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– FROM **I**NFORMATION
TO **D**ECISION

EDITORS

Raluca Ciornea | Lăcrămioara Radomir

PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ
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A WELCOME NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

It is a great privilege to introduce you to the 16th volume of **Marketing from Information to Decision (MID)**. This anthology comprises extended abstracts presented at the International Conference on Marketing, held on 24 April 2026 at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (www.econ.ubbcluj.ro/mid).

The current edition is a collection of papers covering sub-domains as digital marketing and AI, retail, tourism marketing, service marketing, strategic marketing and consumer behaviour. We are confident that the papers considered, are inspiring and provide significant insights from the various industries.

The general purpose of the conference is to provide networking opportunities for researchers (not only) from various institutions with preoccupations in the field of marketing, in the context of a wide range of topics and to enable a stimulating environment for knowledge enhancement and sharing experience. All submitted papers to MID conference go through a rigorous double blind review process of experts in the marketing field.

Marketing from Information to Decision International Conference is a culmination of substantial efforts made by numerous people. For this reason, we want to take a moment to thank the authors, who contributed with their time and experience to the success of this conference. And also, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the editorial board, the reviewers and all technical contributors for donating their time and dedication for the cause of research that makes this volume possible.

We are confident that this scientific event (MID) represents a good opportunity for further evolution and development in the field of knowledge. Consequently, your suggestions and constructive comments on this issue are welcome.

We look forward to building a worldwide community that values the broad domain of marketing.

Sincerely,

Managing editors

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Visualizing Sustainability: Large-Scale Video Assessment of Tourism Communication Across Countries

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: sustainable tourism; social media video analysis; destination image; visual narrative.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to examine how sustainable tourism dimensions are integrated into the destination image projected by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) through social media video advertisements. With tourism increasingly influenced by digital channels, DMOs have shifted their communication strategies from traditional media to online platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. This research aims to evaluate the extent to which these videos convey environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects of sustainability, the alignment with government initiatives for sustainable tourism development, and how tourists' sustainable behaviours are implicitly or explicitly portrayed. By investigating these aspects, the study seeks to provide insights into the role of digital media in shaping sustainable destination images.

B. Design

A qualitative content analysis will be employed to systematically evaluate the representation of sustainability in promotional videos from Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) of the 100 most visited countries worldwide. The sample will include videos published between January 2023 and December 2025 on verified official YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, ensuring geographic and

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organizational authenticity. Each video will serve as an independent unit of analysis and will be converted into sequential static frames using Python libraries (OpenCV, PIL) at half-second intervals, removing visually redundant images to retain meaningful content. Frames will be classified with a multimodal AI model (Claude Sonnet 4) into three categories: aligned with sustainable tourism, not aligned, or visual noise, with noise frames excluded from the dataset. To assess the reliability of AI-powered classification, a random sample of 100 frames from the cleaned dataset will be independently evaluated by two sustainability experts, ensuring high concordance with AI classifications. Data analysis will include unsupervised image clustering to identify thematic visual patterns and sequential clustering using Dynamic Time Warping and Markov chain metrics to examine narrative coherence over time. This approach will provide a reproducible, robust framework for assessing sustainability portrayal and storytelling in tourism video marketing.

C. Value

First, this study investigates the integration of sustainable tourism dimensions in promotional videos at a national level, an area that has received limited attention compared with city-level analyses. Second, by combining AI-powered frame classification with unsupervised image and sequential clustering, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how visual and narrative cues convey sustainability messages across diverse contexts and regions. Third, the study examines the depiction of government initiatives and responsible tourist behaviours, addressing gaps in prior research that often focuses solely on environmental elements or textual content. By applying a large-scale, computationally driven methodology to video content, the research enables a more systematic and realistic assessment of how DMOs project sustainable destination images, enhancing both academic insight and practical relevance.

D. Findings

The analysis is expected to reveal that visual representation of destinations varies across countries, with urban and natural elements frequently depicted, while socio-cultural and economic aspects may appear less consistently. The influence of visual and narrative cues is expected to be complex, with different combinations of frames and sequences likely shaping the perception of sustainable destination images through multiple mediating mechanisms.

E. Study limitations

The study has several limitations. Only YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram videos are included, excluding other social media platforms or official DMO websites, which may contain additional sustainability content. While the coding grid is comprehensive, it may not capture all emerging aspects of sustainable tourism

practices or innovative forms of video communication. Future research could expand the sample to other platforms and formats, incorporate longitudinal analyses to examine trends over time, and apply specialized video content analysis software for more granular evaluation of visual and audio elements.

F. Academic implications

The study advances academic knowledge by providing a validated framework to assess sustainable tourism communication in video marketing. It enriches the destination image literature by integrating the perspective of DMOs and government initiatives into the analysis, bridging the gap between theoretical sustainable tourism frameworks and practical marketing applications. Researchers can adopt the coding grid in comparative studies across regions, media formats, or industry sectors, and explore the relationship between sustainability representation and tourists' perceptions.

G. Managerial implications

The results are anticipated to provide actionable guidance for Destination Marketing Organizations at the national level, supporting the development of social media videos that effectively communicate sustainable destination images for entire countries. The study can inform decisions on visual storytelling, the integration of government sustainability initiatives, and the depiction of responsible tourist behaviours, with attention to environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions within a country-wide context

Toward a Framework of Age-Inclusive Marketing in Fintech

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: age-inclusive marketing; fintech; socially responsible marketing; age inclusiveness.

JEL classification: M30, M31

A. Purpose

The share of aging population (65 years and older) is increasing all over the world. For decades, aging customers have been considered marginal in the bulk of the customer base. Recent concerns for age-inclusive marketing and healthy aging in marketing display an increase in interest in literature for the topic of marketing to aging consumers. In addition, the interest in attracting the aging consumers is also important for practitioners, as companies are looking to extend and protect their market share. Fintech services are offered by traditional financial institutions and new innovative companies. In various contexts, the use of fintech services by aging customers is reduced. Mobile phone payments, mobile banking application payments, money transfers, personal investments remain underutilized by aging customers. In their use of fintech services aging customers are facing two problems: technology and finance. The pace of change is rapid, which can lead to discomfort in the *more settled* life of the elderly. On the other hand, the declining incomes associated with retirement life raise other issues. The use of fintech services could lead to increased well-being for aging people, in terms of potential savings: time, money, stress, etc. Under these circumstances, we identified a gap in the specialized literature, namely, the lack of inclusive marketing for older customers. The research question is: How

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should be conceptualized age-inclusive marketing in fintech? The objective of the research is to identify the directions of age-inclusive marketing in fintech.

B. Methodology

We use a normative-ethical approach and a deductive reasoning to identify the pillars of age-inclusive marketing in fintech. Starting from the socially responsible marketing framework, we redirect and narrow our perspective to the principles that underpin age-inclusive marketing, in order to propose and articulate the framework of age-inclusive marketing in the fintech sector. We follow the typical structure of a conceptual article: problem identification, approach using socially responsible marketing lens, theoretical conceptualization to define and elaborate on the concept of age-inclusive marketing, and finally applying the age-inclusive marketing framework to fintech, to stimulate usage by aging consumers.

C. Originality

To the best of authors knowledge this is the first study to propose a framework of age-inclusive marketing in fintech. In light of low fintech adoption among aging consumers, practical implementation of the study's findings could substantially increase their consumption of fintech services. The impact of our research could go beyond the boundaries of firms and consumers and could contribute to a more equitable society. Dealing with age inclusiveness in fintech, our work is in line with the *grand challenges* that marketing seeks to resolve. Normative aspiration and theoretical reasoning should not block the results to impact the society, therefore repositioning the role of marketing in shaping a better world.

D. Findings

Socially responsible marketing doctrine is based on three components: corporate citizenship, stakeholder orientation and social/environmental sustainability. Socially responsible marketing is important for companies and society because, in the long run, there must be gains for all stakeholders. Distributive justice is the measurement tool of socially responsible marketing. Socially responsible marketing offers a framework to discuss the concept of age-inclusive marketing. Age-inclusive marketing builds on stakeholder orientation and social sustainability to reflect the realities of ageing people consumption practices. Age-inclusive marketing is conceptualized as opposite to ageist marketing, a system that preserves injustice and prejudice. The framework of age-inclusive marketing in fintech includes four basic directions: building trust, customer education in financial and technological matters, online and physical support, focus on long-term relationships with aging consumers.

E. Research limitations

Our normative approach is not free of subjectivity and value bias, as researchers' social norms and attitudes can influence the outcomes. Another limit might deal with lack of empirical testing, as a positive approach can sustain or contradict the normative recommendations. Our findings might be difficult to generalize across markets as they differ in terms of values, consumption patterns, level of technology acceptance. Future studies can elaborate on age-inclusive marketing concept, opening new research avenues that enhance the theoretical debate.

F. Academic implications

The concept of age-inclusive marketing is gaining importance in academia, following demographic developments around the world. Scattered works have addressed the issue of using technology for aging consumers, the relationship between fintech and aging consumers, without articulating a comprehensive normative framework to capture age-inclusive marketing in fintech. Our work can represent the starting point for a deeper understanding of the concept of age-inclusive marketing and its application in other fields. The work makes three major theoretical contributions: it offers a macromarketing perspective on aging consumers by considering their relationship with technology and finance; it refines and provides depth to the age-inclusive marketing framework; it proposes and discusses the premises of age-inclusive marketing in fintech.

G. Practical implications

Our work offers fintech providers a series of actionable measures to relate to aging customers. First, aging customers need a delicate approach, combining human contact with online provision of fintech services. The paradox is that aging customers need to understand and to practice fintech, first under the guidance of an expert, fintech employee or another person. After the first financial operations are made under human supervision, aging customers can confidently use fintech. Therefore, fintech providers should enable these coaching sessions, focusing their marketing efforts to one-to-one sessions. Training sessions to refresh knowledge can be organized at regular intervals. For aging consumers human support is as important as online support therefore it should be offered when needed. In spite of prevailing prejudices, fintech providers should orchestrate their relationships with aging customers on the long run, focusing not on short time profit, but maximizing income over an extended period.

How do AI-based Conversational Agents Shape Consumer Experience and Consumer Attitudes Across Different Stages of the Customer Journey in Conversational Commerce?

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: inclusive conversational commerce; artificial intelligence; conversational agents; customer journey; consumer attitudes.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

Conversational commerce integrates messaging platforms, chatbots, and voice assistants into digital commerce, enabling consumers to interact with companies through natural language. The rapid growth of artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, has significantly expanded the capabilities of conversational agents. Conversational agents can be defined as software systems that mimic human conversation using text, voice, gestures, or embodied avatars. Despite their increasing use in digital commerce, limited research has examined how these technologies influence consumer experience and consumer attitudes across different stages of the customer journey. This study aims to examine the role of conversational agents in shaping customer experience and consumer attitudes within conversational commerce environments.

B. Methodology

By adopting a conceptual literature review approach, this study analyzes relevant academic literature on conversational commerce, artificial intelligence, and conversational agents to examine how these technologies influence consumer experience across different stages of the customer journey. It also considers different interaction modalities and the role of generative AI in shaping consumer perceptions.

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C. Originality

The originality of this study lies in its customer journey-based approach to conversational commerce. While existing research has mainly focused on technology adoption or system design, this paper highlights the experiential and attitudinal impact of conversational agents across the customer journey.

D. Results

The results suggest that AI-based conversational agents can influence consumer experience across different stages of the customer journey by supporting information search, facilitating transactions, and improving post-purchase interactions. By integrating recent developments in generative AI with the conversational commerce literature, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how AI-driven conversational agents influence consumer experience and attitudes in digital commerce.

E. Research limitations

Due to the conceptual nature of the study and its literature review approach, some relevant studies may have been unintentionally excluded from the analysis. Additionally, the rapid emergence of chatbots means that existing literature may not fully capture the latest industry developments.

F. Academic implications

This study contributes to academic literature by integrating insights from conversational commerce, artificial intelligence, and customer journey research. By emphasizing the role of conversational agents across the customer journey, the study offers a perspective that may guide future empirical research on AI-based digital commerce.

From Proximity Information to Retail Attractiveness: Evidence from Consumer Behavior in an Emerging Urban Context

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: retail attractiveness; consumer information processing; proximity; neighborhood supermarkets; urban retail.

JEL classification: M31, R30

A. Purpose

As urban retail environments in emerging economies undergo rapid transformation, consumers increasingly rely on proximity-related information to evaluate nearby retail options and guide their shopping decisions. While prior research has often treated proximity as a unidimensional or purely spatial factor, this study conceptualizes proximity a priori as a multidimensional perceptual construct. The purpose of this research is to examine how four distinct dimensions of proximity—access proximity, identity proximity, relational proximity, and process proximity—contribute differently to durable and situational retail attractiveness in the context of neighborhood supermarkets in Tangier, Morocco.

B. Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative research design based on a survey of 567 consumers who regularly patronize neighborhood supermarkets in Tangier. Drawing on theories of consumer spatial behavior and proximity-based decision-making, proximity is defined prior to the empirical analysis as a multidimensional construct encompassing access proximity (ease of reaching the store), identity proximity (value and identity alignment), relational proximity (quality of interpersonal relationships), and process proximity (fluidity and efficiency of in-store processes). Retail attractiveness is

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conceptualized as a dual construct comprising durable and situational dimensions. All proximity dimensions and retail attractiveness constructs are operationalized using reflective measurement models, as they capture consumers' perceptions and evaluations. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is employed due to its suitability for exploratory analysis, latent construct estimation, and the examination of complex relationships involving multidimensional constructs.

C. Value

This research contributes to the literature on marketing decision-making and urban retailing by explicitly conceptualizing proximity as a multidimensional informational construct, rather than a single spatial constraint. By linking distinct proximity dimensions to different forms of retail attractiveness, the study offers a refined understanding of how consumers transform proximity-related information into evaluative judgments in emerging urban contexts.

D. Findings

The findings indicate that the four proximity dimensions contribute unevenly to retail attractiveness. Durable attractiveness is primarily shaped by identity proximity and relational proximity, reflecting the importance of value alignment, trust, and stable social relationships in long-term store evaluations. In contrast, situational attractiveness is more strongly influenced by access proximity and process proximity, highlighting the role of convenience, operational efficiency, and immediacy in context-dependent shopping situations. These results confirm the differentiated role of proximity dimensions in shaping consumer evaluations.

E. Study limitations

The study focuses on neighborhood supermarkets within a single urban context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other retail formats or cities. In addition, the cross-sectional design does not capture potential temporal changes in proximity perceptions or retail attractiveness evaluations.

F. Academic implications

By specifying proximity as a multidimensional construct prior to analysis, this research advances theories of consumer spatial behavior and retail attractiveness. It demonstrates the analytical value of distinguishing between access-related, identity-based, relational, and process-oriented proximity when examining how consumers process information and form retail-related evaluations.

G. Practical implications

The findings suggest that neighborhood retailers can strengthen durable attractiveness by fostering identity alignment and building stable relational ties with consumers.

Situational attractiveness may be enhanced through improved accessibility, streamlined in-store processes, and operational flexibility that responds to consumers' time-sensitive shopping needs.

Selling Social Impact: An A/B Experimental Analysis of Affective vs. Utilitarian Framing in Youth Recruitment Campaigns

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: pro-social behaviour; youth volunteering; recruitment messages; motivational factors; A/B testing; digital marketing.

JEL classification: M31, L31, D91

A. Purpose

This research investigates the shifting motivational landscape of adolescent and young adult volunteers (ages 12–18+) and evaluates the persuasive efficacy of divergent recruitment framing. While non-profit organizations traditionally rely on altruistic, pro-social appeals centered on moral duty, a gap has emerged between these traditional strategies and the increasingly pragmatic, hedonic drivers of younger cohorts. By contrasting emotional-social appeals with rational-career-oriented messaging, this research seeks to optimize recruitment in high-saturation digital environments.

B. Design

A dual-method quantitative design was employed, combining a descriptive survey (N=361 students) with an embedded A/B experimental scenario. To ensure high validity, participants were exposed to two distinct Instagram recruitment mock-ups for a music festival: Message A - affective-hedonic (emphasizing energy and social bonding) and Message B – instrumental (pragmatic: emphasizing project management skills and CV certification). Analysis included Likert-scale motivational profiling and comparative mean analysis of sign-up intentions and organizational trust.

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C. Value

Moving beyond the over-researched university student demographic, this research captures motivational drivers at a critical formative stage (early-to-late adolescence). Furthermore, it transcends self-reported preference by integrating an experimental A/B test within the survey instrument, providing empirical evidence of how message framing actively moderates behavioral intent and perceived organizational credibility.

D. Results

The data reveal a definitive instrumental shift in youth volunteering. Career skill development emerged as the primary motivator (mean=3.75), significantly outperforming community impact (mean=3.52). The experimental results validate this hierarchy: Message B (career-oriented) elicited significantly higher sign-up intentions (3.46 vs. 3.06) and organizational trust (3.37 vs. 2.95) than the emotional appeal. Notably, *lack of concrete benefits* was identified as a critical barrier to entry (mean=2.87). Our hypothesis is fully supported: younger demographics are significantly more receptive to pragmatic-utilitarian value propositions than traditional altruistic framing.

E. Study limitations

The findings are based on a specific geographic cohort, and the A/B test measures stated rather than revealed behavior. Future research should implement field experiments (live social media ads) to track actual conversion rates across diverse regional demographics.

F. Academic implications

This research contributes to Functionalist Theory in volunteerism by demonstrating that for Generation Z, prosocial behaviour is increasingly moderated by instrumental egoism. It challenges the traditional altruism-centric model, suggesting that hybrid motivations — where hedonic enjoyment and pragmatic utility converge — are now the primary drivers of civic engagement in the digital age.

G. Practical implications

Non-profits organizations must pivot from duty-based to benefit-based storytelling. To maximize recruitment, campaigns should prioritize short-form video (TikTok/Reels) and a Triple Value Proposition: Professional utility, Hedonic experience, and Social impact. Crucially, addressing message ambiguity is vital; organizations must provide transparent role descriptions and tangible return on investment (e.g., certificates, specific skill-building) to convert interest into action.

Demystifying Loyalty Toward Influencers: the Role of Authenticity, Emotions and Trust

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: influencers; consumers' perceptions; perceived authenticity; audience loyalty; customer trust; quantitative approach.

JEL classification: M31, D91

A. Purpose

The current context of the digital economy is characterized by fierce competition, dynamism, and uncertainty, and influencers play an increasingly important role in creating value for organizations. They exert a significant influence on consumers' perceptions, attitudes and purchasing decisions. Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyze how perceived authenticity, positive emotions expressed through promotional content and the degree of trust in influencers contribute to audience loyalty, from the perspective of excellence in marketing communication and the creation of lasting relationships with consumers.

B. Methodology

For conducting this research, a quantitative approach based on surveys was considered. The data were analyzed using inferential statistical methods appropriate for testing causal relationships between the variables studied, in accordance with existing models in the literature on digital marketing and customer relationship management. The sample consists mainly of women with higher education, aged between 19 and 25, representing the young and active segment on social networks.

C. Originality

Although existing literature emphasizes the importance of authenticity, emotional responses and trust in shaping consumer outcomes, the sequential interaction between

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these constructs remains insufficiently explored. Building on process-based perspectives in consumer behavior, this study aims to examine how these variables are linked in an integrated framework. Consequently, this research focuses on how perceived authenticity, emotional responses, trust and loyalty intentions are associated in a sequential process model.

D. Findings

The results showed a significant indirect effect of influencer sincerity on loyalty through trust, indicating that trust acts as a key mechanism linking authenticity to loyalty. Both authenticity and emotional content independently contribute to the formation of trust, and positive emotions generated by content strengthen trust in the influencer even when authenticity is controlled. Emotional content and trust also contributed significantly to loyalty toward influencers.

E. Research limitations

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference and reliance on self-reported measures may introduce systematic error in responses. Furthermore, the Romanian Instagram context may limit generalizability to other cultural settings or platforms. Future research should consider longitudinal or experimental designs to assess the temporal dynamics of influencer relationships and test behavioral outcomes such as engagement or purchasing behavior.

F. Academic implications

From a theoretical perspective, this research expands the literature on influencer marketing by conceptualizing loyalty intentions as the result of an integrated relational mechanism, rather than the direct result of individual communication features. By combining authenticity, emotional communication and trust into a single framework, the study highlights the interaction between cognitive and affective mechanisms in the formation of relationships between influencers and followers.

G. Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, these results suggest that influencer-based marketing strategies should prioritize authentic content, transparent communication and emotionally engaging narratives to strengthen follower trust and promote loyalty intentions.

Talk Like Who? Should Chatbots Be Your Customers' Buddy or Their Advisor?

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: chatbot language style; chatbot interaction; interaction satisfaction; chatbot anthropomorphism.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

With organizations increasingly turning to automated conversational agents to manage online customer interactions, chatbot adoption is projected to grow substantially in the coming years. In particular, chatbots are emerging as key tools in digital customer service, assisting consumers across different stages of the online decision-making process. This trend highlights the need to understand the design features that influence user experience and drive technology adoption among consumers. While anthropomorphic cues have received considerable scholarly attention, the role of chatbot language style (LS) remains relatively underexplored. Drawing on this gap, the proposed study aims to examine how formal versus informal chatbot language influences users' satisfaction with the interaction (SI) in human–chatbot communication during the pre-purchase stage. Specifically, the research will investigate whether the difference in LS affects satisfaction directly or indirectly through mediating factors such as perceived social presence and interaction quality.

B. Design

The study will employ a cross-sectional, between-subjects online experiment with formal and informal LS as conditions. Two chatbots will be developed using an online platform to simulate a pre-purchase interaction in the case of a service. The chatbots

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will follow a menu-based interaction structure commonly used in service contexts, and the formal and informal language conditions will be designed based on insights from the literature on human conversational language styles. Pretests will be conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the language style manipulation and the clarity of the interaction scenario. For the main study, data will be collected from international English-speaking participants recruited through an established online participant recruitment platform. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions, will receive details about the scenario, and will be asked to interact with the chatbot by completing a series of predefined tasks. After the interaction, participants will complete a questionnaire measuring perceived language style, social presence, interaction quality, and satisfaction with the interaction using validated scales from prior research. The proposed research model will be analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

C. Value

First, the study examines chatbot language style as a key linguistic anthropomorphic cue, an aspect that remains relatively underexplored compared with visual anthropomorphic features. Second, by integrating the variables in a SEM model and examining mediating mechanisms, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how conversational cues may influence user perceptions and interaction outcomes; this is particularly relevant given the mixed results in previous papers. Additionally, the study employs an interactive experiment, thus addressing limitations in prior research that often relies on participants' evaluations of static chatbot scenarios (screenshots or hypothetical chatbot conversations). This enables a more realistic assessment of the user experience.

D. Findings

The influence of language style is expected to be complex, with formal and informal chatbot language potentially producing different effects on satisfaction, likely operating through multiple mediating pathways.

E. Study limitations

The proposed research focuses on a single service context and menu-based chatbot interactions, which may limit generalizability. Additionally, the cross-sectional design captures user perceptions at a single point in time. Future studies could extend to other service industries, explore different stages of the customer purchase journey, and include additional variables in the model.

F. Academic implications

The study may advance research by shedding light on the potentially complex ways in which conversational design elements influence user experience and outcomes in human–chatbot communication.

G. Managerial implications

The findings are expected to provide practical insights for organizations using chatbots in online customer communication, guiding the design of language style strategies that enhance user experience, interaction satisfaction, and ultimately, the overall effectiveness of automated service interactions.

Acknowledgement

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Advertising in AI Chatbots: A Persuasion Knowledge Perspective

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: artificial intelligence advertising; generative AI; persuasion knowledge model; scenario-based experiment; hedonic and utilitarian context.

JEL classification: M31, M37, O33

A. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate how consumers react to paid advertisements integrated into generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots. Grounded in the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), the study explores how the appearance of advertisements activates users' persuasion-related defense mechanisms on a platform previously perceived as objective and devoid of commercial intent. Furthermore, the research aims to understand how the context of the conversation with the AI (functional/utilitarian vs. hedonic) influences ad reception and the extent of the defensive responses.

B. Methodology

To achieve the research objectives, a quantitative, scenario-based experimental methodology (vignette methodology) is employed. The research is designed as a 2-group between-subjects experiment, where the sample, consisting of university students, is randomly assigned to either a functional or a hedonic scenario group. During the experiment, participants receive a specific situational description, followed by static mock-up images depicting a simulated conversation with an AI chatbot and an integrated advertisement. Data collection is conducted via an online survey, which measures the PKM variables following the experimental manipulation.

C. Value

The digital advertising market is currently undergoing a significant transformation, with generative AI emerging as a disruptive new actor in persuasion and information

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retrieval. The originality and value of this research lie in the fact that even leading AI developers, such as OpenAI, are currently only in the testing phase regarding the effectiveness of advertisements within chatbot interfaces. Consequently, relevant academic research and publications on this newly forming phenomenon have yet to be established. Applying a rigorous experimental approach provides unique value to the study by delivering empirical data on the causal relationships between variables within a completely new advertising ecosystem.

D. Results

Grounded in the Persuasion Knowledge Model, expected results indicate that persuasion knowledge activation differs significantly between contexts. Users will likely show higher tolerance for integrated advertisements in functional (task-based) situations. Conversely, introducing commercial intent in hedonic (emotionally engaging) contexts is expected to be perceived as a trust violation, triggering psychological reactance, stronger defense mechanisms, and ultimate ad rejection.

E. Research limitations

The primary limitation is the scenario-based methodology. Relying on static vignettes and participants' awareness of the experiment (observation effect) may compromise external validity and response spontaneity. To address this, future research should employ a fully functional, programmed AI chatbot, allowing for dynamic, real-time ad integration in a natural, interactive environment.

F. Academic implications

Addressing the scarcity of literature on generative AI advertising, this study contributes to the emerging academic discourse. It extends the Persuasion Knowledge Model to modern human-computer interactions (HCI), offering early insights into how commercial intent alters user perceptions and establishing AI-mediated environments as a significant new research frontier.

G. Managerial implications

These findings offer valuable insights for AI chatbot developers (e.g., OpenAI, Google) and advertisers exploring this new ecosystem. Ultimately, this research will help stakeholders successfully monetize conversational platforms without degrading the user experience or triggering consumers' ad-avoidance mechanisms.

Enhancing Museum Education through Innovation: from Exhibit Labels to Cultural Mediation in Society 5.0

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: museum education; soft innovation; auxiliary innovation, technological mediation; cultural marketing.

JEL classification: M31, O31, O36, I21

A. Purpose

Museums have always been regarded as 3D encyclopaedias, focused on preserving and showcasing relevant artefacts. Regardless of the perceived or explicit elitist positioning, their educational function has been inherent. The fast pace of technological development and the accessibility provided by open innovation has allowed the New Museum to shift from the unidirectional informative communication to tailored mediation allowing the public to fulfil complex learning, participation, co-creation and reflection needs. The paper aims to provide practical models through which cultural institutions can become education-hubs, offering their visitors various degrees of autonomy while creatively exploring the exhibition. Implementing hard (tech), soft, social, formal innovation and participative creation, the museum visit becomes a personalised experience which offers a sense of cultural belonging and fosters critical thinking.

B. Methodology

The paper uses multi-method research, conducting a thematic inductive analysis on semi-structured interviews with professional elites in the museum field (marketing specialists and managers) corroborated with a thematic deductive analysis of several reports issued by international museum organisations. The author explores the museum education – learning orientation dichotomy by identifying the key coordinates of innovation in this area and highlighting corresponding best practice.

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C. Value

The literature shows few studies linking innovation coordinates, museum education and visitor experience. This study draws on Innovation Theory, focusing on the relevance of soft, formal and auxiliary innovation on the one hand and technological innovation on the other.

D. Findings

The results of the multi-method research reveal three relevant models applicable in the 21st Century museology, adaptable to a wide range of museums: Learning by co-creation (the visitor adopts a heritage interpretation guideline and becomes a creator of the museum narrative), Technological mediation (immersive storytelling using XR allowing the visitor a deep, emotional and cognitive understanding of heritage) Hybrid education (using interactive installations, sensorial exploration kits, gamification). The paper contributes to development of studies in the field of social entrepreneurship, highlighting the transferability of skills acquired through museum education.

E. Research limitations

The museum field is highly heterogenous in terms of focus, heritage, size, management, funding or cultural policy, making it difficult to implement all innovation coordinates throughout museum education practices. Other limitations consist in focusing on professional elites and internationally recognised museum achievements may not fully reflect the resource constraints faced by small, local museums. Further research should include quantitative research regarding visitor satisfaction in the multi-method research.

F. Academic implications

The research contributes to the literature on museum marketing and museum studies, providing researchers with an updated theoretical and empirical foundation regarding experiential learning. Moreover, it demonstrates how efficiently fulfilling the educative function of the museum has a leverage effect on the institution's social and economic performance.

G. Managerial implications

This paper connects theoretical and empirical aspects, providing managers and specialists in the cultural field an overview of the innovation process in museum education, as well as a detailed view of its constituent elements. Adapting and implementing the proposed models, museums can design attractive learning environments becoming active education-hubs, generating social impact and securing a sustainable competitive advantage.

The Influence of Different Packaging Designs on Snack Cravings: A Neuromarketing Perspective

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: neuromarketing; packaging design; eye tracking; consumer behaviour.

JEL classification: M31, D91, C91

A. Purpose

The study aims to investigate how different packaging designs for snacks may influence consumer cravings from a neuromarketing perspective. Packaging is one of the most influential marketing tools at the point of purchase, especially for FMCG, shaping consumer perceptions, emotions, and nevertheless purchase intentions. While traditional marketing research methods are based primarily on self-reported preferences, they often fail to capture subconscious reactions that highly influence consumer behavior. This research seeks to explore how neurophysiological responses, captured through eye tracking, galvanic skin response and micro expression analysis, can provide deeper insights into the cognitive and emotional processes triggered by various packaging stimuli.

B. Methodology

An experimental study was conducted with 22 participants aged 18–49, balanced by gender, selected through convenience sampling. The products in the study were chosen to cover most preferences: sweet (biscuits), salty (fries) and healthy (apple slices). Participants were exposed to the same product under five distinct conditions: unwrapped, neutral packaging, brightly colored packaging, branded packaging, and within a short advertising video (13–19 seconds). The study was randomized, meaning that each participant has seen the products or slides in a different order. The study employed a multimodal neuromarketing approach, combining eye tracking, facial expression analysis (Affectiva), and galvanic skin response (GSR) to capture

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visual attention, emotional engagement, and physiological arousal. Experiments were conducted individually in a controlled laboratory environment to eliminate social influence and ensure consistency in lighting, sound, and temperature. Data were preprocessed with a specialized software and analyzed across metrics such as fixation count, dwell time, time to first fixation, first fixation duration, and GSR peaks. Specific areas of interest (AOIs) were selected for several images. This enables a comprehensive assessment of attention and emotional response across packaging conditions.

C. Value

Unlike prior studies relying solely on self-reported measures or on sales figures in store, this research integrates neurophysiological metrics to reveal subconscious processes underlying consumer engagement. By comparing static images with dynamic video stimuli and assessing multiple product categories (salty, sweet, and fresh), the study provides new insights into how packaging design and presentation format shape consumer perception and affective responses. Furthermore, the correlation between three neuromarketing techniques offer a broader area to discuss the results, with multiple correlations to be established.

D. Results

The results of this research indicate that brightly colored (especially red, but also intense blue) and branded packaging (the golden arch from McDonald's) captured higher visual attention and generated greater emotional arousal than neutral or unwrapped product, although the snack was the same (pictures were edited in a specialized software). Short video advertisements elicited the highest peaks in GSR, suggesting stronger affective engagement compared with static images. Eye tracking heat maps revealed that attention was concentrated on visually distinctive and recognizable elements, such as brand logos and intense colors, but also on the central area of the screen. While facial expression analysis showed predominantly neutral responses, two participants exhibited stronger affective reactions linked to personal memories; these were excluded from aggregated analysis. Dwell time, fixation duration, and time-to-first-fixation metrics highlighted the influence of both visual saliency and central positioning, emphasizing the need to interpret attention metrics in context.

E. Study limitations

The study's limitations include a small, convenience-based sample and variations in participant hunger levels during testing times that varied from early morning to 02:00 PM. This may have influenced physiological and attentional responses. Future research could expand sample size and include a broader range of product categories, as well as local brands or AI-generated products and logos.

F. Academic implications

This study contributes to neuromarketing literature by demonstrating the integration of eye tracking, facial analysis, and GSR as a way to evaluate packaging effectiveness. It highlights the importance of combining cognitive and emotional metrics, as well as traditional marketing theories, to understand consumer behavior at a more complex level.

G. Practical implications

The findings suggest that marketers should prioritize packaging that grabs the consumer attention through branded content or colored packaging and consider dynamic advertising formats to maximize consumer attention and emotional engagement.

B2B Lead Management through Integrated Marketing Analytics: Insights from a Practical Guide

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: marketing analytics; B2B lead management; lead generation; lead scoring; lead nurturing; data-driven decision-making.

JEL classification: M31, M10, M15

A. Purpose

This paper is based on the author's master's thesis - *Integrating Marketing Analytics Approaches into B2B Lead Management. A Practical Guide for Process Optimization*, published in the *BestMasters* series by Springer Gabler, in 2026. Despite the strategic importance of new customer acquisition, many B2B companies struggle with ineffective lead management processes, resulting in poor lead quality and low conversion rates. While marketing analytics offers opportunities to address common issues through data-driven insights, the academic discourse remains fragmented. Existing contributions often focus on advanced methods or individual process stages, leaving practitioners without actionable guidance. Therefore, this study explores how marketing analytics can be comprehensively integrated into B2B lead management to enhance process effectiveness. Based on common effectiveness gaps, it identifies analytics applications of varying complexity to improve lead generation, lead qualification and scoring, and lead nurturing, and demonstrates how companies can measure the effectiveness of their efforts. These insights are summarized in a practical guide outlining concrete recommendations for integrating marketing analytics.

B. Methodology

To ensure both academic rigor and practical applicability, the study combines a conceptual framework with empirical research, synthesizing the findings into a practical guide. The theoretical section consists of a literature review covering journal

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articles, monographs, and industry publications. This is supplemented by qualitative expert interviews with 12 B2B marketing professionals from various industries and company sizes, selected through purposive sampling. The data is analyzed using content-structuring qualitative content analysis.

C. Originality

The practical guide bridges the gap between fragmented academic discourse and practical needs by adopting a holistic funnel perspective that covers various lead management process stages. Unlike existing research, it accounts for varying organizational maturity levels and integrates frequently overlooked foundational approaches, such as descriptive analytics and rule-based automation, alongside advanced AI and predictive analytics applications. Consequently, the guide is applicable to a wide range of companies, regardless of their current circumstances, and offers a structured path toward data-driven lead management.

D. Results

The guide outlines fundamental prerequisites, success factors, and concrete implementation steps. Based on common effectiveness gaps, it includes recommendations for target group analysis to improve the accuracy of lead generation, for implementing lead scoring models and adjusting them in a data-driven manner to ensure lead quality, and for personalized engagement strategies based on behavioral analysis to nurture leads toward sales readiness. Regarding effectiveness measurement, the guide emphasizes funnel performance management to identify bottlenecks and highlights the need to shift from *vanity metrics* to outcome-oriented metrics. Given diverse organizational prerequisites and levels of data-driven decision-making, differentiated approaches of varying complexity are presented.

E. Research limitations

Since the research scope is limited to the marketing perspective, the role of sales following lead handover is not examined in detail. Future research could incorporate the sales perspective and explore advanced analytics and AI applications in even greater depth. Given the nature of qualitative research, the interview results provide in-depth insights but lack statistical generalizability.

F. Academic implications

The research consolidates fragmented discourse into a robust theoretical framework at the intersection of marketing analytics and B2B lead management. By incorporating fundamental approaches alongside advanced methods, the reality of many B2B companies is reflected. The holistic perspective of the lead management process represents an additional contribution to the field.

G. Practical implications

The practical guide provides a structured and concise implementation plan derived from theoretical insights and practical evidence. By offering tailored recommendations instead of a one-size-fits-all solution, it enables B2B marketing practitioners to selectively adopt approaches based on their organizational needs and maturity. This allows companies to improve continuously, transition toward data-driven decision-making, and ultimately improve lead management effectiveness.

How Audiences Value Social Media Content: A Comparison of Video and Image Formats

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: social media; content type; segmentation.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

In digital marketing, social media platforms have become central to how brands engage with their audiences. While a substantial body of research has explored content formats and their impact on user engagement, there remains a gap in understanding how users perceive the intrinsic value of different content types. We directly address this critical gap by investigating user perceptions of social media content value through a direct comparison of video and image formats. We draw upon established theoretical frameworks: consumption values theory and advertising value theory. We adopted a refined content value perspective, focusing on four key dimensions: informational, entertainment, aesthetic, and social value.

B. Methodology

We tested our research hypotheses using a between-subjects experimental design, assigning respondents to one of six conditions in a 3 (social media platform: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) × 2 (content type: photo, video) framework. Each participant followed posts from a fictitious brand on their assigned platform, with separate brand accounts for photo and video content that were identical in theme and message. After a 7-day exposure period, participants completed a questionnaire consisting of validated scales from prior research for informational and social value, entertainment and aesthetic value, with Likert scale responses from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), about their perceptions of the posts. Out of 515

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responses collected, we retained 403 valid responses after screening for attention checks and straight-line answers.

C. Originality

This study's originality draws from how it explores user perceptions of the informational, entertainment, aesthetic, and social value of social media content. It specifically compares video and image posts on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok using a complex 3x2 experimental design and detailed subgroup analysis. This research provides valuable insights into how content format influences perceived value among different user segments.

D. Results

Results showed that the perceived informational value assigned to various platforms differs by gender. Women tend to evaluate content on Instagram more favorably, while men perceive TikTok content as more informative. Men are more sensitive to the type of content, viewing videos as offering significantly greater informational value, whereas women maintain relatively consistent judgments regardless of the format. When it comes to perceived entertainment value, distinctions also arise between genders concerning social media platforms and content types. Women find Instagram to be more entertaining, while men generally prefer TikTok in this regard. In terms of content type, men consider videos to be more entertaining, whereas women do not show a distinct preference for either videos or images. Furthermore, the perceived social value attributed to social media platforms varies significantly between genders. Women associate the social value primarily with Instagram, while men assign that value more to TikTok. On the other hand, regardless of the content type or platform, the perception of aesthetic value in a post is not influenced by an individual's age, gender, education, or level of social media usage.

E. Research limitations

This research's limitations are the lack of a pre-test for stimulus equivalence and a homogenous sample of predominantly young female participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings.

F. Academic implications

This study offers a significant theoretical contribution by moving beyond aggregate engagement metrics to provide a better understanding of the perceived value drivers for different visual content types.

G. Practical implications

Our findings carry direct practical implications for managers. To enhance communication and engagement, brands must align their strategies with these gender-

specific norms, prioritising Instagram (mixed formats) for female audiences and TikTok (video-centric) for male audiences.

The Values Underneath a Place Brand: Making Sense of Modern Western Culture

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: place branding; values; culture; modernization.

JEL classification: R11, Z13, Z32

A. Purpose

Place branding concerns the creation, communication, and management of a place's identity in order to foster community among residents and attract tourists, talent, and investors. Values and culture lie at the heart of place branding strategies. This paper focuses on the fundamental cultural values that underpin people's behavior and that shape a country's social, cultural, and economic space in unique ways. Although cultural values tend to change slowly, they can be contested by future generations and by influences from other cultural spheres. The purpose of this paper is to examine the challenges that place brands face in light of these dynamics.

B. Approach

This is a conceptual paper that focuses on theory adaptation—specifically, the integration of models related to cultural dimensions into the theoretical domain of place branding. First, the paper employs the Inglehart–Welzel Cultural Map (2023) to explain the unique cultural values of a country. Second, using the same map, it illustrates the dynamics of cultural values in relation to societal modernization. Third, the map is used to explore current dynamics in Western culture.

C. Originality

Although many place branding papers highlight the importance of values and culture, surprisingly few have explored the leveraging of fundamental cultural value dimensions as articulated by Hofstede and the World Values Survey. Contemporary Western societies face complex challenges arising from postmodern lifestyles (e.g.,

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heightened individualism) and interactions with non-Western, more traditional ways of life, driven by high levels of immigration. These dynamics have sparked heated and polarizing national debates in both mainstream media and alternative platforms such as X. The key question for policymakers is how to make sense of these interacting cultural spheres.

D. Findings

Modern Western societies can be characterized by a preference for secular and rational values over traditional ones guided by religion and clear authority figures. This transition can be partly explained by modernization trajectories associated with the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Industrialization. Current postmodern lifestyles build upon this modern foundation and celebrate creative and innovative self-expression. However, they also bring unintended side effects, including a diminished sense of community, the erosion of nuclear families, and reduced appreciation for historical heritage—all of which dilute Western place brands. Moreover, modern Western values are challenged by migrant groups that often maintain more traditional and survival-oriented lifestyles, even after residing in modernized societies. From a Western perspective, interactions with these more traditional values could prompt reflection on some downsides of postmodern lifestyles. However, the significant cultural distance between postmodern and traditional values may reinforce tribal tendencies within more collectivistic migrant cultures, potentially disrupting the secular and high-trust characteristics of Western place brands.

E. Research limitations

The analysis adopts a deliberately broad scope to capture the bigger picture of place branding. However, this breadth creates challenges for reliability and validity. Future research could address some of these limitations by focusing on a specific country, domain (e.g., social, cultural, or educational), or time frame.

F. Academic implications

Adopting models of cultural dimensions will enable other researchers in place branding to analyze the fundamental values of countries and cultural zones (e.g., Confucian, Orthodox Europe, African-Islamic) along trajectories of modernization.

G. Practical implications

A place branding strategy that effectively interprets these diverse cultural forces will help policymakers develop a holistic vision and direction for their country's future, rather than being overwhelmed by isolated incidents stemming from cultural differences.

Algorithmic Unpredictability and User Continuance Intention on Social Network Sites

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: algorithmic unpredictability; self-determination theory; social network sites; structural equation modeling.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

This study aims to extend current knowledge of the antecedents of user satisfaction and continuance intention on social network sites (SNS) by incorporating the effects of algorithmic unpredictability. We propose a moderated mediation model grounded in Self-Determination Theory that distinguishes between two SNS uses: self-promotional use (extrinsically regulated) and conversational use (intrinsically regulated). Based on Resource Dependence Theory, we further propose that algorithmic unpredictability moderates the relationships between these uses and satisfaction with the platform, but only for self-promotional use. Finally, the model includes the effects on SNS continuance intention.

B. Methodology

The study adopts a cross-sectional survey design, using data collected from 219 LinkedIn users. All constructs were measured using established multi-item reflective scales, with minor adaptations to the specific research context. The model was assessed using partial least squares structural equation modeling.

C. Value

A growing stream of studies examines the role of algorithmic unpredictability in shaping the relationship between users and platforms. However, available research has addressed these effects at the level of firms and organizations, while their impact

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on individual consumer behavior on SNS remains underexplored. This study contributes to filling this gap by introducing algorithmic unpredictability as a moderating variable in the established use-satisfaction-continuance model.

D. Results

The analysis supports the proposed hypotheses, highlighting the direct and indirect effects of self-promotional and conversational uses on continuance intention. Moreover, algorithmic unpredictability has a strong negative moderating effect on the relationship between self-promotional use and satisfaction, but not on the relationship between conversational use and satisfaction. Overall, the model revealed substantial explanatory power and high predictive accuracy. Robustness checks (for example, detection of endogeneity through Gaussian copulas) confirmed the strength of the findings.

E. Study limitations

The empirical study used data from only one SNS, namely LinkedIn. Further studies are needed to assess the generalizability of the findings across other SNS and platforms.

F. Academic implications

This study advances the literature on consumer behavior on SNS by introducing algorithmic unpredictability as a theoretically grounded moderator in the use-satisfaction-continuance model. In particular, it explains why algorithmic unpredictability asymmetrically moderates the effects of extrinsically and intrinsically regulated uses of SNS on satisfaction.

G. Managerial implications

The findings provide actionable managerial insights. Users who predominantly engage in self-promotional activities on SNS are more vulnerable to algorithmic unpredictability, which erodes the value of their personal branding investment. Platform owners should consider making the content distribution algorithms more transparent for such users.

Patterns of Mobile Device Usage among Marketing Students: a Comparative Study between Romania and Poland

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: mobile device usage; screen time; student behaviour; digital marketing.

JEL classification: M31, D12

A. Purpose

The rapid spread of smartphones has significantly transformed the daily routine and digital consumption patterns of young people, with students representing one of the most active segments of mobile device users. In this context, the study aims to analyze smartphone usage patterns among students enrolled in university marketing programs. The research investigates the time spent on the mobile phone, the main categories of applications used, the frequency of interactions with the device and the volume of notifications received. By comparing students from Romania and Poland, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the digital consumption behavior of young people and to provide relevant insights for digital marketing strategies.

B. Design

The research adopts an exploratory design based on objective behavioral data collected directly from students' smartphone activity reports. The data were extracted from the Screen Time reports of iPhone devices belonging to a sample of 28 students enrolled in university marketing programs, of which 19 were Romanian students and 9 Polish. Participants provided information from their phone usage reports for a

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period of seven consecutive days. The collected dataset included several indicators relevant to smartphone usage behavior, including: total time spent on the phone, average daily usage time, time allocated to different categories of applications (social media, entertainment and other activities), most used applications, average number of phone accesses (pickups), applications used immediately after unlocking the device, average number of notifications received and applications generating the highest volume of notifications. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, intended to synthesize the identified usage patterns, complemented by a comparative analysis between the two groups of students.

C. Originality

The originality of the study lies in the use of objective smartphone usage data, obtained directly from mobile device activity reports. Unlike self-reported research, which can be affected by memory errors or subjective estimates, this approach allows for a more faithful representation of users' actual digital behavior. The study also makes an additional contribution by comparative analysis of mobile device usage behavior among students in two European countries, focusing on a category of users with high exposure to the digital environment.

D. Results

Preliminary results highlight a high level of smartphone usage among the students analyzed. The data show that Romanian students spend an average of approximately 6.45 hours per day using their mobile phone, while Polish students record an average of approximately 5.59 hours per day. This difference suggests a slightly higher level of digital engagement among Romanian students. The analysis of the distribution of usage time indicates the dominant role of social media and entertainment applications, which concentrate a significant proportion of the total time spent on mobile devices. The results also highlight a high frequency of interactions with the phone, reflected by a considerable number of daily accesses and a significant volume of notifications generated by frequently used applications. Overall, the results confirm the central role of the smartphone in the daily life of students and underline the importance of this channel in the contemporary digital ecosystem.

E. Study limitations

The study presents several limitations. First, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the conclusions. Second, the participants are exclusively from students enrolled in marketing programs, which may influence the level of interest in digital platforms. In addition, the analysis only includes iPhone users, which may exclude certain behavioural differences associated with other operating systems. Last but not least, the one-week observation period may not reflect longer-term variations in usage behaviour.

F. Academic implications

From an academic perspective, the study contributes to the emerging literature on digital consumption behaviour and mobile media use among young people. The use of data directly from mobile device activity reports provides a methodologically relevant approach for future research on digital behaviour. The results may also serve as a starting point for further studies investigating the relationship between smartphone use, social media engagement, and consumer decision-making processes.

G. Practical implications

From a marketing perspective, the results highlight the importance of developing mobile-first strategies for the young consumer segment. The high level of smartphone usage indicates that mobile devices are an essential channel for communicating with this audience. At the same time, the prevalence of social media and entertainment applications suggests the need to integrate marketing campaigns into digital platforms frequently used by students. The high frequency of phone accesses and the volume of notifications also indicate the potential of communication strategies based on mobile notifications and interactions to capture users' attention.

Brand Equity of Universities: The Mediation Role of Social Media Communication

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: awareness; brand equity; brand associations; brand loyalty; social media communication.

JEL classification: I23, M30, M31

A. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to analyze the dynamics of the relationships between the dimensions of universities' brand equity with emphasis on the mediation role of social media communication. Specifically, it analyzes whether social media communications generated by universities serve as means for transferring the effects of brand awareness into brand association and perceived quality with the aim of achieving high levels of brand loyalty.

B. Methodology

With this purpose in mind, by using a PLS-SEM approach, this study empirically examines the chain of effects produced in the brand equity model consisting of four dimensions: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. A mediation analysis is also performed to evaluate the indirect effect of social media communication in this chain of effects. The proposed model was validated on a sample of 202 students from the Faculty of Economics Sciences of University "1 Decembrie 1918" of Alba Iulia, Romania. Data was collected through a survey by applying a structured questionnaire with 22 items measured using a seven Likert

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scale. In general, a reflective measurement model was used for the constructs except for perceived quality, that was operationalized as a formative construct.

C. Originality

The brand equity model with its classic four dimensions (awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty) has been validated in many sectors and contexts, including higher education. However, when analyzing the effects of social media communication, most studies focus on its effects on awareness. In the present study, social media communications are considered as means of transferring the effects of awareness on brand associations and perceived quality, which in turn translates into higher levels of brand loyalty.

D. Results

First, the reliability and validity of the measurement model have been confirmed for both reflective and formative constructs. Results show that awareness has a positive and significant effect on both brand associations and perceived quality. Social media communication has positive and significant indirect effects in the relationships between awareness, brand associations and perceived quality. However, the mediation role is particularly important in relation to perceived quality. The model has good predictive power explaining 55,6% of the variance of the brand loyalty, which is explained by positive brand associations and perceived quality. The results of CVPAT also indicate a good out-of-sample predictive power compared to indicators average and linear regression.

E. Research limitations

The main limitation of this research consists in the use of a convenience sample of students of one faculty of the chosen university. Thus, the research should be extended to other faculties.

F. Academic implications

The present research extends the study of the application of brand equity theory in the context of higher education institutions. In addition, it expands the theory by adding social media communication as a relevant mediator of the chain of effect generated within the dimensions of brand equity.

G. Practical implications

The findings can be used by marketers of university to improve the efficiency of their marketing strategies. Specifically, results show that the use of social media communication in the marketing strategies aiming to increase brand awareness leads to more positive brand associations, higher perceived quality and more loyal students.

From Volunteers to Content Creators - Investigating Marketing Communication Roles and Competency Development in NGOs

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: non-profit organisations; marketing communication; volunteer content creation; non-formal education; communication strategy; performance measurement.

JEL classification: M31, L31, M53

A. Purpose

This research investigates the strategic implementation of marketing communications within non-profit organisations (NPOs). It specifically examines the structural distribution of communication roles between salaried employees and volunteers, the selection of tactical channels, and the frameworks used to evaluate performance. Furthermore, the research explores the nexus of non-formal education and competency development, addressing a critical gap in the literature regarding how volunteer-dependent organisations cultivate content creation skills in the absence of formal training.

B. Design

This research employs a qualitative exploratory design based on 25 semi-structured interviews with NPO executives and communication leads. The instrument was structured around three primary thematic axes: operational marketing practices, pedagogical processes for staff/volunteer development, and impact measurement. Data were processed through thematic and frequency analysis to identify cross-organisational patterns. This methodology was selected to provide a granular understanding of organisational logic that quantitative measures often fail to capture.

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C. Originality

While existing NPO marketing scholarship is predominantly donor-centric, this research contributes an internal organisational perspective. It shifts the focus from external campaign outcomes to the internal mechanisms of resource allocation and volunteer integration. By synthesizing non-formal education theory with marketing practice, the research offers a novel framework for understanding how NPOs bridge technical skill gaps through informal learning ecosystems.

D. Findings

The research findings reveal a digital landscape dominated by organic, low-cost channels: social media adoption is nearly universal (92%), while paid performance marketing is statistically negligible (4%). Objectives are primarily mission-aligned, focusing on community engagement (76%) and social education (68%). The data highlight a hybrid human resource model: responsibilities are either centralized in leadership (40%) or distributed across multifaceted roles (40%), with volunteers serving as primary content creators in 36% of cases. Despite the high reliance on volunteers for creative output (68%), evaluative maturity remains underdeveloped. Performance measurement is anchored in vanity metrics—reach (76%) and engagement (60%)—with limited evidence of conversion-based or longitudinal impact assessment.

E. Research Limitations

The research is limited to 25 interviews conducted with organisations, which restricts statistical generalizability across the broader third sector. The reliance on self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias. Additionally, the current phase of the research does not differentiate between NPO sub-sectors. These exploratory results establish the foundation for a subsequent large-scale quantitative validation.

F. Academic Implications

This research advances the discourse on non-profit marketing by mapping communication practices through the lens of organisational capacity. It identifies a structural dependency on organic growth and volunteer labor, contributing to the Resource-Based View (RBV) of marketing in resource-constrained environments. The findings also position non-formal education as a central mechanism for sustaining marketing competencies in volunteer-driven sectors.

G. Practical Implications

The research suggests that NPOs must move beyond exposure metrics toward outcome-oriented evaluation to demonstrate true social impact. There is a clear strategic need to formalize pedagogical pathways for volunteer creators to ensure brand alignment. Finally, the underutilization of paid digital tools identified in this

research suggests a significant opportunity for NPOs to leverage modest budgets for disproportionate gains in reach and conversion

The Rainbow Algorithmic – Mapping the Intersection of AI and LGBTQ+ Discourse through Bibliometric Analysis

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: LGBTQ+ Studies; Artificial Intelligence; Big Data Analytics; Data Ethics; Knowledge Visualization.

JEL classification: M31, O33

A. Purpose

The aim of this research is to synthesize the fragmented landscape of Artificial Intelligence (AI) studies concerning the LGBTQ+ community. The study seeks to identify the dominant thematic clusters and *intellectual nodes* that define this relationship, addressing the core problem: the dual nature of AI as both a tool for community building/personalized advocacy and a mechanism for institutionalizing bias through black-box algorithms and exclusionary datasets.

B. Methodology

The study employs a quantitative bibliometric mapping methodology. We analyzed a comprehensive corpus of peer-reviewed literature indexed in major scientific databases (such as Web of Science and Scopus) covering the last decade. The primary tool used for data visualization and analysis is VOSviewer, which allowed for the creation of co-occurrence networks of keywords and citation patterns. This approach enables a transition from anecdotal evidence to a data-driven visualization of the field's evolution, mapping the intersections between machine learning, algorithmic fairness, and queer lived experiences.

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C. Originality

This research provides a novel, holistic visualization of the *Queer-AI* nexus, a niche often overlooked in traditional marketing and technology studies. Its value lies in bridging the gap between social identity studies and computer science. It is particularly important for researchers in Ethics of Technology and Diversity Marketing, offering a strategic roadmap for fostering *Responsible AI* that respects diversity and prevents algorithmic marginalization.

D. Findings

Preliminary results identified three primary thematic clusters: (1) *Algorithmic Fairness*, focusing on the risks of automated gender recognition; (2) *Digital Advocacy*, highlighting AI's role in queer community building; and (3) *Marketing Inclusion*, examining how AI-driven personalization affects LGBTQ+ consumer behavior. The findings suggest that while technology is evolving, there is a persistent *queer-coding* bias in machine learning models that requires urgent interdisciplinary intervention.

E. Study limitations

The main limitation resides in the reliance on English-language databases, which may exclude relevant local-cultural perspectives on the LGBTQ+ community from non-Western regions. Additionally, as AI is a rapidly evolving field, the bibliometric snapshot reflects the state of the literature up to the point of data collection, potentially missing the most recent *gray literature* or pre-print industry developments. Future studies should include a qualitative meta-analysis to complement the quantitative mapping.

F. Academic implications

The study contributes to the academic domain by providing a structured framework for *Queer Data Science*. It serves as a foundational reference for researchers at the intersection of Marketing, Sociology, and Computer Science, influencing how future studies approach the *human-in-the-loop* requirement for inclusive AI development.

G. Managerial implications

For marketing managers and AI developers, this study highlights the commercial and ethical risks of *algorithmic pinkwashing*. It suggests that companies must audit their datasets for diversity to avoid alienating the LGBTQ+ market. Practically, the results provide a checklist for responsible algorithmic targeting, ensuring that AI-driven campaigns are inclusive and do not inadvertently trigger exclusionary biases or privacy concerns for marginalized groups.

Project-Based Management in University Presses: A Services Marketing Perspective on Author–Publisher Co-Creation

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: services marketing; academic publishing; project-based management; value co-creation; university presses.

JEL classification: M31, L84

A. Purpose

University presses operate predominantly as service organizations, providing complex, knowledge-intensive publishing services to academic authors. In many cases, authors are not only content providers but also clients and active participants in the publishing process. Despite this, university presses often rely on traditional, function-based management structures that inadequately reflect the service-dominant logic of academic publishing. The purpose of this study is to explore the relevance of services marketing concepts—particularly value co-creation and customer participation—for rethinking the management of university presses through a project-based management approach.

B. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design based on an in-depth case study of a Romanian university press. Data are collected through document analysis, direct observation of editorial workflows, and semi-structured discussions with editorial staff and academic authors. The analysis focuses on the structure of publishing projects, the roles assumed by authors and editorial teams, and the interaction points where service quality and coordination challenges emerge. Services marketing theory is used as an analytical lens to interpret these findings, with particular attention to service intangibility, co-production, and internal marketing.

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C. Originality

The originality of the study lies in bridging services marketing theory with project-based management in the context of academic publishing—an area that remains underexplored in both fields. While existing literature tends to approach university presses either from a cultural or institutional perspective, this research reframes them explicitly as service organizations managing multiple, parallel projects with high client involvement. The study offers a conceptual contribution by positioning academic authors as co-creators of value within editorial projects.

D. Findings

Preliminary findings indicate that the prevailing positioning of the university press as a service provider generates a transactional, order-to-pay logic in the author–publisher relationship. When publishing is framed primarily as a paid service, academic authors tend to assume that financial contribution implies full control over editorial decisions, including scope, format, and acceptance. This perception often overlooks the editorial gatekeeping function specific to academic publishing, where selection, evaluation, and quality assurance remain essential institutional responsibilities. The analysis further reveals that, in the absence of a formal project-based management framework, author participation in the publishing process becomes insufficiently governed. While authors are actively involved in content development and decision-making, their roles, responsibilities, and limits are rarely formalized, leading to role ambiguity, communication breakdowns, and recurrent conflicts regarding timelines and expectations. From a services marketing perspective, these findings highlight the risks associated with unstructured customer participation and emphasize the need to balance service orientation with institutional and academic standards. The results suggest that project-based management can function as a governance mechanism, structuring author involvement while preserving editorial authority and enhancing overall service quality.

E. Study limitations

The research is based on a single case study, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Further studies involving multiple university presses across different national contexts are needed to validate and refine the proposed framework.

F. Academic implications

The study contributes to the academic literature by extending services marketing concepts into the field of academic publishing management. It opens avenues for interdisciplinary research connecting marketing, project management, and cultural industries.

G. Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that university presses could improve efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction by adopting a project-based management model aligned with service-dominant logic. Clarifying author roles, formalizing project stages, and strengthening internal marketing practices can lead to better coordination, higher service quality, and more sustainable publishing operations.

Mapping the Evolution of Consumer Autonomy in the Artificial Intelligence Era: A Longitudinal Study on Generation Z

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: AI personalization; consumer autonomy; psychological reactance; digital literacy; longitudinal study; generation Z.

JEL classification: M31, M37, D91

A. Purpose

This research aims to capture the dynamic evolution of Generation Z's relationship with AI personalization through a longitudinal perspective. As this cohort becomes a dominant economic force, understanding their long-term behavioral shifts is critical. The study seeks to validate whether theoretical frameworks regarding AI manipulation and psychological reactance reflect real-world experiences. Ultimately, this qualitative stage serves to consolidate a research direction rooted in the authentic voice of young consumers.

B. Design

The study adopts a longitudinal qualitative approach (panel investigation), tracking the same cohort at three points: T0 (2026), T1 (2028), and T2 (2030). The research uses semi-structured focus groups as the main data collection method, involving first-year university students. Discussions are facilitated by a predefined interview guide calibrated to test constructs of autonomy, reactance, and trust. To ensure a nuanced analysis, the study will explicitly monitor the participants' transition from academic life to their early careers, using employment status at T1 and T2 as a key variable to distinguish between maturation and professional experience effects. Data will undergo

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a circular analysis process (reduction, display, conclusion drawing) conducted by an interdisciplinary team to ensure intersubjective validity.

C. Originality

The originality lies in the longitudinal qualitative design, departing from the predominantly cross-sectional research in AI marketing. It offers a unique perspective on the dynamic maturation of consumers navigating sophisticated AI environments. Academically, it introduces a temporal dimension to psychological reactance and digital literacy. Practically, it provides insights for designing ethical *buyer-advocate* systems that respect user agency.

D. Findings

The research expects to identify a shift in perception as students mature and increase digital literacy. While younger consumers (T0) may exhibit higher psychological reactance toward intrusive algorithms, their ability to navigate marketing manipulation is expected to grow by T2. A major expected finding is a *trust threshold*, where personalization is accepted only if it enhances consumer agency. Collaboration with a psychologist will ensure high-quality interpretation of these deep-seated cognitive patterns.

E. Research limitations

The main limitation is the geographic and institutional specificity of the sample (single university cohort), which may limit generalizability. Additionally, the longitudinal nature poses a risk of participant attrition. Future research should consider cross-cultural comparisons or mixed-methods approaches to validate these patterns on a larger scale across various product categories.

F. Academic implications

This study contributes to the academic domain by shifting the focus from static to dynamic consumer behavior in the context of AI. By introducing a longitudinal qualitative framework, it provides a methodological roadmap for researchers seeking to study long-term human-algorithm interactions. Academically, the research enriches the Theory of Psychological Reactance by exploring it through the lens of evolving digital literacy, a relationship that remains under-investigated. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary integration of psychological interpretation within a marketing study serves as a model for holistic consumer research. This approach encourages other scholars to move beyond traditional metrics and explore the *recursive cognitive processes* that define the modern digital experience, ultimately fostering a more nuanced academic discourse on consumer agency and algorithmic ethics.

G. Managerial implications

Managers will gain insights into the *trust-personalization paradox*, understanding that transparency and user agency drive long-term adoption. The study suggests shifting toward *ethical-by-design* systems that act as consumer advocates. By respecting decisional autonomy, brands can reduce avoidance behaviors and foster sustainable loyalty in an increasingly automated marketplace.

Acknowledgement

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Cross-Cultural Differences in Consumer Perceptions and Behavioural Responses to True Pricing: Evidence from Germany and Poland

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: true prices; food retail; cross-cultural study; scenario experiment.

JEL classification: M16, M38, Q13

A. Purpose

In recent years, companies have increasingly addressed environmental issues to justify higher product prices, particularly for groceries. This phenomenon is referred to as *true prices*. In 2023, the German discount retailer Penny implemented a notable True Price campaign in which nine private-label products were sold with a price premium. However, this markup contrasts with consumers' expectations regarding the price-performance ratio of private labels, potentially leading to negative reactions. Previous practical and scientific studies show mixed consumer responses to such price increases. While sales data from the campaign indicate consumer skepticism and reduced purchases, some academic studies report a higher willingness to pay. Given that insights into the acceptance of true-price food products remain limited, this study aims to examine overall customer evaluations of such campaigns and identify differences in perceptions and behavioral intentions across European markets.

B. Methodology

To address the research objective, a survey was conducted with more than 200 consumers in Germany and Poland. These countries represent a suitable comparison because international retailers such as Aldi and Lidl operate in both markets, while the

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countries differ significantly in cultural dimensions such as individualism. To ensure high external validity, a fictitious private label named *Dobrano* and a corresponding brand logo were created using AI. This experimental treatment ensured that the brand appeared attractive and realistic in both markets. Established seven-point Likert scales were used to measure constructs such as price fairness, willingness to pay, purchase intention, and recommendation intention.

C. Value

This study addresses an important research gap by investigating consumers' acceptance of true-price food products across different cultural contexts. It contributes to pricing research by examining consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions regarding environmentally motivated price markups for private labels and extends international marketing research by providing cross-cultural insights into consumer responses within European retail markets.

D. Findings

The first results indicate that consumers in the two countries differ in their perceptions of price fairness and their willingness to pay for the fictitious brand *Dobrano*. In particular, acceptance of true prices is higher in Poland, which is considered more collectivist, than in Germany.

E. Research limitations

The study is based on survey data from two European countries and focuses on a fictitious private label brand. Although this design increases control and external validity, the results may not fully capture real purchasing behaviour in actual retail environments or be directly generalizable to other countries or product categories.

F. Academic implications

The findings contribute to the literature on pricing strategies and sustainable consumption by demonstrating how cultural differences influence consumer perceptions of price fairness and willingness to pay for environmentally motivated price increases. The study therefore extends knowledge in both pricing research and cross-cultural marketing.

G. Practical implications

For internationally operating food retailers, the results provide guidance for implementing true-price strategies across markets. The findings suggest that consumer acceptance of sustainability-related price markups may vary significantly between countries, implying that retailers should adapt communication strategies and pricing approaches to cultural contexts when introducing true-price campaigns for private labels.

Acknowledgement

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The Role of Retailer Trust and Cookie Transparency in Consumers' Intentions to Withhold Personal Data

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: webpage cookies; trust; digital privacy; perceived transparency.

JEL classification: M38

A. Purpose

Webpages of service companies—particularly in the retail sector—feature different types of cookie notifications, including *fair* cookies, *unfair* cookies that manipulate users into giving consent, and *inform-only* cookies that merely notify users without providing an option to actively grant or refuse consent. This paper investigates how inherent trust and perceived transparency influence consumers' intentions to withhold personal data when interacting with cookie notifications from an international retailer.

B. Design

After extensively reviewing the literature on privacy concerns and retailing, a total of 237 consumers from Germany and 231 consumers from Thailand participated in the study. The data were analyzed using a linear moderated mediation regression model with PROCESS (Model 15) developed by Hayes.

C. Originality

Our work is the first that investigates the impact of real-life cookie notifications of an international fashion retailer across two culturally different countries – Germany and Thailand. We thus compare the perceptions and behavioral intentions of fast fashion retail customers.

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D. Results

Positive experiences—both the inherent trust consumers have in a firm prior to cookie exposure and the perceived transparency arising from the cookie context—reduce consumers' tendency to withhold personal data. These findings suggest that firms benefit from investing in long-term trust-building as well as in short-term improvements to cookie policies and related communication. Trust appears to be particularly important when consumers have no option to decline their cookie acceptance.

E. Study limitations

In our work, we focussed on selected cookie types and their consequences. Further studies might add to research by conducting experiments in other countries with other cultural backgrounds and investigate their effect on other variables. We also only investigated intentions; thus, future work might focus on observational behaviour.

F. Academic implications

Our study contributes to research on website privacy and communication by demonstrating that consumers' responses are influenced both by their inherent trust in a firm and by how cookie notifications are presented, which shapes perceptions of online data collection. Additionally, our work enhances cross-cultural research by showing that consumers across different countries exhibit similar responses to privacy-related factors, thereby adding to the still limited body of research on privacy in regions such as Asia.

G. Practical implications

We also offer important recommendations for retail management by demonstrating that different types of cookie notifications lead to distinct consumer evaluations and behavioral intentions. Additionally, international retailers operating in both individualistic and collectivistic countries may be able to standardize their cookie notifications.

Acknowledgement

Conceptualization and data collection were done with Alisara Charinsarn, Thammasat University, Bangkok/Thailand.

Conversion at the Green Frontier: A Multi-Method Analysis of Message Framing and the Engagement Funnel in Ecological Social Marketing

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: message framing; ecological volunteering; non-profit marketing; civic engagement; communication campaigns; youth audiences.

JEL classification: M31, L31, Q56

A. Purpose

This research investigates the efficacy of strategic message framing in driving consumer engagement within the green non-profit sector. While social marketing literature extensively covers broad prosocial motivations, there remains a critical gap in how specific communication frames—ranging from utilitarian benefits and social identity to urgency and impact visualization—trigger action in low-trust, emerging philanthropic cultures. Focusing on the Romanian NGO landscape, the research maps how diverse message architectures influence the transition from passive awareness to active participation.

B. Methodology

A dual-methodological framework was employed to bridge organizational output with consumer response. First, a content analysis of five best-practice ecological campaigns decoded visual strategies and message typologies (N=5). Second, quantitative research was conducted via a survey (N=217) utilizing Likert-based psychometric scaling to measure engagement intensity across four behavioral dimensions: advocacy (popularization), donation, event attendance, and active

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volunteering. This integrated approach allows for a cross-analysis of intended organizational messaging versus perceived consumer value.

C. Originality

The originality of this research lies in its integrative application of Framing Theory and Social Marketing Theory within the context of a *trust-deficit* emerging market. While previous literature often treats these frameworks in isolation, this research synthesizes them to map the cognitive and behavioral journey of the ecological volunteer. By shifting the focus from what motivates volunteers to how specific message architectures (frames) trigger specific stages of the engagement funnel (social marketing), the research provides a rare, granular analysis of the Romanian NGO sector. It offers a sophisticated understanding of how identity-based value propositions can bypass traditional cultural barriers to civic participation.

D. Findings

The data reveal a *Pyramid of Engagement*: symbolic advocacy (popularization) is the primary entry point (59.4%), while high-commitment behaviors like donation (39.2%) and event participation (38.2%) remain lower. Media consumption follows a bifurcated path: a Reactive Pattern (passive social media exposure, 65.4%) and an Active Pattern (intentional search, 37.3%). Content analysis identifies a significant Resonance Gap: while NGOs frequently use urgency and moral duty frames, the research shows that Identity-Impact Framing generates significantly higher engagement intentions, particularly among the critical 18–35 Millennial/Gen Z demographic.

E. Study Limitations

The reliance on a convenience sample with high prior engagement may skew results toward pre-converted audiences. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the research captures a snapshot of intention rather than long-term behavioral retention.

F. Academic Implications

This research significantly advances the intersection of Social Marketing Theory and Framing Theory by empirically mapping the cognitive-behavioral mechanics of the ecological engagement funnel. By extending Social Marketing Theory, the research introduces a *Behavioral Friction Model* for emerging philanthropic markets, demonstrating that the price of participation is moderated by a trust-deficit that requires a staged, value-driven conversion strategy. Simultaneously, it refines Framing Theory by identifying critical boundary conditions in prosocial communication; specifically, it demonstrates that Identity-Impact Framing (the Gain-Frame) consistently outperforms traditional Urgency-Based Framing (the Loss-Frame) among the 18–35 demographic. Ultimately, the research proves that the

efficacy of a frame is contingent upon the *friction* of the requested behavior, suggesting that identity-centric messaging serves as the primary catalyst for transitioning symbolic supporters into active contributors within the social marketing ecosystem.

G. Practical Implications

The research findings suggest that NGO practitioners should move away from *guilt-based* marketing. Instead, a Staged Communication Strategy is recommended: (1) Use Identity-based short-form content to trigger organic amplification via social media, and (2) Deploy Impact-focused technical data on official websites to convert active searchers. To overcome low-trust barriers, campaigns must prioritize transparency and *Return on Effort* (ROE) by visualizing the direct ecological dividends of individual participation.

Identifying Generational Preferences for Loyalty Program Benefits

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: loyalty program; generations; customer preferences.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

The present paper focusses on understanding how customer preferences for loyalty program benefits are formed, by proposing the Generational Cohort Theory as an interpretative guide. Generational Cohort Theory poses that distinct groups of people born and raised in the same time period tend to share similar life experiences, which in turn contribute to develop similar values, attitudes and beliefs. So far, marketing has mostly addressed generations of consumers by identifying differences in their behaviors and perceptions with respect to brands, retailers and experiences. Existing literature also points out that generations react differently to various types of marketing stimuli, namely promotions, store attributes, social media advertising etc. However, scarce research is dedicated to how generations of customers react to stimuli embedded in loyalty programs, mostly focusing on the differences between members and non-members, or members belonging to different program tiers. The aim of the study, therefore, is to capture differences in perceived relevance of various typologies of rewards and services offered in loyalty programs as what concerns four different generations of consumers. The underlying hypothesis, under the Generational Cohort Theory's assumptions, is that consumers belonging to each generation may also share similar – and distinguished – preferences towards types of rewards and services reserved for members.

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B. Methodology

A quantitative approach was adopted, through the design of a structured questionnaire. Preference for different types of rewards – monetary, non-monetary, and green/pro-social – was measured with three items on a 7-points Likert scale (as such preferences do not exclude each other). Relevance of services reserved for members was measured through one single item, 7-points, ranging from *not relevant at all* to *extremely relevant* for one's experience with the loyalty program. Participants were provided with a list of 16 services, divided in five categories, developed by the authors through a literature review and the analysis of 40 Italian loyalty programs. Categories are: experience personalization, payment, exclusive services, purchase and consumption history, management of loyalty program membership. The survey was shared online, in September 2025, to a representative panel of Italian consumers by a leading consumer panel research company. 1,200 consumers were involved, 300 per each Generation (Baby Boomers, X, Y / Millennials, Z). In order to ensure robustness of the analysis, we required all participants to be active members of loyalty programs. Data were analyzed through ANOVA and ANCOVA methods, with Tamhane's T2 and Tukey post-hocs, crossing the four generations involved over preference for the three different categories of loyalty program rewards and the 5 categories of services offered.

C. Originality

Although previous studies have proven that program members react differently to the same reward offered or service provided, explanations in literature have tied such insights to customers' personality traits or behaviors (e.g. expenditure, purchase frequency). Following in the path marked out by other authors, retailers and academics alike are encouraged to test new segmentation approaches to explore customer reactions to the same benefit offered by the loyalty program.

D. Findings

As what concerns rewards, the analysis showed a barely significant difference across generations for monetary rewards preference ($p = 0,081$). Stronger differences are found in preference for non-monetary rewards ($p = 0,002$), especially between Baby Boomers and Gen Z, who favor them the most. Preference for green/pro-social rewards do not differ between generations, challenging common wisdom about younger customers being more activism-oriented. Significant differences between generations are also found as far as the various categories of services. Baby Boomers do not indicate any type of service as particularly relevant for their loyalty experience. Gen X is attracted by services that support them in planning and managing past and future purchases. Gen Y considers highly relevant services that make their purchase experience personalized. Finally, Gen Z finds payment services (specifically the availability of different methods of payment) as more relevant.

E. Study limitations

The main limitation of the present study lies in its cross-sectional design; also, the measures for services' relevance are single-item, a choice due to the fact that they had to be repeated over long lists of options. As what concerns suggestions for future research, a first extension of the work would be testing results with the use of company data on benefits. Second, the study could be replicated over multiple countries to account for cultural differences in generations at a global level.

F. Academic implications

The study sheds light on how relevance of loyalty program offers is perceived by different segments of consumers, since it has effects on important outcomes such as loyalty program engagement, retention and churn prevention.

G. Practical implications

The study provides practical suggestions on how to design loyalty programs that result appealing to customers belonging to the different generations. Our insights are strategic in terms of: loyalty program attractiveness and new members' acquisition; redesign of current loyalty programs; personalization of communications and in general customer relationship efforts directed at loyalty program members.

Acknowledgements

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Gen Z's Perspective on Sustainable Fashion: Marketing Insights and Consumer Behavior

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: sustainable fashion; consumer behavior; gen Z; marketing strategies.

JEL classification: M31, Q56, D12

A. Purpose

This research aims to investigate Generation Z's perceptions of sustainable fashion, concentrating on purchasing behaviors, attitudes, and reactions to strategic marketing frameworks. The study evaluates the nexus between social media influence, corporate communication, and responsible consumerism in shaping sustainable fashion choices. By analyzing empirical data derived from structured surveys, the research intends to identify pivotal drivers of pro-environmental purchase behavior and elucidate how digital marketing paradigms can optimize engagement with this demographic. The results are intended to inform both scholarly discourse and applied marketing strategies designed to foster sustainability among Gen Z consumers.

B. Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative approach, leveraging survey-based data to investigate Generation Z's attitudes and purchasing patterns regarding sustainable fashion. Quantitative analysis via SmartPLS is employed to identify significant patterns and correlations pertinent to strategic marketing interventions.

C. Originality

The originality of this research stems from its empirical focus on the Generation Z cohort within the specific geographic context of Romania. By examining the interplay between responsible consumption, marketing communication, and social media

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influence, this endeavor extends the existing literature on sustainable consumption and consumer psychology. The research offers a more comprehensive knowledge of how digital ecosystems affect environmentally conscious behavior. Consequently, the findings provide critical information for fashion brands, marketers, and sustainability-oriented enterprises seeking to engineer more efficacious communication frameworks tailored to Generation Z.

D. Findings

Preliminary analysis reveals a significant positive correlation between Generation Z's predisposition toward responsible consumption, marketing communication, social media reach, and sustainable fashion choices. Statistical modeling indicates that Gen Z's awareness of and propensity to acquire sustainable fashion are heavily mediated by social media and sustainability-focused messaging. Hypothesis testing confirms that individuals exhibiting higher levels of responsible consumption are significantly more likely to react favorably to green marketing and integrate sustainability into their decision-making processes. These results underscore the escalating significance of digitally mediated sustainability advocacy.

E. Research limitations

Several limitations merit acknowledgment. First, the study focuses exclusively on Generation Z respondents in Romania, which may circumvent the generalizability of the results to other geographical areas or diverse age groups. Second, the conceptual scope is limited to four primary variables, which may omit other latent variables influencing sustainable behavior. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential social desirability bias. Future research should expand the analytical scope by incorporating cross-generational or cross-regional participants, investigating additional psychographic factors, and employing qualitative methodologies such as longitudinal studies to deepen the understanding of longitudinal behavior shifts.

F. Academic implications

By offering empirical insights into Generation Z's orientation toward responsible consumption, this research enriches the theoretical framework surrounding sustainable fashion. The findings establish a robust baseline for examining the connection between sustainability, digital marketing, and consumer decision-making. Furthermore, this research serves as a theoretical touchstone for scholars investigating sustainable fashion behavior among younger generations within emerging European markets.

G. Practical implications

The conclusions offer actionable insights for fashion businesses and marketers striving to encourage sustainable consumption among Gen Z. The findings emphasize the imperative of leveraging social media strategically to cultivate brand authenticity. Businesses can utilize this information to engineer more targeted sustainability campaigns that align with the intrinsic values and digital-native habits of the Gen Z demographic.

From Information to Decision: Turning Transparency Data into Future-Ready Value Propositions with the Business Model Canvas

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: Business Model Canvas; transparency data; value proposition design; customer trust; procurement requirements; marketing decision-making.

JEL classification: M31, M10, L21

A. Purpose

Markets are currently shaped by overlapping forces—digital acceleration, geopolitical volatility, and regulatory pressure—while customers and procurement functions increasingly require proof rather than promises. In many industries, transparency data (e.g., product footprint metrics, traceability information, social compliance evidence) has moved from *nice-to-have* communication to a practical condition for market access. The purpose of this paper is to show how marketing teams can turn such fragmented transparency-related information into explicit strategic choices: which customer segments to prioritize, what to promise, what counts as credible evidence, and how to deliver those promises consistently over time.

B. Methodology

The paper develops and operationalizes a structured decision routine that reframes the Business Model Canvas (BMC) from a documentation tool into a marketing *sensemaking* workflow. The proposed routine is anchored in three BMC blocks—Customer Segments, Value Propositions, and Customer Relationships—and is expressed as an iterative checklist that teams can apply in workshops or sprint cycles. The approach is practice-oriented: it synthesizes typical information inputs (customer interviews and feedback, CRM/web analytics, competitor moves, channel performance, and evolving procurement/reporting requirements) and translates them

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into decision points and trade-offs. Short teaching and practitioner vignettes are used to illustrate recurring breakdowns between messaging and delivery feasibility.

C. Originality

Existing discussions on transparency often frame it primarily as a communication or reporting issue. This paper instead examines transparency data as a strategic input for value proposition design and business model configuration. More specifically, the paper conceptualizes transparency data as a design constraint that determines whether value propositions remain credible under verification and therefore viable within specific market segments. The originality lies in connecting transparency signals with the logic of value proposition engineering and operational delivery. By operationalizing this logic as a structured information-to-decision routine anchored in BMC elements, the paper provides a practical mechanism for translating transparency signals into explicit strategic trade-offs between customer value, proof requirements, and operational feasibility.

D. Results

The key result is a practical, repeatable routine consisting of four steps: 1 - Clarify customer decision criteria, including trust thresholds and minimum transparency requirements that influence buying and tender eligibility. 2 - Translate transparency signals into differentiated value propositions, specifying not only the promise but also the evidence that makes it believable (*reasons-to-believe*) and auditable. 3 - Test segment attractiveness under shifting requirements, focusing on willingness-to-pay, qualification barriers, and the cost of compliance or proof generation. 4 - Align channels and relationship models with credibility delivery, ensuring that claims can be substantiated consistently across touchpoints (sales conversations, documentation packs, audits, digital product information, etc.). Across the illustrative examples, the loop consistently brings to light three recurrent forms of misalignment: messaging that cannot be operationally supported; promising customer segments pursued through unsuitable or insufficiently aligned channels; and value claims that fail to hold because the required supporting evidence is absent, inaccessible, or inconsistent.

E. Research limitations

The paper is conceptual and practice-oriented; it does not claim statistical generalization. The vignettes illustrate typical patterns rather than serving as a representative sample. A next step is to evaluate the routine in multiple organizations and categories, using comparative case designs and outcome measures such as tender success rates, time-to-qualification, and perceived credibility.

F. Academic implications

The paper strengthens the view of marketing as a driver of business model coherence under conditions of uncertainty. It suggests that transparency requirements can be studied not only as reputation mechanisms, but also as design constraints shaping segmentation, value propositions, and relationship architectures.

G. Practical implications

For practitioners, the routine offers a lightweight way to reduce *non-decision* in fast-moving markets. By making assumptions explicit and connecting promises to proof and feasibility, teams can prioritize capabilities earlier, avoid overpromising, and build value propositions that remain robust under verification.

I Changed My Mind: How Social Media Influences the Choice between Higher Education and Early Career Paths

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: higher education; student decision-making process; university enrolment; social media

JEL classification: I21, I23, M31

A. Purpose

In a marketized educational landscape, understanding the motivations behind student behavior is a strategic necessity. This study moves beyond surface-level perspectives of institutional marketing, questioning: *How does social media reshape the perceived value of higher education during the choice stage of the prospective student journey?* Specifically, it investigates how social media discourse influences the decision to enroll in university or pursue alternative paths, such as early career entry or entrepreneurship.

B. Methodology

Employing a between-subjects experimental design combined with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, the study will perform a three-stage sequence: an initial choice stage based on a baseline scenario of a €10,000 inheritance, where participants choose between continuing higher education, pursuing early career entry, or starting a business; an information injection stage where participants are randomly exposed to neutral labor market data, pro-education peer discourse, or pro-entrepreneurship *hustle culture* opinions; and a final decision stage accompanied by a structured questionnaire.

C. Originality

The study's originality lies in examining the choice stage of the student decision journey, an under-researched critical phase where final educational decisions are

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made. Using methodological triangulation, it captures real-time decision shifts and analyzes the psychological factors behind them. It highlights how social media can influence students' career and financial choices, often outweighing official university communications.

D. Results

The expected results aim to confirm the link between social media discourse and shifts in the student decision journey, suggesting that exposure to pro-entrepreneurship or pro-early career entry content may increase decision reversals from university enrolment. Although academic quality and institutional reputation are known as key drivers of enrolment, their influence is shaped by students' perceptions of value. A hierarchical filtering process is also expected, where reputation initially attracts students, while career prospects and employability ultimately determine whether they continue their studies.

E. Research limitations

This study also has its limitations. First, the hypothetical €10,000 inheritance scenario may not fully reflect real financial pressure or debt aversion, especially for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who often prioritize immediate financial stability. Second, the results may not be fully generalizable across cultures, where family influence, migration attitudes, or mobility constraints can shape educational decisions differently. Third, because the experiment is short-term, it captures only immediate cognitive shifts and cannot assess the long-term stability of career intentions.

F. Academic implications

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in addressing the choice stage of the student journey by integrating Bounded Rationality with the Consumer Decision Journey framework. In doing so, it challenges the rational assumptions of Human Capital Theory, demonstrating how social media effects can override traditional cost-benefit evaluations of degree and trigger real-time decision reversals between academia and entrepreneurship.

G. Practical implications

As contemporary students increasingly act like investor-consumers, weighing the value of a university degree against alternatives such as entrepreneurship or early labor market entry, higher education institutions must also position themselves as employability hubs. This requires transparent communication of tangible return-on-investment indicators, including job placement rates, to reassure financially cautious applicants.

Healthcare Professional Perspectives on Patient Relations: A Qualitative Interview-Based Research at the Clinical Recovery Hospital, Cluj-Napoca

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: health service; hospital employee satisfaction; consumer satisfaction; medical services; patient behavior; medical rehabilitation.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

Amidst the increasing complexity of clinical practices, understanding how healthcare professionals navigate diagnostic formulation and intervention prioritization is paramount for optimizing resource allocation and interdisciplinary synergy. This research investigates the professional satisfaction of clinical staff, focusing on the intersection of technical expertise and the interpersonal dynamics inherent in the doctor-patient relationship.

B. Methodology

To evaluate the satisfaction levels of medical professionals (physicians and nurses) regarding patient interactions at the Clinical Recovery Hospital in Cluj-Napoca, this research employed a qualitative framework. Data were gathered using a semi-

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structured Interview Guide comprising 12 validated questions derived from specialized literature. The sample (N = 54) included 21 physicians and specialists (95% doctors, 5% psychologists; 52% female, 48% male) and 33 nurses (84.85% female, 15.15% male) across eight clinical departments (Mean Age: 42; Mean Seniority: 15.8 years). Analytical processing involved space-sensitive tokenization, part-of-speech dependent lemmatization, and functional term filtration while preserving specialized clinical terminology. Operational metadata—including patient volume, seniority, and department—were aggregated in R to contextualize linguistic patterns within demographic and professional frameworks.

C. Originality

This research represents the inaugural institutional evaluation of its kind within the Clinical Recovery Hospital of Cluj-Napoca. By identifying specific catalysts for professional satisfaction and systemic friction points, the findings provide actionable insights for both clinical leadership and managerial staff to enhance healthcare delivery and organizational culture.

D. Results

The research delineates a clinical landscape dominated by degenerative osteo-articular and neurological pathologies. Findings indicate that professional satisfaction stems from the synthesis of tangible therapeutic outcomes (e.g., functional recovery and analgesia) and *soft* determinants such as empathy, transparent communication, and perceived professionalism. Lexical distribution analysis (utilizing terms like *open* and *very good* versus *deficient* and *difficult*) reveals a moderate polarization. While communication is generally effective, significant barriers persist, including chronic time constraints and the cognitive complexities of geriatric or neurological patients. Key determinants identified — communication, empathy, professionalism, treatment, and attitude — underscore that the balance between clinical acumen and human behavior is the primary differentiator in the therapeutic experience. Post-pandemic reflections indicate an ambivalent shift: while telemedicine and AI are acknowledged for their utility in monitoring immobilized patients and optimizing diagnostics, a strong professional consensus remains that technological mediation cannot replace the essential human component of face-to-face care. Trust is maintained through a virtuous circle of transparency, honesty, and consistent presence, whereas the erosion of the therapeutic bond is linked directly to perceived lapses in empathy or clinical efficacy.

E. Research limitations

Interpretive rigor was ensured through methodological triangulation, verifying concordance between Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topics, co-occurrence clusters, and manual coding via iterative sessions with clinical experts. Limitations

include the relatively small sample size and underrepresentation in certain departments, which were addressed by reporting dispersion measures. The absence of granular metadata regarding specific practice types suggests a need for longitudinal research focused on causal inference.

F. Academic implications

The results provide a foundation for refining medical and social service protocols. Specifically, the findings advocate for a recalibrated approach to doctor-patient interactions that integrates telemedicine without compromising the quality of the therapeutic relationship. This research offers a blueprint for hospital management to improve both staff satisfaction and the patient-centered care model.

Destinations without Filters: The Effects of Ironic Humor in Social Media Advertising

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: schema incongruity theory; destination advertising; tourism; irony; social media advertising.

JEL classification: L83, M31, M37

A. Purpose

Nowadays, polished brand communications no longer impress consumers. To break through advertising clutter, brands are turning to unconventional strategies such as ironic humor. Based on schema incongruity theory, this research aims to analyze how ironic humor in destination social media advertising affects tourists' cognitive, affective and conative responses. The study further explores how these effects differ among individuals with varying levels of need for cognition and need for humor.

B. Design

A 2×2 between-subjects experimental design will be conducted, manipulating two levels of communication type (ironic vs. non-ironic) and two types of social media post background (built vs. natural). A structured survey will then be administered to measure tourists' perceptions and intentions. After data collection, structural equation modeling will be employed to test the proposed relationships.

C. Value

This study contributes to existing literature by adopting a holistic framework of advertising effectiveness in the context of destination social media advertising. While several studies have attempted to address the effectiveness of tourism photographs accompanied by different textual elements, considerably less attention has been given to how nonliteral verbal cues influence consumers. In addition, by jointly examining need for cognition and need for humor, the study provides a better understanding of the audiences for whom ironic advertising is most effective. Furthermore, the

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potential integration of eye-tracking and facial expression analysis could strengthen the methodological contribution, responding to growing calls for neuromarketing research in tourism advertising.

D. Findings

First, ironic advertising is expected to generate a higher degree of perceived surprise compared to non-ironic advertising, due to the mismatch with established beliefs about the destination. Second, ironic ads are likely to raise more attention and lead to better recall than non-ironic ads. Furthermore, ironic advertising is expected to foster more favorable attitudes toward the advertisement and toward the destination brand. These evaluations are predicted to positively influence word-of-mouth intentions and visit intentions. Regarding the background type, advertisements featuring an urban background may have a slightly stronger impact. Finally, ironic advertising is expected to be more effective for individuals with higher levels of need for cognition and need for humor.

E. Research limitations

The first limitation is that the sample is unlikely to represent all relevant segments of potential tourists, as it will primarily consist of Babeş-Bolyai University students. Consequently, groups such as business people, retirees, and residents of other countries, may be underrepresented. Future studies on ironic humor in tourism marketing should recruit more diverse samples. A second limitation is that the research focuses exclusively on real social media posts from a single Romanian destination. Responses to ironic advertising may differ across destinations with distinct brand identities and cultural contexts, therefore, caution is required when generalizing the findings to other destinations or service categories.

F. Academic implications

The study will contribute to advertising research by clarifying irony's potential as a distinct form of humor, especially in the tourism field, where empirical evidence about the effectiveness of this strategy remains scarce. This research will also provide support for the idea that schema-incongruent stimulus, such as ironic advertisement, can generate positive responses.

G. Practical implications

Using a Romanian destination as the focal setting, this study offers valuable insights for its marketing team. It may also motivate other Romanian DMOs to develop successful digital campaigns with limited budgets, by integrating incongruity-based tactics.

Conceptualizing AI-driven Hyper-personalization in Retail: A Literature Review

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: hyper-personalization; retail; artificial intelligence; consumer behavior; literature review.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose

The rapid development of technology has allowed retailers to move past traditional personalization strategies and implement highly individualized forms of consumer interactions. Hyper-personalization refers to the practice of using real-time consumer data, artificial intelligence, immersive technology and advanced data analytics to deliver tailored products, services, and communication to consumers. The purpose of the present research is to review and synthesize existing academic literature on hyper-personalization with a focus on the retail industry. Specifically, the objective of the study is to identify and categorize the main areas in retail where hyper-personalization is used and examine consumer responses discussed in the literature. Furthermore, the review seeks to highlight potential research gaps and outline directions for future studies.

B. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the research, this study will conduct a conceptual literature review. Relevant academic publications will be identified through major research databases, including Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar, using keywords such as hyper- personalization, hyper-personalized consumer experience and artificial intelligence in retail. The selected studies will be systematically analyzed to identify recurring themes related to the different conceptualizations and implementations of hyper-personalization in retail, as well as the consumer responses.

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C. Originality

Due to the consumers' growing demand for tailored products and the diffusion of data-driven strategies, hyper-personalization is playing a crucial role in enhancing the consumer experience. However, a substantial body of research focuses primarily on conventional forms of personalization, while hyper-personalization has received comparatively limited attention. This study will contribute to the retail and consumer behavior literature by synthesizing existing research through the lens of hyper-personalization and categorizing its key forms. By systematizing prior research, the review will provide a structured overview of hyper-personalization in retail and how it shapes consumer behavior.

D. Results

The literature suggests that personalization has shifted toward highly individualized consumer interactions. Within this context, hyper-personalization can be classified into different categories. For example, behavioral hyper-personalization uses real-time purchasing and browsing data from consumers to tailor product recommendations. Contextual hyper-personalization adapts consumer experience based on situational factors such as location. Other types are predictive hyper-personalization that use algorithms to anticipate future purchase behavior and real-time hyper-personalization that dynamically recommends products and offers during live consumer interaction. These approaches can enhance relevance, engagement, and decision-making, though concerns around privacy, transparency, and consumer trust remain important considerations.

E. Research limitations

This study is limited by its conceptual nature and reliance on existing academic literature. Not all relevant studies may be included, and some recent or industry-based developments may not be reflected. Furthermore, as hyper-personalization strategies continue to evolve rapidly, new forms may emerge that are not yet represented in the current body of research. Moreover, differences in terminology and methodology across studies may limit the comparability of findings. In addition, the review focuses primarily on academic literature, which may exclude relevant insights from industry reports.

F. Academic implications

By synthesizing existing research and categorizing it around key areas of hyper-personalization, this literature review aims to contribute to the conceptual understanding of how hyper-personalization is applied within retail context. Furthermore, it seeks to highlight potential gaps in the current literature and suggest possible future directions for empirical studies examining how hyper-personalization can influence consumer behavior.

Cultural Consumption and Digitalization in Romania: Audience Profiles and Implications for National Image Construction

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: cultural consumption; digitalization; cultural audience; national image; cultural communication.

JEL classification: Z10, Z19, M31

A. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze how digitalization influences cultural consumption in Romania and how these transformations affect the construction of the national image. In the context of expanding digital media and changing audience behavior, cultural institutions face increasing pressure to adapt communication and promotion strategies. The paper aims to identify distinct audience profiles, examine digitally mediated cultural practices, and explore the perceived relationship between cultural consumption and national image formation.

B. Design

The research adopts a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews conducted with cultural consumers and individuals with experience in cultural and communication-related fields. A purposive sampling strategy was used in order to ensure diversity in terms of cultural involvement and digital engagement. The interview guide covered themes such as frequency of cultural participation, use of digital media for accessing culture, perceptions of cultural institutions, and views regarding the role of culture in shaping Romania's image. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving transcription, coding, and grouping responses into relevant analytical categories. The study does not aim at statistical generalization but at understanding patterns of meaning and interpretive frameworks associated with cultural consumption in the digital context.

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C. Value

The study contributes to the literature on cultural consumption and digital transformation by integrating the audience perspective into the analysis of national image construction. While previous research has examined cultural participation and digital access separately, fewer studies explore how digitally mediated cultural practices influence symbolic representations of national identity. The paper offers a nuanced perspective relevant for researchers in cultural economics, marketing, and communication studies, as well as for policymakers concerned with cultural promotion strategies.

D. Findings

Preliminary findings indicate the existence of differentiated audience profiles: culturally active audiences, casual participants, digitally oriented consumers, and poorly engaged audiences. Digital media plays a central role in facilitating access to cultural content, particularly through social networks and institutional websites. However, online cultural consumption is often perceived as fragmented and primarily informative rather than deeply experiential. The relationship between cultural consumption and national image appears indirect. While participants recognize that digital cultural visibility influences perceptions of Romanian society and values, they emphasize that coherent communication strategies are necessary for strengthening symbolic impact. Digitalization enhances accessibility but does not automatically consolidate a consistent national image.

E. Research limitations

The main limitation derives from the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study, as well as the relatively small sample size. Future research could employ mixed methods or quantitative surveys to validate and expand the identified audience typologies.

F. Academic implications

The research contributes to the understanding of how cultural consumption practices intersect with digital transformation and symbolic identity formation. It provides a framework for analyzing audience segmentation in cultural markets and supports further interdisciplinary studies linking cultural economics and marketing communication.

G. Practical implications

The results suggest that cultural institutions should develop coherent digital communication strategies that integrate heritage and contemporary cultural narratives. Strategic use of digital platforms can enhance visibility and contribute to a more consistent national cultural image, particularly in competitive international cultural markets.

From Policy Documents to Actionable Insight: A Grey-Literature-Led Review Method

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: grey literature, structured evidence, rapid review, policy-oriented research, AI/digital health.

JEL classification: C18, I18

A. Purpose

This paper presents a structured/rapid evidence review methodology designed for research contexts in which grey literature – such as policy documents, guidelines, and strategy reports – constitutes the primary evidentiary base. The purpose is to articulate design principles and procedural steps that enable rigorous, transparent, and timely synthesis of decision-relevant knowledge for policy- and guideline-oriented research, particularly within policy-facing marketing and service contexts.

B. Methodology

The paper adopts a methodological *how-to* approach. Drawing on existing guidance on grey literature reviews and rapid evidence reviews, it integrates and extends these strands into a coherent, replicable design tailored to policy-facing decision needs. The approach is grounded in explicit design principles – policy orientation, transparency over exhaustiveness, institutional credibility, defined temporal and jurisdictional boundaries, iterative synthesis aligned with policy logics, reflexivity regarding normative assumptions, and continuous relevance testing. A step-by-step procedural guide is provided, covering decision-context specification, purposive identification of authoritative grey literature sources, traceable search strategies, decision-relevance

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screening, policy-focused data extraction, analytic synthesis, and credibility checks. The method is illustrated through two applied examples: (a) a digital health project examining how digital health tools shape relationships and processes of co-creation across the healthcare ecosystem; and (b) a project on the ethics of AI-driven technologies in youth mental healthcare, funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC), reflecting its strategic importance for informing ethical decision-making and supporting policy development in this emerging domain.

C. Value

While prior studies acknowledge the importance of grey literature, most review methodologies treat it as supplementary rather than primary evidence. This paper contributes by theorising and operationalising a grey-literature-led review as a distinct epistemic task, rather than a weakened form of systematic literature review. Its originality lies in integrating fragmented methodological guidance into a single, policy-oriented review design that prioritises decision relevance, institutional authority, and traceability, and in positioning this approach for policy-facing marketing and service research.

D. Results

The paper demonstrates that structured/rapid grey-literature-led evidence reviews can generate actionable insights by identifying policy tensions (e.g., efficiency versus equity), trajectories across documents and time, and underlying implementation logics embedded in policy texts. The illustrative examples show how this method supports timely synthesis without sacrificing transparency or credibility, producing outputs directly aligned with real-world decision-making needs rather than exhaustive academic mapping or effect estimation.

E. Research limitations

The proposed approach does not aim for comprehensive coverage and is therefore unsuitable for research questions requiring exhaustive inclusion, causal inference, or statistical aggregation. Findings may be sensitive to document availability, jurisdictional scope, and the political framing inherent in policy texts, posing risks of overgeneralisation if boundaries are not clearly specified.

F. Academic implications

This paper broadens conceptualisations of evidence and review methodology in marketing and policy research by legitimising grey literature as a primary empirical source. It encourages further methodological debate on quality, credibility, and synthesis logics beyond traditional risk-of-bias frameworks, particularly in applied and interdisciplinary research.

G. Practical implications

For policymakers, guideline developers, and practitioner–researchers, the proposed method offers a transparent and systematic alternative to ad hoc reviews, supporting timely, credible, and decision-relevant knowledge synthesis in fast-moving or contested policy domains.

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A Cross-National Test of Credibility Gatekeeping in Digital Heritage Tourism: Evidence from China and the United States

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: heritage tourism; digital tourism; digital touchpoint cues; credibility evaluation; interpretive stakes.

JEL classification: M31, L83, D83

A. Purpose

Digital mediation is now integral to how heritage tourists form evaluations, yet evidence remains inconsistent: similar digital initiatives can strengthen downstream outcomes in some settings while weakening confidence, perceived authenticity, or willingness to recommend in others. This study addresses that instability by specifying a compact cue-to-judgment mechanism that explains how observable digital touchpoints become consequential for endorsement outcomes, and by testing a boundary condition that accounts for heterogeneity across heritage contexts.

B. Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was implemented in coastal UNESCO World Heritage tourism contexts with parallel procedures in China and the United States. Data collection used a structured intercept approach at attraction contact locations and multiple time windows, combined with a systematic invitation rule to reduce recruiter discretion. The U.S. dataset comprises 289 valid responses drawn from 13 city-level primary sampling units across nine states and territories. The China dataset comprises 1,000 valid responses drawn from 45 city-level primary sampling units across 11 provincial-level regions, including municipalities and a special administrative region. The questionnaire includes multi-item measures for digital touchpoint cues, credibility evaluation, authenticity evaluation, perceived value, satisfaction, and recommendation intention, together with a categorical heritage context indicator for moderation testing. Analyses follow a latent-variable workflow with multi-group confirmatory procedures

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to support cross-sample comparability and structural equation modeling to test the proposed mechanism and moderation pattern.

C. Originality

The study contributes a judgment-architecture perspective that shifts explanation from technology intensity to evaluative processing. It specifies a sequential mechanism in which digital touchpoints operate as observable cues that shape credibility judgments, which condition authenticity judgments, which translate into value, consolidate into satisfaction, and convert into recommendation. The study also advances context theorizing by identifying a link-level boundary condition in which interpretive stakes qualify how strongly authenticity is translated into value, converting context dependence from a narrative caveat into a testable proposition.

D. Findings

Results support the proposed judgment chain. Digital touchpoint cues are associated with stronger credibility evaluation, credibility evaluation is associated with stronger authenticity evaluation, authenticity evaluation is associated with higher perceived value, perceived value is associated with satisfaction, and satisfaction is associated with recommendation intention. The moderation test indicates that heritage context type strengthens the authenticity-to-value relationship, consistent with the argument that authenticity carries greater diagnostic weight for value formation where interpretive stakes are higher. The pattern implies identifiable failure modes for digital initiatives: interaction or novelty may increase without improving downstream support when credibility signals weaken or interpretive coherence deteriorates across touchpoints.

E. Research limitations

The study relies on cross-sectional perception data, limiting causal inference regarding how credibility and authenticity are updated over time across the visitor journey. Heritage context type provides a transparent proxy for interpretive stakes but remains coarse relative to perceived contestedness, sacredness, educational mission intensity, or representational risk. The model is intentionally parsimonious and does not explicitly incorporate countervailing processes such as overload or fatigue that may suppress value and satisfaction under high-intensity mediation.

F. Academic implications

The findings offer a mechanism-level account that can reconcile contradictory empirical patterns in digital and AI-enabled tourism research. By modeling credibility as a gatekeeping judgment and value as the translation interface between meaning evaluation and global appraisal, the study supports more cumulative theory building than direct-effect specifications. The link-level moderation approach provides a

structured path for future research to test additional stake-related qualifiers without proliferating moderators across the entire model.

G. Managerial implications

The results imply two non-substitutable design requirements for heritage digitalization. Credibility integrity concerns transparency, sourcing clarity, and accountability cues that stabilize reliability judgments. Interpretive integrity concerns coherence and contextual grounding that sustain authenticity judgments. Investments in interpretive coherence and accountability are expected to yield higher marginal returns in higher interpretive-stake contexts, while ornamental enhancements that increase novelty without supporting credibility and coherence are less likely to translate into recommendation outcomes.



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