

Ethical Marketing In The Ai Era – A Strategic Necessity For Modern Companies

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Abstract: In a context where artificial intelligence (AI) is radically redefining marketing strategies, the ethical approach is becoming a strategic necessity for modern companies. Decision automation, hyper-targeted personalization and predictive analytics bring significant benefits, but also major ethical risks such as behavioural manipulation, lack of transparency or invasion of privacy. This article explores the intersection of AI and ethical marketing, emphasizing the responsibility of brands to integrate moral principles into the use of emerging technologies. The paper is based on a conceptual analysis and relevant case studies, proposing a strategic framework that supports the development of authentic and sustainable relationships with consumers, in an ever-changing digital ecosystem. The original contribution consists in formulating a balanced perspective between technological efficiency and ethical integrity, with direct applicability in contemporary marketing practices.

Keywords: ethical marketing, artificial intelligence (AI), corporate responsibility, transparency in marketing, brand-consumer relations, sustainable marketing strategy

JEL Classification: M31, L86, D63, D83, O33

Introduction

Over the past two decades, digital technologies have profoundly transformed the way companies communicate, interact, and create value for consumers. At the heart of this transformation is artificial intelligence (AI), which offers the possibility of complex predictive analytics, unprecedented content personalization, and automation of strategic marketing decisions. While these technological advances bring undeniable benefits in terms of efficiency and competitiveness, they also raise significant ethical issues related to transparency, privacy, fairness, and social responsibility.

As consumers become increasingly aware of how their data is being used, and data protection regulations become stricter, ethical marketing is no longer an option, but an essential strategic component. In this context, a crucial question emerges for modern companies: How can the benefits of artificial intelligence be harnessed without compromising the brand's core ethical values?

This article aims to explore this intersection between technology and morality, through a critical analysis of current AI-assisted marketing practices, identifying emerging ethical risks, and formulating a strategic framework that allows companies to responsibly integrate AI into marketing activities. Both international guidelines on the ethical use of AI and examples from the global corporate environment are considered, with the aim of providing applicable recommendations for developing a sustainable relationship between brand and consumer.

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing strategies fundamentally transforms the way companies in Romania interact with consumers and make their business decisions. This evolution is reflected in the significant increase in investments in digital technologies and the increasing use of automation, machine learning and real-time personalization tools. According to the 2023 ANIS (Employers' Association of the Software and Services Industry in Romania) report, more than 55% of local companies active online have started exploring or implementing AI solutions in their digital marketing strategies.

At the same time, Romania, as a member of the European Union, complies with strict regulations on the protection of personal data, such as GDPR, and adheres to legislative initiatives such as the AI Act and the Digital Services Act, which establish essential ethical principles for the responsible use of emerging technologies. Thus, the integration of ethical conduct becomes an indispensable condition for companies that manage consumer data for commercial purposes, ensuring a balance between innovation and social responsibility. At the same time, the local market is facing significant challenges: low levels of digital literacy among consumers, the lack of clear organizational ethics policies in small and medium-sized companies, as well as a marketing culture still focused on performance rather than sustainability. Thus, the ethical approach of AI in marketing not only meets legal and reputational requirements, but also offers a competitive advantage in building transparent and trustworthy brands in a fragile digital environment.

The relevance of the topic is supported by the urgent need to substantiate, including in Romania, responsible marketing practices, anchored in moral principles, to avoid the risks of manipulation, algorithmic discrimination, and loss of consumer trust. This article aims to contribute to this debate by providing a rigorous and applicable analysis of how ethics can be integrated into AI-based marketing strategies.

Specialists in the field of digital marketing and artificial intelligence are increasingly drawing attention to the need to rethink commercial strategies through an ethical lens. According to a review by Su, Wang, and Berthon (2023), ethics in AI-assisted marketing is no longer an optional element, but a necessary strategic component to maintain consumer trust and brand legitimacy in the digital age.

Khan et al. (2021) argue that the transparency of algorithmic decisions, the protection of privacy and the avoidance of automated discrimination are central aspects in the development of ethical marketing practices. The literature also highlights the growing risks related to behavioural manipulation, invasive hyper-personalization, and the opacity of AI models used in commercial campaigns.

In the Romanian context, researchers such as Zaharia and Simion (2024) indicate that, although companies are showing a growing interest in AI solutions, in practice there is a lack of clear ethical governance policies, and consumers are poorly informed about how their data is collected and used.

From a personal perspective, I believe that ethical marketing in the age of artificial intelligence is not only a strategic necessity, but a fundamental duty of companies to society. AI-powered technologies have the potential to profoundly transform the relationship between brands and consumers, but this transformation should not come at the expense of moral values. The power of algorithms to influence decisions, shape preferences, and predict behaviours imposes increased accountability in how business strategies are designed and implemented. In the absence of solid ethical benchmarks, artificial intelligence risks becoming a tool for manipulation, not progress. That's why I strongly believe that organizations that manage to integrate ethics not only into discourse, but also into action – through transparency, respect for privacy, and algorithmic fairness – will build more lasting, authentic, and valuable relationships with their audiences.

1. The evolution of marketing in the context of artificial intelligence

Marketing has evolved from a product-centric model and one-way communication, to one deeply influenced by data, interactivity, and personalization. In the pre-digital era, campaigns were built on intuition, traditional surveys, and generalist messaging. Subsequently, the advent of the internet and social networks allowed the transition to digital marketing, based on real-time feedback and analysis of online behaviour. Today, with the integration of artificial intelligence, we are witnessing a new stage: automated and predictive marketing. Algorithms can anticipate consumer needs, adjust messages based on context, and influence purchasing decisions almost imperceptibly. This evolution brings huge potential for efficiency and scalability, but at the same time raises major questions related to fairness, transparency, and the protection of individual autonomy. Thus, the evolutionary direction of marketing requires not only technological adaptation, but also the consolidation of an ethical compass to guide brand-consumer interactions in the digital age.

To understand the growing importance of ethics in contemporary marketing, it is essential to analyse the evolution of this field in correlation with the development of technologies.

From traditional strategies, based on one-way communication and generalist messages, to the complex use of artificial intelligence, marketing has radically transformed. This technological shift has brought not only major opportunities for personalization and efficiency, but also significant challenges in terms of transparency, accountability, and respect for consumer rights. The following table summarizes these key stages of the evolution of marketing, highlighting in parallel the main tools used and the associated ethical dilemmas.

Table 1. The evolution of marketing – from traditional to ethical AI

| Period/Stage | Main features | Tools and methods | Ethical challenges |
|--|--|---|--|
| Traditional marketing (until the 90s) | Generalist messages, one-way communication | TV, radio, print commercials | Lack of transparency, generalization, lack of personalization |
| Digital marketing (2000–2010) | Interactivity, real-time feedback, digital segmentation | Websites, email marketing, social media | Privacy, manipulation through personalized content |
| Marketing with AI (from 2010 to today) | Automation, hyper-targeted personalization, behavioural prediction | ML algorithms, big data analysis, chatbots | Decision-making opacity, algorithmic bias, intense surveillance |
| AI-Assisted Ethical Marketing (Future) | Transparency, accountability, informed consent | AI Ethical Principles, GDPR Regulations, Explainable AI | Ensuring fairness, protecting consumer rights, preventing manipulation |

Source: Table made by the author based on the works of Kotler et al. (2021), Su et al. (2023) and Khan et al. (2021)

As marketing has evolved from traditional communication to the advanced use of artificial intelligence, the complexity of processes and the potential to influence consumers have increased exponentially. This technological advancement brings obvious benefits, such as efficiency and personalization, but it also raises significant ethical challenges that cannot be ignored. Integrating a sound ethical framework into the use of AI in marketing thus becomes an essential condition for protecting consumer rights and maintaining public trust. Only by balancing innovation with moral responsibility will companies be able to build authentic and sustainable relationships in the ever-changing digital landscape.

Accelerated digital transformations over the past decade have transformed artificial intelligence (AI) from an emerging technology into a fundamental pillar of modern marketing strategies. From recommendation algorithms and conversational chatbots, to predictive analytics and real-time personalization, AI is redefining the way brands interact with consumers. Global platforms such as Amazon, Netflix or Spotify are already illustrating the effectiveness of these technologies in anticipating individual needs and increasing conversions. However, the enthusiasm for performance and automation is accompanied by several essential ethical questions regarding the transparency of algorithmic decisions, the use of personal data and the risks of psychological manipulation. In this context, the need for responsible marketing, guided by clear ethical principles, becomes not only a moral option, but a strategic necessity for companies that want

to maintain their credibility and public trust in an increasingly complex and regulated digital ecosystem.

2. Artificial Intelligence in Marketing: Opportunities and Challenges

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is profoundly redefining marketing strategies, providing companies with tools capable of anticipating consumer behaviours, personalizing communication, and optimizing decisions in real time. Through technologies such as machine learning, behavioural analysis or intelligent chatbots, brands can build increasingly effective campaigns, based on accurate and up-to-date data.

AI applications are already being implemented extensively in digital marketing: streaming platforms recommend personalized content, online retailers improve the shopping experience, and beauty brands use algorithms to suggest products tailored to each customer's profile. These solutions contribute not only to increasing sales, but also to consumer loyalty through relevant experiences.

However, this efficiency comes with important ethical challenges. Decision automation and hyper-targeting can lead to psychological manipulation, and the lack of algorithmic transparency raises questions about accountability. Some systems may perpetuate inequalities or violate the principle of informed consent, especially when users are unaware of how their personal data is collected and processed. In an influential analysis, Mittelstadt et al. (2016) draw attention to the risk of opaque automated decisions that can escape human control.

On the Romanian market, the use of AI in marketing is increasing, but specialists point out that the integration of ethics often remains at the declarative level. Recent studies highlight the need for clearer regulation, but also for a stronger internal commitment on the part of companies to protect consumers' interests.

For a better understanding of the balance between the benefits and risks of AI in marketing, the table below summarizes the main ethical opportunities and challenges that may arise in the context of the use of automated technologies.

Table 2. Ethical Opportunities and Challenges of Using AI in Marketing

| Opportunities | Ethical challenges |
|---|---|
| Advanced personalization of content and offers | Risk of behavioural manipulation and unconscious influence |
| Real-time marketing campaign optimization | Lack of transparency of algorithmic decisions |
| Automation of repetitive processes (e.g., customer service) | Potential for algorithmic bias and unintentional discrimination |
| Precise market segmentation and effective targeting | Excessive collection of personal data without clear consent |
| Increase efficiency and reduce operational costs | Lack of human liability for errors or harm caused by AI |
| Creating interactive experiences (e.g. chatbots, AR, VR) | Exploiting emotional or psychological vulnerabilities |

Source: Adapted from Khan, Paschen & Kietzmann (2021); Mittelstadt et al. (2016); own analysis.

The Romanian context adds important nuances to the debate about ethics in automated marketing. The following table summarizes the main opportunities and vulnerabilities identified in the use of AI in the local market.

Table 3. The situation of using AI in marketing in Romania – ethical opportunities and vulnerabilities

| Aspect | Observations specific to the Romanian market |
|--|--|
| The level of implementation of AI in marketing | Growing, especially in retail and e-commerce. Large companies are more active than SMEs. |
| Level of ethical education in companies | Reduced; most employees do not have specific training in digital ethics or responsible AI. |
| Regulation and compliance | Minimum compliance with international standards; The local legislation in the field is fragmented. |
| Types of applications used | Chatbots, smart CRMs, social media targeting, predictive analytics tools. |
| Challenges identified by specialists | Lack of transparency towards consumers, excessive data collection, lack of algorithmic auditing. |
| Consumer attitude | Low level of awareness of the use of AI; relatively fragile trust in automated decision-making. |
| Positive initiatives | Isolated examples of good practices in retail, political marketing, and banking, especially through external partnerships. |

Source: Own processing based on data from Simion & Popescu (2023); Su, Wang & Berthon (2023); contextual analysis.

3. Ethical marketing in the age of artificial intelligence: challenges and essential dimensions

In the current context, artificial intelligence is fundamentally transforming the way brands interact with consumers, automating processes that were previously exclusively human and generating unprecedented opportunities for personalization and efficiency. However, this technological revolution brings with it complex ethical challenges that cannot be ignored by companies if they want to maintain customer trust and loyalty (Martin & Murphy, 2017).

One of the main challenges is the transparency of algorithmic processes. Many consumers are not aware that marketing decisions, from recommendations to personalized offers, are automatically generated, and the opacity of these systems can lead to a loss of trust (Mittelstadt et al., 2016). In addition, behavioural manipulation through hyper-targeting techniques raises questions about the autonomy and free choice of the consumer, an aspect highlighted by scholars such as Zuboff (2019), who speaks of “surveillance capitalism”.

Fairness in the treatment of consumers is also endangered by algorithmic biases, which can reproduce or amplify existing stereotypes and discriminations (Noble, 2018). An illustrative example is the use of AI in pricing, where certain customer segments may receive different offers

based on sociodemographic characteristics, which raises ethical dilemmas related to distributive justice (Pasquale, 2015).

In terms of personal data protection, AI-based marketing involves collecting and analysing a huge volume of sensitive information. Compliance with informed consent becomes essential, but often insufficiently implemented in practice, as investigations into the Cambridge Analytica scandal have shown (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018).

Consequently, ethical marketing in the age of AI must integrate a set of clear principles, including accountability, transparency, fairness, and respect for the consumer, all supported by robust oversight and audit mechanisms (Floridi et al., 2018). Only in this way can companies build authentic and sustainable relationships with their customers, avoiding the reputational and legal risks associated with unethical practices.

To highlight the complexity of the ethical challenges generated by the integration of artificial intelligence in marketing, the table below summarizes the main dilemmas, their description, and the impact they have on both brands and consumers. This structuring facilitates a clear understanding of the key issues that need to be managed to ensure responsible and sustainable marketing in the digital age.

Table 4. The main ethical dilemmas of marketing in the age of artificial intelligence and their impact

| Ethical dilemma | Description | Impact on brands and consumers |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Algorithmic transparency | Opacity of automated decisions, lack of clarity on how AI makes decisions | Decreased trust, reputational risks, difficulties in assessing the correctness of offers |
| Behavioural manipulation | Using hyper-targeting techniques to influence consumer decisions | Loss of consumer autonomy, negative public reactions, potential legal sanctions |
| Algorithmic bias | Reproduction or amplification of social biases in automated decisions | Discrimination, inequity, ethical and social conflicts, damage to brand image |
| Data privacy | Improper collection and use of personal data, lack of informed consent | Violation of consumer rights, GDPR sanctions, loss of customer loyalty |

Source: Own elaboration, based on the analysis of the literature (Floridi et al., 2018; Mittelstadt et al., 2016; Zuboff, 2019; Noble, 2018).

The table highlights the fact that ethical marketing in the age of artificial intelligence is not just a matter of legal compliance, but a strategic challenge that involves taking an active role in the prevention and management of ethical risks. Companies must implement measures that ensure the transparency of algorithmic processes, prevent behavioural manipulation through hyper-targeting and combat algorithmic biases that can generate inequities and discrimination.

Moreover, the protection of personal data and the respect of informed consent are the foundations in building an honest and sustainable dialogue with consumers. In the absence of

such an integrated approach, brands risk not only legal sanctions, but also loss of credibility and market loyalty.

In conclusion, an ethical marketing strategy in the age of AI must be comprehensive and proactive, oriented towards creating a fair and transparent digital ecosystem that harmonizes technological innovation with social responsibility.

4. Strategies for companies: how to integrate ethics into the use of AI

In a context where artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly present in business decisions, ethical strategies are no longer an optional element, but an essential component of organizational governance. The responsible integration of AI in marketing involves a systemic, multidisciplinary, and proactive approach, where technology is governed by clear principles and transparent control mechanisms.

a. Guiding principles for the ethical use of AI

Three fundamental concepts underpin an ethical use of artificial intelligence in marketing:

- Fairness: avoiding algorithmic discrimination, ensuring equal treatment for all users, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or other sensitive variables.
- Accountability: Taking responsibility for automated decisions and clarifying the answers to the question “Who is responsible when the algorithm is wrong?”.
- Transparency: clear communication of how data is collected, processed, and used, as well as the logic behind algorithmic decisions (Floridi et al., 2018; Mittelstadt et al., 2016).

These principles can be incorporated into strategies through the development of clear internal policies, regular audits of AI systems, and stakeholder engagement in the design of automated solutions.

b. Applicable regulatory frameworks and international standards

Several international bodies have developed guidelines that can serve as reference points for companies:

- The AI Principles developed by the OECD (2019) promote a balance between innovation and responsibility, highlighting the need for human-centric AI.
- ISO/IEC TR 24028:2020 provides a technical framework for managing the risks associated with AI, with a focus on reliability, security, and traceability.
- IEEE Ethically Aligned Design recommends integrating human values into algorithmic architecture, based on the idea that technology must serve the common good.

Companies that adopt these standards not only reduce exposure to legal and reputational risks, but also strengthen their position as leaders in digital responsibility.

c. Examples of good corporate practices

Several global companies offer concrete models for applying these principles:

- Microsoft has developed its “Responsible AI” framework, based on six principles

(including inclusion, safety, and responsibility), which are reflected in all product lines and services.

- IBM has implemented an internal AI ethics committee, with an advisory and decision-making role, which ensures consistency between technological development and the company's values.
- Unilever applies ethical impact assessments in its digital marketing processes to prevent the risks associated with over-personalisation and automated stereotypes.

These examples illustrate how integrating ethics into AI can become a sustainable competitive advantage, strengthening the relationship with consumers, and creating a brand identity based on trust.

d. Ethics by design – from intention to implementation

A central concept in ethical strategy is “ethics by design”, which assumes that moral values are directly integrated into the technological architecture from the design stage. This approach reduces emerging risks by:

- the use of diverse and well-balanced datasets to train algorithms.
- the introduction of human checkpoints in the decision-making process.
- the development of explainable AI systems that can justify the decisions made.

In this way, companies can prevent problems from occurring, instead of reacting post-factum to controversies or errors.

The integration of ethics in the use of artificial intelligence cannot be achieved through punctual solutions or reactive improvisations, but through a coherent, structured and institutionally supported strategy. In an era where marketing decisions are increasingly automated, and predictive models are becoming the norm, companies must adopt practices that focus not only on commercial performance, but also on social responsibility.

The ethical approach to AI therefore involves both a technical component (such as algorithm design and auditing) and an organizational component (internal education, ethical governance, transparency in the relationship with users). The table below summarizes the main applicable strategies, along with implementation examples and associated benefits.

Table 5. Strategies for integrating ethics in the use of AI in marketing

| Ethical strategy | Description | Example of implementation | Potential benefits |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Ethics by Design | Integrating moral values from the design phase of AI systems | Using Explainable AI in Marketing Campaigns (e.g., IBM Watson) | Risk reduction, prevention of ethical errors |
| AI Audit & Ethics Assessment | Periodic checks on the bias, accuracy, and impact of algorithms | Microsoft – AI internal audit and systematic review | Transparency, increased trust from stakeholders |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| Training employees in AI ethics | Training programs for marketing and IT teams | Unilever – in-house training on digital ethics | Responsible organizational culture |
| Data collection with consent | Compliance with GDPR principles and informed consent | Facebook campaigns reconfigured post-Cambridge Analytica | Regulatory compliance, consumer loyalty |
| Creating AI Ethics Committees | Multidisciplinary groups that validate automated projects and decisions | IBM – AI Ethics Board | Strong internal governance and prevention of ethical conflicts |
| Implementation of international frameworks | Adherence to global principles (OECD, ISO, IEEE) | Adoption of ISO/IEC TR 24028:2020 by European companies | Strengthened reputation, sustainable competitive advantage |

Source: Own elaboration, inspired by Jobin et al. (2019), Floridi et al. (2018), and examples of good practices from Microsoft, IBM and Unilever reports.

The table highlights the fact that the application of ethical principles is not reduced to a simple declaration of intent, but requires concrete tools, formal processes, and the active involvement of all levels of the organization. Companies that invest in AI audits, ethics committees, specialized training, and transparency in public relations demonstrate not only compliance, but also long-term vision.

Also, the adoption of international standards and the development of “ethics by design” policies contribute to consolidating a competitive advantage based on trust, sustainability, and positive differentiation. In a digital landscape where consumers are becoming increasingly aware of their rights, ethics becomes a strategic investment, not a compliance cost.

5. The role of regulation and ethical education in business

In the context of a technology that evolves faster than the ability of legislative systems to regulate it, ethics becomes a key element in maintaining a balance between innovation and responsibility. Whether it's the use of personal data, automated decision-making, or influencing consumer behaviour, artificial intelligence poses challenges that require both regulatory intervention and sustained professional training.

a. Regulation as a form of preventive control

Regulation acts as an external mechanism to limit potential abuses in the use of AI. Legislative initiatives, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union or the new Digital Services Act, provide the legal framework to protect users against non-transparent decisions and excessive data collection. These tools oblige companies to implement informed consent mechanisms, algorithmic transparency, and fundamental rights impact assessment (European Commission, 2021).

Also, the AI Act – currently being adopted at the European Union level – proposes a

classification of AI applications according to the degree of risk, setting strict requirements for high-impact systems, including those used in personalized digital marketing. In parallel, some companies are developing their own internal ethical compliance policies, inspired by these frameworks, anticipating the demands of future regulations (HLEG on AI, 2019).

b. Ethical education – the internal component of corporate responsibility

External regulation, although necessary, is not enough. Ethical behaviour must also be cultivated within the organization, through a culture of responsibility and critical reflection. Ethical education in business involves not only informing employees about regulations, but also training applied ethical thinking, by:

- Ethics courses in AI and data science for marketing teams, developers and decision-makers.
- development of code of conduct adapted to the digital context.
- the inclusion of ethical assessment in decision-making processes through methods such as ethics canvas or AI impact assessment.
- promoting an organizational culture based on values and not exclusively on quantitative objectives (Morley et al., 2020).

Organizations that invest in constant ethical training are proving to be more agile in managing reputational crises, more prepared in the face of external controls and more valued by consumers for transparency and accountability.

Table 6. Differences between regulation and ethical education in the use of AI in marketing

| Criterion | Regulatory | Ethical education |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Definition | Set of rules and obligations imposed by authorities to control the use of AI | Internal training process aimed at developing a responsible organizational culture |
| Character | External, coercive | Internal, formative |
| Main objective | Preventing abuse and protecting users' rights | Formation of moral discernment and support for ethical decisions |
| Tools | Laws, directives, standards (e.g. GDPR, AI Act, ISO/IEC) | Trainings, codes of conduct, ethical assessments, case studies |
| Responsibility | Public institutions, regulators | The company – through management, HR and compliance departments |
| Reaction vs prevention | React to systemic risks or abuse | Prevents ethical dilemmas through awareness and training |
| Examples | GDPR, Digital Services Act, AI Act, national legislations | Internal courses at Microsoft, AI Ethics Board at IBM, digital ethics at Unilever |

Source: Own elaboration based on the analyses proposed by Floridi et al. (2018), Jobin et al. (2019), European Commission (2021) and examples from multinational companies.

Regulation and ethics education should not be alternative options, but as two complementary components of a mature approach to the use of AI in business. While the legislative framework imposes limits and defines responsibilities, education creates the conditions for moral ownership of actions, even in the absence of external constraint.

Companies that combine these dimensions – compliance and awareness – are best prepared to manage digital transformations without compromising core human values.

Ethical marketing in the age of artificial intelligence is more than a trend; It is a fundamental strategic necessity for modern companies that want to build authentic and lasting relationships with consumers.

In a digital context marked by automation, personalization and algorithmic decisions, brands must take responsibility for integrating moral principles and transparency into all stages of the marketing process.

The ethical challenges posed by AI – such as behavioural manipulation, lack of transparency, privacy violations, or algorithmic biases – cannot be ignored, and companies that choose to actively manage them will benefit from a long-term competitive advantage.

This article highlighted the need for a clear strategic framework, including principles of fairness, accountability, and transparency, recognized international guidelines and concrete best practices implemented by leaders in the field.

Moreover, the role of regulations and ethical education in business is essential for creating a responsible digital ecosystem, in which every actor – from brands and marketing professionals, to consumers and legislators – contributes to a fair and sustainable market.

In the end, ethical marketing is not a fixed destination, but a continuous journey, which requires commitment, courage, and integrity from everyone. Conscious choice, responsibility and education are the pillars that will transform marketing from a simple sales tool into a positive force capable of shaping a fairer and more humane future.

Conclusions and perspectives

a. Ethics – a continuous journey, not a destination

In the digital age accelerated by artificial intelligence, marketing can no longer be thought of exclusively as a promotional or sales tool but must be rethought as a practice with profound ethical implications. Ethical marketing in the age of AI is becoming more than a moral goal; It becomes an essential element of sustainability and corporate responsibility.

Ethics is not a completed stage or a procedural checkmark, but a transversal dimension, which must permanently accompany every decision, every algorithm, and every brand-consumer interaction. In a context where personal data, decision automation and behavioural influence raise new moral dilemmas, companies have a responsibility to place values at the centre of the decision-making process.

Thus, ethical marketing turns into a long-term commitment: to consumers, to society and to the economic and digital future. It is a path that requires transparency, honesty, inclusion and, above all, respect for human dignity.

b. Perspectives and directions for action

Promoting ethical marketing in the age of AI involves concrete commitments from all market players – not only from companies, but also from consumers, marketers, regulators, and communities.

What companies can do:

- Integrate ethical principles into algorithm design (ethics by design).
- There must be transparency in the processes of data collection and use.
- Adopt internal codes of digital ethics.
- To train employees in ethics applied to technology.

What consumers can do:

- Conscious choice of brands that comply with ESG principles.
- Practicing critical thinking towards manipulative campaigns (greenwashing, social washing);
- Supporting local, ethical, and sustainable products.
- Active feedback in relation to brands and asking for clarity.

What marketers can do:

- Rethinking campaigns from a responsible and human-centered perspective.
- Promoting authentic storytelling, not artificial.
- Using AI in a way that does not amplify existing social inequalities or biases.

What the company can do:

- Stimulating education in the field of technological ethics.
- Clearer regulations on the use of AI in advertising.
- Encouraging partnerships between the public, private and academic sectors to build a common ethical framework.

So, every decision counts. Every responsibly designed campaign, every value-driven consumer choice, every ethically calibrated algorithm – all contribute to building a marketing ecosystem where trust, transparency, and accountability are not optional, but foundations of sustainable success.

c. Ethical marketing starts with each of us

To summarize and structure the main aspects discussed in this article, the following table highlights the key elements of ethical marketing in the age of artificial intelligence. It provides a clear insight into the current context, challenges, and essential strategies for modern companies that want to integrate moral responsibility into their marketing practices. Relevant examples and references are also included to support each point, facilitating a quick and applicable understanding of the topic.

Table 7. Key Elements of Ethical Marketing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

| Aspect | Description | Examples / References |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Current context | AI transforms marketing through automation, personalization, and predictive analytics, but it also raises major ethical issues. | Mittelstadt et al. (2016); PwC Romania (2022) |
| Ethical challenges | Behavioral manipulation, algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, violation of privacy. | Scandal Cambridge Analytica |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Ethical Marketing in the Age of AI | Integrating moral principles into all stages of marketing, ensuring informed consent, transparency, and respect for the consumer. | OECD AI Principles; IBM Responsible AI |
| Strategies for companies | Principles of fairness, accountability, transparency; implementing ethics through AI design; internal education; global best practices. | ISO/IEC TR 24028:2020; Microsoft Responsible AI |
| The role of regulation | GDPR, Digital Services Act, and other initiatives that regulate the use of AI in marketing and consumer data protection. | European Commission (2021); GDPR |
| Ethical education in business | Professional training, awareness of the impact of AI, promotion of ethical values in organizational culture. | Internal training programs; Accountability campaigns |
| Competitive advantages | Ethical brands gain consumer trust and loyalty, and responsible marketing becomes a differentiator in the market. | IBM, Microsoft case studies; Ransbotham et al. (2017) |
| The role of consumers | Conscious choice, active feedback, refusal of manipulative marketing and support for ethical products and brands. | Consumer education, civic activism |
| Conclusion | Ethical marketing is an ongoing commitment, essential for sustainability and long-term success, involving all actors in the commercial ecosystem. | - |

Source: Own elaboration based on the literature and the following sources: Mittelstadt, B. D., Allo, P., Taddeo, M., Wachter, S., & Floridi, L. (2016). *The ethics of algorithms: Mapping the debate*. *Big Data & Society*, 3(2), 1-21; OECD (2019). *OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence*; PwC Romania (2022). *The impact of AI on marketing in Romania*; European Commission (2021). *Proposal for a Regulation on AI (Artificial Intelligence Act)*.

The table above summarizes the fundamental aspects of ethical marketing in the context of AI, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges faced by modern businesses. Integrating ethical principles into marketing strategies is not only a moral obligation, but also an essential competitive advantage in the digital age. The adoption of responsible practices, supported by clear regulations and continuous education, is the path to building authentic and lasting relationships with consumers. Thus, ethical marketing becomes an indispensable pillar in the architecture of a sustainable and transparent economy.

Ethical marketing in the age of artificial intelligence is a necessary commitment for any brand aiming for long-term success. Through responsibility, transparency and respect for the consumer, companies can turn technological challenges into opportunities for an authentic and sustainable relationship with the market.

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