**A Moral Compass for Machine Minds: Cultivating Ethical Decision-Making in Generative AI for Marketing**

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**Introduction**

Imagine a world where AI can paint vibrant portraits, write captivating stories, and craft complex code – and do it so convincing you might swear a human mind was behind it. Enter generative AI, a cutting-edge branch of artificial intelligence that specializes in coining brand-new content in the form text, images, and videos as well as carry on conversations, answer questions, and create code in such a manner that one might think the content was produced by a human (Euchner, 2023). This creative spark comes from massive datasets, where generative AI devours existing content to learn the blueprint of creation (Dermawan, 2023). These vast Language Model for Dialogue Applications (LaMDA) like ChatGPT and Google Bard are spinning narratives that can be scaled to more personalised content (Pichai, 2023).

With AI investments primed to explode from $33 billion to $64 billion by 2025, experts urge business leaders to grasp the reins of this potent force (Vinsel, 2023). Generative AI is increasingly transforming marketing practices by enhancing the time it takes to create content, hyper-personalize advertisements, and automate personalized messaging (MarTech, 2023). However, its use raises ethical concerns such as the bias from the information the large language learning models are populated with (Zohny, McMillian and King, 2023), misinformation in that it is only as good as the data it was formed with (Ebert and Louridas, 2023) and will still draw upon answers that art not verified when dealing with prompts of an unknown nature, and privacy violations in how consumer data is used (Hurlburt, 2023). Furthermore, understanding its inner workings, its limitations, and its potential pitfalls is key to harnessing its creative power responsibly (Natalie, 2023).

This research aims to investigate how marketing practitioners are proactively addressing these ethical concerns so that they maintain trust and credibility with their clients and consumers. It seeks to understand the strategies and ethical frameworks practitioners are adopting and evaluate the outcomes of these practices. Current literature on ethics and generative-AI is nascent due to software availability such as ChatGPT (released in November 30, 2022) to the layman.

**Relevant Background**

To address ethical implications, professional organizations are trying to establish code of conducts for members to use with generative-AI. CIM, has an established code of professional conduct emphasizing ethical and responsible action, but encourages marketers embracing AI to uphold these same principles (CIM, 2023). They rightly point out that the technology itself isn't inherently good or bad – it's the hands wielding it that define its ethical direction (CIM, 2023).

CIPR, a global leader in PR ethics, was an early mover, issuing an AI ethics guide relevant to both the UK and Canada (CIPR, 2020). Their guidance warns of potential pitfalls like misinformation and emotional manipulation, urging practitioners to critically assess their AI applications for such biases (CIPR, 2020). Notably, they highlight the need for sensitivity to diversity, drawing from past controversies like Microsoft's Tay chatbot to illustrate the consequences of bias. Additionally, CIPR raises concerns about the broader impact of AI on workforces, power structures, and algorithmic fairness (CIPR, 2020).

Academics are actively joining the conversation. Miller et al. (2017) advocate for stricter testing, safety measures, and filtering before wider deployment of such technology, arguing for a measured approach. Hurlburt (2023) focuses on the ethical concerns surrounding data attribution and permissions within large language models, aligning with legal discussions on copyright and intellectual property. Finally, Ebert et al. (2023) caution against the misuse of tools like ChatGPT for spreading misinformation, while Zohny et al. (2023) argue that AI's current capabilities might not extend to tasks requiring complex ethical analysis.

Together, these insights underscore the pressing need for robust ethical frameworks and responsible implementation of generative AI in marketing. As this powerful technology continues to evolve, ensuring responsible use is paramount to navigating its potential pitfalls and reaping its immense benefits.

**Research Approach**

We first examine the literature on ethical frameworks used within the marketing industry by professional organizations such as Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) and the Influencer Marketing Trade Body (IMTB) and compare with industry standards relating to data. To explore how agencies implement ethical practices related to generative-AI implementation we take a mixed-methods, using qualitative and quantitative approach, to investigate how Marketing agencies address ethical concerns with generative AI. We are currently conducting expert interviews via Microsoft Teams with marketing agency professionals to gauge their awareness, understanding, and approaches to addressing ethical concerns with generative AI. Upon analysis of the interviews, we will deploy a survey access the outcomes and impacts of ethical practices on marketing campaigns, including client satisfaction, brand reputation, and consumer trust.

**New theoretical framework**

Our theoretical review outlines how ethical frameworks and ethical awareness impact how an agency (marketing, advertising, PR or Influencer agency) implements generative AI (Figure 1). This will further our understanding of the important role of how to develop ethical practices that will enhance the agency’s performance whilst meeting the client’s expectations.

**Figure 1: Conceptual model**

**Agency Characteristics**

-Size

-Specialisation

-Agency years

**Ethical Frameworks**

-Existence of an official ethical framework

-Specific ethical guidelines in use

-Aligning with industry standards CIM,CIPR,IMTB GDPR , CCPA

**Agency performance**

-Impact of ethics consideration on revenue

-Cost associated with implementing generative AI

**AI implementation**

-Types of generative AI used

-Frequency of AI use in campaigns

-Investment in AI technology

**Ethical Awareness**

-Training programmes to employees (professional industry CPD)

-Employees Awareness of ethical concerns to AI

-Regular ethics audit and reviews

**Client’s expectation**

-Clients demand regarding AI ethics

-Respond to clients requests regarding ethics

**Discussion**

The theoretical framework helps explain how ethical frameworks and awareness may impact how agencies implement generative-AI in different ways. First, there are different types of generative-AI which can used (ie text, image, audio and video) which may lead to different impacts on opinions of use. For example, a client might be happy with how generative-AI can be used to create new ads integrating computer generated advertisements for TikTok, but they may draw a line at using it to create hyper personalized adverts that change according to the consumer’s profile. Secondly, the frequency in which generative-AI is used in campaigns may make the campaigns feels static and predictable. Finally, whilst some LaMDA such as Google Bard are free and open to any user, ChatGPT was quick to offer a subscription-based service that provides for more options and ability to integrate across other systems. Together these elements may work together to impact the agency’s performance and client’s expectations.

Overall, navigating the ethical minefield of generative AI in marketing demands an understanding of the technology and potential challenges. While the technology boasts unparalleled creative potential, its pitfalls – from bias and misinformation to job displacement and intellectual property concerns – loom large. Professional organizations and academics are working tirelessly to build ethical frameworks and best practices, but the responsibility ultimately lies with each marketer wielding this powerful tool. Embracing transparency, prioritizing human oversight, and prioritizing ethical data sourcing are crucial steps towards leveraging generative AI for good. Only then can we truly tap into its potential to foster engaging campaigns, forge deeper customer connections, and ultimately propel marketing into a future that is both innovative and responsible.

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