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MANAGEMENT

Between AI Ethics and Responsibility:

How Marketing Professionals Navigate the Corporate Social
Responsibility of AI

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Abstract

Keywords: Generative AI, CSR, Ethical Responsibility, Sensemaking, Stakeholder Theory, Normative CSR, Instrumental CSR, Marketing, AI Ethics

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how marketing professionals make sense of the ethical and CSR implications of using GenAI in marketing and how they assign responsibility for its potential consequences. Exploring further and understanding the gap between organizational obligations and individuals' ethical judgment is crucial to developing effective strategies for responsible AI use.

Research Questions: How do marketing professionals make sense of the ethical CSR implications of implementing AI into marketing? Also, where do marketing professionals assign responsibility for the ethical consequences of the effects of implementing AI into marketing?

Methodology: This thesis employed a constructivist epistemology with an abductive research approach. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary research methodology. 7 interviews were conducted, sampled purposely and snowballed, with marketing professionals who were then interpreted utilizing sensemaking theory within an analytical framework. The analytical framework included both normative and instrumental perspectives on stakeholder theory connected to three levels of AI ethical effects. Interviews were transcribed, then coded and themed using reflexive thematic analysis.

Findings and Theoretical Contributions: This thesis found that governments are held responsible for AI ethical effects that companies can not do anything about. Whilst companies were held responsible for most negative ethical actions that would otherwise be caused by marketers, as they would direct the blame away from themselves. Findings indicated that AI in the hands of others was seen as worse than when in their own hands. This also leads to changes in how marketers interact with external stakeholders, such as customers, more than internal ones. Three primary theoretical contributions were made by this thesis. Firstly, responsibility shifting would occur when swapping between the instrumental and normative CSR perspectives. Deflection of responsibility away from the individual and towards the companies and governments was systemic and active. Finally, cognitive atrophy comes not only from extensive AI use but also from the decrease in satisfaction it causes.

Further Research: Future research identified by this thesis should aim at developing and refining the three concepts developed or refined in this thesis. To begin, the responsibility shift has strong implications for research on responsibility allocation that combines instrumental and normative perceptions. The mechanisms behind deflecting responsibility away from the individual could be elaborated upon. Finally, cognitive atrophy could be further refined and explored to identify all factors that decrease productivity and increase reliance on AI.

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1. Introduction

This chapter lays the foundation for the thesis's background and relevance, highlighting a research gap and setting a clear purpose. Throughout the thesis's introduction, this chapter presents the problem formulation, the aim, and the research purpose, while preparing the reader for the rest of the study.

1.1 Background

Over the past few decades, technological advances have led to vast improvements in marketing, transforming the field towards autonomous content creation and redefining traditional human tasks (Hermann and Stefano Puntoni, 2024). The marketing sector is transforming rapidly, forcing organizations to accelerate the integration of tools within communication departments to promote innovation. Statista 2025 data indicates that 60% of businesses use Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) for a competitive edge, while 35% rely on it to boost brand effectiveness. In the U.S. and Europe, GenAI is primarily used for content drafting (over 50%), brainstorming (48.5%), and ad personalization (13%) (J.G Navarro, 2023, as cited in Statista, 2025).

While AI offers efficiency, its implementation in marketing poses critical environmental and societal challenges. Effective communication depends on transparency, accountability, and genuine value alignment, yet these are areas where GenAI is at risk of bias, where the potential to remove human touch poses serious challenges (Kumar et al., 2024). Organizations can be affected by the outcomes of these actions that align with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Thus, the future of effective marketing lies in balancing Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovation with sustainable, strategic implementation.

Marketing professionals often protect the organization's reputation by taking on ethical risks, even when they have doubts about the strategies they are asked to carry out. They may view GenAI outputs as an ethical problem in marketing, yet feel obliged to proceed anyway. Marketing professionals' roles can conflict with their individual morals, creating tension between two legitimate yet conflicting obligations without a clear resolution. The challenge created an imbalance in which no single individual or organization holds clear authority or responsibility to resolve the ethical implications of GenAI effects on marketing alone. Therefore, the responsible use of AI requires ongoing negotiation and continuous dialogue among multiple stakeholders to balance involvement and the Corporate Social Responsibility of AI (Deshpande and Sharp, 2022).

1.2 Research Problem

With the rapid development of GenAI, marketing experts need to balance AI efficiency with ethical responsibility. This tension creates a paradox: marketers are both individually responsible for their actions and hold personal ethical opinions, while simultaneously carrying out their organization's actions and, as such, its ethical opinions. Autonomy in creation demands a more conscious use of humans and responsibility to regulate outputs. Thus, tools designed to help professionals (GenAI) might add a deeper ethical layer to

decision-making, demonstrating how important it is to understand how marketers, those acting on the decisions, understand and make sense of the implementation of AI in marketing. Existing research identifies a need to understand the ethical implications of AI's integration into marketing (Chan and Choi, 2025). The need to identify responsibility placement in AI implementation has also been recognized and should be further studied (Glukhovskii, 2024).

Understanding AI's ethical impact could lead to a greater understanding of AI's capabilities and how best to implement it to reap the greatest benefits for companies and societies alike. Balancing the benefits for individuals, companies, and society is crucial for the positive implementation of AI (Al-kfairy et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how marketers make sense of the ethical CSR implications of implementing AI would help uncover the ethical and real changes AI is making to marketing. Marketers are also in an optimal position to assign responsibility for the ethical consequences, as they are within the aforementioned paradox that gives them insight into both the individual and the market. To best answer this knowledge gap, this thesis will hold the following purpose and research questions.

1.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how marketing professionals make sense of the ethical and CSR implications of using GenAI in marketing and how they assign responsibility for its potential consequences. To explore further and understand the gap between organizational obligations and individuals' ethical judgment is crucial to developing effective strategies for responsible AI use.

This study, therefore, asks:

RQ1: How do marketing professionals make sense of the ethical CSR implications of implementing AI into marketing?

RQ2: Where do marketing professionals assign responsibility for the ethical consequences of the effects of implementing AI into marketing?

By examining how marketing professionals interpret AI use under organizational pressures and personal ethical constraints, this thesis analyzes the ethical implications of GenAI in marketing through sensemaking. Instead of focusing on AI ethics at the organizational or regulatory level, it centers on the individual professional, specifically those who translate the organizational AI strategies into the messages audiences receive. Consequently, to understand the social process of creating meaning in complex cases and navigate the uncertainties of marketing professionals, sensemaking as a process takes the lead.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, three theoretical areas are presented, with the CSR literature split into two main streams by stakeholder theory: instrumental and normative CSR. Initially, definitions of ethical practices and the role of the marketer within an organization are discussed. It is required to understand their responses and the role they play as stakeholders within their company. The secondary, theoretical area of AI involves the AI effects on society,

organizations, and the individual. In this section, the literature serves as the basis for identifying the primary tensions in ethical AI use for the interviews with marketing professionals. By drawing on existing theory from this literature framework, the research gap can be identified, and the tensions marketers face in AI work examined. The final theoretical area is that of sensemaking literature. Sensemaking is a form of analyzing and understanding past experiences through reflection, and as such, will be an integral tool in breaking down the interviews with marketers.

By applying this literature, the interviews can be structured to allow for introspection and brief discussion with the interviewers, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of AI ethics.

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

When reviewing “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) research, it can be hard to aggregate and view all the research from a single perspective, especially given the field's heavy fragmentation (Frerichs and Teichert, 2021). A simple way to begin aggregating CSR research is to separate it into theoretical streams, such as the most popular theoretical perspectives. For CSR, many researchers view it as a separation of the normative and instrumental perspectives of CSR, stemming from stakeholder theory, where companies hold different obligations to their stakeholders depending on the perspective (Jamali, 2008). Stakeholder theory can, at times, be easier for managers to understand in practical terms and provides researchers with a basis for understanding how we view CSR in the real world (Jamali, 2008). A popular theory such as this can facilitate the translation of theoretical academic conclusions into practical implications for managers. The prevalence of stakeholder theory in recent years has made it a valid tool for better identifying research streams in CSR (Jamali, 2008). Given this, the following CSR literature review will be divided into the normative and instrumental perspectives to better understand how marketers fit into both worlds and why neither perspective can be ignored in this thesis.

2.1.1 CSR as a Tool for Business - Instrumental

This form of CSR, as described by Garriga and Melé (2004, p. 53), is “...seen only as a strategic tool to achieve economic objectives and, ultimately, wealth creation.” As such, this is often the perspective most commonly used by businesses today, as their primary goals are to increase shareholder value and, thus, wealth creation (Garriga and Melé, 2004). Much of the research in this stream stems from the idea posed by Friedman (1970), in his article “The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits” (Friedman, 1970). In this article, Friedman posited that companies, and especially those in control of them, were beholden to shareholders first and to all other stakeholders second (Friedman, 1970). This “wealth creation” perspective that companies must adopt to best appease shareholders leads marketers to work within it. This perspective is also important because it directly assesses the financial impact of CSR on firms.

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) research has shown that measured ESG actions positively affect a firm's financial performance (Qureshi et al., 2021). Other research on ESG

has shown that the effects of actions on firms' financial success can vary over time, across contexts, and across markets (Dong, Xu, and McIver, 2022). What is important to note for this thesis is that ESG actions do affect a firm's financial success, underscoring the importance of a firm's CSR and how it handles its actions, and explaining the prevalence of the Instrumental CSR perspective, as it is a company's obligation to shareholders to generate profits.

One of the primary uses of CSR in current research has been in corporations' strategic decision-making to achieve competitive advantage (Lee, Park, and Chung, 2022). CSR as a tool is important for strategic decision-making and, as such, for marketers, especially when it comes to corporate image and reputation. Some firms may even have a stronger focus on CSR due to factors surrounding them, as discussed in Dong, Xu, and McIver (2022). One example of such a firm is the airport industry, where the sustainability of air travel and working conditions can affect an airport's reputation and, in turn, its financial success, leading to an increasing focus on CSR actions for airports (Lee, Park, and Chung, 2022). This increase in importance also underscores the need to add AI to the mix. As explained earlier, AI use comes with challenges and benefits, and marketers will need to balance them if they wish to continue benefiting from positive CSR actions.

Cause-related actions can also be seen as a part of the instrumental CSR perspective (Garriga and Melé, 2004). Cause-related actions are seen as instances in which a brand works with another organization, typically a charity or a "morally good" company, to increase its own reputation by supporting that organization's cause (Garriga and Melé, 2004). This shows how brand communication is an important aspect of the instrumental perspective of CSR, where companies use their brand to communicate their CSR actions to consumers. The firms then reap the benefits through their increased brand reputation, which, in turn, enhances brand equity and creates value for the company (Mahmood and Bashir, 2020). It can be seen how AI can mediate the effect of cause-related actions, as AI use can contradict the intended messaging and, as such, lower effectiveness.

How companies use CSR actions to benefit their equity and create value changes when their marketing communication changes, as a change in marketing communication would alter brand equity (Alakkas et al., 2022). This shows how AI changing the marketing communication process would alter the firm's CSR. As described by Soar (2000), AI is a new creator of market communication and would alter the final product, whether an advertisement or another form of communication. This is important for firms seeking to benefit from CSR actions, as AI will change communication and, in turn, brand equity, as discussed by Alakkas et al. (2022).

2.1.2 CSR as an Ethical Obligation to All Stakeholders - Normative

To begin, it is important to note that Normative CSR is sometimes grouped with other theories under the broader category of "Ethical theories" due to their focus on the ethical side of CSR research (Garriga and Melé, 2004). More recent papers have separated this view, as stakeholder CSR theory has taken center stage in practical research (Jamali, 2008). Normative CSR pairs extremely well with the instrumental within stakeholder theory, as it

takes an almost opposite view. The normative perspective focuses on how firms should view stakeholders not as a means to creating value, but as an end in themselves, with the organization holding a responsibility to them as well as to profit (Mahajan et al., 2023). With this perspective, the organization's goal is not, as Friedman (1970) proposes, to benefit only shareholders, but rather to benefit all stakeholders. In practice, this can be hard to put into effect, as firms operate in a bounded world where they are required to create profit to survive, and benefiting all stakeholders may not be feasible (Jamali, 2008). Here we once again see the paradox marketers face: they are required to follow their organization's instrumental perspective, yet they are stakeholders who recognize the organization's obligation to them and others from a normative view. At the same time, they see these obligations; they are also part of the system that acts to fulfill them, making it more evident the role they play as members of both perspectives.

The satisfaction of those making decisions within organizations has been shown to affect their performance, especially when it stems from trust in the organization (Baptiste, 2008). The satisfaction of primary stakeholders would be of great importance to the firm, as they are the stakeholders with the most sway within the firm. Employees can be seen as a primary stakeholder in the implementation of AI, as they are the primary users (Huh, Nelson, and Russell, 2023). This underscores the importance of their satisfaction with the implementation of AI. Therefore, under the normative view, the obligations organizations have to their employees directly affect their performance, thereby strengthening the relationship between the perspectives (Wijnberg, 2000).

A large part of normative stakeholder theory discourse concerns the responsibility for actions and their resulting consequences, where researchers have yet to reach consensus and may never do so (Wijnberg, 2000). As discussed earlier, how marketers view their responsibility directly affects their satisfaction and trust in the company. If marketers blame failures in AI implementation on the corporation, normative stakeholder theory would predict decreased performance and an organizational failure to its stakeholders (Wijnberg, 2000). This lack of a norm for ethical responsibility within normative stakeholder theory research has led to a need for further understanding, which may be even more prevalent now that AI is a major change for modern organizations (Sætra, 2023).

2.2 Ethical AI Effects

When speaking about AI, more specifically generative AI such as language learning models and image generators, many researchers have already begun to shift the discussion from whether it will be important to how it will change society (Sætra, 2023). It has already become clear how prevalent AI is in the modern day, and it is here to stay, which leads to this change in focus. The effects of AI on society and its parts can be divided into three levels: Macro (Societal), Meso (Organizations), and Micro (Individual) (Sætra, 2023). In some cases the Meso level can be referenced to as companies, which is more accurate to the scope of this thesis. All the effects described due to AI carry ethical and moral implications that must be considered when using it, and each applies to different parts of society. The following section on AI shall be split into three levels (Macro, Meso, Micro) of AI effects to better understand how AI affects society and the ethical implications of those effects within each level (Sætra,

2023). Marketers in their internal positions will have to fight across all three sectors to make sense of their AI use (Jamali, 2008).

It is also important to note that different geographical areas have reacted differently to AI, with eastern/asian governments differing greatly from western ones, which also seems to stem from sociocultural differences (Van Berkel, Hosio, and Skov, 2020).

2.2.1 Societal-Level AI Ethical Effects (Macro)

Starting at the Macro level, we can see the effects of AI on the spread of information. AI can produce deepfakes and other forms of fake media that are indistinguishable to many viewers, eroding consumers' trust in what they see (Sætra, 2023). Allowing open AI access as it exists today raises ethical concerns about everyone having access to tools that facilitate the easy spread of misinformation and the influence of others (Al-kfairy et al., 2024). To use AI as a professional in this environment is also to be able to create fake media to sell products, giving the professional the ability to judge what is ethical and what is unethical in such a situation. AI also has the ability to conduct mass surveillance and, as such, breaches public privacy to collect consumer data (Al-kfairy et al., 2024). The loss of trust in public information, with the rise of fake media and the ability to conduct mass surveillance, would lead to changes in marketing that need to be understood. If public information is no longer trusted, how a professional makes sense of the content they themselves produce with AI becomes increasingly important.

AI also consumes massive amounts of energy, and the data centers that run it incur significant environmental costs for those around them (Sætra, 2023). This leads to a moral and ethical responsibility for those who construct these sites, but those who build them will claim they are allowed to by regulations, which creates another layer of mixed responsibility (Al-kfairy et al., 2024). The effects of AI on the environment are already well understood by researchers (Al-kfairy et al., 2024), yet there is no consensus on who is responsible for these effects, creating a significant accountability gap among all involved, as none can be individually blamed. Marketers may interpret this application of responsibility in different ways, especially where to place the blame for the environmental impact of AI use, yet they are the ones who facilitate its use within the organization.

This "responsibility gap" can be seen across all parts of society where AI has been implemented, with no single body taking responsibility (Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, 2022). Due to a lack of understanding of who is responsible for AI use, AI has grown unrestricted. This open and unrestricted use of AI leads to Collingridge's Dilemma, as explained by Sætra (2023), in which implementing a technology before it is regulated makes it harder to create future regulations to address its negative effects. AI was placed in the hands of marketers before the technology was fully understood and was unrestricted, leading to many of its effects becoming stronger (Chan and Choi, 2025). The gap in responsibility will most likely remain until regulation is put in place; understanding how marketing professionals interpret and assign responsibility can inform improved regulation. Therefore, the implementation of regulations by governments has become ever more important, which many researchers agree with and now await (Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, 2022).

2.2.2 Organizational-Level AI Ethical Effects (Meso)

At the Meso Level, AI will affect many jobs, especially those that may be replaced (Al-kfairy et al., 2024). According to Sætra. (2023), AI will replace knowledge workers or functions similar to them, such as copywriting and knowledge recall. Within marketing, specifically, GenAI could replace many jobs traditionally assigned to junior marketers, such as writing product descriptions and organizing data (Chan and Choi, 2025). The replacement of jobs would directly affect marketers and other employee stakeholders, as their employment may be at risk due to AI replacements or a reduction in required workforce. If employees perceive this danger, it can also affect their own work, especially if they feel the organization has handled the issue unethically (Wijnberg, 2000). Unemployment due to AI needs to be managed, and responsibility assigned so that all stakeholders know who to pressure for change, if AI is to benefit all stakeholders (Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, 2022).

Marketing processes will also change with the implementation of AI, as it has already begun affecting aspects such as innovation (Chan and Choi, 2025). AI is used by marketers to generate ideas and images/samples of new products for “brainstorming” tasks, enabling faster product development (Chan and Choi, 2025). But AI uses past data to generate ideas and brainstorm, raising ethical and moral questions about using others' work to create your own, thereby circumventing traditional copyright laws (Sætra, 2023). Marketers might be required to utilize AI in their innovation workflows, but too many may be seen as stealing from others. AI also inherits biases from past data, which can affect new outcomes and propagate them into the future, including potentially unethical biases (Chan and Choi, 2025). AI-generated content is often homogeneous and negatively affects innovation in marketing, which, for many, can even stifle creativity (Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, 2022). Marketers who do not use their own thinking in marketing activities may be merely recreating rather than developing ideas, and not using it may leave them behind those who improve their workflows with AI.

2.2.3 Individual-Level AI Ethical Effects (Micro)

At the micro level, how individuals use AI in marketing is an ethically important topic. Overutilization of AI can lead to cognitive atrophy, in which users default to using AI rather than their own thinking, resulting in over-reliance on AI and reduced production (Sætra, 2023). This relates closely to the work of Zhou et al. (2025), which found that how employees use AI shapes their perceptions of one another. If an employee were seen as a “slacker” and used AI only to do less work, it would create social issues with coworkers who did not use AI, and could lead them to become slackers as well (Zhou et al., 2025). This shows how marketers need to use AI effectively without straining relationships with other stakeholders, while increasing efficiency to benefit the whole company. On the other hand, any use of AI has been shown to increase unethical use of AI itself to shorten work, and, with it, a gap in responsibility for it among individuals using it (Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, 2022). It is currently up to the individual to self-moderate and be the

stewards of their own AI use (Zhou et al., 2025). Marketers would see these effects firsthand and could comment on them in their own workplaces, which could help clarify their relationship and better understand them.

AI has also been shown to affect how people communicate, both online and in person (Guzman and Lewis, 2020). This effect also supports Zhou et al. (2025) in showing how AI has changed inter-stakeholder interactions and could lead to reduced social relations between these individuals. Marketers must be aware of this change to also interact with consumers through brand communication, where AI has now changed this form of communication as well (Chan and Choi, 2025). It has also been shown that HR responses shape employees' views of AI, and marketing professionals could offer insights into this as well (Zhou et al., 2025). These effects on relationships and communication have led to changes in how marketers work, and understanding how they view these changes could yield important insights for regulating internal AI use in corporations.

2.3 Sensemaking

The theoretical background for this thesis's analysis is sensemaking theory, originally developed and elaborated by Karl Weick (Cristofaro, 2021). Sensemaking has, over the past 30 years, become an integral part of how researchers understand reflective decision-making and analyze how people think in organizations (Cristofaro, 2021). Sensemaking can be described as “...the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing.” Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 409) argue that we can make sense of the ongoing, active process by which events occurred through sensemaking. This is exactly what is required to, quite literally, make sense of a marketer's actions from both the normative and instrumental perspectives (Jamali, 2008).

As repeatedly emphasized by Weick in his original book “Sensemaking in Organizations”, sensemaking is an inherently retrospective process, where marketers would be required to retrospectively analyze their actions to understand them (Weick, 1995). It is this retrospection that facilitates sensemaking and, therefore, requires the events to be in the past, so that marketers can make sense of them. Another important aspect of sensemaking is that the actions that lead to it also arise from sensemaking itself; it is a cycle of thought and action (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). The proposed actions marketers take after sensemaking has occurred reflect what they have come to understand (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005).

It is also important to understand the social influences on sensemaking, where sensemaking is not in a social vacuum; marketers' understanding and actions are affected by social interactions with others (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). This aspect also helps understand stakeholders' interactions with one another, where the recalled social interactions make sense in themselves and help understand the marketer's relations with other stakeholders (Mahajan et al., 2023).

Another important aspect of sensemaking is that identities influence it (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). Those who take actions are individuals, and individuals are composed of many identities that make a whole; this is what leads each identity to influence the

sensemaking process (Weick, 1995). On the other hand, sensemaking itself can lead to identity construction, in which the individual may choose to make sense of something in a way that builds towards a new identity goal, thereby excluding others in the process (Brown, 2015). Stakeholders, such as marketers, holding existing identity goals related to other stakeholders could, in theory, be influenced by this, and as such, the relationship of marketers and other stakeholders is part of the sensemaking that takes place and must be noted (Wijnberg, 2000).

Sensemaking is used by managers to understand important decisions within organizations and reduce ambiguity or uncertainty of the past (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). This process benefits organizational thinking and can enhance understanding of CSR, especially when it is important to understand individuals and their thoughts (Wijnberg, 2000). It is through this process that this paper could understand the marketers and link how they make sense of their organizational actions to AI's introduction. When marketers are asked "why" something is or "why" something happened, it prompts a moment of sensemaking, leading to increased understanding that can be captured (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). It is these moments that can be best utilized to gain a true understanding of the actions taking place.

Since Weick's original formulation of sensemaking in 1995, many researchers have added to our understanding of it (Cristofaro, 2021). One of these expansions was that of Holt and Cornelissen (2013), who identified that sense can come from an unknown possibility. Marketers face the new unknown of AI (Sætra, 2023), and this event will cause a need for understanding, for which sensemaking provides an optimal tool (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013). These "future understanding" moments can serve as a second way for marketers to engage in sensemaking, allowing them to ask "what will happen" as a result of an event.

Sensemaking can help marketers organize their thoughts, especially in the early stage of AI implementation (Sætra, 2023), where ideas and thoughts are not concretely fixed (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). Sensemaking can cause a situation in flux to form coherent thoughts and understanding based on all actions throughout a period, the entire working day, from the smallest unrelated moments to the most active and important (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). It is this aspect of sensemaking that can generate meaning from the smallest parts, even those that many would miss or overlook. But for this to happen, it requires the active thought and exploration of the period in question (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). This could be the entire working day, where marketers review all the details and uncover factors that influenced their decisions, which were otherwise unknown or not understood (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005).

2.4 Analytical Framework

For this thesis, an analytical framework was designed to best understand how each of the three major literature blocs, CSR, Ethics of AI use, and sensemaking, fits into the research at hand. The analytical framework can be visualized as a model, as seen in Figure 1. This framework shows the relationship between the theories and how the different analytical dimensions will function in relation to each other.

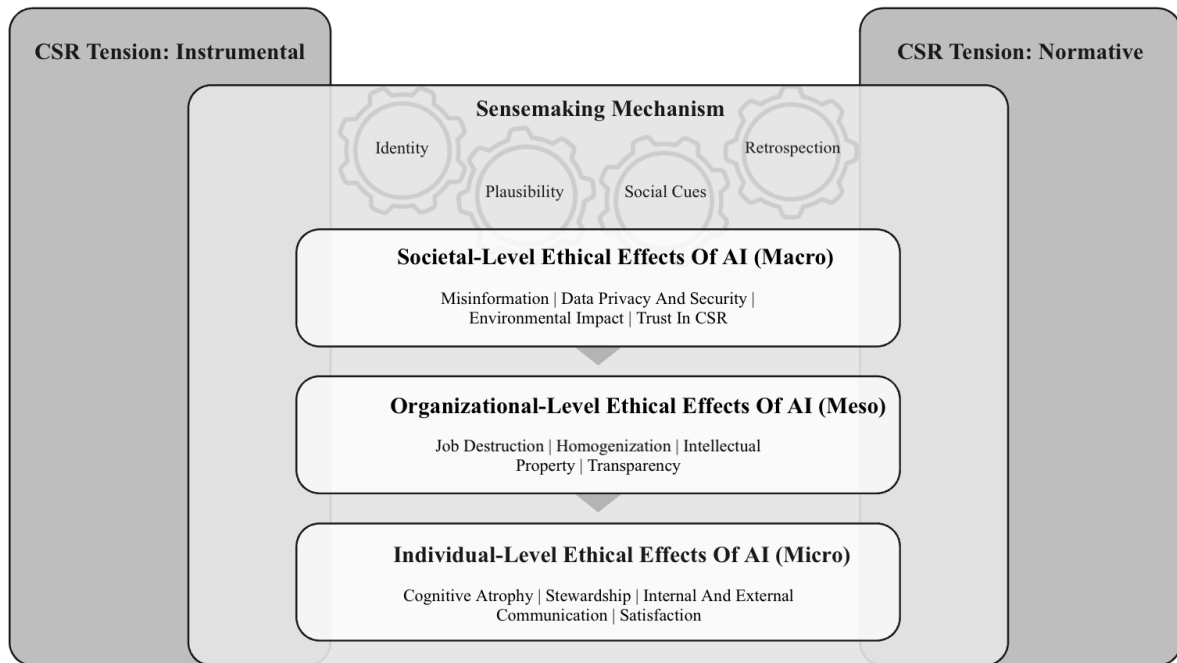


Figure 1: Sensemaking Framework Model of AI Ethical Effect and CSR Tensions

The model begins with the CSR tension, namely the Instrumental and Normative perspectives to CSR stakeholder theory (Jamali, 2008). These theories are opposites, defining responsibility differently depending on the perspective taken, and marketers fall between them. This is shown in the AI Ethical Effects, where each level of ethical effect can be understood and appreciated from both perspectives by marketers, thereby changing how they assign responsibility. Marketers' interpretations of what responsibility is are shaped by how they sensemake across the three dimensions and between the two perspectives. The next section of the framework will define the analytical dimensions, how they shape marketers' interpretation of AI implementation, and how they shape marketers' placement of responsibility.

2.4.1 CSR Tension

The CSR literature shows that perspective matters in understanding the responsibilities and obligations stakeholders have to one another (Jamali, 2008). To answer the purpose of this thesis, it is integral to understand the questions to understand the responsibilities stakeholders hold toward one another and how these perspectives place marketers within a paradox. This paradox stems from stakeholder theory, in which marketers are part of a company yet also individuals in a position to see the world from both instrumental and normative perspectives (Mahajan et al., 2023). This paradox is seen through the lens of sensemaking, specifically in the context of AI's ethical effects, where each level involves different stakeholder interactions that are interpreted through sensemaking. As such, how marketers utilize the two perspectives in each level will shape how they view AI implementation, with instrumental and normative perspectives giving the marketers two different possible answers every time (at least).

Marketers will also change how they assign responsibility depending on which perspective they lean on, as each perspective describes interstakeholder responsibilities differently.

2.4.2 Levels of AI Ethical Effects

The effects of AI implementation in marketing have had ethical repercussions across different parts of society, from the individual to the organizational and government levels. To understand how marketers view who is responsible for the effects of implementing AI in marketing, these three levels need to be understood. Marketers play an integral part not only at the individual level but also at the organizational level, as they highlight the importance of understanding how they split responsibility between themselves and others (Jamali, 2008). It is also important to note how each level falls within both CSR perspectives, as stated before.

The macro societal level encompasses the broader society in which marketers operate. At the meso, or organizational, level of ethical effects, the major ones for this thesis are extensive job losses due to efficiency gains and changes in employees' workflows (Chan and Choi, 2025). At the micro, or individual, level, marketers are facing changes in interpersonal relationships with both internal and external stakeholders (Guzman and Lewis, 2020). These effects not only need to be understood within their respective levels, but also how the surrounding environment of each level will affect their sensemaking. In this way, how marketers view each level when assigning responsibility will also shape their interpretation of AI.

2.4.3 Sensemaking Mechanism

Sensemaking theory is a process of reflection, a concept widely used in business research (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). This theory is how the participating marketers will be questioned and how they reason and interpret responsibility. Understanding how they navigate responsibility placement is highly important for this thesis. The four primary mechanisms of sensemaking (Identity, Plausibility, Social Cues, and Retrospection) will be used to understand their interpretations (Weick, 1995). The identity mechanism is grounded in identity construction, the idea that actions must be taken to build the desired identity (Weick, 1995). Plausibility is how an account hangs together, not the most accurate future, but the one that makes the most sense (Weick, 1995). Social cues shape how sense is made at all levels, but individual decisions are made with others, not alone (Weick, 1995). The final mechanism for this thesis is retrospection, the process by which meaning is assigned to an experience not at the time it occurs but in the present, when looking back (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is integral to understanding how marketers interpret responsibility and how they shift its placement across the three levels of ethical AI effects. Another integral connection is that sensemaking shows how marketers move between the two CSR perspectives, allowing the researchers to understand this movement.

2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, Corporate Social Responsibility research has shown a tension between instrumental and normative approaches. Instrumental CSR is viewed as a strategic tool in

which the firm's primary duty is to shareholders to generate profit (Garriga and Melé, 2004). Normative CSR holds that organizations are responsible for protecting and benefiting stakeholders rather than treating them merely as a means to increase the organization's bottom line (Mahajan et al., 2023). Besides that, AI ethics studies have shown the effects of Generative AI on societal (Macro), organizational (Meso), and individual (Micro) levels. At the Macro level, AI raises societal ethical concerns about misinformation or environmental impact in CSR that affect society as a whole (Al-kfairy et al., 2024), while at the meso level, AI shapes organizations through job destruction (Chan and Choi, 2025) or homogenization, affecting them internally. At the Micro level, AI affects individuals through cognitive atrophy (Sætra, 2023), changing how they communicate.

Sensemaking is a tool for interpreting how marketing professionals make sense of the uncertainty arising from their experiences with AI and how they assign responsibility across the CSR tensions (Weick, 1995). In the analytical framework, researchers propose a model to analyze the paper. The model works by examining the relationships among the CSR perspectives, the three levels of effects, and sensemaking. Concluding this chapter lays the theoretical foundation for the thesis by examining how marketers navigate the CSR tensions of AI adoption and how they interpret the ethical effects of AI across all levels.

3. Methodology

In the method section, the approach to knowledge and research will be explained, followed by the data required to answer the research question and the methods for collecting that data. Afterward, the sample selection will be explained in the context of the data analysis. All parts will be justified within their respective texts to best answer the research question and accomplish the purpose of this paper, with final scientific rigor at the end.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The question this paper aims to answer is: “How do marketing professionals make sense of the ethical CSR implications of implementing AI into marketing, and where do they assign the ethical responsibility to?” To best answer this research question, this paper will take a relativist ontological perspective, leaning towards a strong social constructionist epistemology. This is because sensemaking will be used in the paper to explain how respondents view the world and their lived experiences (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 78). The strong leaning is based on how the sensemaking of AI can be a topic where being further informed can change how respondents sensemake, and the purpose of the research is not to gauge how informed professionals are, but the fully formed sensemaking of their experience and what they have witnessed (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p.79). The complexity of the situation requires a broader context and a framework that accounts for it, allowing for a greater understanding of the respondents' thought process and sensemaking (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 79).

3.2 Research Approach

For this thesis, an abductive research approach was taken to best allow for refinement of the primary theoretical concepts and sensemaking. Abductive research approaches stem from plausible interpretive reasoning, in which researchers attempt to connect observations to theoretical concepts (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 267). This thesis follows this form of reasoning by drawing on existing literature to develop an analytical model that guides the research design. Then, using plausible interpretive reasoning, researchers connect the observations to the existing literature to create new knowledge by answering the research questions and the research purpose.

The form of abduction utilized in this thesis is called “Theoretical-Model Abduction”, where research is guided by existing theory (Schurz, 2007). This approach is not to be confused with deductive research; theoretical-model abduction is a creative, iterative process in which new theories are developed by connecting observations to existing theory (Schurz, 2007). By utilizing this approach, this thesis can hone in on the preidentified ethical issues within AI implementation and better extract meaningful observations from marketers. It also allows this thesis to refine the theories guiding the research based on the observations collected (Schurz, 2007).

3.3 Research Design

This thesis explores how marketing professionals make sense of and negotiate the ethical responsibilities associated with the use of GenAI in brand communication. To address this, a qualitative approach is adopted, as it is best suited to examine marketers' lived experiences and social interactions. Qualitative methods enable researchers to interpret participants' meanings through semi-structured interviews (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 81). The social constructivist epistemology aligns with this, as it centers on how professionals interpret and respond to ethical tensions in their working lives, allowing the collection of data on how knowledge is produced through interaction with researchers through the semi-structured interviews (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 69-72).

The analytical framework was used to interpret participants' ethical sensemaking while using AI, with researchers facilitating the discussion to improve it and to inform future sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). For that reason, semi-structured interviews are ideal, as they allow researchers to ask flexible, open-ended questions while still maintaining a consistent theoretical framework to ensure consistency across interviews (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 69-72). Interviews are conducted remotely via Google Meet, allowing participants from different geographical locations to take part without logistical constraints. The collection of primary textual data is derived from unexpected situations in participants' working lives, using predefined questions organized into categorized themes (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 194-196).

The interview guide is organized around preexisting theoretical concepts and operationalizes them into interview questions (Roskam, 1989). This operationalization allows the analytical framework to guide researchers in honing in on the ethical issue of AI implementation in marketing. The sections on CSR orientation and Ethical issues are used to identify the

responsibilities that may exist and where they may be located, thereby creating the table's categories and items. Questions are then created for each item, so each ethical tension will have at least one question tied to it. The final section of the analytical framework, sensemaking, is then utilized to analyze and make sense of the data. Sensemaking also guides the research on how to understand the interviews. The process of interpreting why and how participants arrived at conclusions about responsibility and ethical tensions will be through sensemaking, in which codes will be created to match the observed sensemaking tensions (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). These theoretical concepts do not dictate the themes or codes that will emerge during data analysis.

3.4 Sampling Strategy

Participants are selected from various industries and have direct experience of using AI in communication or marketing. Thus, to access a variety of interpretative data reflecting professionals' experiences from different organizational and cultural contexts. Participants are key experts because they are actively involved in using GenAI for organizational tasks while serving as moral agents and organizational representatives, which is the central focus of this thesis.

To begin, a purposive sampling method was used to select respondents who worked in a Western-cultured business, had a marketing background/education, and had experience with AI (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 119). These respondents fall within the stakeholder paradox, being both individuals and representatives of a business, and thus apply to our paper. The Western cultural selection is based on differences in Asian AI responses, which could include wide variations in ethical perceptions and are better observed in another paper (Van Berkel, Hosio, and Skov, 2020). After the initial respondents were contacted, a snowball sampling method was used to recruit additional participants. As the individuals selected for these interviews are experts, they are harder to contact directly, and snowball sampling allows researchers to reach new participants more easily (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 119).

For this thesis, precision is the most important aspect in sample selection, as respondents need to be sufficiently knowledgeable in the target area to collect good-quality observations to answer the thesis's purpose (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 119). Participants were further selected based on job title, industry, and AI experience to better enhance transferability and generalizability. The reason for this is to ensure that this thesis promotes participants' inclusion and captures a broader view of the marketing ecosystem, avoiding sampling bias.

Respondent	Job Title	Industry	Experience with AI
Respondent 1	Media Planner	Advertising Agency	Daily use, Admin work
Respondent 2	Digital Marketing/Editor	Retail Office Equipment	Daily use, Communication and text generation
Respondent 3	Social media manager	University	Daily use, Admin work and creative assistance
Respondent 4	Graphic Designer	Creative Agency	Daily use, Image generation, Editing, Communication
Respondent 5	Sales & Marketing Executive	Event Agency	Daily use, Communication and creative assistance
Respondent 6	HR Manager & Employer Branding Specialist	Telecommunications	Daily use, Communication
Respondent 7	Brand Consultant	Brand Agency	Major use, Start of most tasks

Table 1: Respondents' Information

3.5 Data Collection

To explore and understand the research question, we require interpretations from marketing professionals regarding their use of AI. Individual experiences heavily influence how these professionals interpret and categorize their work. To capture these broad perspectives, this study adopts a sensemaking perspective. In practice, this means that when interpreting participants' responses, the focus is on how they build meaning and what they are thinking about when they reach their conclusions. Participants may start by stating one thing, gradually changing their answer throughout the interview, and reaching a conclusion. This entire process is considered data, and not just their final decisions (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). This approach allows participants to share their unfiltered thinking processes, helping the researchers to see how they manage the uncertainty surrounding AI ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Thus, the data must come from post-decision behavior and self-perception. Data can also be acquired through future sensemaking, in which researchers pose a future situation or provide participants with information they can use to think into the future (Holt and Cornelissen, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, as explained above, lasting as long as needed to gather observations on each point of the interview guide. Specifically, the interview duration will be approximately 50-70 minutes to further explore and answer in-depth questions. Interviews were transcribed directly to preserve the raw sensemaking language for analysis. The transcription was conducted locally on the researchers' PCs using OpenAI's Whisper AI; this way, no private data was sent to the cloud or uncontrolled systems. Interviews were conducted in other languages but transcribed and analyzed in English. Interviews will be conducted until data saturation is reached, at which point new codes and themes are no longer being developed. According to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), 12 interviews should be sufficient to reach data saturation, but evidence suggests that as few as 4-6 may be sufficient for expert interviews.

Interview Guide

Beginning the preselection was communicating basic information about the research process. The paper's level of anonymity was explained, along with basic information about the research. Participants were asked about their level of interactions with AI in their work environment and to confirm that they work within marketing. After this initial pre-selection process, they receive further information regarding the experiment. This preselection is conducted to identify the most viable respondents for the research and to obtain their consent to participate. This is part of the purposive sampling to ensure that those who take part in the research can answer our questions to the extent needed for good results (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 119).

Introduction

Here are introductions of the interviewers to the interviewees and the conduct of formalities. These include formal consent to recording, reaffirming identities, and the beginning of light, small talk, and the framing of the interview. This is to better lubricate the conversation and prepare both participants to converse well, especially in video call interviews, where building rapport can overcome the typical sense of disconnect that calls come with (de Villiers, Farooq, and Molinari, 2021).

Interview Questions

Questions in the interview will follow the operationalization of the literature (Roskam, 1989), but for each item, two additional questions will be asked if the respondent does not address them in sufficient depth initially. That is, the ethical implications of their experience and the placement of responsibility for ethical considerations. Following a strong constructivist epistemology, the interviewers will provide additional discussion of the context of AI for questions where respondents may lack experience, so they can better answer based on their observations of the marketing environment (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 82).

A summary question will be asked to ensure that, at the end of the interview, any unexpressed thoughts the interviewees hold can be discussed, and to see whether there were any questions

they believed may not have been asked or could be beneficial to the understanding of the research. The full interview guide used in the data collection is available in the appendix.

Themes	Items	Questions
Societal-Level Ethical Effects Of AI (Macro)	Misinformation	Can you explain to me an encounter you have had where AI has provided a result that included misinformation?
	Data Privacy And Security	Can you tell me about a time where you have been concerned about data privacy with AI? Can you tell me about how you handle security of data within your organization and how you justify it?
	Environmental Impact	Can you recall a time you spoke about sustainability at work, and did AI come up as a subject?
	Trust In CSR	Can you speak about a situation where your trust in an organization has changed after the development of AI?

Table 2: Example of Operationalization

The interview guide was developed using the analytical framework that bridges theory to the field level inquiries (method). *Table 2* illustrates the theoretical themes based on the three levels of AI ethical effects: Macro (Societal), Meso (Organization) , and Micro (Individual). These were broken down into specific items, such as Misinformation or Data privacy and security, that demonstrate within marketing environments. Subsequently, the items contributed to the creation of open-ended questions designed to elicit the participant's cognitive sensemaking mechanisms (based on Identity, Plausibility, Social Cues, and Retrospection) to expose the underlying CSR Tensions within the paradox. The structure ensures that every interview question serves as a diagnostic tool to track participants' empirical experiences and connect them to the analytical framework and, as such, the literature.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed using a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), an improved version of traditional thematic analysis (TA), which is particularly beneficial for constructivist research (Braun and Clarke, 2019). The typical thematic analysis follows six phases, the same as RTA: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining/naming themes, and producing the final report (Ahmed et al., 2025).

The RTA process starts by familiarizing oneself with the data, which is done by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts, followed by coding the interviews using coding software. The coding software used is NVivo 15, a tool provided by the university to help researchers organize and analyze qualitative interview findings. The next phase is the searching of

themes within the codes, which are groups of shared meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2019). The first three phases are conducted independently by both researchers to increase data variety (Braun and Clarke, 2021). It is important to note that this is the process of creating themes, as they do not already exist within the codes and were created by the researchers from their understanding (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Reviewing and defining themes is where researchers bring their themes together to create a draft and a final list of themes with names (Ahmed et al., 2025). The final phase was writing the empirical report based on the themes and codes developed by the researchers.

The primary difference between RTA and TA is the reflexive aspect, in which RTA allows for greater debiasing of the researchers, which is very beneficial within a strong constructivist research epistemology (Easterby-Smith, Jasperson, and Thorpe, 2021, p. 79). When conducting the RTA, the researchers would look back at what they have analyzed and question the assumptions they have made (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Researchers' subjectivity is a resource rather than a hindrance in RTA, as it contributes to the sensemaking and meaning-making of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

The analytical framework serves as the guide for the analysis, providing the basis for understanding and creating the codes. The framework includes the context required for the sensemaking of the responses (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005). It is important to account for the environment in which sensemaking is taking place to ensure accurate results (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Within the analytical framework are the theories required to answer the purpose of this thesis: understanding the sensemaking of marketers. The three parts of the analytical framework provide a basis for understanding what responsibility is, how it is placed, and how it is interpreted by the participants. Utilizing this method, the full sensemaking process can be understood in line with existing theoretical literature to answer this thesis.

The coding system used a three-level hierarchy based on the analytical framework, moving from empirical observations to more general ideas grounded in theoretical concepts. The coding architecture began with a step-by-step process: first, raw interview responses from participants were transitioned from dialogue to connecting observations, and then a pilot sample of first-order codes was created. When participants answered a question derived from a theme, their responses were analyzed line by line to generate the initial round of first-order coding. The first-order codes are connected to participants' literal language, capturing their reasoning that will later be analyzed through sensemaking. The descriptive first-order codes were then transformed into more abstract second-order codes. At this stage, the theory played a key role as the codes are formed around the predefined items, such as Misinformation or Data Privacy.

Once these second-order codes were established, they were integrated with the theory to create the final themes, thereby mapping participants' sensemaking. The final themes are organized into the 3 Levels of Ethical Effects of AI, tracking whether the phenomenon occurs at each level (Macro, Meso, or Micro) in accordance with the analytical framework established for this thesis. After mapping the themes, the researchers interpreted participants' responses through CSR perspectives, showing where friction existed between them and how

responsibility was assigned. The coding framework tracked how multi-level tensions are processed through the marketers' sensemaking mechanism, revealing where participants framed the ethical dilemma and enacted a strategic resolution.

The final coding structure was created to have four themes that fit into the 3 Levels of Ethical Effects of AI. The coding structure ensured that the items derived from the final analysis mapped back onto the operationalized items in the interview guide (Table 2). Ultimately, the 4 themes fit into the 3 Levels of Ethical Effects of AI, showing how these tensions triggered marketers' sensemaking when they face CSR Tensions.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

For this thesis, the primary ethical considerations are anonymity, data confidentiality, and informed consent. Participants are requested to provide permission to record during communication before interviews, then again before recording starts, and, in most cases, after as well, to ensure full consent. They are also requested to provide permission to utilize names and other private information for the study. If one participant requests confidentiality for a particular aspect, that aspect is anonymized for all participants to ensure the omission does not identify them. For this thesis, all participants have given permission to use their first names and working positions, but not company names. Participants have the right to revoke permission to identify aspects of the data.

3.8 Scientific Rigor

When evaluating scientific rigor in qualitative research, the methods and recommendations outlined in Guba and Lincoln's (1989) paper have been widely used (Morse, 2015). They set in place the four primary criteria for checking and ensuring rigor as credibility, transferability, dependability, and trustworthiness, which have been in use for over four decades (Morse, 2015). More recently, commentaries on this established method have raised doubts about its use in modern qualitative work, and recommendations for its improvement have been made, namely by Morse (2015) and Carminati (2022). Carminati (2022) recommends that the terminology in qualitative research surrounding rigor has become too broad and that researchers should stop creating new terminology in favor of established ones, especially regarding generalizability. Following this recommendation, Morse (2015) states that the use of the criteria Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability brings Guba and Lincoln's (1989) original recommendation into the modern day by redefining them for use in both qualitative and quantitative research. The recommendations of both Morse (2015) and Carminati (2022) were used to ensure high scientific rigor throughout the study. In the following sections, the recommendations and their application to the study will be explained.

3.8.1 Validity of the Thesis

The validity of a study is defined as the "degree to which inferences made in a study are accurate and well-founded" (Polit & Beck, 2012, as cited in Morse, 2015). To ensure high validity in semi-structured qualitative research interviews, Morse (2015) recommends four methods. The first recommendation is to ensure interviews are extensive and allow

participants to acclimate to the conversation, which was conducted throughout all interviews as part of the study's guide. The second recommendation is to ensure that the sample utilized in the study is representative of the phenomenon and includes sufficient participants. Finding the exact number of participants required in qualitative research is difficult (Carminati, 2022); as such, this study interviewed participants until saturation, when no new patterns emerged, which was achieved after 5 interviews. The third recommendation is to create a pre-determined coding hierarchy when conducting semi-structured interviews. This study utilized operationalization to itemize the theoretical base and to develop questions to ensure accurate collection of relevant data, as described by Roskam (1989). The coding hierarchy was then created with the items in mind. The final recommendation of Morse (2015) was to actively search for bias and utilize it within the study to minimize its effects. This thesis, following Braun and Clarke's (2019) RTA method, used biases to enhance the analysis by employing two separate coders. Having separate coders allows individual biases to serve as distinct perspectives to refine coding results (Braun and Clarke, 2019). The use of two coders also leads to the reliability recommendations proposed by Morse (2015).

3.8.2 Reliability of the Thesis

Reliability is "broadly described as the dependability, consistency, and/or repeatability of a project's data collection, interpretation, and/or analysis" (Miller, 2008a, as cited in Morse, 2015, p. 1213). Morse (2015) proposes three methods for ensuring reliability for semi-structured qualitative interviews, with the first being the utilization of a coding system. This thesis uses a coding system based on the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2019) and Alfasoft (2025) as described in the data analysis section above. This coding system was then agreed upon, along with the coding rules described by Braun and Clarke (2021), which were used to ensure high-quality coding. Following this coding system, Morse (2015) recommends using multiple coders to ensure the data is identifiable by more than just the primary coder. As explained above, this thesis utilizes two coders; the codes were constructed by both coders to ensure that the data is not simply the interpretation of a single perspective. This flows into the final recommendation: that data should overlap across interviews, with patterns forming quickly and without large differences in responses resulting from inefficient operationalization and sample selection (Morse, 2015).

3.8.3 Generalizability Towards Theory

Generalizability is defined as "extending the research results, conclusions, or other accounts that are based on the study of particular individuals, settings, times, or institutions, to other individuals, settings, times, or institutions than those directly studied." (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014 as cited in Morse, 2015). Building on Morse's (2015) recommendation to utilize Generalizability over Transferability in modern qualitative research, Carminati (2022) addresses this change by recommending that when utilizing generalizability, the epistemological perspective of the study should be stated clearly. This thesis states this at the beginning of the method, establishing that the use of generalizability will encompass qualitative, not quantitative, rigor. The primary difference in generalizability in qualitative

research is that qualitative contributions are generalized to theory rather than to populations of people (Carminati, 2022). This is done in the discussion by decontextualizing the contributions from the specific population in the sample and instead connecting them to CSR and Ethical theories. The observations of this thesis are generalizable to similar responsibility paradoxes in AI and the role stakeholder theory plays in accurately allocating this responsibility.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the methodological approach of this thesis. To better answer the research questions, this thesis adopts a relativist ontological perspective, leading to a strong social constructionist epistemology, in which its studies of lived experiences combine real data with knowledge from human language and sensemaking. Abductive research seeks to connect observations to theoretical concepts by using plausible interpretive reasoning to generate new insights. For that reason, semi-structured interviews were chosen so researchers could ask flexible questions to explore emerging insights while maintaining consistency with the theoretical framework. Participants were selected based on three criteria: working within Western-cultured companies, acquiring a marketing background, and having direct experience using AI in brand communication. To analyze the qualitative data, this thesis used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), in which researchers actively and reflectively interpret themes from participants' data. Using a three-level coding architecture, researchers mapped participants' sensemaking mechanisms. Researchers conclude the chapter by ensuring scientific rigor, as noted by Morse (2015) and Carminati (2022), through data saturation and reliability, thereby making the findings generalizable by applying them to CSR and ethical tensions.

4. Findings and Analysis

After the reflexive thematic analysis of this thesis was conducted, a set of codes and themes was produced. In the following section, the four primary themes will be described, along with the constituent codes briefly reviewed. Each individual code is a result of the sensemaking process that participants went through during the interviews. In the findings and analysis chapter, each code is broken down into three parts: the findings, the patterns and implications of AI implementation in marketing, and, finally, the allocation of responsibility for that code.

Presented below are the findings derived from coding and analyzing the unstructured data collected during the interviews:

Effect Level & #	Themes	Codes	Those Held Responsible
1. Societal-Level Ethical Effects Of AI (Macro)	Necessity for controls and social norms of AI use	Misinformation	Governments
		Data Privacy	Companies Government
		Environmental	Individuals Companies Governments
		Homogenazation	Companies
2. Organizational-Le velEthical Effects Of AI (Meso)	Changes to the workflow lead to uncertain futures and impacts on the job	Job Loss	Companies Governments
		Satisfaction	Companies
		Uncertain Future	Companies Governments
3. Individual-Level Ethical Effects Of AI (Micro)	AI use requires careful management for the benefits to outweigh the costs	Self Control	Individuals
		AI Output	Individuals Companies
		AI Overreliance	Individuals Companies Governments
		Best Practices	Companies
		Ethical Reasoning Gap	Companies
4. Individual-Level Ethical Effects Of AI (Micro)	Changes to interpersonal relationships with internal and external stakeholders	Trust In Others	Companies
		Communication	Companies
		Authenticity	Individuals Companies
		Transparency	Companies

Table 3: Summary of Codes and Themes from Interviews

4. 1 Theme 1: Necessity for Controls and Social Norms of AI Use

The first theme is that participants showed a need for controls and social norms for AI use, and wished for regulations to catch up with AI. When discussing misinformation, data privacy, environmental impacts, and the homogenization of AI outputs, they all identified a need for control during their sensemaking. Much of the responsibility here was placed on the individual, yet it would typically shift to governments as they noticed that personal choice would not lead to systemic change.

“...there are more and more countries that are regulating this and they should be because there could be a much bigger problem in the next few years.” Participant 1

For **Misinformation**, participants showed concern mainly pertaining to deepfakes and the ability of those who use AI to propagate misinformation. They rarely saw what they themselves made as misinformation, as they would not lie about their products, but they feared others might. The only other point of fear with misinformation was if they missed some hallucination in AI and placed incorrect information within their work, yet this was seen as an individual ethical failure that should always be avoided by checking AI work. Later on, the discussion would lead participants to reflect on how, as a society,, misinformation is a real problem, thereby making them hold the government responsible for regulating it. Finally, participant 7 also stated that they felt fear at having such a powerful tool available to others, further showing their support for government regulation.

As participants discussed misinformation,, it can be said that they started from a personal identity perspective. Participants identified themselves as trustworthy individuals, but they also noted that they could not say the same for others. It was clear upon reflection of the entire discussion that marketers did not fear what they themselves made, but their trust in what others made had lowered as a result of AI being added into marketing, as bad use of AI could lead anyone to create misinformation. This decrease in trust supports Sætra’s (2023) findings that AI has negative effects on the ability to trust others due to AI’s prevalence in “hallucination” or creating fake data. Through a view of Weick’s (1995) plausibility mechanism, marketers believe others would use AI to manipulate people, as it is a strong ability of AI. There was an overall sense of concern about AI’s ability to manipulate and change people’s minds. This supports Al-kfairy et al., (2024) in raising ethical concerns around AI’s ability to create misinformation and influence others at scale and with ease.

Through Weick’s (1995) plausibility property, where the most likely outcome is selected, it can be seen that marketers would assign the responsibility for controlling misinformation to governments. This is due to a pattern in which participants recognize that governments hold the most power to influence larger issues that other, smaller stakeholders cannot.

“Uh, because we work, uh, with a lot of clients that, um, they force us, um, to have due diligence in these matters.” Participant 5

When it comes to **Data Privacy**, most of the responsibility is placed on the marketer's individual opinion of privacy. Participant 2 stated they would even put their medical documents into AI to better understand what their results were. They also showed greater worry when told by clients, not their own company, to follow data privacy guidelines. When pressed by the researchers to define ethical data collection and use, most of them said that governments should protect individual privacy by changing software. This way individuals could be protected from unknowingly making their data accessible, but they did not see the government responsible for companies' data.

In discussions concerning data privacy, marketers typically only took an instrumental view of the situation, often discussing the necessity for using sensitive data with AI to improve its use. This showed how marketers view their work as a result of required actions imposed by companies, thereby depriving them of guilt. Personally, they would apply different criteria, acting more ethically. These findings show that AI is seen as dangerous when it comes to data collection by marketers, the same as AL-kfairy et al., (2024).

There was a trend among participants stating that AI companies could use data without others' knowledge and therefore, should not be trusted, specifically because they would use it for income generation. Participants moved from this conclusion into discussing how, if companies are untrustworthy, then governments should instead be held responsible for regulating data privacy. Because governments are seen as power holders that can influence companies, it follows that they believe the most plausible course is to assign responsibility to governments. This aligns with how Weick (1995) describes plausibility as helping them fit with their chosen identity by relegating responsibility away from themselves.

...”(AI companies) will not do anything, I guess, if they are not, uh, forced to. And when you have the government that will say, okay, you will have to pay this fee or, uh, these taxes, if you're doing this use, then they will try to control more that use.” Participant 7

For **Environmental** ethical impacts, almost all participants stated they had not thought about it before, some were not aware at all of the environmental impacts of AI. Even with this initial lack of understanding, all participants concluded that companies, specifically AI companies, are to blame for the environmental impacts and the “overuse” of AI. Yet they saw the responsibility for controlling these impacts as being on governments to restrict AI companies. This stemmed from an understanding that companies, and they themselves, would not lower their use of AI unless pushed to by governments. Last but not least, some participants even stated they would try to lower their own personal use of AI, but if for work, they would continue to utilize AI fully.

There was a pattern of marketers beginning their discussions on the environment with a strong normative stance, stating that AI companies would have to be held responsible for harming the environment and should do what they can to stop it. But when continuing the discussion, they would quickly move over to an instrumental view. It was clear, through the reflective mechanism, that the most likely outcome would be companies abusing the environment for financial gain, following Friedman, (1970) original conclusions on how

modern companies run in the instrumental point of view most of the time.

Whilst no single large body takes responsibility for AI's environmental impact, marketers stated that, within their personal use, not job use, they found themselves responsible. This interpretation shows an interesting dynamic in the responsibility gap, with the instrumental view excusing them of responsibility (Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, 2022). Marketers would place governments as responsible for regulating companies, as outside of personal use, they would not mix their personal identity with their work. This is further evidence supporting Al-Kfairy et al. 's (2024) proposal of government intervention in discussions of AI's environmental impact, as it would require companies to take action where they otherwise would not.

“...AI, not to be able to listen to you, to customer requests, such as, I don't want you to use hyper-sona, originating from Africa. So, biases. Yes, I would really like it to be free to suggest things to you that even you don't want to see or the customer doesn't want..”
Participant 4

Homogenization did not seem to be a major concern to marketers, who believed that, via good prompting skills, they could mitigate most of the homogenizing effect of AI. With further explanation of homogenization from the researchers, participants stated that companies should be held accountable for creating internal AI models that would allow the marketers to utilize more sensitive internal data to prompt AI, thus mitigating the data AI was originally trained on and lower homogeneity. Lastly, a few participants also mentioned that differences in perspective and self-control lead to little homogeneity within their own teams at work.

Marketers have shown how their work has changed to be heavily AI influenced, yet maintain that through their good prompting, they have yet to see any homogenization. This conclusion was made through the Weick's (1995) personal identity property, as it can be seen that they blamed a lack of skill as an external failure, since they themselves know how to conduct good prompting. This interpretation supports Chan and Choi's (2025) position on AI change, providing further evidence that AI is changing marketers' workflows and the importance of understanding how this should be controlled.

Whilst some participants stated that AI would stifle creativity, others stated that it would improve it, especially in creative writing. Our findings also suggest that their creativity was overall improved by AI, even if some agency was lost due to AI's inclusion. This interpretation supports further research into AI's effect on creativity, somewhat contradicting the results from Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, (2022), as they stated that AI should lower overall creativity and decrease diversity of products.

As such it can be seen that there is a pattern of placing any increased homogenization as a failure of companies, as marketers deflected the blame. This pattern of deflection further supports the existence and strength of the responsibility gap proposed by Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, (2022).

4.2 Theme 2: Changes to the Workflow Lead to Uncertain Futures & Impacts on the Job

In this theme, participants expressed fear about the future and, to some extent, the future job market. Whilst most participants showed little fear about their own job prospects, some stated that the positions they once held as juniors were now being replaced by AI, and spoke negatively about the change in norms and how it may affect future employees. Most of their sensemaking in these leads to realizations of lowered satisfaction from working with AI when overused, all of which was compounded by the uncertainty and fears for what may come in the future.

“...i am a bit mad about like big companies reproducing like the use of ai while it's so unregulated. um big companies especially like laying off people uh blaming on like ai and which has been the case for a lot of things and also a lot of companies.” Participant 5

In our findings, participants stated that **Job Loss** can occur as technological advancements grow. Companies and governments are mainly responsible for the results, especially because automation within companies and a lack of government regulations leave participants feeling insecure. In the beginning, when participants started using AI, they didn't expect their jobs might be influenced by automation, but now they fear job replacement regardless of job title, and it's more about seniority and job type, for example, manual work.

Marketers seem aware of the effects technological advancements can have on job destruction, and they see AI as one of these advancements. All participants were aware of this effect, and using Weick's (1995) retrospection mechanism, we can see they seem to have a repeating placement of responsibility on governments for these societal level effects. Even with already knowing where to place responsibility for job loss, participants still felt fear for junior position job losses in marketing. Therefore, this fear shows they have yet to understand the full changes AI will make to their work. This supports Chan and Choi's, (2025) assertion that AI is causing job loss through work change, and that its workers are aware of it.

Marketers view this job loss as a necessary evil of progress and don't view their own use of AI at work as unethical because of it. It can be inferred that marketers have been satisfied with their companies' responses, as they had no complaints about someone being fired due to AI, and whilst job hiring is low, they also don't particularly blame AI. Therefore, the responsibility for this was placed in the hands of governments, as they would have to balance unemployment for the betterment of society.

“So I'm using it for everything. And it's something that sometimes I'm thinking, oh my God, you can think about it a bit and write it by yourself.” Participant 7

Satisfaction is derived from the use of AI in participants' working tasks. When participants feel the need to ask AI for help with how to tackle it themselves, the level of satisfaction is

lowered due to them seeing their own skill deficits. Uncertainty becomes the main result of this, as participants acknowledge the loss of agency in their critical thinking, resulting in anxiety. On the other hand, participants noted that when they consciously use AI tools as educators to learn and improve their skills, satisfaction levels increase.

The primary discovery here is the dissatisfaction marketers have with their own AI use. They would repeatedly recognize their own cognitive atrophy as well as that of others when AI is overutilized. Whilst marketers see their own past actions, it is clear that through retrospection, they are not able to change their future actions. This refines Sætra's, (2023) conclusions surrounding cognitive atrophy of AI as marketers are shown to be aware and dissatisfied with this current occurrence, yet continue without change. Our findings indicate that marketers blame their decrease in satisfaction on companies that don't teach them the best practices, whilst still aware that they hold the control. Awareness leads to the deflection of responsibility, which supports Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, (2022) in describing the gap in responsibility that exists within AI responsibility allocation. This thesis also saw how participants stated that by using AI as a teacher, they had an increase in satisfaction, as they would view their own work as improved compared to previous work. The finding of positive implementation of AI derived from AI use supports Zhou et al., (2025), who showed that positive uses of AI can beget further positive use over time.

Marketers are not blind to how AI affects their satisfaction, and as such, worry about it, but also make a few moves to change their behavior. Through Weick's (1995) reflective mechanism, it can be seen that marketers have changed their actions based on what their companies told them to do, not on their own, and, as such, this led to the placement of responsibility on the companies.

"And the power that it has to control the minds and the way that we think, it's something, it's unethical on its own." Participant 2

Participants are concerned about the **Uncertain Future** because they think that AI might take over the ability of humans to monitor it. Besides job redundancy, marketers experience moral surprise when AI seems like a helpful tool, but continuous use of it might affect humanity, requiring ethical monitoring and use. Therefore, they are drawing the line between reliance on percentages and human agency, which raises concerns about health and creates an uncertain future. Although participants have faith that organizations saw this gap, governments have the ethical responsibility to set boundaries before overriding human well-being.

As AI became a larger part of their everyday lives, participants showed fear and uncertainty in their sensemaking, relying heavily on plausibility and reflection to predict the future. The participants spoke of uncertainty in many forms, but their largest concern was how their work had changed, and will continue to do so. This further supports Sætra, (2023) in showing the complexity that the implementation of AI before regulation has brought into the environment. There was also a trend of holding concern in how their companies would respond to the

implementation of AI. Here, the finding supports Zhou et al. (2025) in demonstrating that companies' responses can shift marketers' perspectives on AI.

Marketers now have higher baseline uncertainty in their own jobs and will likely remain so until their futures become more certain. It is that reasoning that they use to place governments responsible for shaping the future and lowering uncertainty. This reasoning can be interpreted to originate from the instrumental perspective, as top-down action is required to force change, as explained by Garriga and Melé (2004).

4.3 Theme 3: AI Use Requires Careful Management for the Benefits to Outweigh the Costs

Within the third theme are included the codes that make up the multiple sensemaking steps marketers go through when balancing their views on ethical and unethical AI use with the benefits AI brings. Participants spoke of many topics, but overall, they agreed that many of the positives of AI came with moderation in its use.

“...the next thing that we’re going to hear is that AI is as addictive as sugar.”
Participant 2

To begin, **Self Control** is the ethical issue of controlling how and for what marketers use AI. Participants stated they would moderate their own use of AI, as there is no external moderation. But in this itself,, they would say it is a matter of willpower, since they know how to best use AI but still sometimes use it for unethical or harmful purposes, since it saves time and is so easy.

It became very clear throughout the interviews that marketers were self-regulating their AI usage quite heavily, as there was a lack of guidance from their companies. It was possible to deduce using social cue mechanisms (Weick, 1995) to understand that marketers were mitigating cognitive atrophy through self control, as it was in their best interest to create high quality work, as it would reflect poorly upon them to be seen as “slackers”. It can also be seen that due to their work representing themselves, through identity sensemaking (Weick, 1995), this thesis understands that they could not allow AI to do all of their work, as the work represented part of their identity. Both of these interpretations support Zhou et al.’s (2025) “slacker” theory, in that marketers regulate their own work so as not to be seen as slackers by their peers.

The final observation of how marketers would allow unethical use of AI for work reflects on their instrumental perspective, showing how through social cues (Weick, 1995) we can understand that doing this work was not seen as unethical by others since they were doing it for the company, and as such the company was held accountable for the unethical part of the actions, even if they placed the responsibility on themselves. This is another example supporting Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, (2022) in describing the responsibility gap as a mechanism marketers utilize to deflect the guilt of unethical actions onto those above them.

“And now that I'm more concerned of how what I will present to my team and my manager, I'm double checking everything. Because you know, I don't want to get exposed...”
Participant 7

AI Output was the discussion over who would be responsible for the output of AI, and how to ethically utilize the output. Here participants made sense of this situation by stating how they feel individually responsible for the output of AI, since they view AI as a tool, and a failure from AI is a failure for themselves. Some would also state that companies and their managers would be held responsible, as it is their job to ensure that AI implementation goes smoothly. Marketers saw that their own work would reflect upon it in the end, as they viewed AI as a tool, and as such would control themselves in their AI use. Participants stated that they always checked their work as it would reflect on their team and managers.

There was a clear pattern among marketers: neither they nor their coworkers saw themselves or their coworkers as slackers or as overutilizing AI. This thesis's findings indicate that in the marketing environment, there is a lower prevalence of the findings of Zhou et al., (2025) in terms of prevalence for cognitive atrophy tied with constant AI use, as well as the slacker phenomenon.

Marketers personally held responsibility for their own work with AI. This lies more strongly in the normative view of CSR, yet here we see a strong tension, as some participants would make sense of this situation through an instrumental view, where companies are held responsible for the AI output of marketers, as it is their direct responsibility that it is done well, so as to create positive value for the company. These findings indicate another responsibility gap as described by Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, (2022), with marketers holding themselves accountable but placing the blame for unethical actions upon companies.

“...if you are in a company and you can't even reply an email or your on your own what i don't think you not deserve to be in the company.” Participant 1

Some marketers suffer from **AI Overreliance** in their work in certain situations, thus lowering their critical thinking and creativity skills. Participants blame themselves, but like an addiction, they mentioned that they need help from those "above" them to fix this they aren't going to be the ones to fix themselves. Thus, they know they shouldn't rely on it, but they still do.

Participants noted that they have seen themselves begin to have cognitive atrophy to an extent after discussing overuse. Marketers work to avoid overreliance on AI, but for certain tasks, it has become more prevalent and harder to control. Through reflection, the marketers realized that, over time, they had been using AI more and more. Whilst the marketers disagree that, overall, their work is worse, it remains to be seen how much it will worsen or improve in the

future. Sætra (2023) argues that this overreliance will lower overall marketing production, and this has, so far, been shown to be true in the findings of this thesis.

To avoid this ending,, marketers have placed the responsibility for stopping it not on themselves but on all parts of society. Some participants would state that it was the fault of governments, whilst others blamed companies or individual self control. Once again, we see a leaning toward the instrumental perspective, as most participants would argue that companies need to control this to avoid lowering their value production. From Weick's, (1995) social cues, it can be inferred that marketers see their actions as required by the work environment placed upon them by their companies. These findings refine Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, (2022) responsibility gap by showing that marketers are, once again, splitting responsibility to defer guilt.

“I think it actually or you work the best when um yeah you kind of have your own ideas that from that and then kind of help with chat GPT to for example um structure the um a caption so that is yeah we're using.” Participant 3

Marketers see many ways AI can be used in purely positive ways, and they place the responsibility for implementing these **Best Practices** on those knowledgeable in AI, namely the younger generation. They view uses such as speeding up repetitive tasks, less consequential media texts, translation, learning, and others as ethical when in moderation. Learning what these ethical uses are is important, and as such, they find those who are young and already hold knowledge on AI extremely valuable.

Marketers have seen large changes to their workflow and how their marketing work is carried out with the implementation of AI, as they can now accomplish much more work in a shorter time. This change can be interpreted through Weick's, (1995) plausibility mechanism, which allows the inference of a possible future, which is that this seems to be important to understand the future change of marketing work. These findings support Chan and Choi's, (2025) perspective on AI changing work, as marketers' output increases with its implementation. Some participants specifically referenced younger stakeholders as more knowledgeable about AI best uses and, as such, they should be the ones to develop guidelines for others to benefit from. Following Sætra (2023), these findings indicate that a set of best practices or guidelines should be put in place to teach marketers how to use AI effectively.

Marketers place the responsibility on those who have the knowledge on how to best utilize AI. They believe that if these people were given the ability to spread and teach their information to other stakeholders, it would lead to the most ethical uses of AI. This takes a normative perspective, indicating that marketers see companies as responsible for the ethical use of AI and for ensuring it benefits all stakeholders through satisfaction.

“...And it made my job so much easier that I got carried away.” Participant 2

Participants would often contradict themselves in the benefits-to-consequences discussion, leading to an **Ethical Reasoning Gap**. It was also clear that in many instances, they would make sense and justify their unethical actions by stating that they were doing so out of necessity for their jobs. It was also clear that they were aware of this at the same time, but would voluntarily choose to ignore it. When directly questioned, they would place their jobs, as such, the company, as responsible for these unethical actions. They would also still criticize others' actions, even when they might be doing the same, as they might be looking at others' actions from an individual perspective rather than a work perspective. Finally, when speaking about how AI has changed their work, participants spoke extensively about how AI work was seen as worse in many scenarios.

When speaking of authenticity, participants would repeatedly state that AI worsened their view of the ad, yet when it came to using AI themselves, they would say that it improved their work and did not take away from it. It is this ethical reasoning gap that leads to the later responsibility gap, as shown in Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein, (2022), marketers viewed their own shortened work as good use of AI and didn't lower their opinion of the final work, but when others did so, they judged it to a different degree. At the same time, it can be said that the degree to which participants used AI was unnoticeable in the final product, which can also be an indicator of the degree of ethical reasoning.

In all cases, participants would place the blame for poor final product quality originating from unethical AI abuse on companies. Thus stating that if they were given too little time to complete their work, they would use AI in unethical ways to ensure they finished on time.

4.4 Theme 4: Changes to Interpersonal Relationships with Internal & External Stakeholder

Participants showed how the implementation of AI changed their relationship with those around them, both inside and outside of the company. All participants started their sensemaking by stating that nothing had changed, but over the course of the interview would show and realise how they now utilize AI for communication more often than they thought. Since they would still interact with internal stakeholders in person, it mainly sped up communication and was seen as positive. But communicating with external stakeholders was different, as some participants stated that it had become colder.

“Even from small small ones like emails or ideas you know there is a possibility that this is created by ai and it is not the critical thinking of the person I spoke to.” Participant 1

With the introduction of AI, marketers trust the tool but also check its output. It was stated that the **Trust in Others** was inferred from observed AI use in communication. Specifically, Participant 1 mentioned that results from AI might lower trust in results, whereas Participant 4 mentioned that human-made results nowadays are an art form and are therefore more trusted. Furthermore, AI has been a replacement for search engines, in which participants not only trust it but also show empathy and understanding in AI's outputs. For example, Participant 4 stated that although AI can make mistakes, the results come from the prompt

creator, which can be a brainstorming experience to establish a baseline, and in this case, it can be a helpful output.

Across the interviews, the pattern that emerged was that trust is changing from who participants are interacting with and to what systems they are utilizing for that interaction. More specifically, when trust depends on human to human interaction, participants are searching for more details about the results they received from others and are more alert to mistakes. On the other hand, when trust depends on human to AI output, participants mentioned that there are cases where they show empathy to AI because it is viewed as a supportive and less judgmental assistant while searching for an answer. This can be interpreted as when trust is low, participants become more aware of AI-generated outputs in communication supporting Sætra, (2023) theory about weakening trust consumers place in what they see due to AI implementation.

Through Baptiste (2008), trust and satisfaction are linked through their effect on productivity, where it can be seen that marketers are assigning responsibility for lower trust in results to the organizations. This indicates that when marketers perceive the lower trust in their results as a failure of organization rather than a standalone issue.

“...but definitely you could tell that (their bosses) would use chat GPT to craft an email and that would be, like, quirky and cool with a lot of emojis so it changed communication in that way. But the thing is like we could all tell and that was AI generated.” Participant 3

Communication continues to feel mostly human since marketers use AI for easy tasks, but marketers have seen some changes. Participants state that AI implementation has the effect of losing human connection, mostly with other individuals, both internal and external stakeholders. Real satisfaction in communication derives only from human outputs, because people are looking for emotion and human touch in AI results. In addition, participants also stated that in person, relationships have not changed, and that they now further prefer human interaction with both clients and coworkers over online communication. For example, participant 3 observed that while communication aimed to sound more human and engaging, the email received has the opposite effect, resulting in a feeling of artificiality. Finally, participants mentioned that spotting artificial text can be seen in the lack of strong emotion and empathy, after recalling past experiences while reading LinkedIn posts.

A notable observation from the findings is that participants tended to value psychological safety and strong relationships over the AI efficiency. Researchers interpret that this happens because marketing professionals are trying to focus on empathy and create human connection to push back the commodification and erosion of AI text, where it can be mostly found in social media captions. This finding supports the arguments laid out by Chan and Choi, (2025) regarding that when individuals interact with each other, they share a human presence that feels safer, even though communication is imperfect.

Participants placed responsibility on organizations after determining that individual responsibility existed only in personal communication. The researchers interpreted through

Weick's (1995) identity mechanism, that the participants viewed AI communication as an instrumental issue as they would otherwise conduct communication in the way they personally identified with to the detriment of performance. This would imply that organizations require to regulate communication to best guide AI use to the level of human touch they want.

"Like I said, it's not really personal anymore. It doesn't feel genuine, authentic, unique."
Participant 2

Utilizing AI at work can increase or decrease **Authenticity**. It can improve text quality by expanding vocabulary to better explain emotions, while also distancing the work from the creator, making it less human. At the same time some participants would state that their own work was authentic even when utilizing AI. Participant 6 stated that by using AI they would actually increase authenticity since they could better showcase emotion in their marketing communication.

The observations participants made, suggest that bad use can lead to obviously AI generated texts that wildly lower authenticity, but when not noticeable, it either has no effect or benefits authenticity. Participants noticed that AI can improve their outputs, such as describing complex ideas, but it also creates a distance that makes the final result feel inauthentic. They pointed out that obvious AI-generated writing, for example, in caption content, lowers trust and is interpreted as a lack of effort. While a smooth use can go unnoticed, even serving as a quiet help to the result, in this case, the final results are clear, and it remains neutral. Taken together, this suggests that AI only protects authenticity when human touch remains the primary driver of the result, while using AI reduces trust.

This leaves the responsibility with individuals and companies, as they are accountable for the collective reputation of their outputs. Hence, authenticity is a deliberate choice, and the responsibility of marketing professionals is to use AI as a tool to clarify their voice, not to replace human critical thinking, which plays a pivotal role in professional relationships. These findings support Zhou et al. (2025) in describing the critical importance AI has in harming relationships at work if utilized in negative ways.

"...because of course we do know that whenever something is labeled as being ai that the perception is kind of lower of that post so um yeah we're kind of happy that that didn't happen yet." Participant 3

During the interviews, participants mentioned that **Transparency** plays a differentiating role in accountability. While participants indicated a tendency to normalize the non-disclosure of AI assistance in their personal tasks, their ethical standards shifted when evaluating organizations. Participants expressed that when organizations do not disclose or deliberate on the AI use, the ethical expectation shifts and it is seen as unethical. Furthermore, it was

mentioned that the perception depends on organization size, where larger companies are facing stricter scrutiny.

The pattern surfaces here is that transparency creates a filter of security and serves as a protective barrier for consumers. While participants use AI extensively, they admitted they have normalized not disclosing AI assistance in their creative tasks to protect the perceived value of their work. From this, we can infer that organizational transparency often acts as a strategic tool for managing or gaining reputation and protecting consumers, rather than for ethical clarity. This pattern fits into Garriga and Melé (2004) about corporate ethical actions that participants do not see organizations transparency as a moral duty, instead they view it as an instrumental mechanism to manage risk.

Marketing professionals view organization transparency as a tool for protection because they are not expecting corporations to be honest about their duty. Therefore, they see that large organizations do not disclose the usage of AI out of ethical concern for the public, but because they protect their own economic self interest. In this way they placed the responsibility upon companies to increase transparency to their own benefit. This fits with the Garriga and Melé's, (2004) perspective on instrumental perspective of CSR, where marketers did not see lack of transparency as unethical, therefore companies should regulate it as they wish to benefit their own reputation and bottom line.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the empirical findings and provides an analysis of the insights into four themes. To begin with, the first theme expresses a need for rules and social norms to guide how AI is utilized across misinformation, data privacy and security, environmental impact, and homogenization. They initially assigned responsibility to the individual, but shifted it to governments when they realized that personal redirections do not bring about systematic change. The second theme is about AI changing the marketing work and creating fear about job displacement, leading to an uncertain future. Marketers place the responsibility for workflow changes on companies and for job loss at the societal level on governments. Furthermore, managing AI use might benefit from balancing costs, meaning that marketers self-regulate while relying on external guidance. In this theme, marketers mention shifting responsibility to all levels for the ethical effects of AI. Finally, there are changes to interpersonal relationships that AI has changed the trust, communication, authenticity, and transparency. Organizations are primarily accountable for individuals' communication standards. These findings will be discussed further in the next chapter.

5. Discussion

Before proceeding, it is useful to revisit the thesis's core purpose and research questions. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how marketing professionals make sense of the ethical

and CSR implications of using AI in marketing and how they assign responsibility for its potential consequences.

This thesis addresses two research questions. The first research question (RQ1) asks how marketing professionals make sense of the ethical CSR implications of implementing AI into marketing. The second research question (RQ2) asks where marketing professionals assign responsibility for the ethical consequences of implementing AI into marketing.

This thesis makes three contributions to the existing literature, each of which will be discussed individually, with explicit connections to existing theory and how they extend or contribute to the literature. At the end of each contribution, its connection to the research question is made explicit, so that each contribution can have a clear understanding in relation to both the purpose and the literature of this thesis. The contributions are summarized at the close of the discussion for clarity.

5.1 Responsibility Shifts as it is Allocated

A primary contribution of this thesis centers on the phenomenon of 'responsibility shifting'. The data indicate that the process of shifting responsibility allocation results from swapping between the normative and instrumental perspectives to justify ethical implications.

The findings point to a pattern in which allocation of responsibility to different stakeholders begins from a normative perspective but quickly transitions to instrumental reasoning. This back-and-forth transition suggests that both instrumental and normative perspectives justify the allocation of responsibility. This supports the existing literature by Jamali (2008), as stakeholder theories split between normative and instrumental perspectives correctly encapsulate the mechanism for allocating responsibility. Following this, the present findings suggest that the allocation process often ends with the instrumental perspective, which holds governments primarily responsible, since most ethical actions would not be taken by companies without incentives from above. This adds to the prior work of Qureshi et al. (2021), as ESG or CSR positive actions do benefit companies; however, the present contributions state that these benefits are not perceived as direct enough to drive companies to take action. Thus, the government's intervention would be required.

In some cases, the data reveal a shift back onto the normative perspective, but only when it aligns with individual self-interest. This shift back to the normative appears to serve as a mechanism for claiming credit for outcomes viewed as ethically positive. This indicates that the normative perspective is often taken selfishly when understanding the changes brought by AI, adding to Jamali's (2008) findings on stakeholders' views of personal contribution.

This contribution sheds light on the mechanism RQ1 by indicating that the criteria used to define 'good use' of AI stem from personal workplace experience, with added distrust that external creators will use it in the same way. Contributions are also made to RQ2, where the structural mechanism for allocating responsibility is revealed and demonstrates how, through the instrumental perspective, governments are placed in a position to control the ethical implementation of AI when companies would not.

5.2 The Ethical Reasoning Gap as a Workplace Normalized Phenomenon

A secondary contribution of this thesis introduces the ‘ethical reasoning gap’, showing a consistent deflection of responsibility for unethical actions away from individuals and practitioners and onto companies and superiors. This deflection serves as a mechanism to remove personal guilt about the ethical concerns from AI use, even as its continued use is justified.

The present findings bring forward how responsibility is often directed upwards, away from the individual. This contribution stems from the proclivity for responsibility shifting described above, culminating in instrumental perspectives in which companies are responsible only for shareholder value. Leading to responsibility being raised even further than companies onto governments, when ethical use would correspond with lowered profits. Conversely, responsibility is only kept at the individual level when justifying already ethical actions. Similar to Zhou et al. (2025), this contribution adds that ethical practices align with the company's operational workflows, whereas unethical practices are less self-regulated. Following this, the findings point to the mechanism by which changes in unethical uses of AI are driven not by individual choice but by incentives from superiors. This builds on Weick's (1995) argument that identity motivation plays a role, making it clear that work-related actions are not seen as indicators of self-identity but of the company's identity.

Findings also uncovered the mechanisms used to deflect responsibility onto companies. Time pressure to perform and productivity incentives are excuses for unethical AI use. This adds to Wijnberg's (2000) findings on CSR responsibility allocation by showing that responsibility allocation may differ significantly across normative and instrumental perspectives, suggesting that separating responsibility by perspective could help determine a consensus on responsibility allocation.

This thesis also uncovered that the lack of AI transparency is seen as ethical. Findings indicate that transparency is a strategic tool companies use to manage individuals' responses to advertisements and is not seen as normatively unethical. Therefore, transparency is a depersonalized action controlled by the company, not individuals. AI's ability to change individuals' minds is understood as similar to typical marketing, as reflected in Weick's (1995) analysis, in that it involves the same actions taken in the past. This adds to Al-kfairy et al. (2024) 's description of AI as a tool capable of misinformation and manipulation; AI is seen as just another unethical tool.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that internal AI usage is judged differently from external applications. Internal or personal AI usage is framed as ethical; nevertheless, external AI usage by others is perceived as a time-effective but lazy shortcut. The effect is most pronounced when the creator of the outcome is unfamiliar. These findings indicate that Zhou et al. 's (2025) findings of the “Slacker” are most pronounced when the slacker is not well-known, meaning coworkers are more exempt from this effect.

The ethical reasoning gap contributes to RQ1 by explaining how AI ethics are filtered and rationalized through a marketing lens. Because marketing strategies involve manipulation, AI actions fall into the same category, allowing responsibility to be deflected onto the company. In essence, individuals create a gap between their personal ethical standards and the company's requirements. Finally, these findings carry implications for RQ2 by demonstrating that responsibility allocation is influenced by self-interest and occurs within both CSR perspectives, as required for justification. Most of the unethical consequences of AI implementation were attributed to companies, with responsibility deflected onto them. Responsibility is only held at the micro (Individual level) when the ethical effects are seen as positive.

5.3 AI is Changing Marketing Workflows, which Affects Satisfaction and Productivity

The present findings demonstrate how integrating AI into marketing workflows changes the nature of everyday tasks, thereby impacting job satisfaction. This shift in satisfaction influences productivity both positively and negatively, depending on how AI is used.

Specifically, the data indicate a tension between using AI-assisted content generation and maintaining creative thinking. When AI is used for creative tasks, an obvious decline in individual satisfaction is observed. This builds on Sætra (2023) by indicating that cognitive atrophy not only reduces the ability for independent thought but also lowers satisfaction with the work. On the other hand, when AI is used strategically, meaning mindfully, the dynamic is shifting, considering AI as a collaborative tool. In this case, satisfaction and productivity increase. Among the findings, positive uses of AI included its role as a teacher to improve skills, making up for skill deficiencies in creative ability, and for ideation or basic, inconsequential tasks. In line with Baptiste (2008), this balance agrees that the positive implementation of AI could lead to higher increases in production.

Furthermore, the evidence points to future organizational uncertainty as a primary cause of decreasing job satisfaction. When there is uncertainty about how AI is integrated into the company, individuals fear their job security, especially when companies lack regulations to protect them. Therefore, companies should take actions to reduce this uncertainty to raise satisfaction during AI integration. Viewed through Weick's (1995) sensemaking framework, this thesis suggests that in the absence of company guidelines, individuals rely on their assumptions to navigate AI usage. Conversely, the findings provided that a predictable future increases satisfaction and boosts productivity. This aligns with Baptiste's (2008) findings, which emphasize that productivity increases when satisfaction increases. Lastly, following Zhou et al. (2025), who connect productivity to company trust, this study adds that when companies have clear AI regulations, professionals' trust would increase, resulting in greater satisfaction with their work.

Besides that, the data suggest that regulations should be developed by young stakeholders, who are often more knowledgeable and capable of creating AI regulations, thereby increasing individuals' satisfaction and trust. This adds to Huh, Nelson, and Russell's (2023) primary

stakeholder assumptions by confirming that more experienced primary stakeholders should guide satisfactory regulations.

Other findings show how marketing professionals address challenges related to misinformation, data privacy, and job loss resulting from AI use differently, as they view them as problems too large for companies to solve. More specifically, reducing societal uncertainty can influence marketers' trust and satisfaction. It was shown that Instrumental control pertains specifically to decreases in trust and satisfaction with the company's external environment, unlike internally. Marketers shift their responsibility for handling ethical obligations to governments in this case, as the origin of this uncertainty is not one that companies can solve.

To begin with, our findings reveal that society's unregulated, extensive use of AI creates uncertainty that harms companies' futures and allows misinformation to damage individuals' relationships. This creates a sense of lack of control, leading to increased fear of job loss, with junior employees worrying about displacement and middle-level and above professionals fearing that their roles might transform beyond recognition (Sætra, 2023). Ultimately, these fears have a profound impact on lower job satisfaction and trust in organizations, signaling that both corporations and governments need to implement regulations to protect individuals and restore stability.

Another finding reveals that marketers trust their own work when using AI, but they have lower trust in content created by others because poor AI use can lead to misinformation and hallucinations. This raises concerns about their privacy and the misinformation AI disseminates, leading to high workplace uncertainty that can lower job satisfaction. However, the data showed that as uncertainty increases, governments are setting regulations to create a safer environment. In this case, the uncertainty is decreasing, and job satisfaction and productivity are increasing. This supports Sætra's (2023) findings that AI has a negative effect on trust in others, but adds that the origin of this distrust is partially rooted in societal uncertainty.

Collectively, these contributions clarify the dynamics of RQ1 by providing that as AI changes workflows, it creates uncertainty that adds barriers in communication and lowers job satisfaction. This lowered satisfaction is seen as a failure of companies to regulate AI implementation, and requires management to resolve. This is the same for the instrumental governmental perspective, as societal-level uncertainty increases uncertainty and dissatisfaction. For RQ2, the findings reveal that professionals view the organizations responsible for resolving the uncertainty by granting young stakeholders the authority to establish clear regulations. In the case of societal-level concerns, responsibility was placed on governments.

6. Conclusion

In the following conclusion the key findings will be restated, with the theoretical contributions following. This includes why the contributions answer the research questions and help achieve the purpose. Managerial implications will follow, finishing off with the

limitations and recommendations for future research. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how marketing professionals make sense of the ethical and CSR implications of using GenAI in marketing and how they assign responsibility for its potential consequences.

6.1 Key Findings

This thesis presents four key findings in the four themes created from the analysis of the interviews. These four patterns begin with the finding that there is a need for macro-level societal control to lower uncertainty and stabilize the implementation of AI. Uncertainty about the future leads to lower satisfaction in areas beyond companies' control, leaving the responsibility with governments. Similar to the first finding, but not the same, is the second finding, which suggests that companies should be regulating the use of AI by placing younger stakeholders, who are more knowledgeable in AI, in control of creating the regulations. This would then increase satisfaction with using AI at work. The third key finding is that AI use is seen as different from other uses, and, as such, controls are required to ensure it is used in good ways. Responsibility is also deflected upwards from the individual towards companies systematically. The final key finding demonstrates how interpersonal relationships have changed, with decreases in trust stemming from perceived AI use. At the same time, the reactions to this use differ by perspective. All findings within this thesis were analyzed utilizing Weick's (1995) sensemaking as the basis for understanding the professionals.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this thesis contributes to the literature in three primary ways. The core contribution of this thesis is the mechanism by which responsibility is shifted between the normative and instrumental perspectives as different aspects come into play. This extends Jamali (2008) by demonstrating not only the importance of both normative and instrumental perspectives in allocating corporate social responsibility, but also the ways in which professionals oscillate between the two. This is a directed, non-random mechanism in which responsibility is deflected upwards to companies whenever profit is involved. This contribution helps achieve the purpose of this thesis by elucidating the mechanism by which marketers make sense of the implications from both perspectives, leading to the allocation of responsibility based on that understanding. As such, this helps answer RQ1 in the same way, whilst also clearly elaborating on how marketers assign responsibility for ethical implementation in relation to profits to governments through both CSR perspectives.

The second contribution to theory is the deflection method, normalized by the work environment to place responsibility for unethical actions on the company. This builds upon Selter, Wagner, and Schramm-Klein's (2022) work on the ethics and morality of AI, adding that the process of interpreting ethical AI implementation involves deflecting responsibility for actions onto companies in marketing. Within this process, the individual's guilt over using AI was removed in a self-serving manner. This thesis also adds to Zhou et al.'s (2025)

“slacker” theory by demonstrating that the perspective on AI use was perceived as positive within the individual and among close stakeholders. On the other hand, the slacker perspective was more dominant when the observed user was far disconnected from the observer. This contribution helps accomplish the paper's purpose by shedding light on the mechanism behind how marketers view the ethical use of AI differently, depending not only on their perspective but also on their familiarity and trust with the user. This directly answers part of RQ1 in the same manner and benefits RQ2 by making the slacker perspective less dominant among close stakeholders and the individual. The gap in ethical identification is also important for RQ2, as it describes how gaps exist in the placement of ethical guilt and, as a result, in the assignment of responsibility.

The third and final theoretical contribution of this thesis demonstrated that responsibility for ethical actions gets directed upwards, adding to Jamali (2008) by suggesting the importance of an instrumental perspective in AI CSR. This upward direction of responsibility allocation is paired with uncertainty in companies' responses, leading to uncertainty in society at large. Governments are therefore placed to stabilize the implementation of AI. This thesis refines the concept of “cognitive atrophy” as proposed by Sætra (2023) with this information by demonstrating the relationship between the drop in productivity and the drop in satisfaction from ethical sources from Wijnberg (2000). This suggests that Sætra’s (2023) cognitive atrophy includes a satisfaction component that explains part of the decline in production and is more complex than initially described.

6.3 Managerial Implications

In this thesis, some pain points have been identified that companies alone might not be able to or are not incentivized to resolve. As such, it is recommended that governments regulate the use of AI to stabilize its implementation in society. In the current situation, AI operating without regulation can lead to decreased satisfaction with it, which may harm its future use. Governments are also recommended to educate and protect their citizens regarding data privacy with AI, in the same way they already do with password protection laws. Warnings can be placed in the same manner as those warning individuals not to share their passwords with others. Governments could also pass new legislation to mitigate the environmental impacts AI can have, thereby reducing its footprint and enabling its continued sustainable implementation and use in society.

This thesis highlights a couple of managerial implications. It is clear that if companies are to change how they interact with AI, it will require people with the right knowledge and incentives. Companies should consider reskilling their employees in AI and its optimal uses. In this way, companies can manage the benefits of AI whilst mitigating the worst of the negatives, particularly cognitive atrophy. By ensuring marketers are utilizing AI in ways that increase satisfaction, they will mitigate some of the loss of independent thinking that comes with high AI use. It is also recommended that these guidelines and regulations be brought out by the younger or more knowledgeable stakeholders who have been utilizing AI for some time, as it has been shown that through some self-regulation, they have learned some of the

best practices on their own. The guidelines should include how to handle data privacy in AI use, especially if this is of high importance to the companies, best practices, and how to communicate with AI. Communication, especially, can affect the relationships employees have with external stakeholders, with whom they will most often interact through AI.

Within this thesis, some advice can also be given to individuals. It is becoming increasingly apparent that self-control and awareness of AI's negative effects are important. Ensuring AI is utilized in ways that benefit rather than take away skills. AI affects more than just the work of its user; it also shapes how others perceive the work and its creator. Making sure these influences are understood can be the difference between AI improving productivity and satisfaction or the opposite.

6.4 Limitations

Overlooking the strengths of this study, some limitations can be utilized to better understand the findings. The context of this thesis is of high importance, as AI implementation is an active area of development; it is unknown how quickly the context may change. This implies that whilst this study was conducted rigorously, the method's repeatability is unknown in the future as AI advancements continue.

Another contextual limitation is that the sample of experts selected for this thesis all had preexisting experience with AI, whilst experiences that differ do not introduce biases due to the sensemaking nature of this thesis; the existence of the knowledge does. It is unknown whether participants with no prior experience with AI or those introduced to AI within the study would have altered the results in meaningful ways.

This thesis focused on the implementation of AI into the marketing field; as such, whilst the findings and contributions may be generalizable to the theory, they are not as generalizable to different population groups or markets. This limitation mostly originates from the nature of a qualitative study, but also from the span of knowledge and experience of the experts selected for the interviews.

6.5 Future Research

This thesis identifies several areas for future research. This thesis demonstrated that “responsibility shift” should be better understood. Stakeholder theory, as Jamali (2008) explains, can be used to hold together the fragmented field of CSR research, yet most CSR research is conducted from one perspective or the other. This thesis has shown the importance of researching the interaction between normative and instrumental CSR, and that they are both necessary for fully understanding ethical responsibility allocation in AI.

Why deflection is committed and how it could be mitigated could be an important research topic as well. Understanding how and why individuals reflect on AI could be due to uncertainty about its use, but further research would be necessary to fully understand this

topic. This also goes hand in hand with the ethical reasoning gap individuals may have. Future research should be conducted to uncover the full mechanisms underlying the “Slacker” mentality proposed by Zhou et al. (2025), as this thesis has shown that there are more contributing factors to its strength and effect than previously understood.

The final area of future research identified in this study is to further understand cognitive atrophy as explained by Sætra (2023). The findings in this thesis show that cognitive atrophy is not only influenced by the quantity of AI use but also by how it affects work satisfaction, suggesting that even more factors may be at play. Understanding how each factor plays a role in cognitive atrophy may be important for identifying best practices in AI and for understanding how AI affects future production and work paradigms.

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AI Declaration

In this study, Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have been used at different stages. As a whole, all written text is the researchers' own work, where AI use has been seen as supportive and as a tool to increase efficiency without generating outputs.

In terms of literature review and methodology, AI has been employed as an assistant. This means that AI was used to help researchers find literature and similar research, but not to write information or read the papers. Specifically, [Scite.AI](#) provided direction on possible articles, and researchers later searched for them in Google Scholar using SJR rankings to ensure quality, and read them.

Furthermore, AI has been used as a refinement tool. In the thesis, AI has been used for ideation and essay planning, for example, proposing possible titles or creating bullet points. [Grammarly.com](#) has been used to refine grammar, spelling, and vocabulary to reduce repetition. However, AI has not been used to write actual text, which can lead to inaccuracies. Besides that, AI provided feedback or advice based on the thesis criteria of the university in order to help researchers meet academic standards and improve research quality.

Appendix

Abbreviations

Term	Definition
AI	Artificial Intelligence
GenAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
TA	Thematic Analysis
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Terminology

Term	Definition
Participant	An individual who provides data or takes part in a study, could be named as interviewee.
Researchers	The people responsible for designing, conducting and analysing the study.
Individuals	Single people viewed separately from a group or refers to the specific subject being studied.
Stakeholder	Individual, group or organisation that influences decisions.
Interviewer(s)	Individuals who facilitate a conversation to gather information and learn more about the interviewee/participant.
Organizations	Group of people working towards a common goal. For example, charity or club or company.
Companies	Legally register business entities that generate profit and are formed by people.

Interview Guide

Interview Preamble

Thank you for participating in our thesis research. To prepare you for the upcoming interview, we would like you to think about a few experiences related to the following themes:

1. Misinformation and deepfakes with AI
2. Data privacy and AI, including copyright
3. Environmental impacts of AI
4. Fears of AI
5. Transparency of AI use
6. Instinctual use of AI instead of independent thinking
7. A change in how you communicate with others due to AI
8. Level of satisfaction with your work since AI implementation

These experiences can be either personally experienced by you at work or in your personal life, and things you have seen or heard second hand. Focus on experiences related to marketing or your work in general, but other experiences are also welcome. The bullet points

are only to give you some ideas of what will be discussed, so there is no need to prepare anything beforehand.

We're happy to have you participating in our research and sharing your insights and personal experiences with us.

Interview Warm-Up Questions

1. To start, could you briefly tell me about your role and what your day-to-day marketing work looks like?
2. When did generative AI first enter your work life, and how did that happen?
3. Was it something your organization introduced, or did you start using it on your own? What was your first reaction?
4. How would you describe your current relationship with an AI tool? Do you rely on them heavily, use them occasionally, or are you still figuring that out?

Sensemaking Questions

Themes	Items	Questions
Societal-Level Ethical Effects Of AI (Macro)	Misinformation	Can you explain to me an encounter you have had where AI has provided a result that included misinformation?
	Data Privacy And Security	Can you tell me about a time where you have been concerned about data privacy with AI? Can you tell me about how you handle security of data within your organization and how you justify it?
	Environmental Impact	Can you recall a time you spoke about sustainability at work, and did AI come up as a subject?
	Trust In CSR	Can you speak about a situation where your trust in an organization has changed after the development of AI?
Organizational-Level Ethical Effects Of AI (Meso)	Job Destruction	How do you justify AI use when through its use, jobs may be destroyed for others?
	Homogenization	If everyone is utilizing AI in marketing how do you balance the homogeneity of AI output, with the benefits of its use?
	Intellectual Property	To what extent do you think about how AI is utilizing data derived from others' work that may have been taken

		without permission?
	Transparency	Can you describe a scenario where transparency with AI has influenced someone's perception of the work?
Individual-Level Ethical Effects Of AI (Micro)	Cognitive Atrophy	Can you tell me of a time you have experienced someone struggle to think or instinctively ask AI before thinking?
	Stewardship	How do you define what good use of AI is and how do you view self control over AI use?
	Internal And External Communication	Can you describe a time where AI has changed the way people communicate with each other? Can you describe a time where AI has changed the way a brand has communicated to a consumer?
	Satisfaction	Can you describe how you felt in a time where your satisfaction has changed due to the implementation of AI into work?

Further Questions:

Can you tell me about how you view the ethics of that encounter?

Share with us a time that you sensed a failure in communication happen? What was it and why do you consider it a failure?

Who would you consider responsible for the failures: AI outputs, marketing professionals or organisations?

Who would you hold accountable for fixing/the success of that encounter?

Closing and Reflective Questions

Looking across everything we've talked about today, what feels like the most unresolved tension for you when it comes to AI and ethics in your work?

Has anything shifted for you during this conversation, any thought that surprised you or that you hadn't quite put into words before?

If you could design the ethical norms around AI use in CSR marketing, what would you want to be non-negotiable?

Is there anything you expected us to ask that we haven't? Or anything you would like to add?

Sample of Coding Table

Examples	Researcher Code	Code	Theme
“...it will diminish because I don't want to speak well with a robot and for them to make announcements and to communicate with people through AI. I still want to see emotions and connection and the expression of the feelings...” Participant 2	Reduce Human Communication	Communi- cation	Changes to interpersonal relationships with internal and external stakeholders
“I have a lot of uh like emails, listen, the emails from my manager, saying that me and <i>Mitchos</i> , which is the nickname she has for chat GPT, have written this.” Participant 5	Lost Coworker Connection		
“So I don't think it changed with my coworkers, with the clients, for sure. Because everything starts with the AI and email...” Participant 7	Lower External Stakeholder Communication		
‘Everything can be very well done, everything perfectly, but the satisfaction should not come from the connection of the client..’ Participant 4	Loss Of Creative Ownership		
‘It's about uniqueness and it's about what makes you feel. Like, I want to feel something when I read, even if it's for the brand of my friends or whatever, like I want to feel..’ Participant 2	Seeking Human Emotion in AI		