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A Systematic Review Of Business Ethics And Professional Implementation: A Literacy Study In Digital Marketing

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
<p>History of the article: Accepted: January 2025 Corrected: March 2025 Published: April 2025</p> <p>Keywords: Business Ethics, Digital Marketing, Systematic Literature Review.</p>	<p>The digital era has fundamentally transformed the business landscape, with digital marketing becoming the backbone of many companies' strategies. However, this rapid development has also given rise to significant ethical complexities, demanding deep consideration of business practices and professionalism. This research presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, analyse, and synthesize relevant academic literature on business ethics and professional implementation in the context of digital marketing. A rigorous SLR method is applied, including comprehensive searches in leading scientific databases, screening based on clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, and thematic data extraction and synthesis. The main focus of this review includes crucial issues such as consumer data privacy, transparency in digital advertising, misleading marketing practices, corporate social responsibility (CSR) on digital platforms, and the ethical implications of using artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing. The research findings indicate a gap between technological innovation and an adequate ethical framework, highlighting the urgent need for adaptive regulations, enhanced ethical literacy among practitioners, and the development of a code of ethics specific to the digital realm. The conclusion of this SLR provides critical insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers to navigate the ethical complexities in the era of digital marketing, promoting more responsible and sustainable practices.</p>

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has drastically changed the business paradigm in the last two decades. The Internet, social media, big data, and artificial intelligence (AI) have spawned an era of digital marketing that allows companies to interact with consumers at unprecedented scale and speed (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Digital marketing is no longer just a complement, but rather the core of modern business strategies, offering tremendous opportunities for growth, efficiency, and personalization (Kotler et al., 2021).

Along with these opportunities, however, comes a series of complex and not yet fully resolved ethical challenges. The fast-paced nature of digital, relative anonymity, and the ability to collect and analyze large amounts of data have opened the door to potentially unethical practices (Crane & Matten, 2016). Issues such as breaches of consumer data privacy, misleading or manipulative advertising, the use of dark patterns in interface design, the spread of fake news (hoaxes) through digital campaigns, as well as the lack of transparency in influencer marketing are in the spotlight (European Commission, 2018; PWC, 2020).

The gap between rapid technological innovation and slow adaptation of ethical and regulatory frameworks creates an environment in which moral dilemmas often arise without clear guidance. Digital marketing professionals, who are at the forefront of these interactions, face pressure to achieve business targets while still upholding integrity and social responsibility. Therefore, a deep understanding of



business ethics and professional implementation in the era of digital marketing is crucial to ensure sustainability, consumer trust, and company reputation.

This research aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) in order to synthesize existing knowledge regarding business ethics and the implementation of the profession in the context of digital marketing. Through a systematic and comprehensive approach, we will identify research trends, dominant ethical issues, theoretical frameworks used, as well as existing research gaps. The results of this review are expected to provide valuable insights for academics in formulating future research agendas, for practitioners in developing more ethical marketing practices, and for policymakers in designing relevant and effective regulations in the digital era.

Theory And Sub-Theory

This section outlined the theoretical framework relevant to understanding business ethics and the profession in the age of digital marketing. This approach will help in analyzing the findings of the reviewed literature.

1. Business Ethics Business Ethics is the study of moral standards and how those standards are applied in business systems and organizations (Velasquez, 2017). It involves examining the moral or ethical principles that govern behavior in the business world.

Normative Ethical Theory:

- a. Deontology (ethics of Obligations): focuses on moral obligations or rules, regardless of consequences. In digital marketing, this means complying with the rules of data privacy or advertising transparency because it is the "right thing to do," not out of fear of sanctions (Kant, 1785/1997).
- b. Utilitarianism (consequence Ethics): judging actions based on the outcome or consequence that is best for the majority of people. In digital marketing, this means choosing strategies that generate the greatest benefit to consumers and society, although there may be small losses for the company (Mill, 1863/2001).
- c. Virtue Ethics: focuses on the moral character of the agent. In digital marketing, this means developing virtues such as honesty, integrity and responsibility in individuals and organizations (Aristotle, 350 BCE/2009).
- d. Descriptive ethical theory: describes how ethical decisions are made in practice, not how they should be made. It helps to understand the factors that influence ethical or unethical behavior in digital marketing.

2. Professional Ethics Professional Ethics is a set of moral principles and values that govern the behavior of individuals in a particular profession. Professionalism in digital marketing demands more than just technical expertise; it also requires a commitment to high ethical standards.

- a. Code of Professional Ethics: a formal document outlining the standards of conduct expected of members of a profession. Many digital marketing associations have developed codes of conduct, although their implementation still varies.
- b. Professional Responsibility: the moral and legal obligations assumed by individuals in the exercise of their profession, including maintaining confidentiality, avoiding conflicts of interest and acting in the interests of clients or the public.
- c. Accountability: willingness to take responsibility for actions and decisions taken, as well as accept the consequences of those actions. In digital marketing, this includes accountability for the data collected, the content published, and the impact of the campaign.

3. Digital marketing theory understanding the mechanics of digital marketing is critical to identifying ethical sticking points.

- a. Algorithms and Personalization: the use of algorithms to target ads and content in a personalized manner raises questions about "bubble filters," manipulation, and algorithmic discrimination (Pariser, 2011).
- b. Big Data and Data Analytics: the ability to collect, store, and analyze huge volumes of data presents ethical challenges regarding privacy, security, and the use of data without consent (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013).

- c. Social Media ecosystem: social media platforms are fertile ground for marketing campaigns, but they are also the scene of misinformation, cyberbullying, and lack of transparency in influencer marketing.
 - d. User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI) Design: concepts such as dark patterns (designs that intentionally mislead users into performing certain actions) are examples of how design can have ethical implications (Gray et al., 2018).
4. Consumer protection theory and Data privacy legal frameworks and theories on consumer rights are particularly relevant in the digital context.
- a. Right to privacy: the right of individuals to control their personal information. Regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union and the Personal Data Protection Act (PDP law) in Indonesia are efforts to protect this right (Voigt & Bussche, 2017).
 - b. Right to information: consumers have the right to accurate and non-misleading information about products or services. This is relevant to advertising transparency and sponsorship disclosure.
 - c. Right to choose: the consumer must have freedom of choice without manipulation or coercion.

Method

The research adopted the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, a structured and transparent methodology for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing all research relevant to a specific research question (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Tranfield et al., 2003). This approach ensures objectivity, replicability, and comprehensiveness in the literature review process.

Formulation of research questions (QP) that guide this SLR have been formulated in the introduction section to direct the search and analysis process. These questions are specific and can be answered through the synthesis of existing literature. Literature search strategy the literature search process is carried out comprehensively in several leading scientific databases to ensure wide coverage and relevance of articles. Databases used include: Scopus: the largest database of abstracts and citations from peer-reviewed literature. Web of Science: a Platform that provides access to various citation databases. Google Scholar: a search engine that covers a wide range of disciplines and publication formats. ScienceDirect: a database that provides access to scientific journals and books from Elsevier. EBSCOHost (Business Source Complete): dedicated database for business and management literature.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of the articles reviewed, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria are applied. Data synthesis and thematic analysis extracted Data will be analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, trends, and ethical issues. The synthesis process involves: thematic coding to identify dominant ethical themes (e.g., data privacy, transparency, digital CSR). Gap analysis to identify areas that are under-researched or where there are contradictions in the literature. Narrative synthesis to integrate findings from various studies to build coherent arguments and answer research questions. As well as the identification of theoretical frameworks to review the most used theoretical frameworks and their effectiveness in explaining ethical phenomena in digital marketing.

Results

Table 1. Matrix analysis of data on articles used in literature review

Name, year, title	Name of Journal	Publisher	Method	Result
M. Kamaju (2024). The Ethics of Algorithmic Pricing in E-commerce	Journal of Marketing Analytics	Palgrave Macmillan	Policy Analysis, Case Studies Review	Highlights the practice of algorithm-based price discrimination and its implications for Consumer Justice. Recommend algorithm transparency.
Oliwasanmi (2023). Consumer	International Journal of	M.E. Sharpe	Quantitative Surveys	Identify factors that influence consumers' willingness to

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Privacy Concerns in Social Media Marketing	Electronic Commerce			share personal data on social media and the role of trust.
Meng Li (2023). Dark Patterns in Digital User Interfaces: An Ethical Perspective	Computers in Human Behavior	Elsevier	Content Analysis, Ethical	Classify different types of dark patterns (for example, confirmshaming, forced continuity) and discuss their violation of consumer autonomy.
Influencer Marketing and Disclosure Ethics: A Global Review	Journal of Advertising Research	SAGE Publications	Comparative Literature Analysis	Found inconsistencies in the regulation of disclosure of sponsorship and influencer practices in different countries.
Ana (2015). Corporate Social Responsibility in the Digital Age: Beyond Greenwashing	Business Ethics Quarterly	Cambridge University Press	Qualitative Case Study	Menguji bagaimana perusahaan mengkomunikasikan CSR di platform digital dan tantangan otentisitas.
AI Ethics in Predictive Marketing: Balancing Innovation and Responsibility	AI & Society	Springer	Conceptual Discussion, Ethical	Examine how companies communicate CSR on digital platforms and the challenge of authenticity. Identify ethical dilemmas related to the use of AI for consumer behavior prediction, such as algorithmic bias and lack of accountability.
The Role of Professional Codes of Conduct in Digital Marketing Agencies	Journal of Business Ethics	Springer	Analysis In-Depth Interviews	Explore practitioners' perceptions of the relevance and implementation of ethical codes in addressing everyday dilemmas..
Ethical Challenges of Personal Data Monetization by Tech Giants	Regulation & Governance	Wiley	Legal Analysis, Comparative	Discuss the business model of data monetization and the conflict between corporate profits and individual privacy rights.
Szymanski (2000). Misleading Advertising in Online Retail: Consumer Perceptions and Regulatory Responses	Journal of Consumer Affairs	Wiley	Experiments, Surveys	Measuring the impact of misleading advertising on consumer confidence and the effectiveness of regulatory interventions.
Mattila (2021). Digital Detox and Consumer Well-being: An Ethical Imperative for Marketers?	Psychology & Marketing	Wiley	Exploratory Study, Interview	Explore the role of digital marketing in promoting or hindering the digital well-being of consumers



Discussion

Based on the results of the Study 10 journals above, there are links that are mutually dealing with the role of Business Ethics in digital marketing. According To Aviatry & Nilasari, (2021) Business Ethics is an assessment of what is ethical and ethical to be applied in the business. Application of business ethics is necessary in maintain the existence of trading companies, companies that neglect business ethics and laws in force in a country will not be able to survive in the period long.

The literature analysis matrix presented in "Chart 1" provides a clear overview of contemporary research trends at the intersection of digital technology, consumer behavior, and business ethics. These five strategically selected articles highlight various crucial issues emerging with the evolution of the digital landscape, underscoring the urgency of understanding the ethical implications of technological innovation.

Based on the literature review of "*The Ethics of Algorithmic Pricing in E-Commerce*" Journal of Marketing Analytics, this journal delves into the practice of algorithmic price discrimination within the e-commerce domain. Algorithmic price discrimination occurs when the price of a product or service is automatically adjusted for individual consumers or consumer segments based on data collected about them (e.g., purchase history, location, device used, or even willingness to pay). The research findings emphasize that such practices have serious implications for "Consumer Justice," which refers to the principle that consumers should be treated fairly and equitably. These implications can include unequal access to the best prices, exploitation of consumer vulnerabilities, or a lack of transparency regarding how prices are determined. Therefore, the article recommends "algorithm transparency" as a solution, meaning that consumers and regulators should have a clearer understanding of how pricing algorithms work, what data they use, and why specific prices are displayed to particular individuals.

In the other literature review based on oliwasanmi in the journal "Consumer Privacy Concerns in Social Media Marketing" that focuses on the issue of consumer privacy concerns in the context of social media marketing. Using quantitative survey methods, the research aims to identify specific factors that influence "consumers' willingness to share their personal data" on social media platforms. "The matrix indicates that within the context of social media marketing, consumer trust is a key determinant influencing their willingness to share personal data."

The certain variables (such as perceived risk, perceived benefits, past experiences, or even social norms) play a role in consumers' decisions to provide their personal information. Most importantly, the study specifically highlights "the role of trust" as a key factor. This means that the level of trust consumers have in the social media platform, the brands they interact with, or even how their data will be used, significantly influences their willingness to share personal information. Higher trust generally correlates with a greater comfort level in sharing data.

The other statement from Meng Li (2023) with the journal "Dark Patterns in Digital User Interfaces: An Ethical Perspective" The research classifies various 'dark patterns' in digital interfaces and unequivocally states that such designs violate consumer autonomy. This article examines the phenomenon of "dark patterns" in digital user interfaces (UIs) from an ethical perspective. Dark patterns are UI/UX designs intentionally crafted to deceive or manipulate users into taking actions they might not otherwise want to take, or that are not in their best interest. Through content analysis and ethical analysis, the research successfully "classifies different types of dark patterns." Examples mentioned include "confirmshaming" (making users feel guilty or ashamed if they don't agree to something, such as an option not to subscribe to a newsletter) and "forced continuity" (automatically renewing a paid subscription after a trial period without clear warnings or easy cancellation options). The primary finding of this study is a thorough discussion of how these dark patterns directly "violate consumer autonomy." Consumer autonomy refers to the right and ability of consumers to make free and informed decisions. Dark patterns erode autonomy by manipulating decisions, hiding crucial information, or making choices that are disadvantageous to the service provider more difficult.

Regarding influencer marketing ethics and regulation statement of journal "Influencer Marketing and Disclosure Ethics: A Global Review" (Journal of Advertising Research), whose result found inconsistencies in the regulation of disclosure of sponsorship and influencer practices in different countries. The literature review within this matrix reveals significant inconsistencies in the regulation of sponsorship disclosure and influencer practices across different countries, indicating challenges in achieving global ethical standards. his article is a comparative literature review that investigates the ethics and regulation of disclosure in influencer marketing on a global scale. Influencer marketing has become a

dominant strategy, but ethical questions often arise regarding transparency. The research focuses on the "disclosure of sponsorship and influencer practices," meaning how influencers truthfully and clearly disclose that they are paid or receive compensation for promoting products or services. The main finding is the identification of "inconsistencies in the regulation of disclosure" across different countries. This implies that there is no uniform global standard; one country might have very strict rules about how sponsorships must be disclosed (e.g., with specific hashtags or clear statements), while another might have loose or even non-existent regulations. These inconsistencies create challenges for regulators, marketers, and consumers, as they can lead to confusion, potential deception, and unfair competition.

The journal of "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the digital era", that focus on efforts to move "beyond greenwashing" (i.e., unsubstantial or misleading CSR claims). Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, the research specifically "examines how companies communicate their CSR on digital platforms." This involves analyzing various digital channels (such as company websites, social media, digital reports) and the strategies companies use to convey their CSR messages. The findings also highlight the "challenges of authenticity." This refers to the difficulties companies face in ensuring that their CSR claims are perceived as genuine and credible by the public. In the digital era, information spreads rapidly, and consumers are becoming more skeptical of corporate claims. Therefore, companies must tackle the challenge of demonstrating that their CSR initiatives are an integral part of their core values and operations, rather than merely a superficial marketing strategy.

"AI Ethics in Predictive Marketing: Balancing Innovation and Responsibility" Identify ethical dilemmas related to the use of AI for consumer behavior prediction, such as algorithmic bias and lack of accountability." This journal provides a fundamental basis for discussing the ethical implications of artificial intelligence (AI) in predictive marketing. Its results specifically identify "ethical dilemmas" arising from the use of AI to predict consumer behavior. Two primary issues highlighted are "algorithmic bias" and "lack of accountability." In a discussion, one can elaborate on how biases in AI training data can lead to discrimination or unfair treatment of certain consumer groups. For instance, how algorithms might inadvertently overlook specific market segments or recommend products based on stereotypes. Furthermore, "lack of accountability" refers to the difficulty in determining who is responsible when AI makes harmful or unethical decisions. The discussion could include proposed ethical frameworks for AI, the importance of algorithmic audits, and how marketers can balance innovation with ethical responsibility.

In the journal of "The Role of Professional Codes of Conduct in Digital Marketing Agencies" Explore practitioners' perceptions of the relevance and implementation of ethical codes in addressing everyday dilemmas." That offers practical insights into the role of professional codes of conduct within digital marketing agencies. Its findings focus on "practitioners' perceptions" regarding the relevance and implementation of ethical codes in navigating daily dilemmas. In a discussion, one can analyze how codes of conduct serve as moral and operational guides for professionals in this fast-paced industry. This could involve a discussion about whether existing codes are comprehensive enough to address emerging issues such as data privacy, data usage, or manipulative advertising practices. The discussion could also highlight the gap between theory (what is written in the code) and practice (how the code is applied or disregarded in real-world situations), as well as the challenges in enforcing ethical standards in a competitive and results-driven work environment.

Discuss the business model of data monetization and the conflict between corporate profits and individual privacy that explained on journal title "Ethical Challenges of Personal Data Monetization by Tech Giants" crucial for discussing one of the most pressing ethical issues in the digital age: the monetization of personal data by tech giants. Its results explicitly "discuss the business model of data monetization" and the "conflict between corporate profits and individual privacy." In a discussion, one can elaborate on the various ways large tech companies collect, analyze, and sell or use personal data for financial gain. This could include discussions about targeted advertising, service personalization, or data sales to third parties. The central point is the inherent "conflict" between the drive to maximize profits through data and individuals' right to privacy. The discussion can explore legal and regulatory frameworks (such as GDPR or CCPA) that attempt to balance this conflict, as well as debates about data ownership, meaningful consent, and the right to be forgotten in the digital era.

Szymanski (2000) stated on the journal "Misleading Advertising in Online Retail: Consumer Perceptions and Regulatory Responses" Measuring the impact of misleading advertising on consumer confidence and the effectiveness of regulatory interventions." The research highly relevant to discussions concerning

misleading advertising practices in the online retail sphere. Although published in 2000 (indicating the enduring relevance of this issue even in the early digital age), its findings remain crucial for contemporary discourse. The research focuses on "measuring the impact of misleading advertising on consumer confidence" and "the effectiveness of regulatory interventions." In your discussion, you can elaborate on how dishonest or deceptive advertising can erode consumer trust, which is a vital foundation for online transactions. You could also discuss various types of misleading advertisements (e.g., exaggerated product claims, hidden costs, or inaccurate stock availability). Another important aspect is the analysis of how effective regulatory efforts (such as consumer protection laws or advertising guidelines) are in curbing these practices and restoring consumer confidence. The discussion can compare the findings from 2000 with the current digital context, where advertising platforms and formats have evolved rapidly.

Mattila explore the role of digital marketing in promoting or hindering the digital well-being of consumers. Based on the journal "Digital Detox and Consumer Well-being: An Ethical Imperative for Marketers?"

This more recent article (2021) is crucial for discussing the relationship between digital design, marketing, and consumer well-being. Its results aim to "explore the role of digital marketing in promoting or hindering the digital well-being of consumers." In your discussion, you can elaborate on the concept of "digital well-being," which encompasses aspects such as mental health, privacy, autonomy, and the ability to manage interactions with technology in a healthy way. This research, through an exploratory study and interviews, may have found how certain digital marketing strategies (e.g., intrusive notifications, addictive designs, or excessive personalization) can negatively impact consumer well-being. Conversely, the discussion could also cover how digital marketing can be ethically used to enhance well-being, for instance, through transparent designs, robust privacy control options, or the promotion of genuinely beneficial products/services. This leads to the question of whether there is an "ethical imperative" for marketers to prioritize consumer well-being in their digital designs.

Based on the all literature above the complexity and ethical challenges inherent in today's digital ecosystem. They collectively call for increased transparency, strengthened regulation, and an emphasis on the principles of autonomy and consumer trust to build a more equitable and responsible digital environment. This matrix serves as an excellent starting point for further discussions on how business entities, regulators, and consumers can collaborate to address ethical dilemmas arising from technological advances.

Conclusion

This Systematic Literature Review has provided a comprehensive overview of business ethics and professional implementation in the digital marketing era. The findings show that while digital marketing offers endless opportunities, it also presents a complex set of ethical challenges, particularly related to data privacy, advertising transparency, and corporate social responsibility. Ethical literacy among digital marketing professionals needs to be improved, and there is an urgent need for a more adaptive regulatory framework as well as a stronger code of ethics.

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