

ETHICS OF AI USE IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Gina Valerina¹, Leonardus Wahono Kurniawan², Veronica Nurma³

Marketing Communication Management

LSPR Institute of Communication & Business

Sudirman Park, Jl. K.H Mas Mansyur, Kav. 35, Jakarta Pusat 10220 Indonesia

E-Mail: givalerina@gmail.com , onarduswk@gmail.com, vnurma@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the ethical challenges in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in marketing communications and identify applicable solutions to address these issues. AI has provided significant benefits in marketing, particularly in terms of personalization, automation, and operational efficiency. However, challenges related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and a lack of transparency in AI use raise significant ethical concerns. This study uses a qualitative approach with literature analysis and in-depth interviews to explore the implementation of AI in various companies. The results indicate that transparency in AI use, responsible data management, and regular algorithm audits are important solutions to maintain ethics in AI-based marketing communications. The conclusion of this study is that although AI offers significant opportunities to improve marketing effectiveness, marketers must be careful in handling ethical aspects to maintain consumer trust and avoid negative impacts.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence, ethics, data privacy*

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving digital era, artificial intelligence, commonly known as AI, has become a key technology influencing various aspects of life. AI has become a primary focus in many sectors, including business and marketing. Kumar et al. (2021) stated that artificial intelligence can help companies understand consumer behavior, personalize data and messages, and even automate the marketing process itself. This statement aligns with Sumarni and Ariyani (2023), who stated that artificial intelligence has proven to be a powerful tool in helping companies understand consumer behavior, optimize marketing strategies, and also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing communications. This is evidenced by AI's ability to process large amounts of data, analyze behavioral patterns, and provide personalized recommendations gathered from each user's big data. Therefore, it is not surprising that artificial intelligence can help companies adapt to technology and innovate, enabling them to interact with consumers effectively and efficiently.

Marketing communications, which aim to deliver timely and effective messages to target audiences, are increasingly utilizing artificial intelligence technology. The use of artificial intelligence enables the creation of more personalized and dynamic experiences for consumers (Gede et al., 2024). For example, artificial intelligence algorithms used in digital advertising can filter information about consumers' personal preferences, consumer patterns, and online activities to deliver content more tailored to their interests. In addition to delivering targeted ads and relevant content, customer service chatbots, capable of providing 24/7 automated assistance, are also a supporting aspect of the AI-assisted marketing communications suite. This makes marketing communications more efficient and relevant, which in turn can increase consumer engagement and sales conversions for a product or brand. On the other hand, the increasingly widespread use of artificial intelligence has also raised concerns among various parties, particularly regarding the potential for ethical violations, despite all the convenience it offers. These concerns grow in tandem with the benefits offered by artificial intelligence. Many have identified a number of serious ethical challenges in its use in marketing communications. One frequently highlighted issue concerns data privacy. Artificial intelligence works by collecting, analyzing, and using consumer data on a large scale, which often raises questions about how much personal data can be accessed or processed without violating privacy rights (Santoso, 2023). Beyond

privacy concerns, algorithms are also a key issue in the use of AI in marketing. Big data, processed with the help of artificial intelligence and used as a basis for marketing analysis and targeting, can increase the likelihood of ethical and privacy violations, as algorithms are often trained on historical data that may already contain certain data. This often leads to biases stemming from algorithms. Another potential issue is consumer manipulation, related to AI's ability to identify psychological weaknesses and specific behavioral patterns in individuals (Raharjo et al., 2023). Advanced artificial intelligence algorithms are capable of utilizing data obtained through consumer consumption habits and psychographics to create marketing campaigns designed to exploit individual weaknesses or vulnerabilities. This raises questions about the moral boundaries of applying technology for commercial purposes. The lack of transparency in AI decision-making processes also raises concerns. These challenges raise the urgent need to formulate clear ethical guidelines and regulations for the use of AI in marketing communications. Governments, regulatory bodies, and technology organizations have begun developing frameworks aimed at ensuring the responsible and ethical use of AI. A clear example is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implemented in the European Union. This regulation provides strict rules regarding how personal data must be collected, processed, and used. Furthermore, efforts are underway to develop more transparent and auditable AI, so that consumers and regulatory authorities can verify how decisions are made by AI-designed systems.

In addition to external regulations, companies also need to adopt an ethics-based approach to the development and use of artificial intelligence for marketing purposes. This includes assessing the ethical impact at every stage of AI technology development, from algorithm design to implementation in marketing campaigns. Consumer education and awareness about the use of their shared data are also crucial parts of this solution. Consumers need to be better informed about how shared personal data can be collected in big data and used by AI for various purposes, whether known or unknown. This is expected to enable the public, especially those frequently exposed to technology, to make better decisions and ultimately contribute to protecting their privacy. This study aims to identify challenges and solutions to the use of artificial intelligence in marketing activities. Although several studies have discussed the benefits of AI technology used in marketing, systematically designed studies that integrate ethical dimensions in the Indonesian context are still very limited. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by focusing on issues of privacy, algorithmic bias, and transparency in the application of artificial intelligence, particularly in marketing activities.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology applied in this study is a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the ethical challenges in the use of artificial intelligence, specifically as applied to marketing communications. The researcher conducted a literature analysis to examine various findings and current discussions contained in various research literature, such as journal articles discussing ethical issues, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and transparency in the application of artificial intelligence in the marketing field. This literature analysis is expected to help design a conceptual framework and identify existing research gaps, so that the research can focus on the most relevant and current aspects. This can be found through relevant case studies that are also used to provide real-life illustrations of the ethical challenges faced in the application of artificial intelligence in marketing systems.

RESEARCH RESULT

Based on the research results obtained, it is known that the transformation found in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) is considered very significant, especially in marketing communications activities, particularly in terms of improving consumer personalization and operational efficiency. Artificial intelligence (AI) is used in various ways, including the implementation of chatbots, product recommendation systems, and analyzing customer behavior to deliver messages tailored to each individual's needs (Utami et al., 2023). Companies that adopt AI in marketing communications are able to significantly increase customer engagement. For example, chatbots developed with artificial intelligence are not only able to respond to customer inquiries in real-time but can also collect important data used for further personalization in future interactions. This has been shown to increase customer retention and satisfaction (Pramesti, 2024).

A. Ethical Challenges in the Use of AI

The use of AI in marketing is not without challenges regarding data privacy and algorithmic bias (Oktaviani et al., 2024). Artificial intelligence relies on vast amounts of customer data to generate accurate and relevant predictions. However, this data collection often occurs without full customer consent, raising issues related to transparency and privacy (Harahap et al., 2024a). This research identified potential biases in the algorithms used by

AI systems. The data used to train the algorithms could contain biases that lead to unfair marketing processes, such as prioritizing one demographic group over another (Harahap et al., 2024).

Transparency and Consumer Trust

Transparency in the use of AI is a key issue in this research. Many customers are unaware that they are interacting with AI in the marketing process, such as when using chatbots or receiving product recommendations. This lack of transparency can lead to an erosion of customer trust in brands (Garbo & Latifah, 2022). Some companies are starting to implement greater transparency policies, such as notifying customers when they interact with AI. Companies that implement this approach report increased customer trust, which has a positive impact on loyalty and retention (Erik Sibarani et al., 2024).

The Benefits of AI in Improving Personalization

One of the benefits of AI identified in this study is its ability to provide highly targeted personalization. Through customer data analysis, AI can predict individual preferences and tailor marketing content to their needs. This increases message relevance and allows companies to deliver more engaging and personalized offers to target audiences (Yacob & Sabrina, 2024). This personalization has been shown to improve conversion rates and the overall user experience, as customers feel more connected to the brand because the messages they receive are more relevant and aligned with their preferences.

Solutions to Ethical Challenges

Addressing the ethical challenges in the use of AI, this study suggests several practical solutions:

Increased Transparency: Companies should be more transparent about the use of AI in marketing interactions with customers. One way to do this is by providing clear notice to customers about when and how AI is used in their interactions (Indah Permata et al., 2023). **Responsible Data Management:** Companies should update their privacy policies and ensure that data collected from customers is used ethically and transparently. This includes seeking explicit consent from customers before their data is used. **Regular Algorithm Audits:** To minimize bias, companies should conduct audits of the AI algorithms used to ensure that the system is operating fairly and non-discriminatory. These audits also evaluate the overall performance of the AI in terms of ethics and effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

This research shows that the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in marketing communications offers significant opportunities, but also presents ethical challenges that need to be addressed. This discussion will focus on three main aspects raised in the research: the benefits of AI, ethical challenges, and solutions to overcome these challenges. **Benefits of AI in Marketing Communications:** AI has proven to be a highly effective tool in improving personalization and operational efficiency in marketing (Amira, 2023). Using algorithms that can process big data, AI enables companies to understand customer preferences more deeply and respond to their needs in a timely manner. **More Effective Personalization:** One of the key benefits of AI is its ability to provide highly targeted personalization. AI enables companies to deliver marketing messages tailored to individual customer preferences and behaviors, which increases conversion rates and customer loyalty. This also has an impact on improving the customer experience because they feel more cared for (Hermansyah & Astini, 2024). **Efficiency in Real-Time Communication:** AI, particularly in the form of chatbots, allows companies to respond to customer inquiries in real time without direct human involvement. This not only saves resources but also speeds up the communication process with customers, ultimately increasing their satisfaction (Susi et al., 2023).

Ethical Challenges in the Use of AI

While AI brings many benefits, this research also reveals some significant ethical challenges in its implementation. To examine the ethical challenges that arise in the use of AI in marketing communications, the Value-Sensitive Design (VSD) approach can be used as an analytical framework. This approach emphasizes the importance of incorporating human values such as privacy, fairness, and autonomy into the technology design and implementation process (Friedman, Kahn, & Borning, 2006). In the context of AI-based marketing, VSD requires companies to not only pursue efficiency and personalization but also consider the social and ethical impacts of algorithm use on consumers. **Data Privacy:** One key issue that has emerged is how companies manage customer data used by AI. Excessive data collection without explicit consent can lead to privacy violations, ultimately undermining consumer trust in brands (Rosidin et al., 2024). The opaque use of AI, where consumers are unaware that their data is being used to predict behavior, creates serious ethical issues. **Algorithmic Bias:** Another challenge is the potential for bias in AI algorithms. The data used to train algorithms often reflects historical biases that can produce unfair or discriminatory outcomes (Hasanah, 2024). **Lack of Transparency:** Many customers are unaware that they are

interacting with AI, whether in the form of chatbots or recommendation systems. This lack of transparency creates trust issues, where customers feel manipulated or monitored without their knowledge. Transparency in the use of AI is essential to maintaining customer trust (Rosidin et al., 2024).

Solutions to Address Ethical Challenges

To address these challenges, this study identifies several solutions that companies can implement. Transparency in AI Use: One important step companies can take is to increase transparency regarding how and when AI is used in marketing interactions. Providing customers with clear information that they are interacting with an AI system, such as a chatbot, will help create a more honest and open relationship between companies and consumers (Hasanah, 2024). Responsible Data Management: Companies should develop stricter and more responsible data management policies. The collection and use of customer data should be done with clear consent, and companies should ensure that the data is used only for approved purposes (B et al., 2024). This step will help reduce the risk of privacy breaches and build greater consumer trust (Rosidin et al., 2024).

Regular Algorithm Audits: To reduce the risk of bias, companies need to conduct regular audits of the algorithms used in marketing. These audits aim to ensure that the algorithms do not make discriminatory decisions and that the data used has been processed fairly. This is crucial for AI to deliver more accurate and ethical results in the long term. However, some business people and technology developers argue that implementing full transparency in AI systems can pose business risks, such as the loss of competitive advantage due to the disclosure of algorithm details (Ananny & Crawford, 2018). Furthermore, regular algorithm audits, while important, can increase operational costs, especially for small and medium-sized companies with limited resources. Therefore, an ethical approach to AI in marketing requires not only a moral commitment but also a pragmatic policy that considers the balance between transparency, cost, and company competitiveness (Jobin et al., 2019).

Balance between Automation and Human Touch

While AI offers significant efficiencies through automation, it's crucial to maintain human interaction in some aspects of marketing. Customers still value a personal touch, and in some cases, human interaction is more effective in building emotional connections with consumers (Yunnisa et al., 2024). Therefore, companies must find a balance between automation and human involvement to achieve optimal results.

Implications for the Future of AI in Marketing

AI has enormous potential to continue transforming and optimizing marketing communications in the future. In Indonesia, challenges related to infrastructure and skills gaps persist, but the potential for effective AI utilization is enormous. With the right use, AI can help companies improve efficiency, personalization, and build long-term relationships with consumers.

PRACTICAL AND ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF AI IN MARKETING

This research highlights the importance of applying ethical principles to AI-based marketing communications. In the future, challenges related to AI ethics are expected to become increasingly complex as technologies such as predictive algorithms, machine learning, and deep learning advance. Therefore, it is crucial for marketers, technology developers, and regulators in Indonesia to proactively develop adaptive ethical guidelines, not only responsive to current challenges but also anticipating future technological dynamics. Practically, companies need to consider establishing a dedicated team or division tasked with managing digital ethics, particularly regarding the use of AI in marketing. This step will enable companies to quickly respond to emerging ethical issues while building long-term trust with consumers. From an academic perspective, further research is needed to explore the socio-cultural impacts of AI implementation in Indonesia, particularly given the diversity of society and the persistent inequality in access to technology. Furthermore, studies specifically evaluating the effectiveness of various regulatory approaches, such as limited transparency or principle-based regulation, are needed to identify the best regulatory model relevant to the Indonesian context. Therefore, this research not only provides theoretical insights but also opens the door for more specific and targeted follow-up research to address future challenges in AI-based marketing.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the use of AI in marketing communications brings significant benefits in the form of message personalization, operational efficiency, and increased customer engagement. However, these benefits come with significant ethical challenges, particularly related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the lack of transparency in AI systems. Practical solutions such as limited transparency, responsible data management, and

regular algorithm audits have proven relevant for maintaining consumer trust while mitigating ethical risks. Specifically, this research emphasizes the importance of integrating ethical principles into the design and implementation of AI technology from an early stage, as suggested by the Value Sensitive Design approach. An important practical implication of this research is the need for companies, regulators, and academics to continue collaborating to create flexible guidelines and regulations that are relevant to technological developments and market conditions in Indonesia. Thus, this research not only provides academic insights into the ethical challenges and solutions in the use of AI in marketing but also offers a foundation for stakeholders in making sustainable and responsible strategic policies. Future research is expected to further explore the long-term impact of various AI ethics policies in the context of digital marketing in Indonesia.

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