



## The human factor in digital marketing: not all so digital

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates how the use of social media has influenced the marketing sector globally. By highlighting the human factor-related risks and caveats inherent in digital marketing, this paper suggests the strategy that firms and multinational corporations can apply to mitigate them, and thus cautiously make use of the myriad of benefits ‘hidden’ behind the unexploited potential of digital marketing. This paper is a research project that draws from secondary data gathered in a manner enabling a critical examination and insight into issues and processes specific to digital marketing today. A nested analysis of selected case studies complements the discussion. Apart from its academic merit, this research will be of great value to practitioners as it will help them understand the potential risks and threats posed by the facilitation of social media at the corporate level. It will offer a presentation of the plethora of benefits that it entails, and consequently suggest a strategy that will help corporations get the most out of these versatile platforms.

**Keywords:** digital marketing, marketing strategy, customer relationship.

**JEL Classification:** M310.

### 1. Introduction

In today’s international business environment, where changes occur more quickly, organizations are expected to adapt accordingly. A company’s strategic thinking is influenced by the external environment in which it operates. That environment is characterized by complex processes and developments with no particular stability (Vidovic, 2020). The focus of most companies changes from product orientation to marketing orientation (Vidovic, 2020). However, the success of a product is still measured by the volume of sales or its participation/share of

the market (Cochrane, 2017; Engel, Roger, & Paul, 2014). Today though, the situation is entirely different.

The success of a product is assessed by its sales volume or its engagement in the market (Vidovic, 2020). As digital marketing has evolved into being more data-driven, three different ‘waves’ of consumer online experiences have emerged (Allen, 2016). Going from a business card to a website was the first wave of digital marketing (Allen, 2016). Then there was a wide use of web commercials. This was the unsightly start of the digital era. Companies and consumers witnessed the good, the terrible and the downright ugly. The emergence of social media content and analytics ushered in the second wave of digital marketing brought more reach and scientific rigor to marketing (Allen, 2016). Efforts may now be tested and optimized at almost any scale. The concept of people as a significant feature of business and marketing was reintroduced in this second wave, but major obstacles remained between the human element and the overarching desire to scale and quantify (Bucea-Manea-Tonis & Gurgu, 2018). Today’s businesses are on the verge of entering the third wave of digital marketing.

The nature of business interactions is reexamined in this third phase. In this phase, marketing seeks to recognize and appreciate both the humanity of consumers and the humanity of solution providers. It aims to include the power of human connections across the whole experience associated with each brand, including digital interactions. The third wave also focuses on establishing trust and respect through highly personalized digital encounters. Yet, there have been lot of cases in which the human factor has proved to be, at least, problematic in the conduction of business worldwide (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021).

The research strategy the author chose to go for in order to provide a solution to the problem, is the Design Science Framework. The goal of design science is to create an artifact that uses legitimate information to aid in problem resolution in a specific environment, either directly (through a model) or indirectly (by instruction) (vom Brocke, Hevner, & Maedche, 2020). In practice, it attempts to foster constructive innovation that addresses a real-world issue, where theory contributes through the discipline of application (vom Brocke, Hevner, & Maedche, 2020). Extensive research is necessary during the design science phases. Many empirical research approaches describe, explain, and forecast the world and strive to explain the phenomena independent of human activity, but design science goes further by pursuing change, enhancement, and the development of new worlds using methodologies, systems, concepts, models, and specifications (vom Brocke, Hevner, & Maedche, 2020). Thus, in this paper,

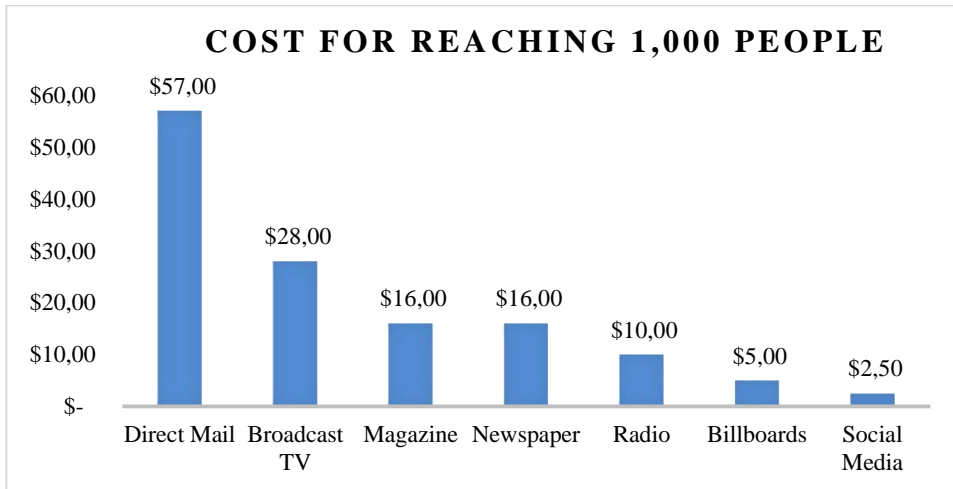
the author first identified the problem that human interference may cause to digital marketing. Then, he contextualized it by researching what the literature says, mapped it, and made the problem tangible by focusing on several examples of mistakes associated with this problem. The author then further explored it by examining its causes and finally suggested how to resolve it by offering a mitigation strategy.

For this reason, the objective of this research is to investigate the human factor in the process of conducting digital marketing, suggest a strategy by the means of which firms and multinational corporations can mitigate the threats it may entail, and cautiously make use of the myriad of benefits, 'hidden' behind its unexploited potential. To this end, the argument in this research is structured as follows: first, there is a literature review presenting the role of digital marketing in the business sector as well as an analysis of the influence that social media have on each business entity. After that, characteristic examples of digital marketing failures are elaborated. Following that, the causes of such kind of failures are investigated. Finally, possible solutions as well as a mitigation strategy of the issue are discussed. Conclusions and recommendations will follow.

## **2. Digital media in the era of social media: a literature review**

In this section, the author will present the role of digital marketing in the business sector nowadays while simultaneously focusing on the influence that social media have on every part of a business entity. To this end, the analysis of various applications of digital marketing and their effects on the conduction of business, as well as a presentation of the history behind social media, their use nowadays, and the extent to which they can prove to be an impartial tool of any company's marketing strategy will be found.

Digital marketing enables the development of successful businesses in ways that were previously unattainable for small businesses, and it is increasingly significant as a source of competitive advantage in both business-to-consumer and business-to-business sectors (Nikunen et al., 2017). Below there is a graph describing the fundamental change that social media has brought about to the industry in terms of their cost (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Costs associated with different marketing channels to reach 1,000 people

Source: LYFE (2017).

Furthermore, it is also vital to highlight the impact of the new digital marketing technologies on the five essential characteristics of customer relationship development that is mentioned in the digital marketing model (Kierzkowski et al., 1996). These factors include recruiting consumers, attracting their attention and engagement, maintaining customers, discovering their preferences, and relating to them (Nikunen et al., 2017). Digital marketing is the future, and nearly every firm must adapt to it (Ismaili, 2020). These promises of an automated digital future, however, raise certain concerns about the role of humans in it. As many people have observed, technology sadly can mean that humans are no longer required for the occupations they once held (Rogers, 2017). Yet, the advancement of digital marketing from the first to the second wave has altered the way we communicate with customers. People progressed from a predominantly vendor-driven consumer-vendor relationship to a moment when the Internet returned some power to consumers (Cochrane, 2017). Consumers may conduct product research and read product reviews without having to speak with a salesperson. Following that, the second wave of digital marketing increased our capacity to learn and grow (Cochrane, 2017). However, it harmed their capacity to develop genuine and suitable human relationships with our consumers based on understanding, empathy, ethics, and civility (Ismaili, 2020). This has resulted in the

third wave of digital marketing experience – a moment to rebalance consumer-vendor connections.

In the third wave of digital marketing the emphasis is no longer just on client acquisition, but also on the complete range of pre- and post-sale customer interactions (Cochrane, 2017). The economy is now the technology. Companies that innovate throughout the customer experience quickly will win the race for digital expertise (Allen, 2016). This wave aims to focus on the three following areas: people, their trust and the experience. There are two types of people we work with in business: our coworkers and the people we work for – our clients (Cochrane, 2017). Previously, the growth of technology had shifted the focus away from people towards cold, hard data, straining the consumer-vendor relationship (Allen, 2016). Technology now exists to assist in the creation of a full picture of each consumer in order to behave with appropriate and real empathy and civility. Context is the king when it comes to creating any connection; as a result, organizations must ensure that they are personalizing experiences to individuals in order to give what customers want at the precise moment they need it (Bucea-Manea-Tonis & Gurgu, 2018). As a result, companies must understand that customers should be at the center of every corporate decision.

Trust is the foundation of any human connection, particularly the one in which money is traded for value. To develop long-term client loyalty, companies must be clear about customer data, including what data is maintained, where it is held, for how long, and how it is utilized (Goldman et al., 2021). Slavery is a powerful and evocative phrase that describes an appalling violation of fundamental human rights and should not be used lightly (Rogers, 2017). It is related to two separate perceptions of ‘alienation from self’: first, being ‘owned’ as property by a third party, and second, being ‘owned’ in a more casual, contemporary sense, via the erasure of an individual’s capacity to govern one’s own life (Rogers, 2017). This double interpretation of alienation from oneself leads the author to describe self-ownership as having the power to define one’s own existence in both a legal and a less formal sense (Chisnall, 2020). From both viewpoints, it can easily be assumed that the increased trafficking of personal data to offer algorithm-based analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) is allowing a new type of digital servitude with the ability to limit liberty and inflict damage (Chisnall, 2020). Thus, companies should avoid the ‘gray area’ of marketing at all costs when corporations acquire or sell second-party data on unwary customers in order to better target adverts (Bucea-Manea-Tonis & Gurgu, 2018). It is a question of brand integrity, honesty, and ethics. Consumers should and must be able to

control their digital lives and no brand should be connected with depriving their customers of this right.

‘Your brand is your experience, and your experience is your brand’ (Goldman et al., 2021). All of the in-person customer encounters, from online to in-store, must be friendly, informed, and helpful. Every perception of every experience linked with your company, from accessing your website to dealing with a representative in your contact center to entering one of your locations, is part of your brand (Bucea-Manea-Tonis & Gurgu, 2018). Companies must make sure that your brand experiences are bright, current, and gorgeous, and that they can be deployed for websites, smart devices, and staff communication platforms as needed. They should also be certain that they are innovating to keep up with the Internet of Things, creating meaningful mobile experiences, and staying ahead of your consumers (Bucea-Manea-Tonis & Gurgu, 2018). The third wave of digital experience in marketing is about providing a seamless, tailored experience for customers across all channels throughout the year (Cochrane, 2017). With this type of unrestricted access, along with customer power in publicly expressing their experiences, consumer trust and true 1 – to – 1 interactions are critical (Cochrane, 2017). Enterprises that fail to understand this risk will fall behind in today’s competitive business environment (Cochrane, 2017). To that end, it must be understood that social media are an integral part of digital marketing (Cochrane, 2017).

Social media are internet-based programs that enable users to generate and share content as well as interact with one another (Albarran, ed., 2013). The multi-user chatroom program ‘Talkomatic’ was the first social media software ever produced, and it may thus be regarded as the foundation upon which developers ‘built’ the social media platforms we know today (Falk & Drayton, 2015; Andzulis, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2012). The existing platforms have ‘layers’ that ‘permeate’ our daily lives as well as the corporate environment (Mandiberg, ed., 2012). Such ‘penetration’ has led to various modifications in how business is conducted at practically every level of a company’s structure and across the economy. However, it is important to highlight that such shifts have an instant and global impact thanks to the Internet of Things (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011). As a consequence of these advancements, the world has accepted and absorbed a variety of new technologies, which have significantly changed the processes and procedures used in legal, marketing, human resources, and many other departments of every firm (Goldman et al., 2021). Examples include the use of social media platforms as promotional tools, the creation of purpose-specific and

business-focused platforms that serve as a type of electronic labor market (LinkedIn), and the use of social media platforms as the primary (or even sole) means of communication between all members of a business entity (Ismaili, 2020). All of these apps are progressively becoming important for the execution of specific corporate activities, necessitating the usage of social media (Lakshminarayan & Yin, 2020).

Being essential for something can mean having immense power. The huge number of users that they accommodate, and more precisely the data linked to them, are the basis of their ‘power’ culminating in the impact that social media platforms now hold (Zecevic, Stojanovic, & Cudan, 2019; Singh, Lehnert, & Bostick, 2012). The data received from the aforementioned user is gathered via the platforms’ ability to gather information about their personality, attributes, and interests in general, resulting in the construction of a ‘pool of information’ (Pan et al., 2017). This information allows for the categorization of users, and hence customers, based on a set of shared characteristics (Pan et al., 2017). Regardless of how social media platforms function, their ability to increase sales and, in general, positively contribute to the operations of worldwide businesses is undeniable (Lakshminarayan & Yin, 2020). It is important to note, however, that this is only true if social media platforms are used correctly and wisely.

The correct use of social media platforms can be extremely advantageous to the marketing industry. Social media marketing can be defined as the use of social media with the aim to sell a company’s services and goods (Miller et al., 2016). The aforementioned ‘pool of data’ which allows marketers to confine the audience of their adverts to only the segment that is truly interested in a given product, is an illustration of their helpful nature (Zhang et al., 2017). Furthermore, owing to their speed and cooperative capabilities, social media platforms have established themselves as one of the primary channels of communication between customer-firm and firm-firm interactions (Nayak, Nayak, & Jena, 2020). Additionally, social media marketing allows businesses to communicate with existing and potential customers in innovative ways while also promoting their mission and culture (Miller et al., 2016). These strategies have decreased the time and effort necessary to promote unity and belonging among consumers, which was previously the product of enterprises’ annual efforts (Gausis, 2017). The basis for this sense of unity is emphasized even more by the fact that it may allow for the development of a devoted customer base, which may contribute to establishing a better public image and thereby drawing even more consumers to the business through their ‘loyalty’ to the firm (Anupriya & Satish, 2017).

Moreover, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is seen as a topic to which clients have recently paid a great deal of attention. To that purpose, social media platforms enable a firm's successes in terms of CSR-related acts to be recognized more quickly (Grayson, 2010). However, the 'instant' nature of social media, along with their potential misuse, may exacerbate their helpful nature and end up producing the reverse of the anticipated consequences (Luo, Zhang, & Duan, 2013). Thus, taking all the above into consideration, it is clear that although digital marketing, and consequently social media, can be invaluable for the success of a business entity, its management must be or get optimized in a manner that will eliminate or at least minimize the 'threats' that they may entail.

### **3. Human oversights as triggers of digital marketing disasters**

Several times, social media platforms have been accused of inflicting more harm than good (Cross, 2014). 'More than 80% of brands do not have a Social Media strategy!' (Alen, 2016; Bucea-Manea-Tonis & Gurgu, 2018). There have been several instances where an apparently minor component of a post made, on behalf of a business, on a social media site, has either rendered an advertisement useless or, worse, destroyed the firm's reputation (Tsimonis, Dimitriadis, & Omar, 2020). The episode between one of the most well-known talk-show presenters, Oprah Winfrey, and the worldwide business Microsoft is a classic illustration of such a scenario (Marwick, 2013; Griggs, 2012). The whole thing started when Oprah was a part of a Microsoft marketing campaign and had to write a 'tweet' on the social media network 'Twitter' expressing her ecstasy about Microsoft's new tablet called 'Surface' (Griggs, 2012). Yet it hasn't crossed her (or the page's management) mind that 'Twitter' shows the device from which it was shared in every tweet' which in this case was Microsoft's Surface's direct competitor, Apple's iPad (Griggs, 2012). As a result, Microsoft's campaign was incredibly ineffective and may have even had the opposite effect. Following that, the official Microsoft Twitter account made a similar error last year when it published a message honoring 'Microsoft's birthday' using an iPhone, i.e., Apple's phone.

Another case of social media misuse happened two years ago when Huawei's Twitter account published a 'tweet' from an iPhone with a new year's greeting (Jiang, 2019). A similar error was made by their Indian Twitter account



while attempting to advertise their new smartphone series. Following this occurrence, the business penalized two of its workers, with Chen Lifang, the company's corporate senior vice-president and director of the board, saying that 'the incident did damage to the Huawei brand' (Jiang, 2019). The same firm has also employed Gal Gadot as an influencer to promote their new phone series. This approach has also failed since Mrs. Gadot sent the promotional tweet from her iPhone (Gottsegen, 2018).

Finally, the international firm 'Samsung' found itself in a similar situation when their Indian and Nigerian Twitter accounts posted a promotional 'tweet' touting the company's new mobile phone, with the 'tweet' itself being shared from Apple's mobile phone (BBC, 2018; Business Telegraph, 2018). This error has resulted in a significant 'blow' to the company's public image, as the post has quickly gone 'viral' (Park & Park, 2020). The firm's immediate reaction to this incident was to suspend their account, which was later revealed to have posted more than 300 promotional 'tweets' from an Apple device (BBC, 2018; Business Telegraph, 2018). A similar error was made by their United States account, which attempted to advertise the debut of a new product (Sohail, 2021).

Adding to these examples, there is also a big number of other big technology companies that have made similar mistakes to the already mentioned ones. These companies include Lenovo, Oneplus, OPPO, Poco, Razer and others. Below you may find evidence of their unsuccessful digital marketing attempts. Somebody may notice that no matter which company commits such kind of mistakes, it is almost always an Apple device that acts as the means of voiding the marketing campaign. Yet, they are not infallible themselves either. More specifically, their Apple Music Twitter account has once been caught answering to Ariana Grande's tweet, using an Android device, which is a phone running the direct competitor's software, Google's Android (Salman, 2018). The same company has though also managed to make the 'industry common' mistake of posting a tweet from an iPhone as well (Salman, 2018).

All of these examples represent a small portion of the overall number of times when a minor detail or neglect of a feature of a social media platform, results in poor marketing efforts that generate unfavorable attention (Miller & Washington, 2011). Consequently, all of these difficulties ultimately result in decreased sales and, as a result, financial losses for organizations (Yeo et al., 2020). In order to solve this problem and avoid such kind of mistakes, we first have to look into the cause of the problem.

## 4. Causes behind the unintended consequences of failures in digital marketing

Unintended consequences can be defined as unintentional or unexpected outcomes of a deliberate action (Merton, 1936). In order to understand how to cope with such kind of incidents, first the causes that may lead to such kind of mistakes have to be identified. Catherine Tucker feels that a worthwhile implementation of web marketing requires substantial effort. Having identified the mistakes made, the question of how to avoid such incidents should be answered. To that end, the American Marketing Association Foundation's 2015 award winner, Erin Anderson, answered that initiating a social media campaign but not devoting enough employees' time to it results in the brand being diminished rather than enhanced. Either 10 hours each week may be devoted to social media or none at all. Anything different results in something sloppy, which is detrimental to the company (Venzin, 2015). To facilitate thinking about unintended consequences, it should be examined how and why they occur in the first place. The sociologist Robert Merton discusses four basic origins of the creation of unintended effects of social activity in his famous essay published in the "American Sociological Review" in 1936, which are still applicable today (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). Table 1 presents the potential causes of these types of mistakes, their main principles as well as the implications that they may entail.

**Table 1.** Causation behind several digital marketing mistakes

Causes	Principles	Implications
<b>Inadequate knowledge</b>	Create 'foreknowledge' in order to predict unintended consequences	Comprehending and forecasting all possible results nearly impossible
<b>Merton's 'error'</b>	Mistakes in the context of prejudice and logical fallacies	Confusion between correlation and causality might lead to potentially harmful conclusions
<b>Demanding immediacy of interest</b>	Focusing entirely on the desired immediate outcomes of an action without considering long-term potential consequences	Unexpected consequences frequently influence broader social concerns
<b>Uncritical focus on fundamental values</b>	When an activity appears to be a logical and required consequence of core principles, other implications may be overlooked	May cause enormous distortions in our perception of reality and our capacity to determine what is 'true'

The first cause is inadequate knowledge. To be able to create some type of 'foreknowledge' in order to predict unintended consequences, a thorough comprehension of all the repercussions of an action is required, as well as a thorough

awareness of the interplay between these consequences and other factors (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). The marketing industry's fast adoption of sophisticated advertising and marketing technologies over the last decade has resulted in more difficult decision settings for marketers (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). For example, automated digital advertising markets or artificially intelligent gadgets that communicate with networks of other products make fully comprehending and forecasting all possible results nearly impossible.

The second cause is what Robert Merton defines as 'error' (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). Based on Wiertz's and Kittinger-Rosanelli's paper, Merton considers mistakes, in the context of prejudice and logical fallacies, as the second source of unintended effects. Amongst the most puzzling elements of the digital economy is that, despite the abundance of numbers and data, insight does not necessarily follow (Bloomberg, 2010). For instance, rather than experimental data, observational data are far too commonly used to support causal assumptions regarding advertising and other marketing impacts (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). Confusion between correlation and causality might lead to potentially harmful conclusions about why certain occurrences occur. The current controversy over immunizations and their negative health effects should be considered: are they the result of the vaccination, or did the two incidents just happen to coincide? Misattribution of causation results is not just poor decision-making but also inaccurate prediction (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). The effects cannot be precisely foreseen – intentional or otherwise – if the causes are incorrectly ascribed (Bloomberg, 2010).

The demanding immediacy of interest is the third factor. The third type of unanticipated impact is focusing entirely on the desired immediate outcomes of an action without considering long-term potential consequences (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). For a long time, Facebook's uncompromising dedication to growth and disruption was encapsulated by its famed internal motto 'Move fast and break everything' (Bloomberg, 2010). By focusing on this pressing strategic need, Facebook ignored a slew of other repercussions of the platform they were building, such as data security and customer privacy, the ability to influence opinion, user's mental health, and many other effects (Bloomberg, 2010). Yet, these repercussions may not have been significant enough to hinder progress. Another case is YouTube's recommendation system, which is intended to maximize a user's time on the platform. The more time a person spends on YouTube, the more information the company learns about them and the more effectively they can commercialize their platform. That is the result of a sudden

surge in interest (Bloomberg, 2010). However, one unforeseen result may be the formation of so-called ‘rabbit holes’ which can be described as the ‘phenomenon’ by which, in order to keep a user interested, the recommendation system may propose progressively irrelevant content (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). It is worth noting that the result of immediate interest frequently pertains to a business goal, but unexpected consequences often influence broader social concerns such as the freedom of speech and the people’s right to privacy.

Finally, the fourth cause is the potential uncritical focus on fundamental values. The fourth source of unexpected effects is likewise the product of decision in some way (Bucea-Manea-Tonis & Gurgu, 2018). When an activity appears to be a logical and required consequence of core principles, other implications may be overlooked (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). A notable example is the unwillingness of many social media sites to police content. Freedom of expression is a key virtue in democratic countries, particularly in the United States. Social media businesses situated in the United States are highly hesitant to claim editorial responsibility for the information produced by their members (Bloomberg, 2010). Allowing anybody to say anything, however, may cause enormous distortions in the perception of reality and the capacity to determine what is ‘true’. Taking all the above potential causes into consideration, the attempt to develop a mitigation strategy that will solve the issue both theoretically and practically will be taken into account.

## **5. Strategy to mitigate the risks and threats**

Issues and problems always abound in the business sector. While feasible solutions are not always complicated, there is a risk that tackling one problem can result in unforeseen effects. Thus, how should companies address the unintended consequences of digital marketing without triggering a cascade of further issues? First of all, they should attempt to eradicate all the causes behind the mistakes presented above. In order to reduce the consequences of a fast-changing retail environment, merchants should plan twelve months in advance, specifying the precise marketing vehicles they want to utilize while leaving enough leeway in the budget to pivot in response to new information (Efros, 2020). Although, in order to make a plan, the past with the aim to help shaping the future is utilized but it may not always be the greatest and most accurate option (Efros, 2020). For this reason, marketing departments should always keep their options open. One principle that can prove to be effective in solving some of the aforementioned

causes, is to act transparently and mobilize the crowd (Villanova et al., 2021). Transparency is another frequently expressed need in the realm of digital marketing (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). It is not only about access to personal information, but also about how that data is utilized and processed, particularly by algorithms, applications, and gadgets. Even if there is no universal remedy, openness can assist, detect and avoid many of the above-mentioned sources of unintended effects. Increased openness will make it simpler to identify discriminating algorithms, problematic measurements, and corporations' imbalanced ambitions (Engel, Roger, & Paul, 2014). To prevent misuse of power, decisions on what constitutes 'fake news' should be transparent and based on agreed-upon norms. Complicated monitoring is required for complex systems. When several stakeholders work together, the odds of avoiding and detecting unintended consequences rise (Villanova et al., 2021). When 'the audience' is permitted to see what is going on behind the scenes more intimately, counteraction can be more successful.

Additionally, promoting and respecting privacy may also prove to be of vital importance for tackling the problem (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). At least in Western democracies, there is universal agreement that privacy must always be protected and that present privacy protection standards must be enhanced. Customers should have the option of deciding whether or not their personal information should be made public and to which organization (Engel, Roger, & Paul, 2014). The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), enacted by the European Union, is widely praised as a first and critical step toward this goal, but regulation alone will not be enough. It is viewed as too slow, too smart, and incapable of coping with huge firms' monopolies such as Google, Apple, and Facebook (Engel, Roger, & Paul, 2014). To that end, technology solutions for increased personal data protection, greater customer control, and more transparent usage are suggested to be applied by companies.

Furthermore, thinking more holistically may also help with eliminating the issue (Wiertz & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). Technology is frequently lauded for its ability to improve outcomes and processes, but whether the correct things are optimized is increasingly being called into question. Beyond digital marketing, there is a demand for more balanced and thorough thinking. In recent years, the younger generation, in particular, has questioned not just 'Wall Street Thinking' and the overuse of our planet's natural resources, but also the influence of Big Tech (Giunta, 2020). While technology is seen to be a part of the answer to many issues, there is growing concern that technology is only benefiting the

short-term economic goals of businesses and their shareholders (Giunta, 2020). The concentration of power among a few global actors is undeniably concerning, and society must remain vigilant and suspicious of their activities. The cost of convenience must be made obvious and negotiable.

Last but not least, in order to practically avoid mistakes such as the examples presented in the third section of this research, companies should look for adopting a mechanism that will deter such kinds of errors. Such mechanism can include several changes in the way digital marketing is currently conducted by multinational enterprises. A possible solution to the problem may be found by requiring every subsidiary to first pass their intended promotional attempt to a team that is going to be entirely responsible for preventing such kinds of mistakes. Furthermore, they may go for establishing Poka-Yokes. Poka-Yokes are error/fail-preventing procedures whose aim is to block a mistake from becoming a service defect (Jacobs, 2017). Their aim will be to remind, the employee responsible for a company's digital presence, of mistakes such as using devices of competitors for publishing a tweet. Finally, companies should establish a framework under which such kind of wrongdoing is going to be financially sanctioned by the respective administration of the company.

## **6. Conclusion and recommendations**

The numerous digital marketing mistakes presented in this research have made it clear that the human factor is still of vital importance for the success of any digital marketing strategy or objective. To that end, inadequate knowledge, Merton's 'error', the demanding immediacy of interest, as well as the uncritical focus on fundamental values have been identified as the main causes behind most digital marketing failures. Based on them, a mitigation strategy is developed with the main aim to eliminate such kinds of mistakes in the future. This strategy entails the implementation of measures such as establishing error/fail-preventing mechanisms, increasing monitoring and transparency, planning, respecting privacy as well as thinking more holistically. Further research on this phenomenon may entail studying behavioral patterns of digital marketing employees that may lead them to commit – such kind of mistakes as well as a psychological analysis of users investigating what they consider as the best method for a company to 'correct' such kind of mistakes. Should it be acknowledging and embracing their mistake by following the trend of reactions of their follow-

ers (by making smart use of humor), or should it be attempting to hide it and make all its traces disappear from the web?

Taking all the above into consideration, it should be understood that digital marketing is a tool that can prove to be extremely beneficial for the business sector worldwide. Nevertheless, as with every tool, its ‘substance’ is defined by the way it is used. If it is decided to be used – in an ignorant way that diminishes the privacy of the user, or even if it gets facilitated in a sloppy way that undermines its value, its importance may get void. Yet, careful and thoughtful use of all the social media platforms combined with an efficient and effective digital marketing strategy can create a competitive advantage and put any company at the forefront of any industry they may specialize in.

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