PLUS: SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES TO BOOST ENGAGEMENT AND SALES

QUARTERLY

MarketingNews

AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION AMA.ORG SUMMER 2024

REALITY CHECK

AI WILL PROBABLY NOT SOLVE YOUR BIGGEST INSIGHTS CHALLENGES

AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION

Confidence Prepared

Become a Professional Certified Marketer®

When marketing challenges cause confusion, are you the clear voice providing direction?

In marketing, the only constant is the desire to connect. Audiences, channels and technology are in continuous flux.

Becoming a Professional Certified Marketer® will prove to yourself and employers you have the knowledge to navigate modern marketing challenges.

With specialty tracks, the PCM® program offers skill-specific certifications, so you're ready for what's next.

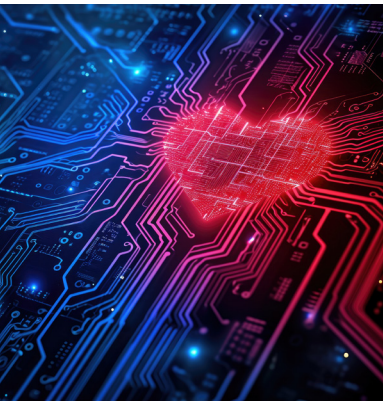
PCM® Tracks for You

- *Digital Marketing*
- *Marketing Management*
- *Content Marketing*
- *Advanced Digital Marketing*

Confidence starts at
ama.org/pcm

Inside This Issue

5
Reality Check
AI Will Probably Not Solve Your Biggest Insights Challenges



10
Can Companies Create a Machine That Feels and Cares?
Using Generative AI to Provide Empathetic Customer Care

ANSWERS IN ACTION: SOCIAL MEDIA

19
From Likes, Shares, and Comments to Sales
How Can Brands Use Social Media to Stimulate Both Engagement and Sales?

21
A Research-Proven Way to Build a Bigger Social Audience
Target Followers of Followers

23
I'm Not Listening!
Disabling Social Media Comments Makes Celebrities and Influencers Less Persuasive and Likable

25
The Element of Surprise
How Unexpected Syntax Makes Marketing Communications More Effective

27
Brands Beware!
Even Loyal Customers May Disengage After Seeing Socially Unacceptable Brand Mentions on Social Media

29
Research Insights: Social Media

SUMMER 2024
VOL. 58 | NO. 3

Marketing News

AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION

Mike Brady
Chairperson of the AMA Board 2024–2025

Bennie F. Johnson
AMA Chief Executive Officer
bjohnson@ama.org

EDITORIAL STAFF

Marilyn Stone, Director, Academic Communities and Journals; Editor in Chief
mstone@ama.org

Karin Horler, Senior Copy Editor, Academic Communities and Journals
khorler@ama.org

William Murphy, Designer
wmemurphydesign.com

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES

Email sales@ama.org

Questions?
Adam Howard, Director of Sales Operations & Strategy
ahoward@ama.org

Marketing News (ISSN 0025-3790) is published quarterly by the American Marketing Association, 130 E. Randolph St., 22nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60601.

Tel: (800) AMA-1150, (312) 542-9000

Opinions expressed are not necessarily endorsed by the AMA, its officers or staff.

Marketing News welcomes expressions of all professional viewpoints on marketing and its related areas. These may be as letters to the editor, columns or articles. Letters should be brief and may be condensed by the editors. Please request a copy of the "Writers' Guidelines" before submitting an article. Upon submission to the AMA, photographs and manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, adequately stamped envelope.

Annual subscription rates: Marketing News is a benefit of membership for members of the American Marketing Association.

Advertisers and advertising agencies assume liability for all content (including text, representations and illustrations) of advertisements published, and also assume responsibility for any claims arising therefrom made against the publisher. The right is reserved to reject any advertisement.

Copyright © 2024 by the American Marketing Association. All rights reserved.

Without written permission from the AMA, any copying or reprinting (except by authors reprinting their own works) is prohibited. Requests for permission to reprint—such as copying for general distribution, advertising or promotional purposes, creating new collective works or resale—should be submitted in writing by mail or sent via email to customersupport@ama.org.

2024-2025 AMA Academic Conferences

Moving the Field Forward

Be a part of advancing the marketing field! Discover and share new ideas, collaborate with peers, and enhance your knowledge and work.

2024 AMA Summer Academic Conference

The ideal event for making connections and advancing your career

August 12: Virtual | August 16-18: Boston, MA

ama.org/summer

2025 AMA Winter Academic Conference

A showcase for emerging methodologies and some of the best work in the field

February 10: Virtual | February 14-16: Phoenix, AZ

ama.org/winter

2025 AMA Marketing and Public Policy Conference

An intimate conference focused on making an impact through policy-related work

June 20-22 | Washington, DC

ama.org/mppc

AMA | AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION

Reality Check: AI Will Probably Not Solve Your Biggest Insights Challenges

BY JORIS ZWEGERS AND PAUL RICCIUTI

Artificial intelligence (AI) has marketers buzzing—but across industries, marketers and insights professionals are struggling to successfully leverage AI.

Knowing that effectively distilled and deployed insights act as the seeds of growth,[1] the AMA and Kantar surveyed 606 marketers to understand where and how AI is used in insights development today, what roles it may displace, and, in turn, what skill sets organizations should prioritize to maximize the benefit created by insights professionals and AI tools.

The research reveals that while there is broad excitement for AI and a sense that there are specific actions AI can perform effectively, marketers feel AI is actually less suited to solve the top challenges facing insights teams today: crafting insights-backed stories and activating new ideas with relevant business leaders.

Exhibit 1

TOP THREE CHALLENGES FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION/CLIENT

When Distilling and Actioning Insights Across Multiple Sources

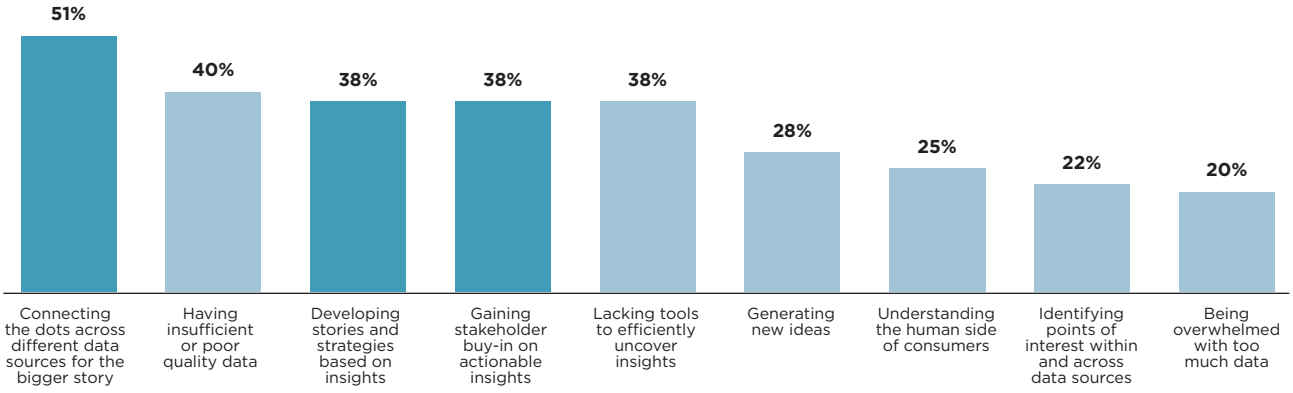
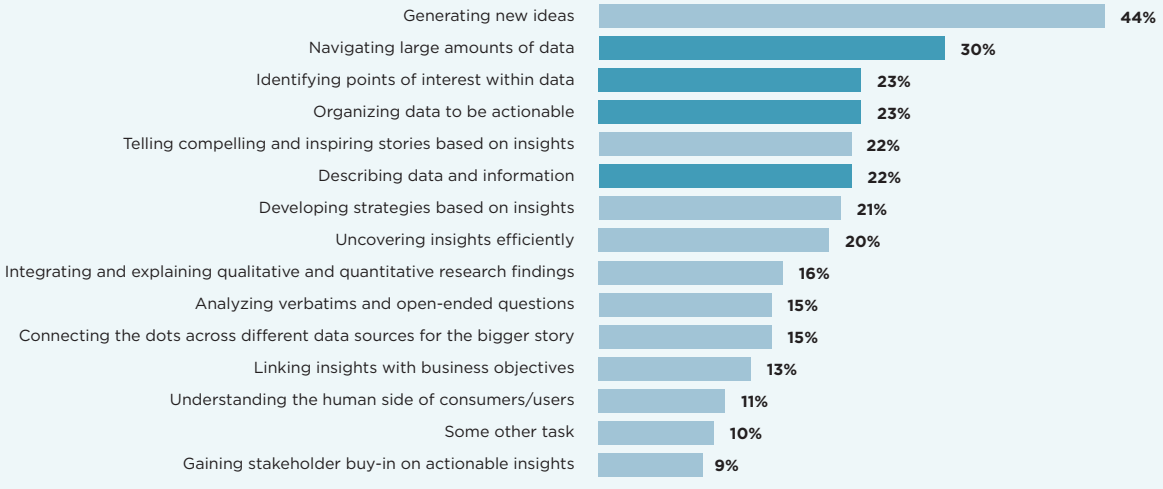


Exhibit 2

IN WHICH OF THESE USE CASES IS AI BEING USED WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?



Insights Development: Key Challenges

The insights development process comes in many shapes and forms but broadly follows a similar pattern after a problem is clearly defined:

1. **Data Assessment:** Insights teams build a sense of understanding of all the data they have collected.
2. **Insight Distillation:** The data is analyzed and transformed into actionable insights with the aim of answering one or more key business questions.
3. **Activation:** Insights are firmly linked to business strategies and presented in compelling stories that encourage stakeholder adoption and activation.

The top three challenges insights professionals face (when sufficient, quality data is available) are not found in the data assessment phase. They're found in the transition from insight distillation into the activation phase: connecting the dots across multiple data sources to reveal the bigger story, crafting that story, and gaining stakeholder buy-in on the result (see Exhibit 1).

The Current Use of AI for Insights

Today, 23% of marketers state they have AI capabilities built into their insights processes and are actively using them. This usage is commonly found in the initial data assessment phase of insights development (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 3

HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN SEEING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AI FOR EACH OF THESE MARKETING USE CASES WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION? (TOP 2)

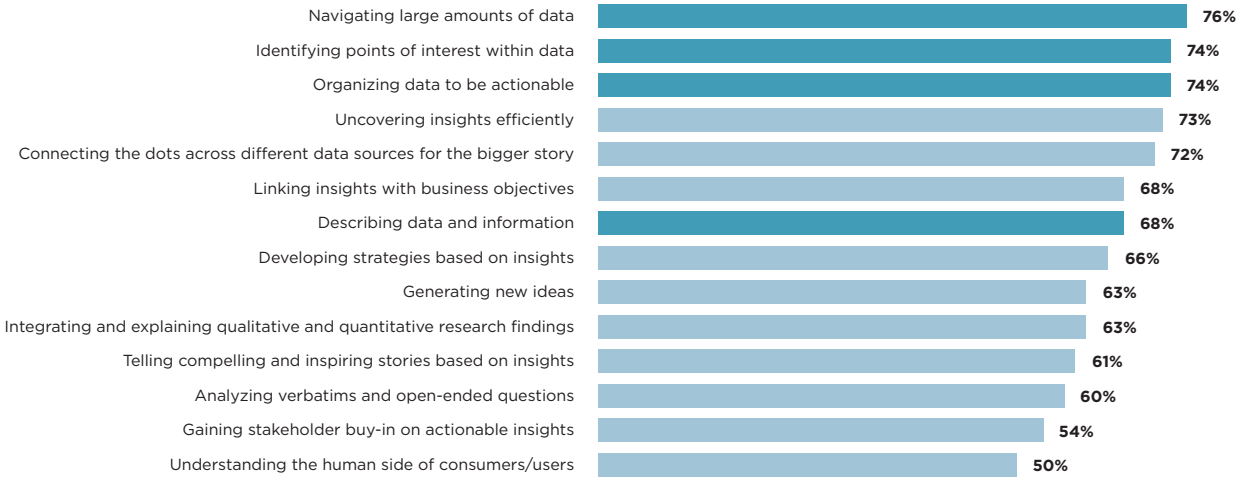
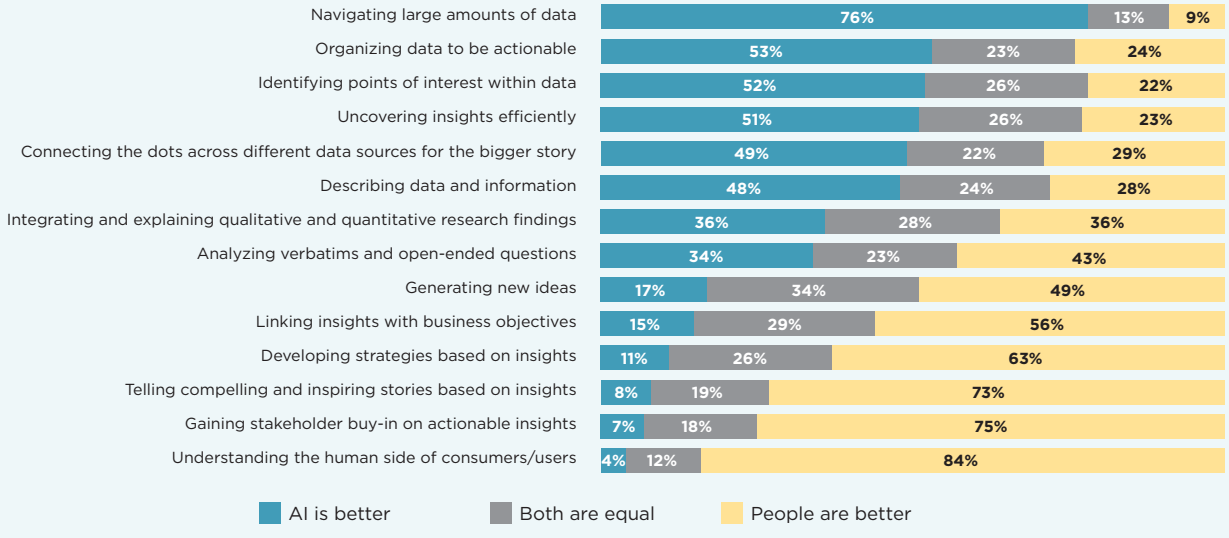


Exhibit 4

WHICH IS BETTER IN EACH AREA: PEOPLE OR AI?



This corresponds with how marketers are currently interested in leveraging AI: while there is broad interest in using AI across almost all use cases, marketers are most interested in using AI to tackle their lower-order challenges around assessing and managing data (see Exhibit 3).

AI Usage in the Future

While today's AI usage and interest intersect in the early stages of the insights process, perceptions of AI capabilities indicate that there is appetite for AI to be deployed beyond data assessment, into areas where it may outperform people (see Exhibit 4).

In the future, AI may aid in the transition from insight distillation to activation. There is interest in deploying AI against a top challenge: connecting the dots across different data sources for the bigger story. While only 15% of respondents state they are currently using AI in this capacity, 72% state they are interested in doing so, and 49% of respondents think AI is already better than people at performing this task, compared with 29% who think people are superior.

What Does This Mean for How Organizations Compete?

Insights 2030 and Insights 2020 research showed that the competitive advantage separating leading and lagging insights teams lies in the ability to transform data into actionable strategy.[2,3] Leading organizations have processes and tools in place, now including AI, that free them to focus on strategic priorities and challenges rather than exerting effort on less valuable tasks.

Developing and leveraging an insight to change opinions and business strategies—activating it—is a challenge and strategic priority where marketers feel AI is ill-equipped to help:

- 76% of respondents believe it is somewhat or extremely difficult to gain stakeholder adoption of new data or insights, and 75% feel this is a problem better solved by people over AI.
- Similarly, even though there is some usage of AI in these areas, respondents think that telling compelling stories based on insights and developing strategies based on insights are also better accomplished by people (73% and 63% respectively).

Marketers are adopting AI to better assess their data and are hopeful that it can help them connect dots across multiple data sources. But activating insights, which includes some of the biggest, mission-critical challenges insights professionals face, remains a human skill set.

Organizations can't remain on the sidelines as their competitors begin leveraging AI. The adoption of AI to handle lower-order challenges may further the divide between organizations. Leading companies that have already deployed AI to help with data assessment can focus their people on developing activation skill sets that drive business success. Laggers, on the other hand, must spend time on data assessment tasks, which may be important but don't directly drive business outcomes. Regardless of your current state of business, if you're afraid of being left behind, consider how AI can be leveraged in your own data assessment phase—the common place to start. **MN**

Joris Zwegers is a Partner at Kantar Brand Consulting. Paul Ricciuti is an Associate Director at Kantar Brand Consulting.

Notes

1. Kantar, "Insights 2030: The Imperative of Imagination," https://www.kantar.com/campaigns/insights2030/download-report.
2. J. Walker Smith, "The Imperative of Marketing Imagination," *Marketing News* (Fall 2021), https://www.ama.org/marketing-news/the-imperative-of-marketing-imagination/.
3. Frank van den Driest, Stan Sthanunathan, and Keith Weed, "Building an Insights Engine," *Harvard Business Review* (September 2016), https://hbr.org/2016/09/building-an-insights-engine.

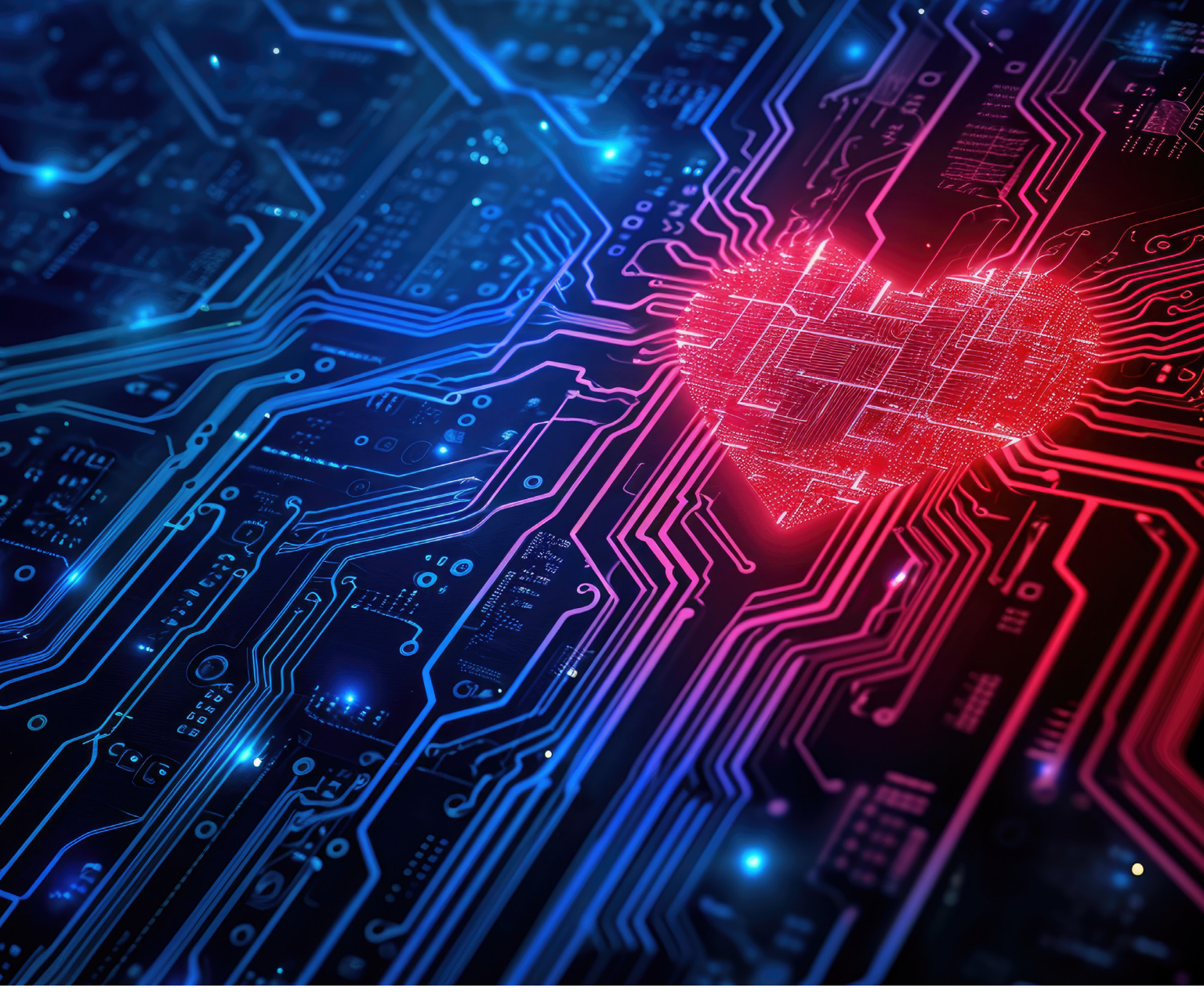
Skills for a Career on the Move

Trends change. Tactics shift. You're always on the move.

AMA Training gives your career a boost and fine tunes your skills to show you can take on any challenge that comes your way.

AMA.org/Training

AMA | AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION



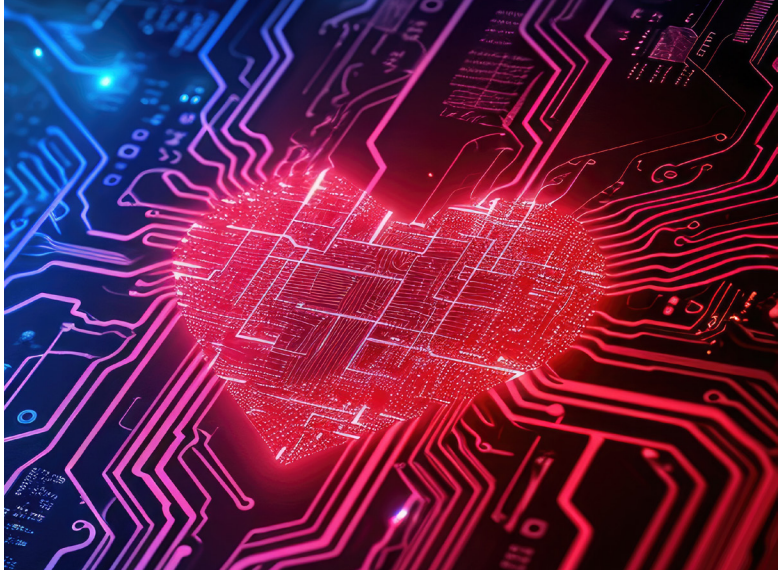
Can Companies Create a Machine That Feels and Cares?

Using Generative AI to Provide Empathetic Customer Care

BY MING-HUI HUANG AND ROLAND T. RUST

Over the last decade or so, there has been a debate on whether artificial intelligence (AI) can handle customer emotions and replace humans when it comes to building long-term relationships with customers. In a new *Journal of Marketing* article, we explore how companies can use generative AI (GenAI) to provide empathetic customer care that can strengthen relationships and increase customer lifetime value.

There is increasing attention in marketing practice to customer care. Beyond helping customers make purchasing choices or solving product problems, customer care is about building and strengthening long-term relationships. Relationship building involves solidifying emotional connections with customers to give them a sense of belonging and being understood. This is not just an altruistic goal; if done well, it also increases firm profits because emotionally connected customers are loyal and bring steady profits.



Advances in Deep Learning

GenAI refers to advanced deep learning models—such as OpenAI's GPT models, Microsoft's Bing, Google's Bard, and IBM's Watsonx—that are designed to generate content. These models utilize the vast data they have been trained on, combined with specific user inputs, to generate output. The pre-training learning from the huge amount of human-generated data makes GenAI able to generate humanlike responses, and the prompt response design enables the interactive and communicative capabilities of GenAI. Together, they make GenAI the new generation of feeling AI because they:

- are designed for human interaction and communication,
- can recognize and express empathetic understanding of user emotions by analyzing the user's direct inputs,
- can generate responses that demonstrate empathy, understanding, or support based on the context of the conversation, and
- provide information, suggestions, or recommendations that may help address the user's emotional challenges.

Bridging practice and the academic literatures in marketing and computer science, we develop an AI-enabled customer care journey that covers:

- accurate emotion recognition,
- empathetic response,
- helpful emotion management, and, finally,
- establishment of an emotional connection.

Compared to the traditional customer journey, this sequence focuses on the *feeling aspect*, such as customer engagement, experience, and emotion, rather than the more typical *thinking aspect*, such as customer utility, choice consideration, or consumption decisions.

We surveyed 305 U.S. chief marketing and customer officers from various industries and company sizes. In three open-ended questions, we asked them to list the major problems their company faces with customer care, the main pain points of using AI for customer care, and the main benefits of using AI for customer care.

Lessons for Chief Marketing Officers

Whether it is possible or desirable to fully automate the customer care journey is an ongoing debate. Bearing this in mind, we offer points for marketers to consider along the customer care journey.

- ***For emotion recognition***, companies need to accurately identify customer problems and emotions to avoid miscommunications. Miscommunications escalate customer emotions; thus, recognizing customer emotion accurately is critical for deciding whether and how to care. GenAI can recognize expressed emotions accurately if given clear and honest customer input; however, we find that accuracy may be compromised if the input is dishonest or imprecise and if GenAI lacks relevant knowledge for prediction. Thus, marketing practitioners need to cross-verify GenAI outputs.
- ***For emotion understanding***, companies need empathy: the ability to understand the customer's emotions as if they were the customer and respond to the emotions appropriately. GenAI can take customers' perspectives by learning from their direct inputs; however, the responses they generate may be less appropriate due to lack of commonsense knowledge. It is important for marketing practitioners to master prompting skills for probing customer thinking and deeper feeling.
- ***For emotion management***, companies need to provide helpful recommendations to assist customers in managing emotions. Generally, the recommendations should be specific to the customer's situation and related to the service provided by the company. GenAI can provide generic recommendations, but the recommendations tend to be less personally helpful. Thus, marketing practitioners need to master response engineering skills to observe customer preferences in emotion management recommendations.
- ***For emotional connection***, companies need to develop a caring machine that has sufficient self-awareness (i.e., is aware of its own being and thus can have its own perspective) to distinguish itself from the customer and the firm. Thus, marketing practitioners need to align GenAI with the firm's strategic goals and the customer's intentions to make the caring machine strategic, and marketing researchers need to develop marketing strategies that can leverage GenAI strategically. **MN**

READ THE FULL ARTICLE
Ming-Hui Huang and Roland T. Rust, "The Caring Machine: Feeling AI for Customer Care," *Journal of Marketing*.

AMA AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION | **Foundation**

The American Marketing Association Foundation (AMAF) champions individual marketers making an impact in our profession and community. We recognize marketing visionaries who have elevated the field, and we support the next generation of marketers who will transform the profession. Congratulations to our most recent award winners!

2024 Robert J. Lavidge Global Marketing Research Award

This award recognizes a marketing practitioner or educator who has devised and successfully implemented a research/insight procedure within the last five years that has practical implications for use by others.

WINNER:

Simon J. Blanchard
Provost's Distinguished Associate Professor and Dean's Professor
McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WINNER

2024 Nonprofit Marketer of the Year Award

This award honors extraordinary leadership, vision and achievement in the field of nonprofit marketing at the national and regional level.

WINNERS:

NATIONAL NONPROFIT

Leah Chandler
Chief Marketing Officer
Discover Puerto Rico

REGIONAL NONPROFIT

Jody Shiroma
Vice President, Communications
PBS Hawai'i

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WINNERS

Be the Change in Marketing!

Support the power of marketing to drive positive societal change, address critical challenges and make a lasting impact on the public good. Your donation to the American Marketing Association Foundation directly impacts initiatives that bridge gaps, foster collaboration and empower future generations to make a difference.

» Learn more and make your donation at **ama.org/foundation**

AMA AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION | **Foundation**

2024 AMA-EBSCO-RRBM Award for Responsible Research in Marketing

This award honors outstanding research that can be applied to benefit society.

DISTINGUISHED WINNERS:

Madhubalan Viswanathan

Nita Umashankar

Arun Sreekumar

Ashley Goreczny

"Marketplace Literacy as a Pathway to a Better World: Evidence from Field Experiments in Low-Access Subsistence Marketplaces" | *Journal of Marketing* (January 2021)

WINNERS:

Wendy De La Rosa, Abigail B. Sussman, Eric Giannella and **Maximilian Hell**

"Communicating Amounts in Terms of Commonly Used Budgeting Periods Increases Intentions to Claim Government Benefits" (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* September 2022)

Claudia Gonzalez-Arcos, Alison M. Joubert, Daiane Scaraboto, Rodrigo Guesalaga and **Jörgen Sandberg**

"'How Do I Carry All This Now?' Understanding Consumer Resistance to Sustainability Interventions" (*Journal of Marketing,* May 2021)

Kristopher O. Keller and **Jonne Y. Guyt**

"A War on Sugar? Effects of Reduced Sugar Content and Package Size in the Soda Category" (*Journal of Marketing,* September 2023)

Jenny Olson, Scott Rick, Deborah Small and **Eli Finkel**

"Common Cents: Bank Account Structure and Couples' Relationship Dynamics" (*Journal of Consumer Research,* December 2023)

Nathaniel Posner, Andrey Simonov, Kellen Mrkva and **Eric J. Johnson**

"Dark Defaults: How Choice Architecture Steers Political Campaign Donations" (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, October 2023)

Nicole Robitaille, Nina Mazar, Claire I. Tsai, Avery M. Haviv and **Elizabeth Hardy**

"Increasing Organ Donor Registrations with Behavioral Interventions: A Field Experiment" (*Journal of Marketing,* May 2021)

Journal of Interactive Marketing Award

2023 Journal of Interactive Marketing Best Paper Award

This award honors the *Journal of Interactive Marketing* article from the most recent calendar year that has made the most significant contribution to the advancement of the practice of marketing.

WINNER:

"Content That Engages Your Customers: The Role of Brand Congruity and Promotions in Social Media" (*Journal of Interactive Marketing,* February 2023)

Elisa Montaguti, Sara Valentini and **Federica Vecchioni**

Journal of International Marketing Awards

2023 S. Tamer Cavusgil Award

This award honors the *Journal of International Marketing* article from the most recent calendar year that has made the most significant contribution to the advancement of the practice of international marketing management.

WINNER:

"Marketing Agility in Subsidiaries: Market Orientation and Marketing Program Standardization as the 'Twin Engines' of Performance" (*Journal of International Marketing,* June 2023)

Ayşegül Özsomer, Bernard Simonin and **Timo Mandler**

2024 Hans B. Thorelli Award

This award honors a *Journal of International Marketing* article published at least five years prior that has made the most significant and long-term contribution to international marketing theory or practice.

WINNER:

"Global Versus Local Consumer Culture: Theory, Measurement, and Future Research Directions" (*Journal of International Marketing,* March 2019)

Jan-Benedict E.M. Steenkamp

Journal of Marketing Awards

2023 AMA/Marketing Science Institute/H. Paul Root Award

This award is given to the *Journal of Marketing* article that has made the most significant contribution to the advancement of the practice of marketing in the latest full calendar year.

WINNER:

"Finding Goldilocks Influencers: How Follower Count Drives Social Media Engagement" (*Journal of Marketing,* May 2023)

Simone Wies, Alexander Bleier and **Alexander Edeling**

2023 Shelby D. Hunt/Harold H. Maynard Award

This award recognizes the *Journal of Marketing* article published in the latest full calendar year that has made the most significant contribution to marketing theory.

WINNER:

"Learning from Data: An Empirics-First Approach to Relevant Knowledge Generation" (*Journal of Marketing,* May 2023)

Peter N. Golder, Marnik G. Dekimpe, Jake T. An, Harald J. Van Heerde, Darren S.U. Kim and **Joseph W. Alba**

2024 Sheth Foundation/Journal of Marketing Award

This award honors a *Journal of Marketing* article that has made long-term contributions to the field of marketing. An article is eligible for consideration to receive the award in the fifth year after its publication.

WINNER:

"How to SHIFT Consumer Behaviors to be More Sustainable: A Literature Review and Guiding Framework" (*Journal of Marketing,* May 2019)

Katherine White, Rishad Habib and **David J. Hardisty**

Journal of Marketing Research Awards

2023 Paul E. Green Award

This award recognizes the best *Journal of Marketing Research* article published in the last full calendar year that shows or demonstrates the most potential to contribute significantly to the practice of marketing research.

WINNER:

"How Do Nutritional Warning Labels Affect Prices?" (*Journal of Marketing Research,* February 2023)

Max J. Pachali, Marco J.W. Kotschedoff, Arjen Van Lin, Bart J. Bronnenberg and **Erica Van Herpen**

2024 Weitz-Winer-O'Dell Award

The Weitz-Winer-O'Dell Award honors *Journal of Marketing Research* articles published five years earlier that have made the most significant, long-term contribution to marketing theory, methodology and/or practice. Two winning articles were chosen this year.

WINNERS:

"Service Robots Rising: How Humanoid Robots Influence Service Experiences and Elicit Compensatory Consumer Responses" (*Journal of Marketing Research,* August 2019)

Martin Mende, Maura L. Scott, Jenny Van Doorn, Dhruv Grewal and **Ilana Shanks**

"When Words Sweat: Identifying Signals for Loan Default in the Text of Loan Applications" (*Journal of Marketing Research,* December 2019)

Oded Netzer, Alain Lemaire and **Michal Herzenstein**

Journal of Public Policy & Marketing Award

2024 Thomas C. Kinnear/Journal of Public Policy & Marketing Award

This award honors *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* articles that make the most significant contribution to the understanding of marketing and public policy issues within a three-year time period.

WINNER:

"Institutionalizing Diversity-and-Inclusion-Engaged Marketing for Multicultural Marketplace Well-Being" (*Journal of Public Policy & Marketing,* April 2021)

Eva Kipnis, Catherine Demangeot, Chris Pullig, Samantha N.N. Cross, Charles Chi Cui, Cristina Galalae, Shauna Kearney, Tana Cristina Licsandru, Carlo Mari, Verónica Martín Ruiz, Samantha Swanepoel, Lizette Vorster and **Jerome D. Williams**

2024 Louis W. Stern Award

This award recognizes outstanding articles in widely recognized and highly respected refereed journals that have made a significant contribution to the literature on marketing and channels of distribution.

WINNER:

"The Temporary Marketing Organization" (*Journal of Marketing,* March 2019)

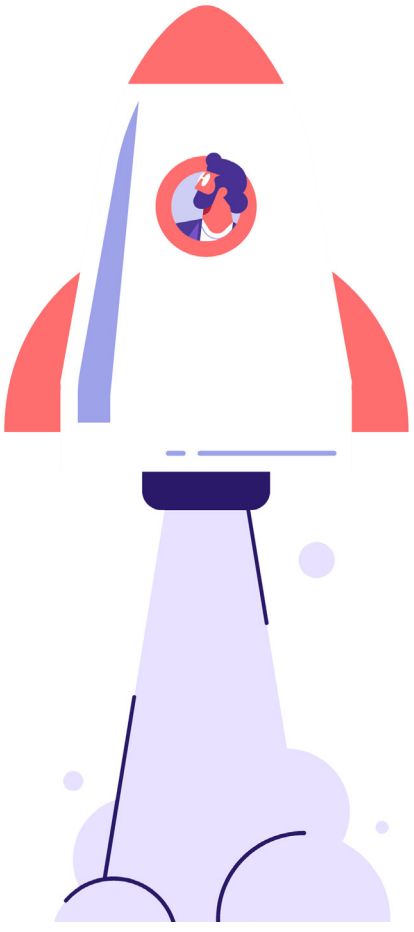
Allègre L. Hadida, Jan B. Heide and **Simon J. Bell**

From Likes, Shares, and Comments to Sales

How Can Brands Use Social Media to Stimulate Both Engagement and Sales?

BY GEORGIA LIADELI, FRANCESCA SOTGIU, AND PEETER W.J. VERLEGH

With more than three billion social media users worldwide, brands have long recognized the importance of establishing a strong social media presence. Recent surveys indicate that over 91% of firms will increase social media marketing budgets in the next three years and that 62% of consumers believe brands will succeed in the long run only if they have a strong social media presence.



The content that brands create and share through their social media channels is called "owned social media." While brands are increasingly investing in owned social media, many are unsure about the overall return on their social media presence and ask how they can design more effective social media campaigns along the purchase funnel. In other words, firms ask the following questions:

- How effective are owned social media and do they only drive engagement, or also sales?
- Can the content that generates social media engagement also be used to improve sales?
- Is a firm's owned social media equally effective across settings? Is it more effective for hedonic brands than for functional brands?

In a new *Journal of Marketing* study, we examine the impact of owned social media on social media engagement and sales. Our findings are based on a meta-analysis of 1,641 elasticities across 86 studies spanning from 2011 to 2021 that covers 31 industries, 14 platforms, and 17 countries. Contrary to managerial beliefs that owned social media are primarily an engagement tool, we observe a stronger impact of owned social media on sales. There may be many consumers who "like" individual posts or take the time to leave a comment or share the post from their personal accounts, but—given our results show an average elasticity of .137 for social media engagement and .353 for sales—brands may be underestimating the impact of their owned social media by focusing on such easy-to-measure metrics.

To create engagement via social content, companies are often advised to include a question at the end of their posts or create a contest. However, our study shows that the most effective content to stimulate social media engagement is to focus on emotions (e.g., funny or touching posts). On the other hand, if the goal is to stimulate sales, social media content should focus on communicating information and product benefits and steer away from the emotional.

Our article provides the following guidelines for chief marketing officers and social media managers:

- Balance "what you say" and "how you say it" depending on your goal: Focus on the "how" to engage consumers with more emotional content and on the "what" to stimulate sales with more informational content (e.g., the hedonic brand Oreo recently boosted its sales using an informational post on Facebook about a recipe featuring its limited-edition red velvet flavor).
- It is not necessary to always grow communities to reach as many consumers as possible. Owned social media are more effective for small brand communities with consumers valuing the intimacy of a small community with greater trust in the brand and its messages.
- Social networks like Facebook and Instagram are better suited for stimulating social media engagement than microblogs such as Twitter. This suggests that tie strength and trust are more important than open access and wide dissemination.
- The introduction of advertising on different platforms weakened the effect of owned social media on engagement. While advertising may amplify the reach and engagement of owned social media content, it can distract the audience and reduce its contribution.
- It may be suboptimal for brands to use one social media strategy across different geographies, so managers should adapt strategies to account for differences in country characteristics. The increasing use of social media on smartphones amplifies the impact of owned social media on sales, and managers can expect stronger sales effects in countries with a greater mobile phone penetration. For countries with high power distance, we find that owned social media exerts stronger effects on sales. High power distance is related to greater receptiveness of branded communications fulfilling materialistic and status needs. **MN**

READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Georgia Liadeli, Francesca Sotgiu, and Peeter W.J. Verlegh, "A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Brand Owned Social Media on Social Media Engagement and Sales," *Journal of Marketing*.

A Research-Proven Way to Build a Bigger Social Audience

Target Followers of Followers

BY JACOB GOLDENBERG, ANDREAS LANZ, DANIEL SHAPIRA, AND FLORIAN STAHL

"The best way to gain meaningful followers is to be one yourself."

SoundCloud explicitly mentions this approach in its help center for content creators. Like Soundcloud, user-generated content platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter) understand not only that individuals and firms seek to build and expand their follower base to increase the reach of the content they upload, but also that they apply the follow-for-follow approach for this purpose.

Existing research has largely focused on the follower base of influencers (e.g., low vs. high status). However, there has been scant attention paid to the follower base of the individual or firm (i.e., of the content creators). This is a missed opportunity due to the tendency of the follow-for-follow approach to attract somewhat remote followers who do not necessarily fit in well with the creator's follower base.

In a new *Journal of Marketing* study, we consider the case of unpaid endorsements, also known as the follow-for-follow approach, which is a popular way of building a follower base. "When you follow a user on Instagram, there's a good chance they will check out your feed and consider following you back," writer Christina Newberry wrote on Hootsuite, a major platform management tool.

Along these lines, our study proposes leveraging first-degree followers as interconnectors to target second-degree followers—that is, the nearby (low-status) influencers (who are interconnected with the focal content creator)—and provides both empirical and experimental evidence for why this could work.

In our study, we explore how such a creator may capitalize on natural network formation in the immediate vicinity to support seeding efforts. We maintain that the creator's own follower base is an overlooked area in the network for finding surprisingly valuable influencers.

The Importance of Triadic Closure

One of the fundamental processes of natural network formation is triadic closure: the tendency to become friends with those with whom one has mutual friends. Our study investigates how unknown, emerging content creators can accelerate this process.

Consider a focal creator A as well as users B and C. Since C follows B, and B follows the focal creator A, the first-degree follower B is an "interconnector" between A (the creator) and the second-degree follower C (the influencer). Now, if A targets C with an outbound activity (e.g., a follow, comment, like, or private message) and C subsequently follows A back, it results in triadic closure—which was accelerated due to the outbound activity.

Along these lines, given an outbound activity from an unknown content creator A, the a priori probability that a nearby influencer C (who is interconnected with A through B) will follow back A should be substantially higher compared to the chance of a remote influencer (who is not interconnected with A) following A.

Using secondary data from a worldwide leading audio platform, we study unknown creators who seek to increase the reach of the content they upload—songs and podcasts—by expanding their follower base through directing outbound activities such as follows, comments, likes, or private messages to other users of the platform.

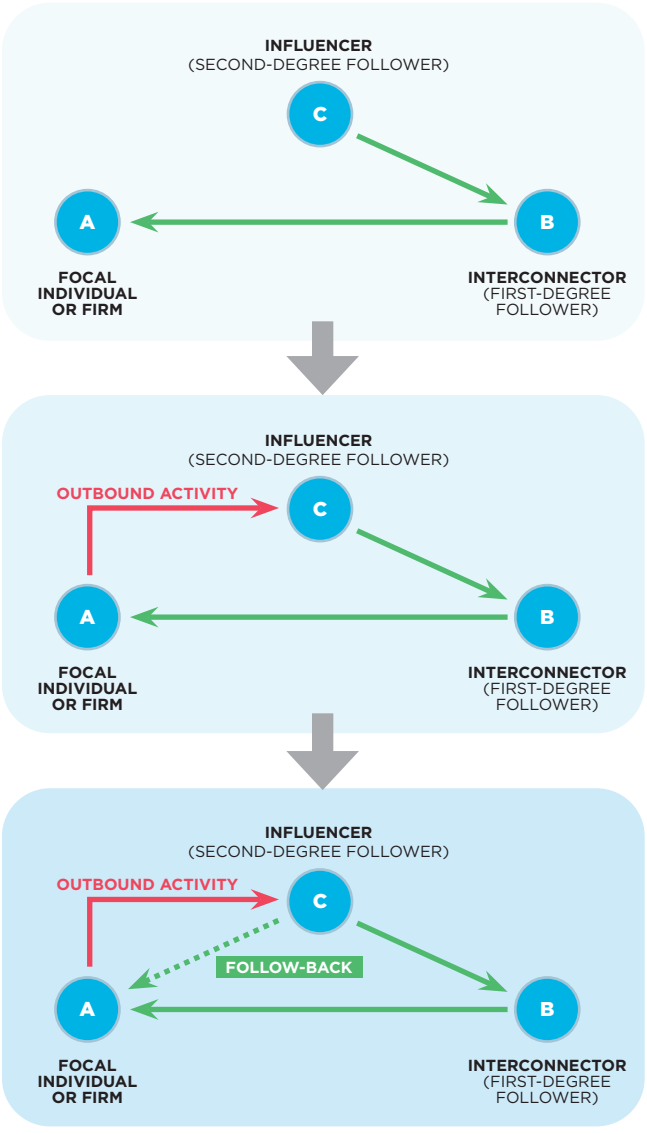
Our results show that leveraging interconnectors to close triangles is more effective. We find that the a priori follow-back probability of nearby low-status influencers—the ones who are second-degree followers—more than doubles, from 6.68% to 14.37%. Additionally, we find that exclusively targeting nearby low-status influencers outperforms targeting remote (and nearby) high-status influencers—which is the traditional influencer marketing approach—by 2,300% within two years.

For the worldwide leading audio platform that is the focus of our study, our results show that likes and follows are the most effective outbound activities to trigger follow-backs; that is, the mere presence of an interconnector is most effective if the outbound activity type is either a like or a follow. The most straightforward way to build a follower base by leveraging interconnectors is to follow second-degree followers.

Lessons for Chief Marketing Officers

The way networks are naturally built—via the closing of triangles—is most effective for influencer marketing. Firms can keep in mind the following lessons when formulating their social media strategy:

- To build and expand the follower base, firms may be better off targeting followers of followers, or nearby influencers, rather than cherry-picking remote influencers—most probably also in paid endorsements (when paying influencers to endorse the firm). This means that nearby nano influencers (influencers with a smaller following) are most effective.
- Firms that are using work-related platforms such as LinkedIn as a means for new customer acquisition may benefit from leveraging interconnectors for access to companies that they want to sell their services to. This means that promising sales leads in such companies should be interconnected with the firm, or followers of followers. **MN**



READ THE FULL STUDY

Jacob Goldenberg, Andreas Lanz, Daniel Shapira, and Florian Stahl, "Targeting Nearby Influencers: The Acceleration of Natural Triadic Closure by Leveraging Interconnectors," *Journal of Marketing*.

I'm Not Listening!

Disabling Social Media Comments Makes Celebrities and Influencers Less Persuasive and Likable

BY MICHELLE E. DANIELS AND FREEMAN WU

Celebrities and influencers like Addison Rae, Hailey Bieber, and even Oprah have, on various occasions, disabled access to their social media comments in response to negative sentiment. Is this misguided?

The answer is yes, according to our *Journal of Marketing* study. We find that influencers who disable social media comments are less persuasive and likable than those who do not, even when the displayed comments are mostly negative in their content.

Celebrities and influencers are more than just public figures in today's digital age. They often serve as a bridge connecting brands and consumers by integrating their personal narratives into sponsored brand content. Despite their popularity, influencers receive plenty of criticism, and they often disable social media comments as a first line of defense against negative feedback. However, we find that this behavior can negatively impact how consumers judge influencers and respond to their promotional content.

Online influencers have the ability to interact with their followers in a relatively intimate and informal manner, which makes them seem sincere and approachable. Such positive assessments are often a product of how influencers engage with their viewers or followers, including directly addressing them in their posts and treating them more as friends than as consumers. Although these behaviors can dramatically increase consumer engagement, this level of approachability can also come at a cost.

As consumers become accustomed to influencers' accessibility, they may feel emboldened to share feedback that is critical. The constant stream of followers' feedback can be overwhelming and even detrimental to influencers' mental health. As a result, many influencers have chosen to turn off their comment sections at various points, likely to avoid unwanted feedback. Our research reveals the negative downstream consequences of this seemingly well-intentioned behavior.

The Cost of Disengagement

We discover that when influencers disable comments, they are perceived as less receptive to consumer feedback, or what we term "consumer voice." Consequently, they are judged as less sincere and ultimately incur both interpersonal and professional consequences. In other words, disabling comments can undermine a key influencer asset—their perceived receptiveness to consumer voice—and, relatedly, their ability to connect and engage with their followers.

In fact, we find that turning off comments is more costly for an influencer's reputation than leaving them on, even when the displayed comments are mostly negative in nature, like those you might find flooding an apology post. This effect occurs because influencers who leave their comments enabled appear to be interested in hearing from the public and learning from their actions, while those who turn them off signal their dismissiveness of others' opinions.

Our results show that, under certain situations, consumers understand an influencer's decision to disable comments. If, for example, an influencer is perceived as taking reasonable measures to protect themselves during times of emotional turmoil and distress (e.g., grief and mental health struggles), the backlash against disabling comments is weakened.

However, it is critical to note that it is consumers, rather than the influencers, who decide what are considered reasonable forms of self-protection. So, while consumers might empathize with an influencer's decision to disable comments if their beloved pet had recently died, they may be less empathetic to influencers who disable comments to avoid negative feedback after apologizing for a transgression.

Lessons for Influencers and Brands

Our findings highlight the importance of understanding the delicate balance between establishing personal boundaries and managing audience expectations. While it is necessary for influencers to protect their mental health, how they decide to communicate this desire and manage their social media interactions plays a significant role in shaping relationships with their viewership.

Relatedly, our study encourages thoughtful consideration of how best to manage one's online interactions and highlights the need to clearly communicate a legitimate reason for disabling comments to avoid sending the wrong signals to viewers.

By recognizing the tension between mental health protection and audience engagement in the context of social media comments, we strive to empower influencers and public figures to navigate the challenging waters of audience engagement. We hope these findings inspire influencers to adopt strategies that safeguard their well-being while maintaining a strong, positive connection with their followers.

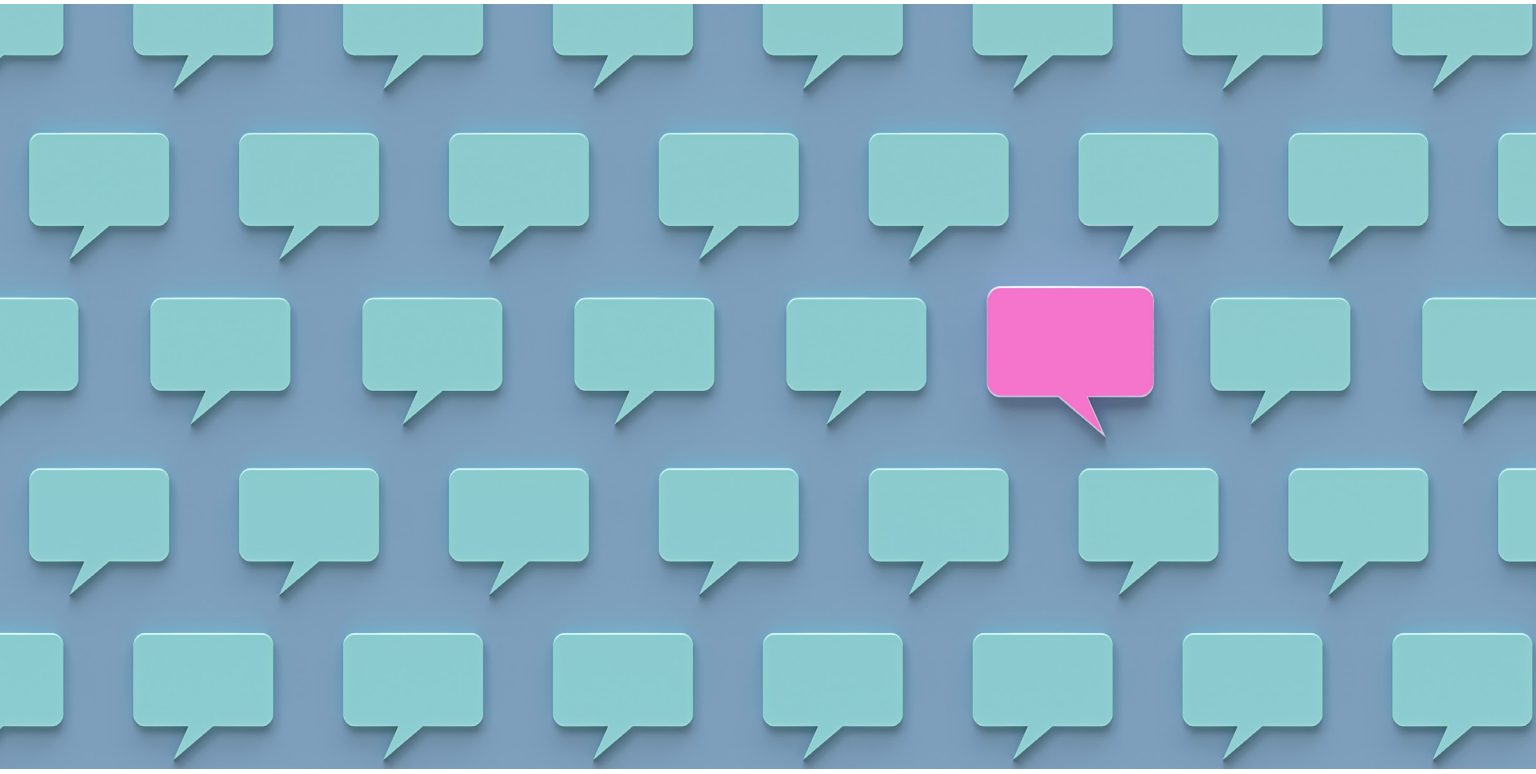
Global spending on influencer marketing campaigns reached $34.1 billion in 2023 and is projected to surpass $47.8 billion by the end of 2027. Therefore, seemingly innocuous online activities could have important professional ramifications for influencers' brand partnerships. Our study demonstrates that the decision to disable social media comments can reduce influencer persuasiveness, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring communication between brands and influencers to optimize their strategic partnerships.

We find that turning off comments is more costly for an influencer's reputation than leaving them on, even when the displayed comments are mostly negative in nature.

To all the celebrities and influencers out there: Think before you decide to disable comments! **MN**

READ THE FULL STUDY

Michelle E. Daniels and Freeman Wu, "No Comments (from You): Understanding the Interpersonal and Professional Consequences of Disabling Social Media Comments," *Journal of Marketing*.



The Element of Surprise

How Unexpected Syntax Makes Marketing Communications More Effective

BY A. SELIN ATALAY, SIHAM EL KIHAL, AND FLORIAN ELLSAESSER

Consider a manager advertising for a job, deciding whether to go with "Apply today to join a great team!" or "Join a great team, apply today!" These messages are similar, and both are inviting a job application, but they are formulated differently—or, in other words, they use different syntaxes. Can the manager tell which message will more successfully facilitate applications? How can the manager compare the effectiveness and efficiency of the formulation of these messages and decide which one to use?

Today, companies face this challenge of finding the right message on an hourly basis due to their permanent presence on digital platforms.

Formulating the right message for an intended purpose is not a trivial task. Today, companies face this challenge of finding the right message on an hourly basis due to their permanent presence on digital platforms. Many utilize multiple communication tools and channels to spread messages of various lengths and types, reaching consumers via social media, television, radio, or newspapers, as well as email, brand websites, and blogs. While marketing messages must weigh various elements—including content, images, and choice of channel—language is one of the most critical aspects of effective communication.

In a new *Journal of Marketing* study, we explore how companies can formulate effective messages intended to reach a desired outcome. We focus our study on syntax, which is the arrangement of words in a sentence, and investigate a measure called syntactic surprise: the average unexpectedness in the syntax of a message. By using state-of-the-art methods in natural language processing, we demonstrate the role of syntactic surprise in effective writing.

The Power of Surprise

Studies have shown that people begin comprehending a sentence before processing it in full. For example, people generally anticipate a direct object relationship after a verb (such as in the sentence "Amazon delivers diapers"), in which case the syntactic surprise is low. By contrast, an adverb following a verb is less expected and would bring on high surprise (such as "Amazon delivers fast"). Taken together, syntactic surprise is the unexpectedness of the syntactic element occurring (i.e., object: diapers vs. adverb: fast) given the previous syntactic element (i.e., verb: delivers) that the individual encounters in the sentence.

We conducted four main studies using large-scale field data and a series of follow-up experiments on Facebook and Instagram to validate syntactic surprise. We then assessed the role of this measure in various forms (i.e., experimental and field data), contexts (i.e., donations, advertising, and product reviews), and relevant outcomes (e.g., likelihood to donate and click-through rate). We find that syntactic surprise is a unique aspect of syntax that accounts for the effectiveness of marketing messages beyond previously established measures.

Additionally, we show that the relationship between syntactic surprise and effectiveness of the message follows an inverted U-shape: Messages are most effective at a medium syntactic surprise level but less effective at low and high levels. Next, we collectively analyzed the findings from the studies to show how the measure of syntactic surprise can be used (i.e., by marketing professionals) to improve the effectiveness of various messages. To this end, we classify the range of syntactic surprise into four categories: optimal, effective, acceptable, and ineffective. Through a series of field experiments on Facebook and Instagram, we demonstrate how managers can use this proposed approach to modify the syntactic surprise of their ads to increase click-through rates significantly and improve performance.

Syntactic Surprise Calculator

To simplify the process of computing syntactic surprise and improving a specific text, we developed an easy-to-use, free online tool that automates the use of the metric: the syntactic surprise calculator (https://syntactic-surprise-calculator.com/). This tool calculates the syntactic surprise of any text at the message and sentence level and then provides recommendations. Managers can revise their messages sentence by sentence until they reach the effective or acceptable range. The proposed approach is automatic, scalable, and able to be used without any machine learning expertise.

Overall, our findings demonstrate the importance of syntactic surprise in various forms, contexts, and relevant outcomes and shows how to use syntactic surprise to improve marketing messages. With the use of the syntactic surprise calculator, communicators can improve their messaging strategies. Regardless of message length, a practitioner can measure the syntactic surprise of any text, assess its syntax, and use the results to improve the message. Any communicator (e.g., retailers, brand managers, advertisers, politicians, educators, policymakers) can benefit from the findings. **MN**

READ THE FULL STUDY

A. Selin Atalay, Siham El Kihal, and Florian Ellsaesser, "Creating Effective Marketing Messages Through Moderately Surprising Syntax," *Journal of Marketing*.

Brands Beware!

Even Loyal Customers May Disengage After Seeing Socially Unacceptable Brand Mentions on Social Media

BY DANIEL VILLANOVA AND TED MATHERLY

Companies know that driving consumer engagement with their brands on social media is an important part of the modern marketing toolkit. They also know that it's easier to keep existing users than to acquire new ones. And while consumers can both increase their engagement with a brand or disengage, less is known about the drivers of disengagement.

In a new *Journal of Marketing* article, we investigate social media disengagement, which is the manifestation on social media of the psychological motivation to distance oneself from a brand. A striking case of this occurs when a consumer unfollows a brand. Understanding social media disengagement is critical because it can undermine the reach of future marketing content. For example, when someone unfollows a brand on Twitter, that consumer is no longer directly reachable by the brand's Twitter presence, nor are that consumer's followers, who will no longer see the brand's content via the consumer's interactions.

Just as customer retention is understood to have drivers that are distinct from customer acquisition, the reasons why consumers engage with brands on social media may not completely overlap with why those same consumers disengage. We study one potential reason why consumers who are highly connected to a brand may choose to disengage from it: their observation of socially unacceptable mentions of the brand on social media. Socially unacceptable brand mentions are acts of violation of the implicit or explicit rules guiding consumer interactions by an individual mentioning the brand. We propose that socially unacceptable brand mentions threaten the identity of highly connected consumers, with consequences for the brand.

Our study finds that when consumers observe socially unacceptable brand mentions, such as profanity-laden tweets, they become motivated to distance themselves from the brand. This motivation to distance manifests on social media in heightened disengagement intentions (i.e., a desire to reduce posting) and even unfollowing the brand.

The Dangers of Vicarious Shame

Socially unacceptable brand mentions do not affect all consumers equally. These problematic posts have a greater impact on people who are more connected to the brand. They threaten a part of these consumers' identities and generate vicarious shame. Unlike guilt, which involves a personal sense of wrongdoing and a motivation to atone, shame leads to weakness and incompetence and a desire to withdraw and distance from the situation.

We find that consumers who have integrated the brand into their concept of themselves are more likely to view other people's socially unacceptable brand mentions as reflecting poorly on their shared brand-related identity. Whereas consumers with weaker self-brand connections can view socially unacceptable brand mentions and move on, consumers with stronger self-brand connections experience vicarious shame when seeing these behaviors.

One of our studies looks at fans of ten Major League Baseball teams that competed in the 2018 postseason and focuses on those who were more likely to unfollow their team when exposed to an increasing number of socially unacceptable brand mentions on Twitter. This was especially the case for fans who were previously more connected to the brand. Separately, in a lab experiment, we show that a more socially unacceptable tweet (compared to a less socially unacceptable tweet) led fans of National Football League teams to feel a greater sense of shame, which drove their intentions to disengage from the brand on social media.

What Brands Can Do

We find that brands can take action to mitigate the risks of disengagement for highly connected consumers. For example, consumers who were strongly connected to various apparel brands saw a socially unacceptable Reddit post. With no additional information, the consumers indicated they wanted to disengage from the brand, but when they were told about the brand moderating and removing such posts, the desire to disengage was reduced, suggesting that active management of the brand's social media environment is important.

Our study offers vital lessons for chief marketing officers:

- Be proactive in mitigating the potential damage of socially unacceptable content.
- Actively moderate posts with socially unacceptable brand mentions to stop consumers who identify with the brand wanting to disengage from it.
- Educate consumers by explaining why certain social media content was removed.
- Help consumers become productive members of the community when these clarifications are provided.
- Produce high-quality content to crowd out socially unacceptable brand mentions.

Social media disengagement is costly to brands, and it is important for both researchers and practitioners to understand its drivers. While prior research suggests more highly connected consumers are able to maintain positive attitudes toward a brand when they are exposed to negative brand information, our results suggest that socially unacceptable brand mentions may lead to vicarious shame and subsequent disengagement. The insulating effects of strong brand relationships may not be as unequivocal as once thought. **MN**

READ THE FULL STUDY

Daniel Villanova and Ted Matherly, "For Shame! Socially Unacceptable Brand Mentions on Social Media Motivate Consumer Disengagement," *Journal of Marketing*.

Research Insights: Social Media

Quick Takes from AMA Journals Research

BY T.J. ANDERSON

CEO Versus Brand Communications in Times of Crisis: What Has More Impact?

Brands are increasingly expected to acknowledge pressing social and political issues, and doing so requires great care and sensitivity in communications. During massively consequential world events (e.g., the Russia–Ukraine war), what has more influence: official brand messages or personal messages from a brand's CEO? This research reveals key insights into the impact of CEO communication during global crises, showing that CEO communications—particularly those that blend personal perspectives with factual or emotional content—are more effective in driving public engagement and activism than standard brand messages. This suggests CEOs' significant influence in shaping public opinion and action, especially during geopolitical events. The findings can help firms strategically leverage CEO voices for impactful messaging and digital campaigns in sensitive geopolitical situations.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- CEO communications on social media during global crises have a greater impact on public engagement and digital activism than brand messages.
- The effectiveness of these communications is enhanced when CEOs blend personal insights with factual or emotional content, highlighting the importance of the sender and of strategic message framing in crisis communication.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Kedma Hamelberg, Ko de Ruyter, Willemijn van Dolen, and Umut Konuş, "Finding the Right Voice: How CEO Communication on the Russia–Ukraine War Drives Public Engagement and Digital Activism," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, doi:10.1177/07439156241230910

Getting the Recipe Right: How Content Combinations Drive Social Media Engagement Behaviors

Like milk, eggs, flour, and baking soda in a recipe, social media content incorporates sights, sounds, words, symbols, and social elements. Yet most guidelines for social media managers consider each element separately. In this study, the authors explore how different content *combinations* drive social media engagement.

For instance, social media managers can use strong and bright colors (visual), songs (auditory), text and hashtags (linguistic), emojis (symbolic), people (social), and evocative images like hearts (emotional) in their posts.

The authors analyze engagement behaviors across 516 Instagram stories and identify distinct social media content "recipes" that drive successful engagement.

They identify four specific combinations for engagement: "loud," "informative," "affective," and "relational."

For example, the "loud" combination relies on auditory elements like music or talking. To enhance this recipe, marketers can add visual content (such as bright

colors), social elements (like a smiling person), and emotional images (such as a heart). But avoid using linguistic elements (text or mentions) in this combination—it will spoil the recipe!

As in baking, social media engagement success depends on combining the right ingredients in the right amounts.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Designing social media content for maximum engagement is crucial.
- Consider a range of content—not just linguistic and visual—and adopt a holistic content design strategy, considering how all the elements fit together.
- Loud, informative, affective, and relational content can all drive engagement when the elements are used in the right combination.

READ FULL ARTICLE

Sara Lapresta-Romero, Larissa Becker, Blanca Hernández-Ortega, Harri Terho, and José L. Franco (2024), "Getting the Recipe Right: How Content Combinations Drive Social Media Engagement Behaviors," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, doi:10.1177/10949968241251694

The Rivalry Reference Effect: Referencing Rival (vs. Nonrival) Competitors in Public Brand Messages Increases Consumer Engagement

Whether it's T-Mobile slamming Verizon's poor network coverage, Burger King making fun of clowns, or Pepsi provoking Coke on social media ("We don't have Pepsi, Coke OK? #SixWordHorror"), brands often reference competitors in public messages. Yet not all competitors are equal. Some are bound by rivalry, a special competitive relationship based in a shared history. This research shows that rivalries have a special appeal to consumers because of their narrative, storylike quality.

Drawing from rivalry theory and the storytelling literature, the authors argue that rivalries feature two key elements of stories: identifiable characters (like Ronald McDonald) and a plot that is inherent to human life: repeated conflict and competition for supremacy.

In two archival Twitter studies and three experiments, the authors find consistent support for the "rivalry reference effect." Referencing a rival rather than a normal, nonrival competitor can increase consumer engagement because consumers perceive the message as embedded in a larger narrative. The effect occurs for multiple brands across many different product categories, and holds for both loyal supporters of a brand as well as neutral consumers with just basic knowledge of a product category. This illustrates how widely the effects of a rivalry reference can be felt, as the group of neutral consumers is usually far bigger than a company's loyal consumer base. Interestingly, the rivalry reference effect is stronger for negative rather than positive messages.

This research shows how managers can use the rival to their advantage, leveraging their joint history to craft social media content that is engaging to both loyal and neutral consumers.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Distinguish between rival and nonrival competitors, with rivals sharing a special competitive relationship based in a joint history, like Coke and Pepsi.
- Use your longtime rival to your advantage: By targeting rival rather than nonrival competitors in public communications, you can boost consumer engagement.
- Capitalize on the narrative appeal of rivalries, which are appealing to both loyal and neutral consumers.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Johannes Berendt, Sebastian Uhrich, Abhishek Borah, and Gavin J. Kilduff (2024), "The Rivalry Reference Effect: Referencing Rival (vs. Nonrival) Competitors in Public Brand Messages Increases Consumer Engagement," *Journal of Marketing Research*, doi:10.1177/00222437241248414

Whether and How Prepurchase Word of Mouth Affects Postpurchase Word of Mouth

Marketers know that word of mouth—reviews and recommendations from friends and strangers—can lead consumers to make a purchase. But what happens after the purchase? If a customer learned about a product from a friend or from a stranger, will they be more likely to share negative or positive reviews? In this study, the authors propose that having received a positive recommendation from a stranger might make a customer more likely to share a negative experience, for two reasons: First, the customer may think their negative review could have a greater impact, helping more people by contradicting the positive review. Second, if they received the recommendation from a friend, they may hesitate to contradict their friend's opinion. In five experiments, the authors test these ideas and reveal several insights on information sharing and interpersonal closeness.

This research counteracts the view that word-of-mouth intentions depend only on the customer experience after purchase. In fact, what happened before the purchase matters too.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Ask customers "How did you hear about us?" and pay attention to the answer: close friends or distant others?
- When launching new products, be aware that many five-star reviews from unknown reviewers can make customers judge a shortfall more harshly.
- E-tailers and online marketplaces can strategically display testimonials and reviews from people who share characteristics like nationality, city, age, and gender with potential customers.
- Managers in countries with an interdependent culture, such as China, should pay particularly close attention to this effect.

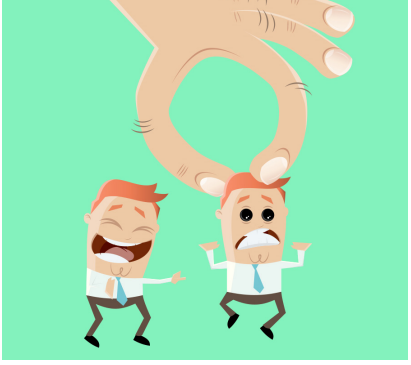
READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Hung M. Dao, Kshitij Bhoumik, and Reika Igarashi (2024), "Whether and How Prepurchase Word of Mouth Affects Postpurchase Word of Mouth," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, doi:10.1177/10949968241227923

Schadenfreude and Sympathy: How Brands Should Approach Loyal Customers' Bad Behavior on Social Media

Social media is a high-visibility platform where customer complaints, responses from other customers, and company responses can shape brand perceptions. Take, for example, the following anecdotal account. One disgruntled customer took to a brand's social media channel to post this complaint: "Epic fail [brand name], order an XL hot coffee Mocha and get no mocha."

Another customer chimed in with this reply: "If you want to exaggerate while also sounding 12, sure it's an 'epic fail'... Is your life so shallow and empty that someone forgetting your sugary treat in your coffee is an 'epic fail'?" The response continued with sarcastic well-wishes and laughing emojis. This condescending retort, laced with mockery, not only belittled the complaining customer but also trivialized their grievance.



A *Journal of Interactive Marketing* study shows that firms must actively denounce such responses to maintain a positive brand image and customer relationships, even if the uncivil comments come from a loyal customer who is ostensibly defending a brand. Addressing comments featuring schadenfreude is essential for mitigating a negative backlash. By fostering a culture of respectful engagement and addressing customer complaints, brands can cultivate a positive online reputation and foster stronger connections with their audience.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Uncivil comments from one customer directed toward another customer can be perceived by observers as the attacker exhibiting schadenfreude, which produces sympathy in observers toward the victim.
- Loyal customers more than trolls can harm brand perceptions on social media, particularly when engaging in uncivil comments toward other customers on social media.
- Instead of passively ignoring or agreeing with uncivil customer-to-customer exchanges in defense of a brand, firms should adopt a response strategy that denounces online incivility to avoid a negative backlash effect from observers.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Todd J. Bacile, A. Banu Elmadag, Mehmet Okan, Denitsa Dineva, and Ania Izabela Rynarzewska, "Schadenfreude and Sympathy: Observer Reactions to Malicious Joy During Social Media Service Recovery," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, doi:10.1177/10949968241246252. MN

T.J. Anderson is Associate Content Manager at the American Marketing Association.

AMERICAN MARKETING
ASSOCIATION