



Impact of Ethical AI Disclosure on Consumer Trust in Digital Marketing Campaigns in the UK

Dissertation Proposal

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background Context

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a key technology in the world of digital marketing which are used by organisations to analyse consumer data, create marketing content, customise messages, recommend products and enhance user interaction (Haleem, et al., 2022). The AI applications enhance the efficiency of the businesses by helping them in send more effective targeted marketing messages. The business organisations are expected to support the responsible and transparent application of AI in customer interactions especially by maintaining transparency and accountability in AI-driven marketing efforts due to the increasing AI integration in marketing operations (Esa, et al., 2025). In the UK, AI is increasingly being used in businesses with approximately 16% of UK businesses already using AI and other 5% are intended to use AI in their future operations. Moreover, around 72% of the UK businesses apply AI in marketing which make marketing one of the most common business functions for AI adoption. The enhanced workforce productivity is reported by about 75% of business companies which demonstrates the benefit of AI for business performance and customer engagement (GovUK, 2026).

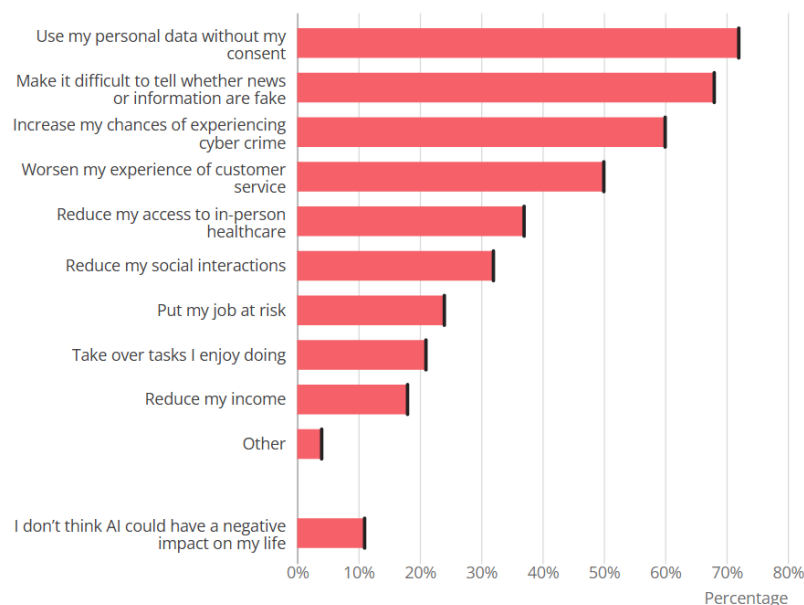


Figure 1: Public Perceptions of the Potential Negative Impacts of Artificial Intelligence in Great Britain

(Source: Harris, et al., 2023)

However, the increasing use of AI has raised concerns about transparency and consumer trust. The use of AI systems helps to tailor ads and marketing content to individual preferences however, there is uncertainty about the information exposure about how AI is involved in creating the content (Yunus, et al., 2025). In the UK, the public expects organisations to use AI responsibly and transparently as shown in *Figure 1* since most of the adults are concerned about their data usage. In order to meet these requirements, the UK Government has focused on adopting responsible AI practices such as transparency, accountability, fairness and explainability which further fosters trust in the use of AI across various sectors (UK Parliament, 2025). The ethical AI disclosure is gaining significance as a way to foster consumer trust and practice responsible marketing strategies since the organisations are increasingly utilising AI in digital marketing. Hence, it is crucial to understand the importance of ethical AI disclosure to support the firms in enhancing their customer confidence by adopting responsible digital marketing in the UK.

1.2 Research Problem and Rationale

The growing adoption of artificial intelligence AI in digital marketing campaigns has also increased anxiety about transparency in AI-generated content and automated decision-making which presents consumer trust as a key challenge. In the UK, approximately 96% are aware of the AI utilisation however, there are increasing concerns about its implications along with the demand for transparency and accountability (GovUK, 2024). Lack of disclosure regarding the use of AI leads to diminished consumer confidence, brand credibility, engagement and purchase intent (Gao, et al., 2026). The earlier research has explored the use of AI, personalisation and consumer trust with a limited understanding of the impact of ethical disclosure for AI on consumer trust in a UK digital marketing campaign (Wang, et al., 2025). The proposed study will seek to fill this gap by exploring the influence of ethical disclosure of AI on consumer trust. In addition, it will offer empirical support for the development of transparent and ethical digital marketing practices in the UK.

1.3 Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

Aim

The proposed study will aim to examine the influence of the ethical disclosure of AI usage in digital marketing campaigns on consumer trust in the UK.

Objectives

- To explore the prevailing ethical disclosure practices of digital marketing campaigns in the UK.
- To evaluate the impact of ethical AI disclosure on consumers' trust among UK consumers.
- To examine the ethical AI transparency factors influencing consumer trust in digital marketing campaigns.
- To identify ethical challenges connected to AI-driven digital marketing campaigns and propose solutions to build consumer confidence.

Research Question

Q1. What is the impact of the ethical use of AI in digital marketing campaigns on consumer trust in the UK?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concepts and Theories

Hari, et al., (2025), explain ethical AI disclosure as a clear explanation of the role and usage of AI in digital marketing practices such as AI-authored content, personalised ads and automated decision-making. It helps consumers to become more aware about the usage of AI in marketing communications which further encourages better business conduct. On the other hand, Hasan and Mayr, (2026), define consumer trust as the level of consumers' trust in an organisation which is shaped based on the honesty, integrity and reliability of the businesses. The transparent disclosure of AI utilisation in digital marketing is anticipated to reinforce consumer trust and confidence in digital marketing communications.

In order to underpin the proposed research, the Signalling Theory and Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory will be used. In the context of Signalling theory, Connelly, et al., (2025), highlights that organisations mitigate information asymmetry by communicating certain signals that make them credible to their stakeholders. The use of this theory will allow to focus on the ethical AI disclosure as a sign of transparency and responsibility that significantly shapes consumer trust. Moreover, in the context of SOR theory, Jeong, et al., (2022), shows that that external stimuli such as stimuli affect people's internal assessment and action. In the proposed study, the stimulus will be represented as the ethical AI disclosure, the organism will be consumer trust and the consumers' responses to digital marketing campaigns will be the response in the proposed study. The integration of these theories will serve as adequate theoretical basis to analyse the proposed research.

2.2 Ethical AI Disclosure in Digital Marketing Campaigns

According to Saeed and Fleischman, (2025), AI has revolutionised digital marketing through personalised advertisements, predictive analytics, recommendation algorithms and automated customer engagement. These technologies help to enhance the customers' engagement and marketing performance which further support the organisational efforts to effectively communicate their messages to the customers. The ethical AI disclosure is essential for businesses to cope with the ethical issues of algorithmic bias, data privacy, transparency and consumer autonomy. These transparency

measures and responsible AI practices are used to reinforce consumer confidence which further helps to meet the dynamic regulatory demands. On the same note, Hari, et al., (2025), found that AI integration helps companies in order to understand consumers' needs and customise services however, its extensive adoption has increased concerns about privacy, asymmetry of information and transparency. Organisations need to incorporate responsible AI principles into their marketing strategies to support accountability and develop consistent consumer relationships. This shows that transparency and ethical governance are the fundamental elements for maintaining trust in AI-enabled marketing environments.

On the other hand, Verma and Bhavsar, (2026), state that the lack of transparency in AI-powered digital marketing leads to privacy concerns, biased algorithms and uncertainty regarding AI-generated content. It is crucial to implement approved algorithm disclosure, advanced regulatory supervision and third-party algorithm audits to ensure responsible usage of AI and boost consumer trust. These findings highlight that ethical disclosure of AI is an integral part of responsible digital marketing, fostering trust and transparency in the relationship between organisations and consumers.

2.3 Consumer Trust in AI-Enabled Digital Marketing Campaigns

In view of Jain, et al., (2025), consumer trust plays an essential role in AI marketing because it directly affects the consumer's reliability towards AI-driven suggestions and personalisation. The trust is driven by transparency, data privacy, consumer control and personalisation but the positive emotional experiences foster trust in AI systems. The younger and technologically savvy consumers show a great level of trust because they are more familiar with AI technologies. On the same note, Acatrinei, et al., (2025), highlight that AI-integrated digital marketing improves customer engagement by providing a personalised experience on social and mobile platforms. The effective development of trust depends on the transparency of the organisations, clear communication of the positive effects of AI use and the reduction of perceived risk. This shows that the perceived transparency, social influence, satisfaction and perceived benefits positively impact the customer trust. However, the perceived risks and negative emotions lead to a reduction in confidence in AI-driven marketing.

Moreover, Sarran and Datt, (2026), indicate that consumer trust in AI-driven advertisements can be reinforced by establishing trustworthy verification systems which further helps to minimise information asymmetry. The third-party certification seals and the QR codes foster credibility since it helps to support transparency and accountability. This shows that the effectiveness of the AI-driven digital marketing is connected to the communication, verification and a positive approach to AI that builds consumer trust and mitigates uncertainty.

2.4 Research Gap

The existing literature such as Saeed and Fleischman, (2025) and Hari, et al., (2025), has identified the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing digital marketing practices through personalisation, automation and engagement strategies. Most of the previous studies have concentrated on the trust landscape through elements such as transparency, privacy and verification protocols for AI-powered marketing. However, the influence of ethical AI disclosure on consumer trust in online marketing campaigns in a UK setting is still not properly examined. These gaps highlight a need for additional research to comprehend the effect of AI disclosure on consumer trust and support the promotion of responsible digital marketing in the UK.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

The positivism research philosophy will be adopted in the proposed study which assumes that knowledge is built on the process of objective observation and empirical evidence. It enables the testing of the relationships between variables based on measurable data (William, 2024). In the field of quantitative research, the positivism philosophy focuses on facts rather than personal opinions. In the proposed study, positivism will be used to gather objective data from consumers in order to explore the relationship between ethical AI disclosure and consumer trust in digital marketing campaigns. Therefore, the use of measurable response will make the research findings more reliable and objective.

3.2 Research Approach

The deductive research approach will be followed where existing theories and literature will be used to develop the research objectives and test them with the empirical data. This approach is commonly used in quantitative research to systematically investigate the relationship between different variables (Gamage, 2025). In the proposed research, the deductive approach will allow to examine the impact of ethical AI disclosure on consumer trust by gathering quantitative data from UK consumers. It will also serve as a basis for the application of Signalling Theory as well as Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory which will form the theoretical basis for research.

3.3 Research Method, Data Collection and Strategy

The proposed study will investigate the study context using the primary quantitative research method. Primary research involves gathering original data directly from the participants and the quantitative research method is used to statistically analyse the numerical data (Alem, 2020). It will enable the investigation of views, perceptions and behaviour of the respondents in a structured format. In the proposed study, the data will be gathered from the consumers to gain first-hand insights regarding their understanding of ethical disclosures and their impact on their trust in AI. The use of primary quantitative data will ensure the efficient collection of data that will address the research aim and objectives in a reliable manner.

The data will be collected through survey research strategy that is an effective way to gather standardised data from large number of people in an effective way (Taherdoost, 2021). A semi-structured questionnaire with closed questions using a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree will be prepared using the Google Form and sent as a link through the professional network such as LinkedIn to the UK consumers. The adoption of the survey strategy will provide an opportunity for the respondents to respond to the statements about ethical disclosure of AI and consumer trust. Thus, the use of a structured questionnaire will facilitate the consistent and efficient collection of data which will further help to gather comparable information from the respondents.

3.4 Sampling

The target audience will include the consumers in the UK who have prior experience using digital marketing platforms and AI-powered marketing activities. Around 80-100 participant will be recruited. The convenience sampling will be used to access the participants which further facilitates the collection of data from participants who are easily available within the time frame and resources (Obilor, 2023). This type of sampling technique will help to support the timely completion of the proposed study.

3.5 Data Analysis Method

The collected data from the survey will be analysed through descriptive statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations will be used to summarise the numerical data and identify the key patterns in the data (Alem, 2020). It will help to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, their perceptions of ethical disclosure of AI and consumer trust. The findings will be presented using tables and charts to enhance the clarification and interpretation of the research findings.

4. Expected Findings

The proposed study is expected to demonstrate the potential impact of ethical disclosure of AI on UK consumers' trust in digital marketing campaigns. Consumers are more encouraged to trust companies that openly communicate their AI usage in marketing. The transparency regarding AI-driven content creation, tailored recommendations and automated decision-making is also expected to enhance consumer trust in digital marketing communications.

This finding will also indicate the crucial aspects of fostering customer trust such as transparency, accountability and responsible AI principles. The lack of disclosure may lead to an increase in concerns among consumers regarding privacy, fairness and marketing message reliability which further lowers trust. Moreover, the proposed study is also anticipated to identify the primary challenges for organisations in adopting ethical AI disclosure in digital marketing campaigns. The results are expected to increase awareness among organisations about the significance of clear AI practices and responsible marketing strategies. Collectively, the proposed study is expected to contribute valuable insights that can help businesses in enhancing consumer confidence and supporting responsible AI implementation in digital marketing within the UK.

5. Limitations

The proposed design of the research is appropriate however, there may be certain constraints that may affect the scope and interpretation of the results. The study will use a convenience sampling technique which may not fully represent the views of all consumers in the UK which can reduce the generalisability of the results. Moreover, the data will be obtained using an online questionnaire which will be based on the opinion and honesty of the participants which may result in response bias. The proposed research will be conducted based on the cross-sectional time horizon because the data will be collected over a certain period of time rather than examining the changes in consumer trust over time. In addition, the proposed research will focus only on the consumers in the United Kingdom which means that the results obtained from the research may not be applicable to other countries and different businesses.

6. Timeframe

Gantt Chart

Activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Selection and approval of the research topic												
2. Preparation of the research proposal												
3. Identification and collection of relevant literature												
4. Critical review and synthesis of the literature												
5. Development of the research methodology												
6. Designing the survey questionnaire												
7. Pilot testing and revision of the questionnaire												
8. Administration of the questionnaire and data collection												
9. Data coding, cleaning and preparation												
10. Statistical analysis using SPSS												
11. Interpretation of findings and discussion												
12. Writing and finalising the dissertation												
13. Proofreading, formatting and reference checking												
14. Dissertation submission												

7. Conclusion

This research proposal highlighted the significance of examining the impact of ethical AI disclosure on consumer trust in digital marketing campaigns in the UK. The use of positivism philosophy, deductive approach and primary quantitative methodology is proposed to effectively address the research objectives. It is expected that the findings of the proposed study will enhance the understanding of the connection between ethical AI disclosure and consumer trust. In addition, it will also offer valuable insights for promoting clear AI use and responsible digital marketing in UK businesses.

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