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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Steven Bellman,
University of South Australia, Australia

*CORRESPONDENCE
Nikola Vangelov
✉ nlvangelov@uni-sofia.bg

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Editorial: Artificial intelligence in the context of marketing communications

Nikola Vangelov^{1*}, Catalin Vrabie², Diana Petkova¹ and
Lyubomir Lyubenov³

¹St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria, ²National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania, ³"Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse, Ruse, Bulgaria

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Editorial on the Research Topic

[Artificial intelligence in the context of marketing communications](#)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the field of marketing communications in profound ways. Once considered an auxiliary tool for efficiency, AI is now central to how organizations design, deliver, and evaluate communication strategies. From generative content creation to automated engagement systems, from virtual influencers representing brands to AI-driven customer insights, the applications are vast and expanding. Alongside the opportunities for personalization, creativity, and scalability, however, lie pressing ethical, social, and regulatory challenges (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2020).

Recent scholarship emphasizes that AI's impact on communication extends beyond traditional marketing channels into smart cities and public organizations, where it underpins digital infrastructures and new forms of consumer engagement (Vrabie, 2022; Vangelov, 2025). AI-enabled personalization, interactivity, and contextual targeting—whether in digital out-of-home advertising or in public services—illustrate how AI is reshaping not only the relationship between brands and consumers but also the connection between organizations and their broader social environments. Understanding these dynamics is therefore vital for both scholarship and practice.

This Research Topic, *Artificial intelligence in the context of marketing communications*, brings together contributions that examine AI from complementary perspectives: ethical frameworks for generative content, the credibility of AI-mediated influencers, systemic risks and opportunities of digital applications, and the strategic integration of AI in branding and communication. Collectively, these works illuminate the promises and pitfalls of AI adoption while providing a foundation for future inquiry and responsible practice.

One contribution highlights the moral conditions that should underpin the use of generative AI in marketing. Grounded in a deontological framework, the study identifies requirements such as transparency, fairness, accountability, and compliance, with intellectual property emerging as decisive for brand reputation. This underscores that the growing use of generative AI must not be evaluated solely in terms of efficiency or creativity but also in terms of the ethical safeguards that sustain consumer trust and long-term legitimacy (Floridi et al., 2018).

Another study examines the role of AI-generated personas in crisis contexts. By distinguishing between animated and humanized virtual influencers, it shows that while human influencers remain more effective overall, humanized virtual influencers foster stronger perceptions of similarity and identification. Importantly, the research suggests that enhancing mental human-likeness and narrative richness can increase message acceptance and brand image repair. This expands the scope of crisis communication research by showing how AI-mediated identities may 1 day serve as credible organizational representatives, a finding consistent with broader scholarship on parasocial interaction and influencer authenticity (Sundar, 2020).

A third contribution provides a wide-ranging review of AI's role across marketing activities, from advertising and public relations to neuromarketing and sales promotion. It emphasizes AI's advantages, including cost reduction, scalability, personalization, and continuous operation, while also cataloging significant risks: data privacy violations, cybersecurity threats, manipulative practices, competence gaps, and labor displacement. By situating these insights within the European Union's policy frameworks, such as the Digital Decade and the Digital Europe Programme, the study underscores that effective adoption requires not only technological innovation but also governance, regulation, and skill development (European Commission, 2023; Taddeo and Floridi, 2018).

The final article offers a comprehensive overview of how AI supports customer engagement, personalization, and value co-creation across industries. It identifies factors shaping consumer acceptance, such as trust, perceived usefulness, and ease of use, while also pointing to barriers like transparency concerns, ethical dilemmas, and resistance to adoption. Unlocking AI's full potential in marketing therefore requires integration across strategic, organizational, and technological dimensions, aligning with consumer expectations and corporate values (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Davenport et al., 2020).

Taken together, these four contributions demonstrate that AI in marketing communication is not merely a matter of deploying new tools but a profound socio-technical transformation. Ethical inquiry, communicative innovation, systemic risk assessment, and strategic integration emerge as mutually reinforcing perspectives that will shape the field's trajectory. These findings highlight the need to approach AI holistically, recognizing the interdependence of technological capacity, human perception, organizational strategy, and regulatory oversight.

Looking forward, future research should continue to explore how AI can be integrated responsibly and sustainably into marketing communication. Critical questions remain: How can ethical standards be embedded into AI design? Under what conditions will consumers accept AI-mediated communicators as credible and authentic? What regulatory frameworks best balance innovation with accountability? And how can organizations align

technological capabilities with strategic goals to create long-term value? Addressing these questions will require interdisciplinary collaboration, drawing on marketing, communication, ethics, psychology, and information systems.

As AI technologies evolve, the balance between opportunity and risk will be decisive for shaping consumer perceptions and brand legitimacy. The contributions in this Research Topic suggest that progress in marketing communication will depend less on the technical sophistication of AI systems alone and more on how organizations design, govern, and communicate their use. By foregrounding ethics, authenticity, and responsibility, the field can chart a path toward an AI-enabled marketing landscape that fosters innovation, trust, and sustainable engagement.

Author contributions

NV: Methodology, Formal analysis, Resources, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization. CV: Supervision, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Formal analysis, Resources. DP: Resources, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. LL: Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Resources.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The author(s) declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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