

CASE STUDY 7: AI IN MARKETING

In the last couple of years, artificial intelligence has become increasingly important in the everyday work of marketing strategists, content creators, influencers, and other professionals in the field of marketing.

Marketing professionals, especially those working for smaller companies (1-50 employees), are often responsible for a large variety of tasks, such as creating ideas, copywriting, creating posts on social media, creating advertisements, creating voice-overs, and many other tasks. Therefore, marketing professionals take on multiple roles; idea generators, they are photographers, copywriters, and social media managers.

Often, small companies do not have the financial resources to even hire a marketing professional, so they take freelancers for a short period of time. Freelancers, at least in Latvia, often are young marketing students or recent graduates who happily take these jobs for short periods of time with various clients.

BACKGROUND

To some marketing professionals, artificial intelligence (AI) has been a great help, especially those working for many clients and managing their social media accounts and posting content on a daily basis, for several reasons such as writing text, explaining the product from a technical standpoint, generating ideas, creating unique and high-quality images for social media posts and many other reasons explained further in the case study. However, while some marketing professionals see artificial intelligence as a helpful tool, others see it as something that will take away their jobs and make them irrelevant in the modern marketing world.

As technology is improving and becoming even more advanced, young people in Latvia are understandably worried about their freelancer jobs in the field of marketing because small companies can now use artificial intelligence tools provided by tech companies to save costs on hiring marketing professionals as freelancers, which could mean that young people would struggle even more to find jobs and unemployment among the younger generation would be even higher.

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Let's explore...

Marketing AI's Content Creation Offerings

To explore the ethical complexities of AI in modern marketing practices, consider the case of Marketing AI. Marketing AI is a company that helps marketing professionals with copywriting, unique image creation, proofreading, content creation, photoshop, voice-over creation, and much more.

Their slogan is "Empower your marketing team to work smarter, not harder." Some of their tools are available for free, some have a 30-day free trial, and then one can use them for a fee, and others are only available for purchasing or subscribing to all of their artificial intelligence tools and using them without restrictions, which costs more. However, it is estimated that even the most expensive artificial intelligence marketing tools for copywriting, image creation, social media posts, and other tasks would still be considerably cheaper than hiring a marketing professional, even part time as a freelancer.

By interviewing one of the key stakeholders of this company- the marketing professionals, it becomes clear that they see these tools and the opportunities and threats that they impose in vastly different ways. For instance, Aiga Lasmane, a freelance marketing professional says, "The clients now expect much faster results because they know that we have these tools at our disposal. Therefore, client expectations have risen in the last year or two. And numerous times, they jokingly have questioned the necessity of hiring me since they could also learn how to use artificial intelligence marketing tools to generate text, images, and social media posts." Aiga acknowledges that one still needs to ask artificial intelligence the right questions and give clear and comprehensive instructions, saying that "Artificial intelligence will not give you anything of quality if you give the instructions in just two words. It will only generate something of value if you explain in detail what it is that you want". Furthermore, she says that one needs to go over everything that AI tools have produced, but she says that one often wonders at which point the client will realize that much of this is generated by artificial intelligence and the client can do this by him or herself, making her job obsolete.

Aiga's fear of losing her job is visible during the interview, but everyone does not share this fear in the field of marketing. For instance, another marketing freelancer working with many different clients, Lauris Liepkalns who, says "I don't see artificial intelligence as something that can steal my job and make me irrelevant. I have been using it for over a year now, and it has made my work more efficient and timesaving. Besides, the quality has also increased because I can get better pictures with the help of AI. However, artificial intelligence has not yet captured the Latvian language so effectively that it could write on 10. It writes on a solid 8, so there always is a need for a professional to go over the text that has been generated."

It is correct that artificial intelligence is much more helpful if the text is needed to be in English or any other widely spoken language (Spanish, German, French); however, in Latvian language, the copywriting tools of artificial intelligence have yet to be improved to perfection.

Nevertheless, Lauris Liepkalns emphasizes the upsides, particularly with image creation: “Artificial intelligence tools can generate a perfect image for my client. For example, I needed to make a picture of a client’s gift card with a bouquet of flowers. If I did it without AI, I would actually have to buy the flowers and spend money, and the image still might not look as good as it did with artificial intelligence.”

Another key component of artificial intelligence is the fact that it is learning and becoming even better day by day, which is also confirmed by the interviewees. Lauris says, “I have noticed that artificial intelligence saves everything that you asked for. For instance, if you ask AI to generate something about coffee machines, he will save all of that info and become more knowledgeable about it and provide even higher quality explanations, text, and images later on”.

During this part of the interview, Lauris begins to wonder about the fact that it becomes better and better; thus, perhaps in the future, it will be able to do everything and at a pitch-perfect quality where oversight is not needed anymore.

Finally, important stakeholders in all of this issue are the small business owners who hire marketing professionals as freelancers to help them with content creation, social media, and other marketing tasks. From speaking with a small business owner who frequently uses services from marketing professionals, particularly with social media content, it becomes clear that he and other small business owners are considering investing a bit of time in learning how to use these available AI tools so they can save marketing costs.

Since the opinions of the opportunities and threats imposed by AI for marketing professionals are rather split, perhaps it is necessary to conduct research into this topic to see what marketing professionals across countries think about it. In other words, do they see it as a helpful tool that provides opportunities or something that would lead to them losing their jobs and creating other significant challenges along the way in their careers?

Ethical Considerations

Fake Content

Artificial intelligence imposes another ethical consideration, which is that the content generated might be damaging to someone and, what is more, it could be completely fake. Furthermore, the AI generated content could be misleading potential customers about the appearance of the product or the ability of the product and marketing professionals could blame the technology and not take responsibility for the misleading image.



Loss of Jobs

As discussed earlier, one of the primary ethical concerns is that some marketing professionals, particularly those who work as freelancers, might lose their jobs and become irrelevant in the eyes of their clients because, in order to save money, the clients could do the work themselves. This is particularly important considering that in many countries, including Latvia, these jobs are particularly occupied by young people, where unemployment is often the highest of any age group.

Therefore, these technologies could increase unemployment even higher. On the other hand, we as a society need to consider the needs of small businesses that are constantly looking for ways to save money, and using artificial intelligence tools instead of hiring marketing professionals could save them a considerable amount of money.



Originality and Plagiarism

Companies like Marketing AI are being criticized for not being transparent about how their tools are able to generate such quality text and ideas for social media posts. The company Marketing AI and others like it are not revealing the technology behind their artificial intelligence tools. These companies often are using company confidentiality and the “Black box” issue, which is something that people cannot explain how it works. Therefore, figuring out how it generated some text or images is difficult due to the black box issue.

However, experts argue that the text that artificial intelligence tools produce is generated by other people's work, who are not getting compensated. They argue that the outcomes of these marketing artificial intelligence tools are created by the company engineers feeding in marketing text and other forms of content from various companies and advertising agencies where marketing professionals have generated texts and content over decades of hard and creative work, which is now being created by mixing thousands or even millions of marketing copywriting together making new marketing copywriting, but the question is- is it really new?

Mitigating Risks

1. AI Training for Marketing Students

Concerning the issue of job loss, universities could teach marketing students who later become marketing professionals to use artificial intelligence tools, thus becoming more efficient and increasing the quality of the services that they will offer their employers or clients and freelancers. There is an idea that artificial intelligence will not replace marketing professionals, but rather, marketing professionals who work with AI will replace marketing professionals who do not work with AI.

2. Ethics Courses to Fight AI Misuse

Regarding the fake and misleading content generated by marketing artificial intelligence tools, universities could create ethics courses teaching not to mislead the public and customers and use artificial intelligence responsibly, understanding the risks of not acting in good faith and responsibly, therefore possibly preventing this sort of behaviour. Marketing professionals could be required to take these courses to finish their study program. Furthermore, the public should be educated more on this issue through government-sponsored campaigns that increase critical thinking.

3. Transparency in AI Marketing tools

Concerning taking other people's work, government institutions could demand companies such as Marketing AI to be more transparent about how their artificial intelligence tools are created and how are the results of their tools generated because taking someone else's work to fuel one's marketing tool for personal commercial gain is not an ethical business model.

Case Study 7: Questions for Reflection

1. How can we solve the dilemma of marketing professionals not losing their jobs to AI marketing tools while considering the interests of small companies wanting to save on marketing costs? Is there something that can be done to protect the jobs of people working in the field of marketing as freelancers from a lawmaker's standpoint?

2. Should universities be teaching courses on how to use tools provided by companies such as Marketing AI, considering that these tools are relevant for current and future marketing professionals but also considering that their tools are created by taking work from other marketing professionals without compensation? What kind of measures could be taken to protect authors' work?

3. What kind of measures should be created to ensure transparency of companies such as Marketing AI to be more transparent about how their artificial intelligence tools operate and how they are able to generate such quality copywriting, images, and social media posts?

4. Is there a way to protect the copyright of marketing professionals so that tech companies will not use their creative work for their artificial intelligence tools without compensation to the marketing professionals? Please provide 5-7 criteria to ensure protection of the content in the creative process of marketing.

