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**REAL-TIME MARKETING PUBLICATIONS AND THEIR ETHICAL  
PERCEPTION**

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Dissertation

presented as a partial requirement for obtaining the Master's Degree Program in Data-Driven Marketing

**NOVA Information Management School**  
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# **REAL-TIME MARKETING PUBLICATIONS AND THEIR ETHICAL PERCEPTION**

By

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Master Thesis / Project Work presented as a partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Data-Driven Marketing, with a specialization in Marketing Intelligence.

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## STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

*Leonor Borges*

*Lisbon, November 2023*

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the ethical dimensions of real-time marketing (RTM) in the context of brands leveraging current news events for promotional purposes on social media platforms. RTM, aimed at capturing immediate consumer attention, often involves aligning brand messages with unrelated topical moments, transcending direct product promotion. However, a notable gap exists in academic analysis regarding the ethical considerations and consumer perceptions associated with this practice.

The experiment was elaborated with the objective of understanding if the brands by using RTM publications, the interpretations of consumers change their purchasing decisions, and how it makes them feel when it comes to ethics. We learnt that there is no negative relation between brand loyalty, consumer brand identification, consumer brand engagement, eWOM, how people perceive this type of publication, and its ethics. The participants did not see any harm, exploration, or felt bad perceptions of the brand. They see the publications as disruptive and original.

## KEYWORDS

Real-time Marketing; Social Media; Consumer Perception; Brand loyalty; Ethical Content Marketing; Electronic Word of Mouth

### Sustainable Development Goals (SGD):



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**BL** Brand Loyalty

**CBI** Consumer Brand Identification

**CBE** Consumer Brand Engagement

**EWOM** Electronic Word of Mouth

**RTM** Real-Time Marketing

**ECM** Ethical Content Marketing

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The best way for marketers to communicate with consumers is by using digital communications. Social media takes an important role for the brands to get closer to the customers, to generate more awareness and hype (Colicev et al., 2018; Kanuri et al., 2018; Meire et al., 2019). However, getting their attention is becoming more difficult. Consumers are exposed to a large amount of advertising from brands and influencers on social media every day. These social media ads can be seen as overwhelming, repetitive, and irrelevant, leading consumers to feel saturated online. For this reason, to get more attention from the public, brands are using real-time marketing to create meaningful messages on meaningful moments.

Real-time marketing is the new way to get instant attention from consumers, however, they are not using these posts to sell their products. Real-time marketing refers to the strategies and practices that involve creating or adapting marketing campaigns, content, or interactions in response to real-time events or consumer behaviors. It involves leveraging immediate, current trends, events, or data to engage with an audience in a timely and relevant manner. These publications are made to create brand awareness, for consumers to know about the brand, and to trust the brand, which in the end game leads to more purchases (J. W. Kim et al., 2012). Yet, from an online search on several brands, we can conclude publications, where the brands are only selling their products, do not have as many likes, shares, and comments, compared with publications where were use current news as marketing.

In August 2021, Coldplay’s tickets for four days of concerts were sold in an instant. Which lead NOS Portugal to post an image related to this event, which got 8,574 likes and 71 comments. However, a post where they are only selling their products got 527 likes and 7 comments.

Showing that RTM efforts can generate increasingly positive electronic Worth-of-Mouth (eWOM), with far better results in terms of engagement (reactions and comments) than posts where the brand is selling its product (Willemsen et al., 2019).

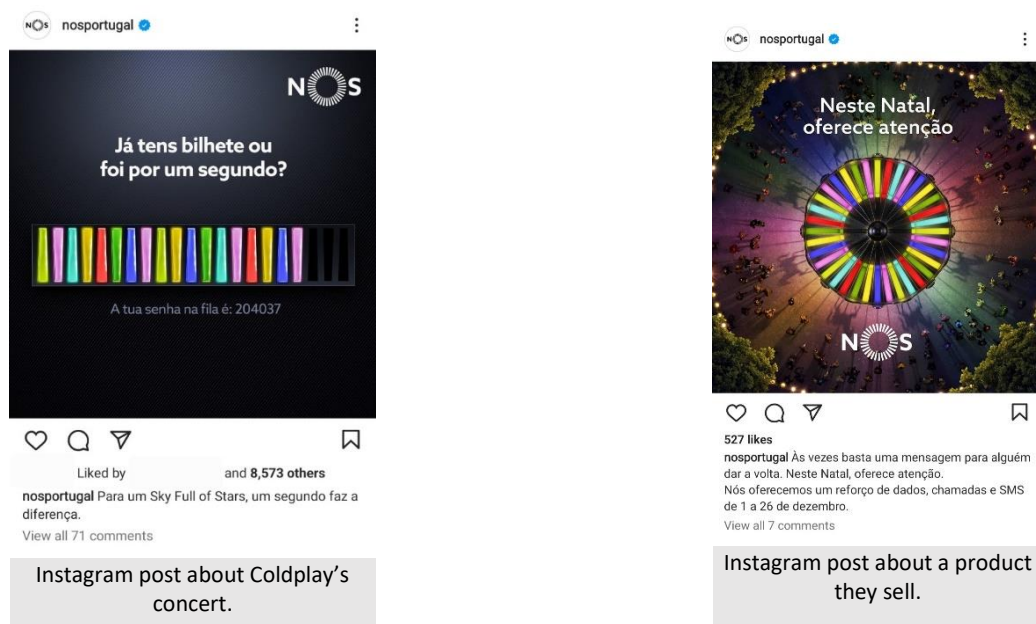


Figure 1 – NOS’s Instagram Posts.

Previous literature discusses on the topic (Goldstein & Lee, 2005; Hollebeek et al., 2014; J. W. Kim et al., 2012; Tar & Wiid, 2021) has lack regarding RTM' ethics and how the customers' perception of this kind of marketing. Are the brands hurting themselves by using current news which is not related to their values, products, and motivations? This is the gap I will try to explain in this study, the use of current news as a way of Real-time Marketing and its ethics.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. REAL-TIME MARKETING

In advertising, we need to recognize the timing of the post as a pillar to get more revenue. Real-time marketing is more than just doing a creative post (Mazerant et al., 2021), it is having into consideration the correct channel, the right customer, and the perfect timing. (Deniz AKÇAY, 2017).

Using customized and pertinent material, real-time marketing enables businesses to connect personally with customers in real-time. Real-time marketing has grown in popularity over the past few years as a result of technological advancements and the growing significance of social media (Tar & Wiid, 2021b)

RTM can boost customer interaction because customers are more inclined to interact with brands that react quickly and appropriately to trends or current events. Real-time marketing can improve brand loyalty and reputation. When customers believe that a business understands their needs and can deliver pertinent content immediately, they are more inclined to make a purchase (Reece, 2010)

Real-time marketing can promote client loyalty and customer retention. Brands interacting with their customers in real-time and offering pertinent material have a greater chance of retaining their investment. RTM can raise customer engagement and satisfaction because customers are more inclined to interact with businesses that react quickly and appropriately to their requirements (Santos et al., 2023)

RTM has the potential to raise brand recognition and boost sales. When exposed to real-time marketing, consumers are more likely to purchase since they are more likely to be interested and receive pertinent material. Customers are more likely to believe that a business knows their needs and can give pertinent content in real-time, which can boost customer happiness (Lieb, 2013)

The tactic in RTM that is growing the brand's interest is that there is a race against minutes and even seconds to publish a post about current events. However, the usual content planning and pitching ideas can still be applied on RTM in some kinds of events as Christmas, Blue Monday, and the Super Bowl. Even though this is true, brands should have into consideration RTM messages associated with unpredictable moments elicit more sharing behaviour than RTM messages associated with predictable moments, (Willemsen et al., 2019). Also, brands should get more hype in their publications if they use creativity and humour associated with unpredictable moments.

Brands by using RTM messages in real-time conversations about current events, instead of doing paid advertising, they are getting attention from social media users, while being part of the conversion, and obtaining free brand recognition (Kerns Chris, 2014; Scott, 2011).

In accordance with Garner (2013), not only the content needs to be aligned with the trends, but also the marketer needs to have a deep understanding of search and social media to perform the three of them together to create an RTM post (Kim & Nguyen, 2015).

Having in consideration this citation, brands need to know how to use various technology and software to gather and analyse consumer data to send out real-time messages to the right customers. By doing a deeper search and gathering customer information such as customer purchase behaviour and purchase history, likes and dislikes, and online and social media behaviour. They can also get more details from the customers themselves by making them fill in promotional forms or apply for loyalty programs (Mohamed & Al-Jaroodi, 2014).

To conclude, RTM can take on one of three forms, automated RTM, personalized marketing that is executed in real-time, and marketing campaigns that are developed in real-time (KALLIER, 2017)

**Automated RTM:** This is the process of sending the appropriate, pre-written messages to the appropriate customers at the appropriate time (Davies, 2013). These are automatic messages that are sent almost immediately after the customer takes a particular action or when certain events occur. Consider a buyer who wants to buy a cell phone. They use Google to look up the features and costs of the newest mobile phones available. On the consumer's search results page for a nearby mobile phone retailer, a pop-up banner ad appears.

**Personalized marketing campaigns:** that are carried out in real-time are referred to as real-time personalized marketing campaigns. As an illustration, some merchants provide customers with loyalty cards that may be used to earn points for each transaction. When customers use their loyalty cards to pay for purchases, they may accrue points or immediately receive a discount.

**Marketing communications:** that are created and disseminated in real-time across various channels in response to an event or special occasion are referred to as "marketing campaigns built in real-time." Events like the Soccer World Cup, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's announcement of a royal baby, and the Oscars spark a lot of consumer attention and discourse. These occasions are used by brands to participate in the discussion and raise awareness.

The ultimate goal is to gain more purchases, and RTM positively influences consumer purchase behaviour (KALLIER, 2017). Real-time marketing can be a useful tool for businesses looking to raise consumer engagement, boost client retention, and boost revenue. When consumers believe a brand understands their requirements and can deliver relevant material in real-time, they are more inclined to interact with and purchase from them. Customers are also more likely to interact with brands that respond swiftly and pertinently to current events or trends.

## 2.2. BRAND LOYALTY

The idea of brand loyalty has gained more significance in recent years as businesses look to understand the variables that affect consumer behaviour.

Trust, emotional connection, and personal beliefs are other elements that affect brand loyalty. Consumers who trust a brand are more inclined to stick with it even if rival companies provide comparable products at a cheaper price (Kocak Alan et al., 2012). Similarly, to this, a (Loureiro et al., 2012) study discovered that brand loyalty and emotional connection are positively correlated. This is because consumers who have a strong emotional connection to a brand are more inclined to stick with it.

Personal ideals and convictions can contribute to brand loyalty. Customers who identify with a brand's core values are more inclined to stick with it since they believe that it shares those values (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016).

(Duhigg, 2013) has a biography about brand loyalty. The author of this book examines the science of habits and how they influence consumer behaviour. Duhigg claims that because people frequently form routines and behaviours linked with companies, habits are what motivate brand loyalty.

Social media is a key factor in influencing consumer behaviour and brand loyalty, according to a recent study on the topic. People who interact with brands on social media are more inclined to stick with them because they feel a feeling of community and connection. Customers have a forum to express their ideas on social media, which can have a big impact on a brand's reputation. Customers are more likely to develop brand loyalty to companies that address their concerns and offer superior customer service because they feel valued and appreciated (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016; Yadav & Rahman, 2018).

Brand loyalty is another important factor in word-of-mouth advertising. Brand-loyal customers are more willing to spread the word about their favourite products, which can help the business (Ebrahim, 2019).

Personalization is another factor that influences brand loyalty. Customers are more likely to stick with a brand if they believe it is personalized to their individual needs and preferences. Customers are more likely to develop brand loyalty to a company that provides individualized experiences and goods because they believe that the company cares about and values their requirements (Iglesias et al., 2011).

Brands that want to increase brand loyalty should concentrate on offering top-notch goods and services, developing strong emotional bonds with clients, and providing individualized experiences. Companies must also be conscious of the influence that social media and word-of-mouth advertising may have on consumer brand loyalty and take action to include consumers and foster goodwill (Bernarto et al., 2020).

### **2.3. CONSUMER BRAND IDENTIFICATION (CBI)**

The idea of consumer-brand identification (CBI) is the understanding the how, when, and why companies can assist consumers in articulating their identities. Is the psychological condition in which a customer perceives, feels, and values his or her affiliation with a brand. People's search for their identity-fulfilling meaning in the marketplace of brands is valid and potently expressed by consumer brand identification, which is here defined as a consumer's perceived sense of oneness with a brand (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). Over the years, research has shown that Consumer Brand Identification is critical for the success of a brand. A strong brand identification helps consumers remember the brand, enhances brand loyalty, and creates a sense of trust in the brand (Sihvonen, 2019).

Tuškej et al., (2013) recognized that consumer behavior is influenced by consumer brand identification in various ways. For example, consumer loyalty, psychological sense of brand community and brand commitment, consumer buying-related decisions, brand preference, consumer satisfaction, and positive word of mouth.

Additionally, is influenced by a variety of elements, including company name, logo, packaging, ads, and personal experiences, according to recent studies (Graham & Wilder, 2020).

Ward et al., (2020) recently investigated the effect of brand identity components on consumer brand identification. According to the survey, the three factors that matter most in determining brand identification are the brand name, logo, and packaging. The study also discovered that customers are more likely to recall a brand if they feel emotionally connected to it favorably.

Phillips et al., (2014) the latest research also looked at the influence of individual experiences on consumer brand identification. According to the study, brand recognition and loyalty can be dramatically impacted by individual brand encounters. A pleasant brand experience increases a consumer's likelihood of remembering it, according to the study.

Graham & Wilder, (2020)'s study looked at how commercials affect consumer brand identification. The study concluded that advertising, particularly those that are in line with the brand's image and values, can have a big impact on consumer brand identification. The study also discovered that emotional responses in consumers are more conducive to brand memory and loyalty in commercials.

For a company to succeed over the long term, brands have been seen as being crucial in fostering strong ties with customers. Due to the high level of brand awareness among consumers in the market today, companies have begun to use conventional media to promote their brands. Customer-brand engagement (CBE) has been called into question by the current global economic crisis, and customer-brand identification (CBI) has become extremely important for brand management (Rather et al., 2018).

## 2.4. CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT (CBE)

The consumers' own personal values and their perceptions of brand values positively impact customer–brand identification, then through identification, it also impacts customer–brand engagement, affective commitment, and brand loyalty (Rather et al., 2018). As social media is becoming more popular, which enables users to actively engage in the community. As more and more users interact, different types of participation develop over time (Coelho et al., 2018).

Consumer brand engagement is the level of interaction and connection that a consumer has with a brand. It is considered a crucial component of brand success, as engaged consumers tend to be more loyal, vocal, and have a higher level of satisfaction with the brand. It includes the extent of consumer focus, enthusiasm, and emotional commitment to a given brand. Brand engagement is now widely acknowledged as a key element in creating brand loyalty and boosting revenue (Jayasingh, 2019).

(Hollebeek et al., 2014) defines three CBE dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral nature of engagement. Cognitive processing is defined as “a consumer's level of brand-related thought processing and elaboration in a particular consumer/brand interaction”. Second, emotional refers to “a consumer's degree of positive brand-related affect in a particular consumer/brand interaction”. Third, ‘activation’ is defined as “a consumer's level of energy, effort and time spent on a brand in a particular consumer/brand interaction”.

The brand relationship literature suggests that customers do not buy brands merely because they work well. Customers also buy brands because of the meanings the brands add to their lives and to express their self-concept (So et al., 2017).

Consumer brand engagement has been found to be influenced by several elements. These include the brand's character, image, relationship, experience, community, and storytelling (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that consumer loyalty and brand trust are strongly correlated with brand engagement (J. K. Lee et al., 2020).

Consumer brand engagement is the level of interaction and connection that a consumer has with a brand. It is considered a crucial component of brand success, as engaged consumers tend to be more loyal, vocal, and have a higher level of satisfaction with the brand (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). This literature review will summarize research on consumer brand engagement and its impact on brand success (Islam & Rahman, 2016).

According to a (Jayasingh, 2019) study, brand advocacy and brand loyalty are positively correlated with customer involvement with a brand. According to the survey, customers who are loyal to a brand are more inclined to spread the word about it and are less likely to move to competing products. This emphasizes how crucial brand involvement is to creating brand advocacy and loyalty (Rather et al., 2018).

In conclusion, this review highlights the importance of consumer brand engagement in building brand loyalty, advocacy, identity, and satisfaction. It has been discovered that consumer brand engagement significantly affects consumer behavior and fosters brand loyalty. Strong brand identities, brand relationships, distinctive brand experiences, and captivating brand narratives are all ways that brands can increase consumer brand engagement.

Brands should focus on creating engagement opportunities that are relevant and meaningful to consumers to build a strong connection with them and use social media to connect emotionally with their target market.

## **2.5. ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (EWOM)**

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) refers to the sharing of views, suggestions, and firsthand accounts regarding goods, services, and brands on online discussion boards, blogs, and review sites. It has evolved into a crucial component of contemporary marketing and altered how companies interact with customers. It has been discovered that eWOM influences both actual purchasing behavior and purchase intentions, making it an important source of information for customers as they make decisions about what to buy (M. Lee & Youn, 2015).

Research indicates that consumers regard Word of Mouth (WOM) as a much more reliable channel than traditional media (e.g., television, radio, print advertisements, etc.) (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). It is considered one of the influential sources of information about products and services (M. Lee & Youn, 2015). Users generally trust other consumers more than sellers (Nieto et al., 2014)

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has become an increasingly popular research topic in recent years due to the rapid growth of social media and the increasing influence of online opinions on consumer behavior (Fu et al., 2015).

Online reviews, ratings, comments, and posts on social media are just a few of the various formats that eWOM can take. Depending on variables including the authority of the source, the perceived sincerity of the message, and the kind of product being discussed, eWOM's impact can be either beneficial or negative (Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2018).

Consumers are more inclined to trust and rely on eWOM from people they know or have a relationship with, such as friends and family members, according to a study by (Abrantes et al., 2013). The authors also discovered that the type of product affected how eWOM affected customer behavior, with consumers more likely to be influenced by eWOM for high-end and luxury goods.

Recent research has demonstrated that eWOM significantly affects consumer behavior and buying choices. A study by (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) found, for instance, that eWOM influenced consumer decisions by fostering trust and trustworthiness, offering insightful information, and assisting consumers in making knowledgeable judgments. Another study by (Choi et al., 2018) revealed a favorable correlation between eWOM and brand loyalty, trust, and desire to recommend, indicating that eWOM can aid companies in forging enduring bonds with customers. However, unfavorable eWOM can harm a brand's reputation and client loyalty.

According to a study by (Babić Rosario et al., 2019), the availability of unfavorable eWOM can significantly affect consumers' intentions to make purchases, particularly when that information is viewed as reliable. The authors also discovered that luxury and high-involvement products were more affected by eWOM on purchase intentions.

The most important distribution channels for eWOM have developed as social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Tien et al., 2019). These platforms have a big and varied readership, giving them the chance to connect with a lot of customers and influencers. According to a study, social media eWOM was more effective than traditional word of mouth since it was more widely accessible and reached a larger audience (Trusov et al., 2009).

Artificial intelligence (AI) has gained popularity in eWOM during the past few years. Large amounts of data from online sources can be analyzed by AI algorithms to give businesses insights into the attitudes and habits of their customers. For instance, a study discovered that eWOM analysis supported by AI was successful in forecasting consumer preferences and buying intentions, assisting firms in making better marketing decisions (King et al., 2014; Oday et al., 2021).

In conclusion, eWOM is a potent tool for both marketers and consumers. Consumers can utilize eWOM to make wise purchasing decisions, while marketers can use it to build favorable brand awareness and image. Understanding the effects of eWOM and managing one's online reputation successfully is crucial for marketers.

## **2.6. CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF REAL-TIME MARKETING**

As said before, real-time marketing is the utilization of timely and pertinent content to interact with customers right away. It makes use of mobile, social media, and other digital technologies to connect with customers when they are most interested.

Despite the surge in interest and increasing use of real-time marketing by retail businesses and brands, little scholarly attention has been given to examining real-time marketing as a concept from a consumer's perspective, particularly looking at the consumer's perception of this type of marketing campaign that is aimed at them.

Real-time marketing is now expected by customers, and those customers are more inclined to interact with firms that employ it well. According to a Salesforce poll, 60% of customers want firms to answer their social media questions within an hour. According to the same study, 69% of consumers are more likely to buy from a company that provides real-time customer service (*The State of Real-Time Marketing*, 2017).

However, there is a chance that real-time marketing would come out as obtrusive or fake. Real-time marketing is considered bothersome by 44% of consumers, according to a (Cahill, 2016) report, and can be intrusive if not done properly, according to a (*Pros and Cons of Real-Time Marketing – Digital Marketing Services Agency*, 2021) study.

For instance, firms like Coca-Cola and Samsung engaged customers on a political topic that was in many people's thoughts during the 2020 US Presidential Election. Coca-Cola produced a commercial urging people to cast their ballots, while Samsung prepared a tweet illustrating how voters were using its products.

Also, the 2020 Super Bowl served as another example of real-time marketing, as companies like Pepsi and Budweiser used the occasion to develop real-time advertisements that reacted to game developments immediately.

In conclusion, real-time marketing can be a successful strategy for brands to interact with customers, but it's critical for brands to find a happy medium between relevance and timeliness. Intrusive or unauthentic approaches should be avoided by brands since they might negatively affect consumer impression and engagement (Ishii & Peters, 2011).

Real-time marketing is often well-received by consumers since it enables timely and meaningful connections between brands and consumers. Customers value the personalized touch that real-time marketing offers and are more willing to interact with companies that employ real-time marketing strategies. Real-time marketing can, however, backfire if not done correctly, thus it is crucial for firms to use it in a responsible and ethical way (Reece, 2010).

## **2.7. ETHICAL CONTENT MARKETING (ECM)**

Ethical Content Marketing refers to a marketing strategy that is centered on creating, publishing, and distributing content that is honest, transparent, and in line with ethical principles (Lieb, 2012). The goal of ECM is to build trust and credibility with the target audience by providing them with valuable and authentic information that helps them make informed decisions (Nazanin et al., 2021).

This type of marketing avoids the use of manipulative tactics and misleading information to push a product or service. Instead, it focuses on educating the audience and creating a meaningful connection with them through relevant and engaging content (Ferrell & Keig, 2013). So, companies should make sure that their material is transparent, accurate, and truthful. Additionally, they should refrain from employing misleading strategies like false headlines or overstated promises.

According to studies, unethical content marketing techniques including clickbait, deceptive advertising, and influencer marketing can erode consumer trust and harm a brand's reputation (Hagenbuch & Mgrdichian, 2019). Another aspect is ensuring that the content is respectful and inclusive. This includes avoiding offensive language, stereotypes, and discrimination.

A successful marketing plan that emphasizes forging solid relationships with clients through honest and authentic content must include ECM. It not only contributes to increasing brand credibility and trust, but it also develops a positive brand image and a base of devoted customers (Roy, 2012). They should also be aware of the information sources they use and take care to only publish reliable, impartial content.

Businesses should also be mindful of cultural differences and ensure that their content is culturally sensitive. However, ethical content marketing can promote brand loyalty and sales by fostering consumer trust and a positive perception of the company (Loe & Ferrell, 2001).

In conclusion, ECM is crucial for maintaining customer trust and building a positive brand reputation. Businesses should strive to create and distribute content that is truthful, accurate, and transparent while avoiding unethical practices such as false advertising or misleading tactics.

Brands need to consider the wider impact of their content marketing on society. ECM should align with the values and goals of society, and promote positive outcomes such as environmental sustainability, community development, and equality.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

**H1:** *Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication positively affects Brand Loyalty (BL)*

**H2:** *CBI impact is positively related to Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication.*

**H3:** *Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication has a positive effect on CBE.*

**H4:** *Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication positively affects the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM).*

**H5:** *There is a difference in the impact on Consumer Perception of Real-Time Marketing between with Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication.*

**H6:** *Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication impacts Ethical Content Marketing (ECM).*

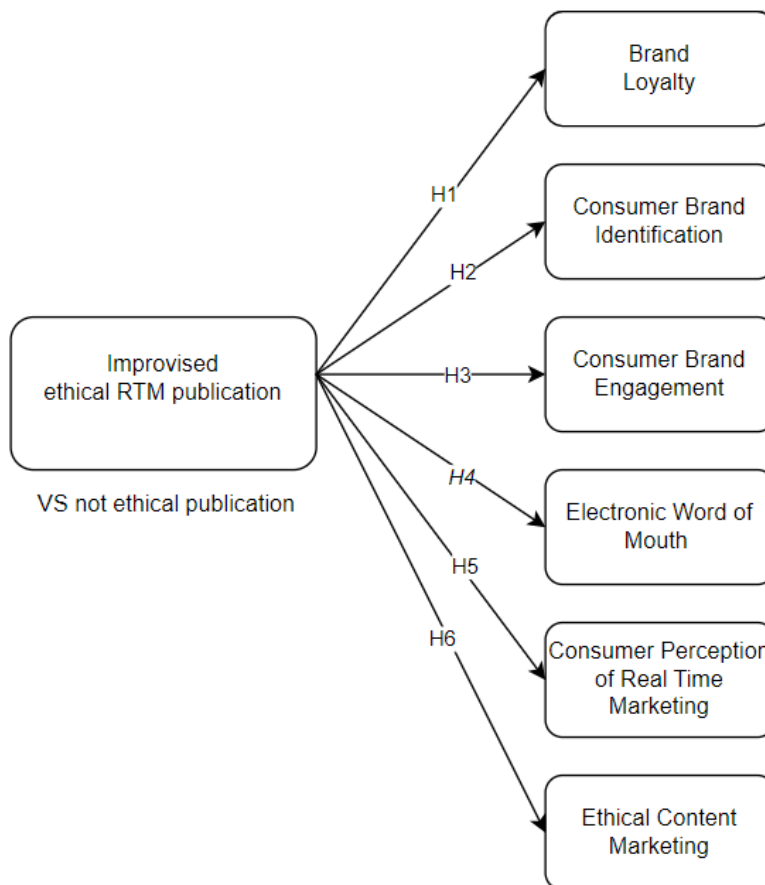


Figure 2- Theoretical model

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. RESEARCH APPROACH

An experimental study was conducted through a quantitative approach, aiming to understand the impact of the use of real-time marketing publications on ethical consumer perception.

The study was focused on publications only on social media due to the easy measurement component, despite RTM can also be used on offline campaigns.

The experiment was elaborated with the objective of understanding if the brands by using RTM publications, the interpretations of consumers change their purchasing decisions, and how it makes them feel when it comes to ethics. The publications shown in the survey that the respondent saw and about which they were asked questions is the condition imposed by this experimental methodology. To make sure that any differences in the answers are solely the result of the manipulation, the conditions are altered in a controlled manner. Therefore, the objective is to maintain the current conditions while only altering the independent variables that are being investigated.

The study will be conducted in Portuguese and using a known Portuguese brand (NOS Portugal). Due to this research being about ethical publications, there was a need to get the most honest response possible, and it was necessary to have a connection with the brand or at least a knowledge of the brand.

This experiment was conducted through an online self-administered questionnaire using Qualtrics.

In this questionnaire, a publication appeared randomly to the respondent. One of the following publications could appear: a real publication from NOS Portugal taken from their Instagram account about Queen Elisabeth II's death (not ethical RTM publication), or a publication that was manipulated for this questionnaire, which is the same publication but using only the queen photo (control condition – ethical RTM publication). Images of the survey can be seen below.

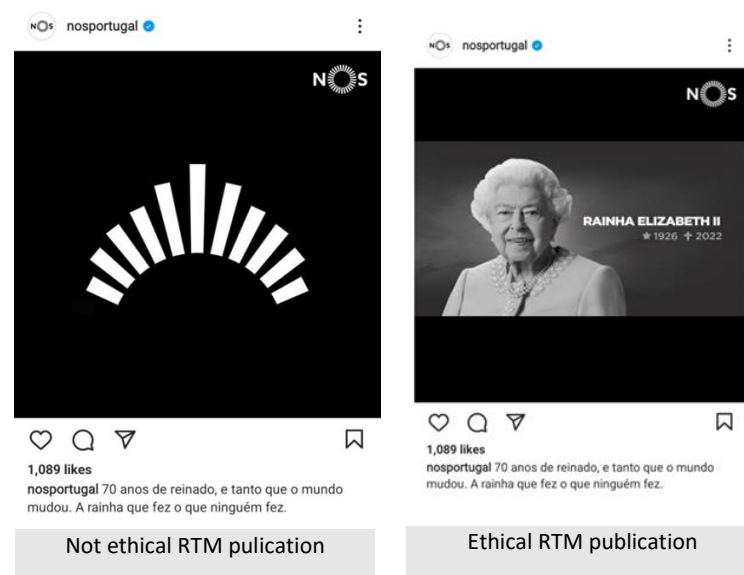


Figure 3 – Survey Posts.

## 4.2. EXPERIMENT – QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

Firstly, the respondents were questioned if they often utilized social media because this survey was centered on Portuguese culture and many brands are currently adopting this RTM method. The respondent would not continue with the questionnaire's completion if they answered "no" to any of questions.

In the second part of the questionnaire, accessing the conceptual model's hypothesis validity, the questions were grouped regarding which dependent variable we wanted to analyze. First, there was shown an Instagram post from NOS Portugal with a little background about the queen's death and then it was asked, having in consideration the post, if the participants new about the brand, were costumers of the brand, proud of the brand and if they remembered the publication.

After these questions, the participants were evaluated about each of the conceptual model's hypothesis titles (brand loyalty, brand identification, brand engagement, electronic word of mouth and consumer perception of RTM).

Then, they were faced with a second image about the queen death. An image that was not the original publication and which was believed an ethical one. After this, the participants needed to choose which image they preferred. The less ethical one or the most ethical.

In the third part of the questionnaire, accessing the conceptual model's hypothesis validity on the previous block, the respondents were randomly assigned to the exposure of one of the types of Images shown before and they answered some questions regarding Ethical Content Marketing.

The consumer profile, a crucial element for obtaining data and demographics that may affect opinions and actions, was finally included in the questionnaire's final group. In order to assess Generation as a potential covariate, general demographic questions on gender, education, and the respondent's birth year were asked.

### 4.3. DATA MEASUREMENT AND SCALES

Scales were chosen adapted from previous literature to evaluate the constructs (see Table 1). A five-point Likert scale measured the items from the questionnaire (ranging from 1-strongly disagree/nothing likely to 5-strongly agree/very likely.)

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale	Author	Nº of items
Brand Identification	0.789	(strongly disagree – strongly agree) – Likert 5	(Graham & Wilder, 2020; Sihvonen, 2019)	6
Brand Engagement	0.857	(strongly disagree – strongly agree) – Likert 5	(Hollebeek et al., 2014)	6
Brand loyalty	0.810	(strongly disagree – strongly agree) – Likert 5	(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001)	4
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.864	(strongly disagree – strongly agree) – Likert 5	(Fu et al., 2015)	4
Consumer Perception of Real-Time Marketing	0.735	(strongly disagree – strongly agree) – Likert 5	(Tar & Wiid, 2021a)	4

Table 1 - Constructs, Scales and Authors – conceptual model

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used in this study, constituted by respondents from both genders, over 18 years old who use social media.

Out of a total of 141 initial responses, only 111 were considered valid, due to the non-completion of the questionnaire.

Regarding Ethical Content Marketing, the last hypothesis of the Conceptual Model, the respondents were randomly assigned to the exposure of one of the types of RTM as an Instagram post. Then, they responded to these questions, knowing NOS Portugal chose image 1 to post (the original one). Because of this, the 6 questions were not factors reliable, the Cronbach's Alpha was lower than recommended.

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1. PSYCHOMETRIC PROPRIETIES

In order to understand if the constructs are statistically valid and reliable, a reliability analysis was conducted to analyze the consistency of the measures used. Table 1 above presents the reliability values. The Cronbach's Alpha to be found valid need to be higher than the recommended value of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), which shows a high internal consistency.

Consumer Perception of Real-Time Marketing was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective was to measure how consumers perceive and respond to these timely marketing efforts. To evaluate its effectiveness in capturing attention, generating engagement, and influencing consumer behavior. With this information, I can assess whether real-time marketing strategies achieve their intended goals and have a positive impact on consumer attitudes and actions. The Cronbach Alpha was ( $\alpha= 0.735$ ) which means that the values of the internal reliability were good.

Electronic Word of Mouth was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective was to measure how consumers use digital platforms to share information, influence others, and make purchase decisions. To evaluate the sentiment, volume, and content of online conversations about a brand are carried out in real-time and perceive and talk about it. With this information, I can assess the level of consumer involvement, interaction, and participation, providing insights into how brands can effectively engage with their target audience online. The Cronbach Alpha was ( $\alpha= 0.864$ ) which means that the values of the internal reliability were good.

Brand Loyalty was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective was to measure why consumers consistently choose and prefer certain brands over others. To evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies, product quality, customer satisfaction, and other factors that contribute to building strong, loyal customer relationships. With this information, I can assess the likelihood of customers repurchasing the brand, recommending it to others, and being resistant to competitive offerings. The Cronbach Alpha was ( $\alpha= 0.810$ ) which means that the values of the internal reliability were good.

Brand Engagement was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective was to measure the relationship between consumers and brands. To evaluate the depth of emotional connection, identification, and involvement that consumers have with a particular brand and, how well marketing efforts and strategies drive consumer involvement and interactions. With this information, I can identify target segments with high levels of engagement, guide resource allocation, and shape brand communication strategies. The Cronbach Alpha was ( $\alpha= 0.857$ ) which means that the values of the internal reliability were good.

Brand Identification was measured with a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The objective was to measure the relationship between consumers and brands and to provide valuable insights into how consumers form emotional connections and attachments to specific brands. With this information, I can craft targeted messages, create brand experiences, and foster stronger connections with the target audience. The Cronbach Alpha was ( $\alpha= 0.789$ ) which means that the values of the internal reliability were good.

## 5.2. DESCRIPTIVE STATICS

		<b>N</b>	<b>Valid percentage</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Gender (N=111)	Male	35	31,5	-	-
	Female	75	67,6	-	-
	Other	1	0,9	-	-
Age	-	111	-	29,18	9,292285
Education level (N=111)	High Education	9	8,1	-	-
	Professional Course	1	0,9	-	-
	Bachelor's degree	43	38,7	-	-
	Master's degree	58	52,3	-	-
Area of Work (N=111)	Marketing	15	13,5	-	-
	Engineering	5	4,5	-	-
	Health	8	7,2	-	-
	Management/Eco nomics/Finance/C onsulting/Audit	61	55,0	-	-
	Education	1	0,9	-	-
	Other	21	18,9	-	-

Table 2 – Descriptive Statics

### 5.3. ANOVA TEST

To provide a study analysis context, out of 111 participants, 30,4% said they spend one to two hours on social media and other 30,4% said they spend two to 3 hours. 60.7% of these participants also use Instagram every day. Even though 99.1% knew about NOS Portugal, 83,9% said they did not see the NOS's Portugal publication about the queen's death. The last closed question we had regarding the publication, was which image they preferred the most to be on the publication, and 70.5% chose image one (the original one).

In order to analyse the hypotheses previously presented in the theoretical model, some statistics tests were done to examine the data collected.

One-way ANOVA test was conducted if the dependent variables (Consumer Brand Identification, Brand Loyalty, Customer Brand Engagement, Electronic Word-of-mouth and Customer Perception of RTM) are triggered by the type of image chosen (Improvised ethical RTM publication or not ethical RTM publication). The validation of the hypotheses will be supported if the result of the p value is  $<0.01$ .

***H1: Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical RTM publication positively affects Brand Loyalty (BL).***

The study revealed not relevant differences among all the groups [ $F(1,110) = 0.41$   $p = 0.840$ ]. The answer unethical was superior ( $M=2.58$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ), followed by the answer ethical ( $M=2.55$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ), meaning that for the participants the loyalty to the brand is not affected by whether the image shown is ethical or not. This result does not prove support of H1 (cf. Appendix B, table 1).

***H2: CBI impact is positively related to Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication.***

The study revealed not relevant differences among all the groups [ $F(1,110) = 0.004$   $p = 0.951$ ]. The answer unethical was inferior ( $M=2.78$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ), followed by the answer ethical ( $M=2.79$ ,  $SD=0.86$ ), meaning that for the participants the identification they feel with the brand is not affected by if the image shown is ethical or not. This result does not prove support of H2 (cf. Appendix B, table 2).

***H3: Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication has a positive effect on CBE.***

The study revealed not relevant differences among all the groups [ $F(1,110) = 0.045$   $p = 0.833$ ]. The answer unethical was superior ( $M=2.31$ ,  $SD=0.80$ ), followed by the answer ethical ( $M=2.28$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ), meaning that for the participants the engagement they feel with the brand is not affected by if the image shown is ethical or not. This result is not proving support of H3 (cf. Appendix B, table 3).

**H4:** *Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication positively affects the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM).*

The study did not reveal relevant differences among all the groups [ $F(1,110) = 1.079$   $p = 0.301$ ]. The answer unethical was superior ( $M=2.41$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ), followed by the answer ethical ( $M=2.21$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ), meaning that for the participants the shares they will do of the brand is not affected by if the image shown is ethical or not. This result is not proving support of H4 (cf. Appendix B, table 4).

**H5:** *There is a difference in the impact on Consumer Perception of Real-Time Marketing between with Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication.*

The study did not reveal relevant differences among all the groups [ $F(1,110) = 0.358$   $p = 0.551$ ]. The answer unethical was superior ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=0.74$ ), followed by the answer ethical ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ), meaning that the participants do realize the publications are a form of marketing, however they do not care if the image shown is ethical or not. This result is not proving support of H5 (cf. Appendix B, table 5).

**H6:** *Improvised ethical RTM publication vs not ethical publication impacts Ethical Content Marketing (ECM).*

After seeing the two images and knowing that NOS Portugal chose image 1 to post (the original and considered unethical one), the participants answered the final 6 questions regarding Ethical Content Marketing (ECM). It was conducted a multivariate test and the average marginal mediums were also analysed for the 6 questions. cf. Appendix B, table 6).

The study revealed relevant differences among all the groups in all questions. For Q1, if the participants felt that this type of publication help the brand [ $F(1,110) = 4.366$   $p = 0.039$ ] and ( $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=0.12$ ). This result is proving support of H6.

For Q2, if the participants felt that the brand used the event in their favour [ $F(1,110) = 9.112$   $p = 0.003$ ] and ( $M=3.83$ ,  $SD=0.11$ ). This result proves support for H6.

For Q3, if the participants felt that the brand was being transparent with their intentions [ $F(1,110) = 1.501$   $p = 0.223$ ] and ( $M=3.30$ ,  $SD=0.11$ ). This result does not prove support of H6.

For Q4, if the participants felt that this type of publication can be misleading and dishonest [ $F(1,110) = 0.324$   $p = 0.570$ ] and ( $M=2.60$ ,  $SD=0.11$ ). This result does not prove support of H6.

For Q5, if the participants felt that NOS Portugal was being ethical while doing this publication [ $F(1,110) = 0.007$   $p = 0.934$ ] and ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=0.11$ ). This result does not prove support of H6.

For Q6, if the participants felt that the brands should be obliged to follow specific rules when posting this type of publication [ $F(1,110) = 1.318$   $p = 0.254$ ] and ( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=0.10$ ). This result does not prove support of H6.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORKS

### 6.1. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

With all the studies referenced on this study reveal, with any doubt, RTM publications allow brands to stay current, that consumers react differently to this type of publication compared with not improvised marketing publications, and that also can trigger very positive feelings about the publication and the brand. However, this study is the first-time the ethical part of these publications has been questioned.

The participants had the chance to choose how they felt about a real publication of a brand, in this case NOS Portugal. The questionnaire was in Portuguese on purpose, to force only Portuguese people to answer. Because a Portuguese brand chose to make a publication about the queen of England's death, without having any connection with the United Kingdom. The purpose was to understand how the Portuguese felt about the brand after this and if they would have chosen a picture not relatable to the brand itself.

What we learnt was that for RTM publications, there is not a negative relation with brand loyalty, consumer brand identification, consumer brand engagement, eWOM, how people perceive this type of publication and its ethics.

The participants did not see any harm, exploration, or felt bad perceptions of the brand. They see the publication as disruptive and original.

I believe this is a start for marketers to think about how the publications can be perceived and that we will need some regulations about these publications in the future.

### 6.2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Even though, any hypothesis was found true. We can conclude some inputs:

- Original and impactful publications can overshadow any misinterpretation of the images chosen.

The participants still chose the original image, after seeing a more "simple" and not relatable to the brand one. They did not feel it was harmful to the brand image. They would still like the picture and use its products.

- Take into consideration that there is a thin line when it comes to ethics.

Most of the participants had a positive reaction to the publication. However, 29.5% chose image 2 for the publication. Brands need to know very well their target, to be able to anticipate how would they feel and perceive it. The companies can be original and act on the moment but have in mind the morals and relations of the society.

- RTM publications are a good way to get interactions, however, they cannot make more sales instantly.

With data collected in this study, the participants did not feel more confident about the brand, it did not make them buy products more, and it was not relevant enough to make them feel different about the brand. It is a journey. With RTM publications, the brand gets noticed, but people are constantly on social media and getting impacted by a lot of brands. These publications need to be constant to be impactful. For people to remember then in the act of purchase.

### **6.3. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study has several limitations that may lead to future research. The publication itself may not be “unethical” enough to have a bad impact on the participants. We wanted to do a real publication from a known Portuguese brand, instead of using an imaginary one. In future researches maybe try to use a fake publication.

Another limitation is that it was applied to Portuguese respondents – and one could expect cultural and behavioural differences to be found when applied to other countries. And that what can be ethical for me can be unethical to other participants.

Also even though, the study refers to social media in general, in practical terms, we focused only on Instagram. It can be interesting in future research to understand how people react on different platforms such as Facebook or TikTok. Or if influencers do it, instead of brands.

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## APPENDIX A: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire and data collection is part of a master's dissertation in Data-Driven Marketing at the Nova Information Management School.

Participation is voluntary and anonymous, so you are free to participate or not, and the answers will be used for academic purposes only. There are no right or wrong answers, so please be honest. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire is 7 minutes.

Thank you in advance for your time and availability.

### Informed Consent Statement:

By selecting "I agree", I declare that I am at least 18 years old and that I agree to participate in this study. I have been informed that my participation in this study is voluntary, that I can end the questionnaire at any time, and that all data collected is confidential.

- I agree to participate in this survey
- I do not agree to participate in this survey

Q1. Do you use social networks in your daily life?

- Less than 1 hour
- Between 1 hour and 2 hours
- Between 2 hours and 3 hours
- Between 3 hours and 4 hours
- More than 4 hours
- Do not use

Q2. Do you use the social network Instagram in your daily life?

- Always
- Most of the time often
- About half of the time
- Sometimes
- Never

The photo below was taken from NOS Portugal's Instagram account.

Please take a look and then it will answer questions related to the image.



Q3. Do you know the brand NOS Portugal?

- Yes
- No

Q4. Do you remember seeing this NOS Portugal publication after having seen this photo?

- Yes
- No

Q5. Bearing in mind the image you've just seen, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- I like to see these kinds of posts on my Instagram.
- I feel I understand the message in the photo.
- I feel that this publication makes me want to buy NOS Portugal products instead of another competing brand.
- I feel that this publication has changed my opinion of NOS Portugal.

Q6. Bearing in mind the image you've just seen, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- I recognized the values of NOS Portugal when I saw this publication.
- I feel that this type of publication gives me more confidence in NOS Portugal.
- I feel moved by this publication.
- I feel happy seeing this publication.

Q7. Bearing in mind the image you've just seen, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- I feel like I would share this post on my Instagram.
- I feel like I would "like" this post.
- I feel that I would comment on this publication.
- I feel like I would talk to someone about this post.

Q8. Bearing in mind the image you've just seen, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- I would talk about NOS Portugal's publications.
- I'd talk about the good ideas that NOS Portugal has in its campaigns.
- I would talk about NOS Portugal and its reputation.

Q9. After seeing this publication, would you say that I am proud to be a customer of NOS Portugal?

- Yes
- No
- I am not a client.

Q10. Bearing in mind the image you've just seen, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- You would probably share/comment on the NOS Portugal publication with someone outside social networks.
- Likely to share NOS Portugal publication with someone on social media.
- Likely to send this post to another person on Instagram.
- Likely to recommend NOS Portugal to someone else.

Q11. Bearing in mind the image you've just seen, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- I understand that this publication is a form of marketing.
- I feel that NOS Portugal is taking advantage of this event to get more followers/shares/comments.
- I feel that I interact more with this type of post than with posts about the brand's products.
- I feel that this type of post is more creative.
- I feel that this type of publication helps the brand.

Now imagine that NOS Portugal had the option of choosing one of the two photos below to publish on its Instagram page on the day Queen Elizabeth II passed away.



Image 1



Image 2

Q12. Which of the two photos would you choose to publish on the Instagram page?

- Image 1
- Image 2

Q13.a) We know that NOS Portugal chose Image 1. Now that you've seen the two photos that NOS Portugal could have published, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- I feel that the chosen publication helped the brand.
- I feel that the brand has used the event to its advantage.
- I feel that the brand is being transparent about its intentions.
- I feel that this type of publication can lead to misleading or dishonest practices.
- I feel that NOS Portugal is being ethical in making this publication.
- I feel that brands should be obliged to follow specific rules or regulations when implementing this type of campaign.

Q13.b) We know that NOS Portugal chose Image 2. Now that you've seen the two photos that NOS Portugal could have published, how much do you agree with each of the statements? From Not Agreeing at All to Totally Agreeing.

- I feel that the chosen publication helped the brand.
- I feel that the brand has used the event to its advantage.
- I feel that the brand is being transparent about its intentions.
- I feel that this type of publication can lead to misleading or dishonest practices.
- I feel that NOS Portugal is being ethical in making this publication.
- I feel that brands should be obliged to follow specific rules or regulations when implementing this type of campaign.

Q14. What is your age? Please enter your date in the format yyyy/mm/dd.

Q15. Please choose your gender.

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary / Third gender
- I prefer not to say

Q16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Primary School Secondary School
- Secondary
- Vocational
- Professional
- Degree Master's / Postgraduate
- Doctorate

Q17. What area do you work in?

- Marketing Arts and Design
- Engineering Health Management/Eco Management/Consulting/Finance/Auditing
- Education
- Communication Sciences
- Other

## APPENDIX B: ANOVA TEST TABLES

Table 1 - Brand Loyalty (BL).

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Unethical	56	2,5848	0,90864
Ethical	55	2,5491	0,95872
Total	111	2,5670	0,92997

	<b>df</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Among groups	1	0,41	0,840
Groups	110		
Total	111		

Table 2 – Customer Brand Identification

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Unethical	56	2,7798	0,67278
Ethical	55	2,7887	0,85723
Total	111	2,7842	0,76708

	<b>df</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Among groups	1	0,004	0,951
Groups	110		
Total	111		

Table 3 – Customer Brand Engagement

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Unethical	56	2,3185	0,80106
Ethical	55	2,2827	0,97852
Total	111	2,3006	0,89034

	<b>df</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Among groups	1	0,045	0,833
Groups	110		
Total	111		

Table 4 - the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM).

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Unethical	56	2,4152	0,99004
Ethical	55	2,2188	1,01137
Total	111	2,3170	1,00112

	<b>df</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Among groups	1	1,079	0,301
Groups	110		
Total	111		

Table 5 - Consumer Perception of Real-Time Marketing

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Unethical	56	3,7321	0,74446
Ethical	55	3,6429	0,83238
Total	111	3,6875	0,78736

	<b>df</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Among groups	1	0,358	0,551
Groups	110		
Total	111		

Table 6 - Ethical Content Marketing (ECM).

Multivariate:

	<b>Z</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Q1	4,366	0,039
Q2	9,112	0,003
Q3	1,501	0,223
Q4	0,324	0,570
Q5	0,007	0,934
Q6	1,318	0,254

Average marginal mediums:

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Q1	3,384	0,115
Q2	3,830	0,109
Q3	3,295	0,109
Q4	2,598	0,110
Q5	3,563	0,108
Q6	3,116	0,101

## APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL STUDY INSIGHTS TABLES

Table 1 – Social Media

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	12	10,7
Between 1 hour and 2 hours	34	30,4
Between 2 hours and 3 hours	34	30,4
Between 3 hours and 4 hours	16	14,3
More than 4 hours	15	13,4
Do not use	1	0,9

Table 2 – Use of Instagram

	Frequency	Percentage
Always	68	60,7
Most of the time often	20	17,9
About half of the time	10	8,9
Sometimes	8	7,1
Never	6	5,4

Table 3 – NOS Portugal's Instagram Publication

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	16,1
No	94	83,9

Table 4 – Choice between Image 1 and Image 2

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Image 1	79	70,5
Image 2	33	29,5