

Data Ethics

The Impact of ESG on Brand Perception

Roundtable Summary

This round table discussion will focus on the utilization of consumer intelligence in ethical decision-making processes. Participants will delve into the ways in which organizations can gather and analyze consumer data to better understand their values, preferences, and expectations. The discussion aims to explore how leveraging consumer intelligence can guide ethical decision-making across various industries, foster stronger brand-consumer relationships, and drive positive societal impact.

In this session we will discuss and share perspectives around the following questions:

- How can organizations effectively gather and analyze consumer intelligence to gain a deep understanding of their values, preferences, and expectations? What ethical considerations should be taken into account during this process?
- In what ways can leveraging consumer intelligence influence ethical decision-making across different industries? Can you provide examples of how organizations have used consumer insights to address ethical dilemmas and make informed decisions?
- What role does consumer intelligence play in driving positive societal impact? How can organizations leverage consumer insights to align their ethical decision-making with broader social and environmental goals?
- What data sources can organizations use to track and understand the most important ESG topics for their consumers and what impact is an organization’s ESG strategy have on the wider brand equity? (improve)
- What are the potential challenges and risks associated with utilizing consumer intelligence in ethical decision-making processes? How can organizations mitigate these risks and ensure responsible and ethical use of consumer data?

Background Context

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives are stealing the spotlight (and a larger slice of the budget) for more brands these days. The reasons are multifold: an increased awareness of climate change and its impact on business operations; pressure from customers, investors, and employees for consumer brands to act responsibly and ethically; and regulatory requirements that prioritize ESG practices. But beyond ESG initiatives being the “right” thing to do, consumer brands are using them as a strategic pillar to promote growth and strengthen connections with their target markets.

However, there’s a disconnect between wanting to create buzzworthy ESG initiatives vs. executing ESG as a strategic pillar. According to PwC’s Pulse Survey, 37% of CMOs say that values-based expectations of the brand and its products and services impact them greatly. Authenticity is key, and CMOs and executives want to avoid promoting half-hearted ESG efforts that don’t align with brand values or fail to resonate with their customers.

Regulatory changes may also limit CMOs’ decision making. Things like the disappearance of cookies and changes around customer data and privacy impact the experiences companies create for their customers and the approach they take to reach them.

Keeping pace with rapidly changing technology poses another challenge for executing on ESG. Marketing budgets aren’t keeping up with new tools and technologies, such as the Metaverse, AI, and automation. As consumers gravitate toward new technologies (and leave older options behind), consumer brands struggle to continue reaching their core audience and attracting new customers.

Solving these and other challenges of executing ESG efforts starts with knowing what environmental, social, and governance impacts your customers care about and the best channels and methods to reach them. Using consumer data as a north star can help brands develop their ESG goals in ways that add substance as well as track their ESG performance over time.

Roundtable Chairs:



James Andrews
Consumer Insights
Director UKI & Nordics
Meltwater
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Rachel Weekes
CMI PDC Director
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James has over a decade of Digital Marketing, Ecommerce, Community and Brand Building Experience. Currently leading the Consumer Intelligence division at Meltwater for the UK&I and Nordics, helping Global Brands such as Danone, Reckitt, Pernod Ricard & more leverage social, digital and first party data for Consumer Intelligence. Complementary to Meltwater, he also sits on the Advisory Board for AS Prike, the largest Premium Spirits import, sales and marketing company in the Baltics.

Rachel Weekes is the CMI PDC Director at Unilever, with over more than 20 years of experience in Data Marketing.