

AI-Assisted Formal Buyer-Seller Marketing Theory

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ABSTRACT

Customer behavior, market dynamics, and technological advances have made it challenging for marketing theorists to provide comprehensive explanations and actionable insights. Although there are numerous substantive marketing frameworks, no formal marketing theory exists. This study aims to develop the first formal grounded theory in marketing by incorporating artificial intelligence and Forde's conceptual framework as a guiding lens. Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory tradition and Forde's conceptual framework and data analysis strategy were employed for this purpose. The data analysis strategy used with grounded theory's constant compare-and-contrast method comprises holistic and systems thinking, dramaturgical and situational analysis, perspective-taking, and deconstruction. To evaluate Glaser's assertion that all is data, artificial intelligence was incorporated into the research as the data source for retrieving the theoretical samples to address the primary research question: How can Forde's conceptual framework and artificial intelligence be leveraged to develop a formal marketing theory grounded in evidence? Of significance was the emergence of democratic marketing behaviors and the normalization of anti-democratic marketing approaches leveraged to manipulate buyers or gain access to segments of customers. Buyers and sellers can simultaneously benefit from and be prejudiced by marketing exchange dynamics. This finding lends credibility to the newly emerged framework of strategic actions where empowerment and disempowerment are leveraged to achieve specific goals. Considering this finding, it is suggested that businesses view marketing as a symbiotic relationship between two power centers, buyers, and sellers, who respectively strive to maintain human dignity and sustainability. Researchers are encouraged to apply the framework across substantive areas, international markets, public relations, political campaigns, and others.

Keywords: Apple AI; Bagozzi; ChatGPT3.5; Drucker; Ethical framework; Grounded theory; Kotler; Parasuraman; Unethical marketing practices.

1. Introduction

Human existence is possible only in tension—in tension between man's simultaneous life as an individual in the spirit and as a citizen in the society. The same tension exists for the corporation, which has a dual role of a competitive enterprise and a corporate citizen of philanthropy. However, these tensions represent ultimately shared interests, and marketing represents potential relief.

—Drucker, 1971

Marketing theorists need help to provide comprehensive explanations and actionable insights into contemporary marketing practices as customer behavior, market dynamics, and technological advancements rapidly evolve. Despite extensive research, a significant gap exists in understanding the underlying processes and mechanisms governing customer behavior and market phenomena. Due to this gap, a pioneering approach is needed to systematically uncover emergent patterns, relationships, and concepts grounded in empirical data to offer a nuanced understanding of the complex interactions between consumers, marketing, and sellers. This necessitates the development of the first formal grounded theory in marketing that aims to address these shortcomings by applying a rigorous methodological framework based on Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory. In adopting a top-down approach, the study seeks to develop a novel theory that transcends the limitations of existing substantive marketing theories to allow deeper insight into consumer decision-making processes and marketing strategies. With the aid of artificial intelligence, this grounded theory endeavor strives to uncover implicit patterns, generate theoretical codes, and refine Forde's conceptual framework to capture the essence of contemporary marketing phenomena, the recognition of consumers and their role in marketing, through a systematic exploration of real-world data collected

by artificial intelligence from a variety of sources. Through the development of this pioneering research, co-constructed with AI, marketers, scholars, and practitioners will be provided with a robust conceptual foundation and a pragmatic framework for guiding decision-making processes, advancing organizational sustainability, and guiding marketing strategies.

Marketing is a symbiotic process of social exchange between buyers and sellers whereby political, psychological, and social strategies influence buyers' attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, perceptions, or buying habits to satisfy their demands, needs, and wants. Although marketing evolved throughout the different eras to become more ethical, customer-centric, and socially conscious, there is scant evidence of formal marketing theory [1], [2]. Marketing has been around for more than 40,000 years, as evidenced by jewelry and figurines discovered in Europe's Ice Age caves, Greek potters' signatures on their work in 600-700 BC, wall advertisements as old as 79 AD in Naples, Italy, and complaints found engraved on clay tablets in cuneiform writings in ancient Mesopotamia [3]. In the United States, marketing started during the Industrial Revolution and evolved through various eras: production, product, sales, customer, and social orientation. During the first three eras, consumers had little product choice. However, marketing took a customer-centered approach during the customer era thanks to early marketing theorists and strategists like Drucker. Marketing scholars at the time needed to understand the symbiotic relationship between buyer and seller like Drucker. Drucker positioned the customer at the center of business and marketing [4]. He asserted that the primary purpose of business is to attract customers through "value and service first, profit later. Maximizing profit, perhaps never" (p. 8) [4]. The idea is that buyer-sellers engage in co-creating goods and services, and the results are so effective that the goods and services sell themselves. Drucker's customer-centric approach led to "basic consumer rights (the right to safety, the right to be informed, the right to choose, and the right to be heard;" p. 9) [4].

Parasuraman et al., Bagozzi, and Kotler followed suit and continued to focus on the consumer [5-7]. Bagozzi developed a theory of marketing as an exchange process. For Kotler, the marketing exchange process is value creation for customers and value capture for sellers (p. 26) [7]. Parasuraman et al. developed SERVQUAL, a research instrument to measure customer expectations and perceptions of service quality [5]. The instrument captures reliability, empathy, responsiveness, tangibles, and assurance [5]. Bagozzi later appraised the role of emotional arousal in cognitive processes and their implications for "volitions, goal-directed behavior, and decisions to help" (p. 184) [8].

Bagozzi briefly explored the link between emotions and customer satisfaction [6]. Kotler developed a five-step framework that relies on knowledge to lead to consumer satisfaction and organizational sustainability [7]. The first four steps create value for the customer [7]. Relying on market knowledge and "customer needs and wants" (p. 55) [7], a customer-driven strategy is developed with the end of "getting, engaging, and growing targeted customers" (p. 55) [7]. The third step involves the construction of a marketing program that "delivers superior value" (p. 55) [7]. The three steps lead to the fourth step: "engaging customers, building profitable customer relationships, and creating customer satisfaction (p. 55) [7]." Drucker's, Bagozzi's, Kotler's, and Parasuraman's human-centric approach to marketing is the basis for introducing the first principles of democracy to construct a transformational formal buyer-seller marketing behavior theory [4], [6], [7], [5].

This study aims to develop the first formal grounded theory in marketing by incorporating artificial intelligence and Forde's conceptual framework as the guiding lens. Grounded theory's rigorous, constant compare-and-contrast method of data analysis will be applied to systematically unravel the complexities of contemporary customer behavior, market dynamics, and marketing strategies to transcend the limitations of existing marketing theories. This will provide marketers, scholars, and practitioners with a deeper insight and practical implications as the market landscape evolves.

1.1. Study Objectives

This study aims to extend an existing formal social change grounded theory by applying Forde's motivational, transformational, and ethical principles framework to a buyer-seller marketing theory while assessing the use of artificial intelligence as a grounded theory methodology data analysis tool for co-constructing theories embedded in substantive content. Moreover, the study puts to the challenge Glaser's assertion that all is data by using artificial intelligence as a theoretical sampling source. Forde's empowering and disempowering categories will be used as sensitizing concepts and as part of grounded theory's constant compare-and-contrast method of data analysis. Because the concepts are highly generalizable due to their level of abstraction, emerging marketing concepts will have to reflect a level of abstraction lower than Forde's concepts but higher than those used in substantive marketing areas to cover buyer-seller interactions across cultures and industries. Through this process, the study aims to elucidate customer-centric buyer-seller interactions in various contexts. The synthesized theory will provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying principles governing buyer-seller relationships, facilitating the development of effective marketing strategies, and enhancing decision-making processes for businesses operating in diverse market environments.

2. Conceptual Framework

Forde's conceptual framework was selected to answer two research questions: How can Forde's conceptual framework and artificial intelligence be leveraged to develop a formal marketing theory grounded in evidence? and, How can Forde's conceptual framework be expanded and applied to create effective marketing strategies? Forde developed a formal democratic social change theory and multiple transformational grounded theory frameworks within the same study.[9] She integrated the two categories of theoretical codes into multiple democratic social change grounded theories. Forde cited examples of how the framework can help with understanding power strategies and counterstrategies leveraged during intimate partner violence, school bullying, and workplace violence. Furthermore, the framework was incorporated into a public policy analysis and evaluation framework that reveals the latent consequences of incrementalism. The empowering category was also applied as a business strategy and an ethical framework to leverage multiple polarities using Johnson's polarity management [9]. The theoretical codes were also applied to business as a business strategy and decision-making model to leverage polarities in organizations. Hence, it appeared possible to attend to Rosenbaum and Russell-Bennett's call to "encourage service researchers to engage in 'theoretical disruption' by purposefully adding variance to existing substantive theories, and conceptual frameworks, to construct formal theories of buyer-seller marketplace behaviors" (572) [1]. Whether the framework will add variance as it is or become instrumental in the emergence of

marketing principles is uncertain. However, what is certain is that the principles transcend cultural values, which is a perceived barrier to constructing a formal marketing theory [1]. Although cultural differences exist within families, communities, regions, and across the nation and globe, people are linked by universal principles regardless of who or where they are. Everyone desires to be treated fairly, respected, informed, connected with others, and free to pursue their overall well-being. These shared desires are endorsed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, where knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, and security are found [9] (see Figure 1).

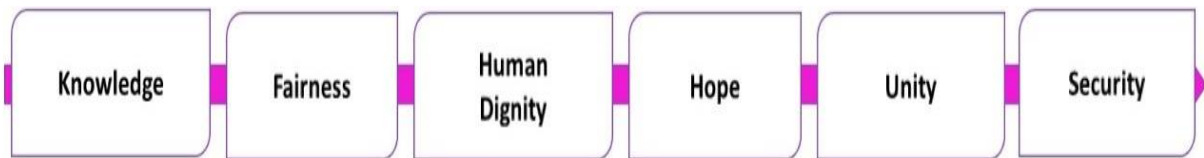


Figure 1. Empowering Concepts

Forde [9] used empowerment and disempowerment as sensitizing concepts to get a "general sense of what is relevant" (p. 148) [10]. Empowerment and disempowerment were used for theoretical sensitivity. They were later used as category labels, each containing six theoretical codes. In conceptualizing the theoretical codes, she took the broad versus narrow conception of knowledge, which includes intuition, pragmatism, abduction, prudence, tacit knowledge, and other forms of knowing. Forde borrowed from Snyder's [11] motivational theory of hope to conceptualize hope. Snyder defined hope as pathways plus agency. Meaning that hope is based on the awareness of a viable path that will lead to fulfillment. A review of Forde's memos revealed the following principles of hope: knowledge, trust, desire, anticipation, and future orientation. Unity, human dignity, and fairness were narrowly constructed. Unity is a common essence that bonds two or more people together. Human dignity is restricted to the innate worth of all of humanity, which makes a person as worthy as the next. Fairness is defined as being superior to equality because it is the moral essence of equality. Fairness can be a driving force. Driving forces or motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Ryan and Deci [12] found that intrinsic motivation leads to exploration, challenge-seeking, and self-enjoyment, while extrinsic motivation is instrumental and depends on external rewards. Extrinsically motivated individuals can adapt proposed values through internalization (taking in the value, idea, or behavior) and integration (identifying with the proposed value, idea, or behavior as their own). Lastly is security, the final cause of human existence and primary motivation. Security includes safety, economic, food, health, environment, personal, community, and political [13]. Security is well-being: spiritual, intellectual, psychological, emotional, social [14], physical [15], financial, and environmental. The principles are interrelated and undergird by human dignity, facilitating well-being and security. Knowledge is a founding principle among the five concepts. They are uniting, ethical, processual, and transformational [9]. Moreover, they are motivational [12], [16-21].

By contrast, Forde [9] asserts that the disempowerment concepts, or anti-democratic tenets, are employed as strategic actions that impede security. They are divisive strategies used to uphold social stratification and elevate one segment of society over others. The disempowerment category comprises nativism (tribalism), social distinctions, dehumanization, fear, misinformation, and subjugation (physical, psychological, and emotional control). The concepts are interrelated in many ways. A tactic may fulfill the aim of one or more strategic actions. For example, deceptive information dehumanizes and subjugates listeners. Misinformation is leveraged to control

the perceptions, opinions, or behaviors of others. Fear is leveraged to dehumanize and subjugate. No disempowering strategy is leveraged without control as the goal.

The common essence of these strategic actions is their ability to affect the balance of power between individuals or groups (see Figure 2) [9]. Misinformation may appear passive. Still, it aims to control their attitudes, behavior, or ideas. Dehumanization often takes subtle forms, such as silence, ignoring a person or group, or objectification [9]. Subjugation can also be subtle forms such as manipulation. Fear can motivate people to act [9]. Nativism (tribalism) often promotes ideas that instill fear or create a dual society [9]. The power dynamic between buyers and sellers makes this conceptual framework appropriate for this study. More importantly, the framework transcends culture and is ethics-based [9]. It could also facilitate the emergence of less abstract marketing concepts.



Figure 2. Disempowering Strategic Actions

3. Methods

Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory tradition was employed to construct a marketing theory and answer two research questions: How can Forde's conceptual framework and artificial intelligence be leveraged to develop a formal marketing theory grounded in evidence? and, How can Forde's conceptual framework be expanded and applied to create effective marketing strategies? Forde [9] selected Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory to produce the democratic social change theories. Therefore, it was logical to employ the same grounded theory tradition. Doing so introduces consonance to newly emerged theoretical codes. Moreover, it is the most appropriate tradition to engage in critical inquiry and explore implicit meanings [23], "power, inequality, and marginality" (p. 11) [25].

3.1. Grounded Theory Tradition

Grounded theory has become the preferred methodology for constructing theories grounded in substantive data—considering that all is data, using systematic data gathering and analysis [23], [26]. There are several grounded theory traditions—positivist [26], post-positivist [27], and constructivist [23]—all of which rely on the interpretivist paradigm to analyze data systematically. The methodology has also been utilized to contribute to extant frameworks. However, Glaser and Strauss contested its use to contribute to existing theory [26]. Regardless of how the methodology is used, the three traditions adhere to basic grounded theory principles: theoretical sampling (a purposive sampling method with the aim of theory generation), constant compare-and-contrast method of data analysis, coding, theoretical coding (coding process aimed at theory construction) [25], interrelated theoretical codes, memo-writing, categorizing, abstraction (the elevation of concepts to a higher abstract level) [28], abductive reasoning (a means of inference that enables the generation of novel explanations) [29], theory generation, and a literature review that is relevant to the constructed grounded theory [29], [27], [26].

Although these traditions share principles, there are controversies: the timing of the literature review [26], [29], whether grounded theory is an inductive process, and whether theory emerges automatically or as a result of the user's lived experience [28]. Moreover, despite Glaser and Strauss's [26] protestation, Martinovic and Manizade [30] and others engaged in grounded theory methodology to expand extant theory. Grounded theory is not a methodology that lends itself to theory verification [26]. Scholars who engage in grounded theory must ensure rigor by meeting the following standards held by all grounded theory traditions: sample diversity, theory grounded in the substantive data, internal consistency, originality, and plausibility. However, each grounded theory tradition has its rigor criteria. The constructivist tradition requires the theory to resonate with common people and be plausible, original, and useful [32].

3.2. Sample

Artificial intelligence (AI), Apple AI, and ChatGPT3.5 were engaged for the sample selection, theoretical sampling, pattern recognition, exploration of emerging research questions, data analysis, compare-and-contrast, and integration of a priori codes with existing theories. To reduce sample selection bias and make the best use of time, AI was asked to produce the most frequently cited marketing theories and their key concepts for the initial sample: the marketing mix (4Ps), consumer behavior, brand equity, diffusion of innovation, relationship marketing, social media marketing, integrated marketing communications, market segmentation, positioning, and marketing ethics.

3.3. Data Analysis

A successful grounded theory project that produces a plausible theory begins with deep reflection on the data analysis strategy. A data analysis strategy must complement the grounded theory tradition and the research phenomenon. These reflections were documented as memos and later used throughout the research process. The data analysis strategies were used to analyze the theoretical samples commensurate with grounded theory's constant compare-and contrast method and the constructivist coding tradition.

Forde's [9] data analysis plan was followed. However, the process was modified in two ways: the inclusion of a priori codes and the top-down versus the bottom-up approach to abstraction to facilitate field-specific theoretical codes. The data analysis strategy comprised dramaturgical and situational analysis, systems and holistic thinking, reification, perspective-taking, and deconstruction [9]. Systems thinking explores units, processes, and how they relate to the whole [34]. Rather than focusing on the parts of a phenomenon, holistic thinking seeks to gain insight into the phenomenon as a whole [34]. Situational analysis incorporates relational, social world arena, and positional analysis [35]. A dramaturgical analysis includes the theatre metaphor to explain self-presentation to others during routine social exchanges [36]. The perspective-taking technique involves understanding a situation from the point of view of another individual's cognitive and emotional process [37].

Deconstruction is the careful attention given to explicit and implicit meanings associated with cultural norms and power [29], [23], [38]. Data analysis started with the "most cited marketing theories" and their basic tenets using the constructivist grounded theory coding processes, open coding (codes are allowed to emerge [9]; see Table 1), and

theoretical coding. Efforts were made to lower the level of abstraction to create a formal marketing theory using marketing concepts. After saturation, the concepts were deconstructed and contrasted with a priori codes.

Table 1. Open Coding

| Empowerment | Disempowerment |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Customer-Centric | Objectification |
| Fair Pricing | Commoditization |
| Respectful Engagement | Ignoring Customers |
| Segmentation | Discriminatory Segmentation |
| Niche Marketing | Discriminatory Niche Marketing |
| Co-creation | Manipulation |
| Personalization | Coercion |
| Customer Satisfaction | Misleading information |
| Positive Customer Service | Automated Customer Service |
| Storytelling | False Advertising |
| Customer Engagement | Hidden fees |
| Innovation | Limited Choices |
| Identifying with Brand | Poor Customer Service |
| Data-driven decisions | Aggressive Sales Tactics |
| Social Responsibility | High or Unfair Pricing |
| Community Building | Fear-Based Marketing |
| Transparency | Frequent Upgrades |
| Accessibility | Illegible Fine prints |
| Diversity and Inclusion | Complex Terms/Jargon |
| Education | Exclusion |
| Continuous Improvement | Limited Access |
| Strategic Partnerships | Exploitive Labor Practices |
| Technology Adoption | Predatory Lending |
| Sustainability | Lack of Customer or Human |
| Adaptability and Resilience | Customer Service |
| Empathy | Collusion |
| Dignified Communication | Monopoly |
| User-Generated Content | Poor Product/Service Quality |
| Consumer Feedback and Surveys | Ignoring Product Safety |
| Quality Product and Services | Harming Environment |
| Safety/Security | Violating Privacy |

3.4. AI-Enabled Theoretical Sampling

The theoretical samples were generated using Apple AI and ChatGPT3.5. The theoretical samples were compared iteratively. Apple AI and ChatGPT3.5 were often asked redundant questions to ensure AI understood the command. Appendix A contains a sample of the questions that guided the process. Some questions were asked to verify the data. Other questions were asked following emerging research questions or the emergence of discrepancies.

3.5. Discrepant Data

Discrepant data emerged during data analysis. Discrepant data includes sustainability, business reputation, brand, service, product quality, segmented, exclusivity, and niche markets. The latter three approaches emerged as disempowering tactics used to control consumers through false or misleading information, leveraging fear, control, discrimination (segmentation and exclusivity marketing), and the dehumanization of consumers through objectification (i.e., The rapper Mos Def retired his moniker and legally changed his name in 2011 to Yasiin Bey. The change came after he "began to fear that Mos Def was being treated as a product, not a person" (p. 1) [39]. There are circumstances in which segmentation and exclusivity serve legitimate marketing goals (i.e., Amazon Prime's student discount; meeting the dietary needs) that promote the human dignity of otherwise ignored groups. Business reputation, brand, service, product quality, segmentation, niche, and exclusivity were coded under empowerment concepts. However, there were times when market segmentation and niche and exclusive marketing took the form of disempowerment.

Finally, there were exceptions to applying the framework to the sample. The two exceptions are the marketing mix (4Ps) and the zone of tolerance. The 4Ps need a more human-centric approach; therefore, the principles framework must be applied. However, the 4Ps were expanded to 7Ps to incorporate people, processes, and physical evidence into the marketing mix.

4. Findings

Artificial intelligence complements grounded theory methodology. It played an important role throughout the research process. There are, however, significant weaknesses associated with artificial intelligence. It was instrumental in identifying a priori codes across substantive marketing areas, international markets, and platforms, including e-commerce (see Appendix C, D, and E, respectively).

4.1. Use of AI in Grounded Theory

Glaser's [40] "all is data" was put to the challenge by employing artificial intelligence [AI] as the data source for theoretical sampling. While useful, AI is no substitute for user experience. Users must be able to ask good questions and analyze data for deeper meaning, which requires interpreting data from multiple perspectives. It was less useful for data analysis, deconstruction, and generating abstract theoretical codes. The vast amount of data that AI can access without intuitive capability and how this data is generalized makes in-depth data analysis challenging, if not impossible. Theoretical sensitivity is required during data analysis for depth, abstraction, abduction, theoretical synthesis, and the phenomenon's integrated (and plausible) explanation.

Although AI can produce theories, the marketing theories produced by ChatGPT3.5 [41] are integrated and not very different from existing theories or Forde's [9] democratic social change theory, a holistic theory integrating ethics

and extant motivational and social theories. AI-produced quasi-process, which were poor at best, were descriptive accounts of the concepts in the order in which they were entered. This is more inconvenient than a real problem because users can switch the order of the concepts and command AI to “generate a new theory.” The optimal application of AI is using a priori codes to expand existing theories (see Appendix F) or commands to construct marketing theories based on extant social science frameworks. AI can produce abductive discoveries (alternative theories using the same theoretical codes [9]) if commanded.

The real challenge is AI’s lack of intuition to develop new, undefined propositions to create novel theories. Moreover, AI integrates theoretical codes into a narrative account as required [28] by grounded theory methodology into one that is elementary. Although AI recognized the empowering theoretical codes as ethical, it lacks intuition. This was evident when AI limited deconstruction to dominant political, cultural, and ideological constructions and did not recognize the theoretical codes as dis/empowering, motivational, and transformational. Improvements to AI can revolutionize theory construction and facilitate the development of plausible, practical theories. There are a few minor edits in AI-generated output. These were incorporated for fluidity. The following marketing-specific concepts are the particulars that undergird the a priori codes.

4.2. Theoretical Concepts

The concepts are strategic actions (deliberate and planned initiatives to create a competitive advantage and achieve a specific objective [41]) used in marketing. They are interrelated and can simultaneously serve as multiple disempowerment strategies. Deceptive marketing controls consumers through fear and can also dehumanize them (see Figure 3). If a specific vulnerable group was targeted (e.g., people with mental illness), the approach may be considered discriminatory. The following are the disempowering and empowering concepts and examples related to marketing. They can often give rise to consumer complaints.



Figure 3. Disempowering Marketing Strategies

4.2.1. Deception

In marketing, deception takes various forms and is communicated through different mediums. There are times when marketing campaigns present unreliable information in order to prey on unsuspecting customers. Transparency and ethical communication should be prioritized when marketing approaches are based on deception. Examples from ChatGPT3.5 [41]:

- False Advertising: Providing misleading or inaccurate information about a product's features, benefits, or performance in advertising materials.

- **Selective Disclosure:** Sharing only positive information about a product or service while concealing potential drawbacks or risks.
- **Manipulative Pricing:** Using deceptive pricing strategies, such as inflating original prices or creating a false sense of urgency with limited-time offers.
- **Greenwashing:** Making false or exaggerated claims about environmentally friendly practices to appeal to consumers who prioritize sustainability.
- **Pseudo-Science:** Using misleading scientific or technical language to create an illusion of credibility, even when the claims lack scientific support.

4.2.2. Fear

Fear-based marketing aims to influence consumers' behavior by exploiting their fears or anxieties. Fear-based marketing, involving excessive or unfounded fear, can be persuasive. Examples from ChatGPT3.5 [41]:

- **Identification of Fears:** Understanding the fears or concerns of the target audience to tailor messaging that resonates with their emotions.
- **Highlighting Consequences:** Emphasizing potential negative consequences or risks of not using a particular product or service.
- **Creating Urgency:** Instilling a sense of urgency, often through limited-time offers or creating a fear of missing out (FOMO), to encourage quick decision-making.
- **Providing Solutions:** Positioning the promoted product or service as the solution to alleviate or address the identified fears.
- **Empathy:** Demonstrating empathy by acknowledging and understanding the consumers' fears, emphasizing that the marketed product can offer protection or relief.

4.2.3. Dehumanization

Dehumanization can occur in marketing in various ways: through impersonal interactions, unethical practices, objectification—treating individuals as objects to sell goods or services—or exploitation. Objectification can involve using sexualized images, stereotypes, and unrealistic portrayals of individuals to attract attention and generate sales. It contributes to the reinforcement of gender norms, stereotypes, and unrealistic beauty standards. Exploitation occurs when companies take advantage of vulnerable populations, manipulate emotions, or use deceptive tactics to enhance their profits or goals. Examples from ChatGPT3.5 [41]:

- **Automated Customer Service:** Excessive reliance on automated systems without providing avenues for personalized, human interactions can make consumers feel neglected.
- **Exploitative Pricing:** Employing dynamic pricing strategies that take advantage of customer behavior without considering fairness or transparency.

- Targeting vulnerable populations: Some companies may target vulnerable populations with marketing campaigns that exploit their vulnerabilities. For example, advertising unhealthy food products to children or promoting high-interest loans to individuals in financial distress can be considered exploitative.
- Emotional manipulation: Emotional manipulation tactics to persuade customers to make purchases they do not need based on fear, guilt, or other negative emotions.
- Predatory marketing to vulnerable populations: Companies may engage in predatory marketing practices by targeting vulnerable populations, such as individuals struggling with addiction, mental health issues, or other challenges, with products or services that exploit their vulnerabilities for profit.

4.2.4. Discrimination

The unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on their racial, ethnic, gender, age, socioeconomic, or other characteristics is referred to as discrimination. Different forms of discriminatory marketing practices exist, including exclusivity and segmentation, which can lead to inequality, exclusion, and harm to marginalized groups. Exclusivity, niche, and segmented marketing strategies can be leveraged discriminatorily by unfairly targeting or excluding specific demographic groups. Examples from ChatGPT3.5 [41]:

- Supplier Discrimination: Engaging in discriminatory practices when selecting suppliers or business partners based on factors unrelated to the quality of goods or services.
- Unfair Marketing Practices: Targeting or excluding certain demographics based on discriminatory criteria in marketing efforts.
- Digital Discrimination: In the digital marketing era, segmentation algorithms should be carefully designed to avoid unintentional bias. If algorithms perpetuate existing societal biases, it can lead to discriminatory outcomes.
- False scarcity: Companies may create artificial scarcity by limiting the supply of a product or service to drive up demand and prices. This can deceive consumers and manipulate them into purchasing based on a false sense of urgency.
- Exclusionary practices: Exclusivity can sometimes lead to exclusionary practices that alienate certain consumer groups or create barriers to access. This can harm brand reputation and contribute to negative perceptions of the company.

4.2.5. Control

Marketers can leverage control over consumers in various ways, some of which may raise ethical issues.

Deceptive Advertising: Providing false or misleading information about a product's features, benefits, or performance to persuade consumers.

Emotional Manipulation: Crafting marketing messages to evoke strong emotional responses, often to create a sense of urgency or need.

Behavioral Targeting: Using consumer data to track and predict behavior, allowing for personalized marketing that can potentially manipulate decision-making.

Exploitative Pricing: Employing tactics like hidden fees, bait-and-switch pricing, or dynamic pricing to manipulate perceived value.

Limited Choices: Restricting options or creating a false sense of scarcity to guide consumers toward specific choices.

4.3. Empowering Strategies

In contrast with disempowering concepts, knowledge, equity, respect for customers, co-creation, buyer confidence, and customer satisfaction (see Figure 4) are motivational, transformational, and ethical concepts that represent the fundamentals that guide marketing strategy, customer relationship management, and responsible business conduct. They are the bedrock of marketing, influencing approaches and shaping the ethical, strategic, and social dimensions [32], [41]. They play a significant role in customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and sustainability. They consistently appear across various marketing fields and contexts, guiding buyer and seller behavior, brand strategies, and market dynamics. Furthermore, they reflect the importance of aligning marketing efforts with current societal values and fostering positive relationships with customers and stakeholders for commercial success and societal progress.

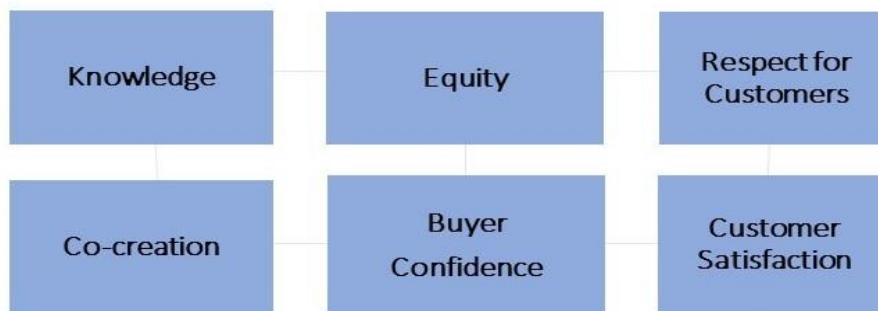


Figure 4. Empowering Marketing Strategies

4.3.1. Knowledge

In marketing, knowledge is the principal driver. The goal of knowledge in marketing is creating ways to garner customer loyalty [7] versus customer dependence (e.g., Spotify’s 2019 lawsuit against Apple for muting competition [42]). “Organizations must continuously gather, analyze, and leverage knowledge about customers, markets, and societal trends to understand evolving needs and preferences” [41]. More specifically, marketing and research must assess what consumers construct as brand equity, respect for customers, co-creation, high buyer confidence, and customer satisfaction. Moreover, they must also determine what consumers consider deceptive, exploitative, dehumanizing, fearmongering, and discrimination due to the evolving nature of social values. Regular evaluations and assessments are conducted to identify areas for improvement and enhance ethical marketing practices [41]. By leveraging insights, organizations can co-create value with customers and differentiate themselves. Knowledge involves more than designing a strategic plan that leads to customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. Marketing communication serves to build trust and foster informed decisions. Therefore, organizations should commit to providing consumers with accurate and transparent information about products, services, and business practices [41].

Apple AI [32]: The more informed a buyer is about a product or service, the more likely they are to trust the brand and stay loyal. Providing buyers with detailed information about the product, its benefits, and its usage can significantly enhance buyer loyalty and sustainability.

4.3.2. Respect for Customers

Encounters with buyers are personal marketing opportunities in which the seller reinforces its communicated message about its products, services, and brand. Respect for customers becomes part of the brand and is fundamental to building trust and customer loyalty. In this theory, respect for customers is derived from respect for human dignity and human rights.

ChatGPT3.5 [41]: Human dignity underpins ethical marketing practices, emphasizing respect for individual rights, diversity, and inclusivity. It involves avoiding stereotypes, discrimination, and exploitation in marketing communications while championing social causes and responsible business practices. [Respect for human dignity] influences ethical product development, marketing communication, pricing, consumer perceptions, brand equity, innovation adoption, relationship building, social media interactions, communication effectiveness, segmentation inclusivity, positioning, and ethical marketing practices.

This means that organizational policy, brands, products, and services must reflect a human dignity-centered approach. Throughout marketing, the buyer-seller exchange, and encounters thereafter, sellers must respect customers' dignity not only because it secures the seller's reputation and leads to trust, loyalty, and sustainability but also because it is ethical. A t-shirt that bore the slogan "Eat Less" by Urban Outfitters was criticized in 2010 [43]. Critics argued that the shirt promoted unhealthy body image ideals and encouraged eating disorders, effectively dehumanizing those suffering from such conditions [42], [43].

ChatGPT3.5 [41]: Building and nurturing respectful relationships with customers are foundational. Respectful engagement involves actively listening to customer feedback, valuing diversity, and adapting marketing strategies to meet the unique needs and preferences of diverse customer segments. Marketers must prioritize empathy, honesty, and integrity in all interactions, avoiding dehumanization and exploitative tactics.

4.3.3. Equity

In marketing, equity refers to ensuring consumers are treated fairly and exchanges are transparent. "Pricing, distribution, promotion, building trust, creating positive consumer attitudes, brand perceptions, innovation adoption, relationship building, social media credibility, ethical communication, segmentation representation, positioning strategies, customer service interactions, market competition, and fostering trust and credibility with consumers" are all dependent upon equity [41]. Mutually beneficial relationships and "sustainable value exchange are the hallmarks of equitable practices" [41]. Marketing practices must uphold the principles of equity through honesty, transparency, and inclusivity with customers, stakeholders, and competitors [41]. Equity can resonate strongly with consumers and contribute to consumer well-being, satisfaction, a sense of belonging, and a support network that can lead them to feel that they are part of something larger than themselves [41]. Marketing efforts that resonate with consumers lead to brand loyalty and affinity. Equitable marketing practices contribute to consumer

trust, satisfaction, and the perception of justice. Diverse consumer needs and preferences concerning cultural, social, and individual differences must be addressed.

Improving trust between buyer and seller can benefit customers' overall well-being. Real or perceived bias can jeopardize trust, consumer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and sustainability. In the past, real estate companies and financial institutions faced lawsuits for discrimination, particularly redlining [32], [44], and excluding certain consumers by offering discriminatory interest rates or fees [45]. Tech companies have used algorithms unfairly to target or exclude certain races, genders, or ages [46]. Tech companies have also faced lawsuits for allegedly using users' data for targeted advertising without proper consent or transparency [32], [47].

4.3.4. Co-Creation

A co-creation approach promotes solidarity and connection between buyer and seller by promoting shared values and experiences, influencing group dynamics, resonating with a wide range of consumer groups, accelerating innovation diffusion, fostering community, strengthening brand identity, enhancing resonance, and assisting with segmentation, differentiation, and ethical marketing [41] (Appendix B). “Co-creation involves engaging customers in the value creation process while ensuring their rights, needs, and feedback are respected” [41]. Co-creation occurs during “consistent customer experience, employee engagement, customer participation, brand identity, and co-creation” [41]. Organizations tap into diverse perspectives, insights, and ideas by involving customers in co-creation, leading to more relevant and meaningful value propositions [41]. Co-creation recognizes consumers as active participants, “not merely targets for marketing efforts” [41].

4.3.5. Buyer Confidence

The most important marketing strategy is creating buyer confidence in the goods, services, and brands. Buyer confidence refers to the confidence of buyers or purchasers, focusing on the sentiments of individuals or businesses actively considering goods, services, or investments. In other words, it indicates a willingness to purchase. Several factors influence buyer confidence, including personal finances, job stability, interest rates, and the economic outlook. Buyer confidence gives the seller access to the consumer. In this study, buyer confidence rests on hope, defined as pathways plus agency [11]. Hope fulfilled increases buyer trust and confidence, leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

ChatGPT3.5 [41]: Hope is a powerful emotional driver in marketing, inspiring consumers with optimistic messages about the future. [Hope] affects consumer aspirations, purchasing decisions, emotional connections with brands, innovation adoption, trust, loyalty, social media engagement, communication resonance, segmentation understanding, positioning, and responsible marketing initiatives. Brands often leverage hope to create aspirational narratives around their products and services, connecting with consumers on a deeper, emotional level.

Apple AI [32]: Brands that inspire hope can create strong emotional ties with buyers. Whether it is hope for a better future, a better self, or a better world, these emotional connections can lead to strong buyer loyalty.

The principles of hope include knowledge, vision, trust, desire, and future orientation. Together, the basic elements create a synergistic effect and motivate consumers. The role of knowledge in hope cannot be understated, as

implicit and explicit communication can affect externals (those who blame self-relevant events on external events and others [48], [49]). The higher the level of trust in the marketing message, the higher the level of buyer confidence. There are several means by which marketers can inspire buyer confidence: fairness, co-creation, and respect for customers. “Expressions of [buyer confidence] are often intertwined with positive experiences, loyalty, and the belief that a product or service will continue to deliver value and meet expectations in the future” [41]. Customer engagement, purchasing decisions, and customer loyalty are directly related and influenced by buyer confidence.

Companies can increase buyer confidence by building trust “through consistent communication, reliability, and delivering on commitments” [41]. These three factors help create trust and the feeling of safety and transparency. Transparency can be demonstrated through consistency, reliability, and open and honest communication. “Long-term relationships with collaborator (...) build ongoing trust and [can] potentially [create opportunities to] explore additional [collaboration]” [41]. It is important to recognize that co-creation, buyer confidence, equity, respect for customers, and customer satisfaction are essential marketing strategies that contribute to well-being by promoting optimism, trust, equity, and belonging among consumers [32]. This iterative process requires sellers to fulfill consumers’ hopes to establish customer loyalty. One way to accomplish this is by meeting the needs and wants of consumers.

ChatGPT3.5 [41]: Buyer confidence strategies focus on building and maintaining confidence through reliable, high-quality products and services, along with transparent and ethical business conduct. Organizations must engage in trust-building initiatives that provide accurate information, ensure product quality and safety, and make genuine efforts to address consumer concerns promptly to instill confidence in the brand.

4.3.6. Customer Satisfaction

The seller’s goal in initiating an exchange is to give the buyer a sense of security [7], leading to customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction strategies must be an integral part of strategies aiming at gaining buyer confidence. Regular customer satisfaction through transparency, equity, respect for customers, maintaining consumer confidence, and a strong buyer-seller relationship leads to customer loyalty and likely customer delight. Loyalty, essential for sustaining long-term relationships with customers,” can be facilitated by prioritizing meeting their needs, wants, and demands [7]. Moreover, well-being builds “confidence, which [is] essential for maintaining long-term relationships” [41].

ChatGPT3.5 [41]: Satisfying experiences at every touchpoint of the customer journey is paramount but always within the bounds of ethical conduct. By exceeding customer expectations, organizations can evoke positive emotions, foster loyalty, and drive advocacy, ultimately maximizing customer lifetime value. Organizations must avoid using fear, manipulation, or deceptive tactics to induce customer satisfaction, focusing instead on exceeding expectations through genuine value.

Sellers can achieve customer satisfaction by satisfying buyer "needs (‘states of felt deprivation’), wants (‘shaped by culture and personality’), and demands" (‘for products and services that add up to the most value and satisfaction [7]; p. 30; see Appendix F). Satisfying these three can lead to customer well-being, satisfaction, and loyalty [7].

ChatGPT3.5 [41]: Well-being focuses on enhancing consumers' overall quality of life beyond just meeting their material needs. [A well-being-oriented focus is] essential for ethical product offerings, communication, consumer needs, brand trust, loyalty, innovation adoption, relationship building, positive social media interactions, communication resonance, targeted marketing, differentiation, and ethical marketing practices. [Well-being-focused] marketing encompasses health and wellness products, sustainable practices, and efforts to improve work-life balance and mental health.

The digital age ushered in new security risks. Brands that can ensure the security of their customers' data will likely earn their loyalty. In contrast, a security breach can significantly damage buyer loyalty and affect customer satisfaction. To ensure security and meet customer satisfaction, sellers must “address consumer concerns around safety [and] ensure product safety, data security, consumer trust, purchase decisions, brand trust, loyalty, innovation adoption, relationship trust, social media credibility, communication credibility, segmentation, differentiation, ethical marketing practices, privacy, and financial integrity” [41]. A marketing plan incorporating these strategies is likely to contribute to customer loyalty, brand reputation, and organizational sustainability.



Figure 5. Product of Effective Ethical Marketing Practices

4.3.7. Brand Reputation and Customer Loyalty

Brand reputation is derived from the public perception of a brand’s actions, behaviors, and communications. It reflects the brand's credibility, trustworthiness, and overall image. Positive customer experiences, consistent messaging, and ethical business practices contribute to the development of a strong brand reputation. Alternatively, a poor reputation can result from controversies and customer dissatisfaction. Brand reputation influences consumer decisions, customer loyalty, and long-term sustainability [32]. Key to achieving a strong brand reputation is the organization’s commitment to a strategic and holistic approach that focuses on the brand's relationship with customers that incorporates knowledge, equity, respect for customers, buyer confidence, co-creation, and customer satisfaction. Brand authenticity builds credibility and customer loyalty. Hence, brand integrity requires organizations to align marketing messages with business practices and values. A culture that respects its brand's reputation ensures consistency, authenticity, and ethical behavior. To build credibility, “deceptive practices must be

avoided” [41]. For example, several companies faced lawsuits for false or misleading marketing of prescription drugs, claims about the effectiveness and potential side effects [50], the environmental impact of their products or practices [51], and false claims about product capabilities, data privacy issues, and more [52], and downplaying the health risks associated with smoking or promoting "light" or "low tar" cigarettes as safer alternatives [41], [53].

Apple AI [32]: Brands prioritizing the well-being of their customers, employees, and communities are more likely to attract and retain loyal customers. This can be through offering healthier products, promoting work-life balance, or contributing to social causes. (...) By cultivating a positive brand image, companies can create a strong emotional connection with customers, leading to increased trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. [Customers with] a positive perception of a brand... are more likely to continue purchasing from that brand, recommend it to others, and remain loyal even in the face of competition or challenges.

4.3.8. Organizational Sustainability

There appears to be a strong positive association between loyalty and sustainability in the sample and marketing in general. Drucker aptly stated that business is about attracting customers through “value and service first (...), maximizing profit, perhaps never” (p. 8) [4]. Marketing and organizational sustainability principles include “understanding and meeting customer needs, creating long-term value, and fostering customer loyalty” [41]. Sustainability requires building “strong, meaningful relationships with customers, emphasizing communication, trust, and customer satisfaction” [41]. Moreover, embracing “innovation to stay relevant and address evolving customer needs” and engaging in “honest, transparent, and ethical marketing practices, avoiding deceptive tactics and ensuring an accurate representation of products or services” are principles of marketing sustainability [41]. Marketing plans that include the preceding strategies help build trust, and emotional connections are key to maintaining long-term buyer-seller relationships, loyalty, and organizational sustainability.

Sustainability is an integral part of organizational practices. All three dimensions of sustainability are considered: environmental, social, and economic. Social responsibility initiatives aim to contribute positively to communities and society while avoiding harm. By adopting this framework, organizations commit themselves to ethical marketing practices. They recognize that unethical practices harm consumers and society and undermine the organization's credibility and long-term success.

5. Formal Marketing Grounded Theory

Consumer behavior, market dynamics, and technological advances have made it challenging for marketing theorists to provide comprehensive explanations and actionable insights. Although numerous substantive marketing frameworks exist, there are no formal marketing theories. The delay in constructing a formal buyer-seller marketing theory may be attributed to the overwhelming number of studies in the field, the prevalent worldview that humans are much more different than alike, and the need to develop area- or brand-specific substantive theories. This study aimed to develop the first formal buyer-seller grounded theory in marketing by incorporating artificial intelligence and Forde's [9] conceptual framework as a guiding lens. Several axioms support the theory. The overarching assumption is that prioritizing ethical conduct through respect for human dignity contributes to a positive social impact that fosters a responsible and sustainable business environment and long-term organizational

success by creating a good brand reputation, attracting socially conscious consumers, and mitigating legal and reputational risks.

The theory prioritizes aligning marketing practices with consumer and societal well-being and organizational sustainability. It is far from a 'theoretical disruption' that purposefully adds "variance to existing substantive theories and conceptual frameworks" [1], [2]. Instead, it gives a sense of familiarity. The complexity is in the marketing fundamentals it has in common with substantive frameworks, strategies, and approaches: a) knowledge management, b) brand equity, c) relationship marketing, d) brand management, e) service-dominant logic (SDL), f) behavioral economic theory, g) customer experience management (CEM), h) consumer behavior theories, and i) triple-bottom line [41]. These frameworks add depth to and support this theory. The elegance of the theory is the result of abstracting rudimentary marketing concepts across substantive areas and marketing platforms. The framework can lead to organizational objectives: understanding markets, connecting with customers, and delivering value. It integrates a variety of ethical considerations by incorporating marketing fundamentals: knowledge, equity, respect for customers, co-creation, buyer confidence, and customer satisfaction. The axioms follow:

- The most effective use of knowledge is determining an effective marketing approach that arouses buyer confidence to such a level as to facilitate customer loyalty, the final cause of marketing.
- Accessing buyer confidence can drive exchange.
- A buyer's perception of the seller strongly influences their perception of justice, interaction with the seller, and purchasing behavior.
- Respect for customers disarms non-cooperative customers, creates a welcoming atmosphere, empowers, and improves the customer-seller relationship.
- Co-creation nurtures buyer confidence and is a gateway to brand loyalty.
- Loyal customers drive organizational sustainability.
- Unethical marketing practices that deceive, manipulate, control, and discriminate against customers are outside the zone of tolerance.

The primary goal of marketing is to gain consumer confidence in a brand's goods and services, which can ultimately lead to consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Marketing approaches must be based on understanding customers' needs, wants, and demands to provide the experience buyers seek (see Figure 6). Knowing what buyers seek is important because both hedonistic and practical buyers are a source of information concerning their likes, dislikes, what goods and services they are willing to purchase, and how much they are willing to spend. Experiences must be co-created. Co-creations are more likely to make buyers feel recognized and included because the perception of justice is motivational. Equity contributes to respect for customers. Customers also assess fairness by considering price, utility, quality, and other factors that inform customers of the seller's intention. Knowledge, co-creation, and equity inform buyers of the sellers' respect for customers. Respect for customers increases buyer confidence and satisfaction. Buyer confidence can be further primed through pleasant sensory experiences that entice them to assess and seek information about products and services.

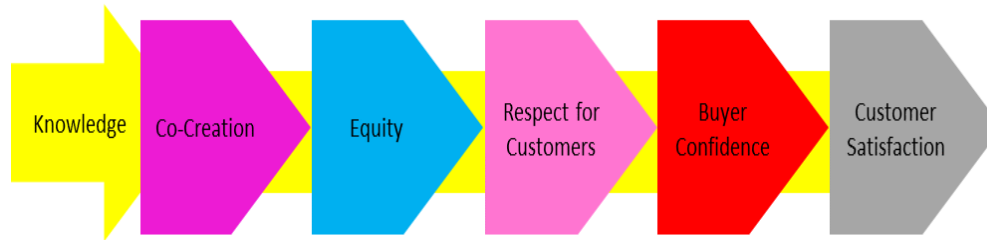


Figure 6. Buyer–Seller Process

Utilizing these approaches consistently leads to customer satisfaction and increased brand value. Knowledge, buyer confidence, co-creation, and equity are the primary vehicles that show respect for customers, introduce customers to a brand, and motivate engagement. Respect for customers goes beyond marketing: It includes customer service, quality, and respect for the environment, among other ethical practices. Customer satisfaction is significantly influenced by respect for the customer's dignity (see Appendix G), achieved by adhering to marketing fundamentals, and is measured through trust, loyalty, and sustained customer relationships. Alternatively, fear, deception, discrimination, and dehumanization are also motivators. However, they can motivate consumers to retaliate against the seller or the brand. They jeopardize brand loyalty and sustainability and expose the organization to legal liability by undermining empowering strategies. Moreover, the unethical practices are outside consumers' zone of tolerance and ill-suited for customer respect.

5.1. Unethical Strategies

Within this study, unethical strategies consist of marketing approaches that subjugate consumers through various dehumanization strategies: fear, control, discrimination, and deception. During the production, product, and seller eras, consumers were objectified partly due to a lack of competition and were exposed to deception, exploitation, and fear. They were not invited to the co-creation process and had fewer consumer rights. The strategies are not only unethical, but they are also anti-democratic. There have been positive changes in marketing; chief among these changes is the recognition of consumers' humanity and their role in marketing. Buyers were no longer objects controlled by marketers for increasing profit. Other improvements were introduced because of this recognition. There was also a call for ethics in marketing and consumer protection. Despite improvements, unethical practices in the field have been normalized. Commonly leveraged unethical tactics include misleading advertisements, fear-based marketing, and discriminatory practices (exclusivity, segmentation, and niche markets) that discriminate against and victimize buyers and objectify and commoditize models, athletes, and celebrities.

Unethical strategies jeopardize the buyer-seller relationship, making saving face or avoiding conflict difficult [36]. ChatGPT3.5 [41] indicates that unethical practices negatively impact marketing efforts. For example, segmentation can laud material wealth and hierarchy over respect for human dignity and ethics. Although not always unethical and disempowering, segmentation has created an atmosphere of entitlement and hope that increased material wealth can elevate human dignity. The strategies are often subtle when applied by organizations. Buyer retaliation includes boycotts, negative reviews, social media outcries, and lawsuits [32]. Some buyers retaliate against the unethical strategies leveraged by sellers with the help of the federal government, which has filed lawsuits against organizations caught using these strategies. Lower-end buyers are not the only victims. Elites are deceived through

appeals to ego and status, selective information, subtle persuasion, and creating a "sense of urgency or scarcity to encourage impulse purchases" [41]. This finding reveals that strategic action during marketing exchanges can benefit sellers and unlawfully prejudice buyers. Other examples of unethical marketing practices include Wells Fargo and pharmaceutical companies leveraging fear. In 2016, Wells Fargo was embroiled in a scandal involving employees creating unauthorized accounts to meet sales targets. The bank faced multiple lawsuits from consumers who alleged the fraudulent accounts harmed them, accusing Wells Fargo of subjugating consumers through deceptive marketing practices [32], [53]. Pharmaceutical companies have faced legal action for fear-based marketing of prescription drugs [54]. This includes lawsuits alleging that companies exaggerated certain health conditions' risks to promote their medications or used scare tactics to encourage people to seek treatment [32], [55]. The consequences of these behaviors affect buyer-seller relationships, consumer trust, decreased sales, loss of loyalty, and "impact on employee morale," all of which have reputational costs [41]. Unethical practices reinforce discrimination and dehumanization (e.g., commoditization of celebrities, models, social influencers, and athletes) and widen the gap between "us" and "them." Marketers are asked to reflect on their marketing strategies to determine whether their approach contributes to or detracts from respect for human dignity and brand reputation.

5.2. Contributions

Novel contributions to the marketing field include constructing a formal grounded theory using interrelated marketing concepts to bind the framework and unethical marketing practices category used to manipulate and control consumer attitudes and buying behaviors. The framework can stand alone as a formal marketing theory or expand existing marketing theories lacking an underlying ethical framework. AI suggests the concepts can be applied in various markets, including health and wellness, sustainable and ethical products, education and training, financial services, technology, real estate, travel and tourism, food and beverage, and international [32] (see Appendix E, F). Although this may be possible, no formal theory will eliminate the need to develop substantive marketing behavior theories. Marketing professionals can use this framework to navigate the complexities of the modern marketplace while fostering a culture of integrity, responsibility, and sustainability [41]. Lastly, Forde's framework supports the concepts as strategic actions and extends them into marketing.

5.3. Limitations

There are inherent grounded theory methodology constraints that affect plausibility, interpretation of data, data collection, and generalizability [23], [26]. Other limitations that should be considered include AI-mediated theoretical sampling and assumed sample diversity. This creates a reasonable concern about the reliability of AI sources. Although intuitive, and AI supports applying the theory across substantive areas and international markets (see Appendix D and F), further investigation is recommended.

6. Conclusion

The research questions: How can Forde's conceptual framework and artificial intelligence be leveraged to develop a formal marketing theory grounded in evidence? and How can Forde's conceptual framework be expanded and applied to create effective marketing strategies? Forde's [9] transcultural and transdisciplinary conceptual

framework was utilized to construct this marketing theory. It further extended Forde's framework into another domain of knowledge. Profit-centered marketing approaches neglect consumers' role in marketing and innovation. Consumers were dehumanized and controlled. Drucker, Bagozzi, Kotler, and Parasuraman's customer-centric approach contributed to buyers' recognition and their contributing role in marketing [4-8]. Hence, they laid the groundwork for incorporating a human-centric approach to marketing, without which a transformative buyer-seller theory would not have been possible. Buyer recognition creates a circular relationship between buyers and sellers, where both serve and lead at the same time. This circular relationship makes marketing an arena where two power sources exist. One seeks customer satisfaction, and the other sustainability through consumer loyalty. Scholars are tasked with evaluating the theory and AI's contribution to theory construction. I hope this effort will motivate others to develop competing marketing theories. In the near future, a more elaborate article will provide depth to this formal marketing theory and the use of artificial intelligence in theory construction.

Marketers are recommended to introduce and integrate existing theories into marketing to anchor the discipline further. Tailoring the theory to suit specific industries and platforms is equally crucial. Different industries and platforms use marketing in diverse ways. Recognizing industry-specific challenges and opportunities enables formulating strategies tailored to address sector-specific needs and preferences, thereby enhancing the theory's practical utility and relevance. Researchers are encouraged to apply the concepts across marketing areas "ripe for the development of formal theories" (p. 574), [1] international marketing, public relations, political campaigns, public service announcements, and various industries and platforms. Furthermore, validating the theory's applicability across varied contexts is imperative in a world characterized by diverse cultural landscapes and international markets. Rigorous research endeavors should unravel cultural nuances and adapt the theory to ensure its effectiveness and resonance across different regions. Lastly, ongoing longitudinal assessment is vital to gauge the theory's long-term impact and sustainability. Organizations can iteratively refine and optimize their buyer-seller marketing strategies by tracking key performance indicators over time, ensuring continued alignment with evolving market dynamics and ethical imperatives.

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Consent for Publication

The author declares that she consented to the publication of this study.

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Appendix A: Theoretical Sampling Questions [32], [41]

What are the most often cited marketing theories?

What are the principles of brand equity theory?

What are some common themes among [x, y, and z samples]?

What are the principles of marketing? [Compare and contrast principles with theoretical codes.]

How is hope constructed in marketing? [Repeat question inserting other theoretical codes.]

How do marketers use knowledge marketing?

How do consumers construct human dignity?

How are these concepts: knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, security, and well-being used as marketing strategies?

- How does marketing dehumanize consumers?
- What are some negative effects of segmentation?
- How does segmentation discriminate against buyers?
- What are some consequences of exclusivity?
- Which psychological strategies are used in marketing?
- What are common fallacies used in marketing?
- What does marketing ethics look like?
- How do consumers show loyalty in marketing?
- Develop a marketing theory.
- Develop marketing theories using knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, security, and well-being.
- Create a process theory using knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, security, and well-being.
- Create a marketing process theory with knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, security, and well-being.
- Use a critical perspective.
- What makes these theories different: marketing mix (4Ps), consumer behavior theory, brand equity theory, diffusion of innovation theory, relationship marketing theory, social media marketing theory, integrated marketing, communications theory, market segmentation theory, positioning theory, and marketing ethics theory?
- What do these theories have in common: marketing mix (4Ps), consumer behavior theory, brand equity theory, diffusion of innovation theory, relationship marketing theory, social media marketing theory, integrated marketing, communications theory, market segmentation theory, positioning theory, and marketing ethics theory?

Appendix B: Zone of Tolerance [41]

The "zones of tolerance" concept refers to the range of acceptable variation that customers are willing to tolerate in product or service attributes without significantly impacting their satisfaction levels. Understanding and managing these zones are crucial for businesses to meet customer expectations effectively. Here are the principles associated with zones of tolerance.

| | Output | Codes |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|
| Customer Expectations | The first principle involves understanding customer expectations regarding product or service attributes. Customers have certain expectations about factors such as quality, price, delivery time, customer service, and reliability. These expectations are influenced by factors such as past experiences, marketing messages, word-of-mouth recommendations, and industry standards. | K, BC, R, |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------|
| Perceived Performance | <p>The second principle is about evaluating the perceived performance of a product or service. Perceived performance refers to how customers perceive the actual delivery of attributes compared to their expectations. If the perceived performance exceeds customer expectations, it leads to satisfaction. If it falls short, it may lead to dissatisfaction.</p> | K, BC |
| Zone of Tolerance | <p>The zone of tolerance represents the range of acceptable variation between customer expectations and perceived performance. Within this zone, customers are generally satisfied, even if there are minor discrepancies between their expectations and the actual performance. However, if the performance falls outside this zone, it may result in dissatisfaction.</p> | K, BC |

| | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------|
| Critical Incidents | <p>Critical incidents are specific interactions or experiences that have a significant impact on customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These incidents can influence customers' perceptions of performance and may shift their expectations or tolerance zones. It's essential for businesses to identify and address critical incidents promptly to maintain customer satisfaction levels.</p> | K, BC, E, R |
| Continuous Improvement | <p>Businesses should continually monitor and adjust their performance to ensure it remains within customers' zones of tolerance. This involves gathering feedback from customers, analyzing trends, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing corrective actions. Continuous improvement efforts help businesses stay aligned with changing customer expectations and maintain high levels of satisfaction.</p> | K, BC, R |
| Segmentation | <p>Different customer segments may have varying zones of tolerance based on factors such as demographics, psychographics, and purchase behaviors. Businesses should segment their customer base and tailor their products, services, and experiences to meet the specific needs and preferences of each segment. This approach allows businesses to optimize resources and deliver value effectively to different customer groups.</p> | K, R, E, CS |

Competitive
 Benchmarking

Businesses should also consider the performance levels of competitors when evaluating their own performance against customer expectations. Competitive benchmarking helps businesses identify areas where they may need to improve to remain competitive in the market and meet or exceed customer expectations.

K, BC, E, CS

By adhering to these principles of zones of tolerance, businesses can effectively manage customer expectations, deliver superior value, and maintain high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

K, BC, R, E, CS, Su

Note: Zone of Tolerance does not include practices that lead to a co-creation strategy. Codes: Knowledge (K), Equity (E), Respect for Customer (R), Buyer Confidence (BC), Co-creation (C), Customer Satisfaction (CS), Sustainability (Su)

Appendix C: Application to Different Markets: A Priori Codes [32]

Health and Wellness Market: In this market, buyers can utilize knowledge to make informed decisions about their well-being. Sellers can promote fairness by offering transparent pricing and accurate product or service information. Human dignity can be upheld by respecting buyers' autonomy and providing options catering to their needs. Hope can be instilled by offering solutions and positive outcomes. Unity can be fostered through community support and shared experiences. Security and well-being can be prioritized by ensuring that products or services are safe and contribute to overall health.

Sustainable and Ethical Products Market: In this market, buyers can use knowledge to understand products' environmental and social impact. Fairness can be emphasized by supporting sellers who adhere to ethical practices, such as fair trade or sustainable sourcing. Human dignity can be promoted by valuing the rights and well-being of workers involved in the supply chain. Hope can be generated by showcasing the positive impact of purchasing these products. Unity can be fostered by building a community of conscious consumers. Security and well-being can be prioritized by offering safe products for consumers and the environment.

Education and Training Market: In this market, buyers can seek knowledge to make informed choices about their educational needs. Sellers can promote fairness by offering equal opportunities for access to educational resources. Human dignity can be upheld by respecting learners' individuality and providing an inclusive learning environment. Hope can be instilled by demonstrating the potential for personal and professional growth. Unity can be fostered through collaborative learning experiences. Security and well-being can be prioritized by ensuring learners' physical and emotional safety.

Financial Services Market: In this market, buyers can use knowledge to make informed financial decisions. Fairness can be emphasized by providing transparent and unbiased advice or services. Human dignity can be

promoted by treating customers with respect and empathy. Hope can be generated by offering opportunities for financial growth and stability. Unity can be fostered by creating a sense of shared financial goals. Security and well-being can be prioritized by offering secure and trustworthy financial solutions.

Technology Market: In this market, buyers can use knowledge to understand the features, benefits, and potential risks associated with different technological products. Fairness can be emphasized by ensuring equal access to technology and digital resources. Human dignity can be promoted by respecting users' privacy and data rights. Hope can be generated by showcasing the transformative potential of technology. Unity can be fostered through collaborative platforms and communities. Security and well-being can be prioritized by offering secure and reliable technology solutions.

Food and Beverage Market: In this market, buyers can utilize knowledge to make informed choices about their food and beverage consumption. Fairness can be emphasized by providing transparent information about ingredients, sourcing, and production processes. Human dignity can be upheld by respecting cultural and dietary preferences. Hope can be instilled by offering nutritious and sustainable options. Unity can be fostered by supporting local and diverse food producers. Security and well-being can be prioritized by ensuring food safety and promoting healthy eating habits.

Real Estate Market: In this market, buyers can use knowledge to understand property values, market trends, and legal aspects of real estate transactions. Fairness can be emphasized by providing transparent information about property listings, pricing, and negotiation processes. Human dignity can be promoted by respecting buyers' rights and preferences in the buying or renting process. Hope can be generated by showcasing the potential for investment returns or finding a dream home. Unity can be fostered by creating inclusive and sustainable communities. Security and well-being can be prioritized by ensuring safe and well-maintained properties.

Travel and Tourism Market: In this market, buyers can utilize knowledge to make informed decisions about travel destinations, accommodations, and activities. Fairness can be emphasized by offering transparent pricing and cancellation policies. Human dignity can be upheld by respecting and preserving destinations' cultural and natural heritage. Hope can be instilled by offering memorable and enriching travel experiences. Unity can be fostered by promoting responsible and sustainable tourism practices. Security and well-being can be prioritized by ensuring traveler safety and providing support services.

Marketing Theoretical Codes [41]

User: In which markets can this framework be applied: Respect for customer, buyer confidence, knowledge, equity, customer satisfaction, and co-creation?

ChatGPT3.5: The framework you mentioned, which includes elements such as respect for the customer, buyer confidence, knowledge, equity, customer satisfaction, and co-creation, can be applied across various markets and industries. Here's how it can be applied in different contexts:

Consumer Goods: In consumer goods markets, companies can demonstrate respect for customers by ensuring product quality, providing transparent information, and offering excellent customer service. Buyer confidence can

be built through warranties, guarantees, and reliable customer support. Knowledge about consumer preferences and behavior helps in designing products that meet their needs effectively. Equity can be established by offering fair pricing and promotions. Delighting customers with unexpected perks, personalized experiences, or exceptional after-sales service fosters loyalty. Co-creation involves involving customers in the product development process through feedback, surveys, and user testing.

Service Industries: In service industries such as hospitality, banking, or healthcare, respect for the customer involves attentive and personalized service delivery, listening to their needs, and respecting their privacy. Building buyer confidence may involve transparent communication about services offered, security measures, and professional expertise. Knowledge about customer preferences enables customization of services to meet individual needs. Equity is demonstrated through fair pricing, accessibility, and non-discriminatory practices. Delighting customers in service industries often involves exceeding service expectations, providing memorable experiences, and resolving issues promptly. Co-creation can involve involving customers in service design, feedback mechanisms, and community engagement initiatives.

Technology: In the technology sector, respecting customers may involve respecting their privacy, data security, and offering user-friendly interfaces. Buyer confidence can be built through reliable performance, robust customer support, and transparent data policies. Knowledge about user behavior and preferences helps in designing intuitive and innovative products. Equity in technology markets may involve offering affordable options, minimizing digital divides, and promoting accessibility. Delighting customers in tech often involves providing seamless user experiences, timely updates, and anticipating user needs. Co-creation can involve involving users in beta testing, ideation forums, and developer communities.

Business-to-Business (B2B): In B2B markets, respect for the customer involves understanding their business challenges, providing valuable insights, and building long-term relationships. Buyer confidence can be built through transparent communication, reliability in delivery, and demonstrating industry expertise. Knowledge about the client's industry and specific needs helps in providing tailored solutions. Equity may involve fair contract terms, flexible payment options, and mutually beneficial partnerships. Delighting B2B customers often involves providing exceptional service, anticipating needs, and offering innovative solutions. Co-creation can involve collaborating with clients on product development, joint marketing initiatives, and industry events.

In summary, the framework of respect for the customer, buyer confidence, knowledge, equity, customer satisfaction, and co-creation is versatile and can be applied across diverse markets and industries, as long as it is adapted to the specific characteristics and needs of each market segment.

Appendix D: International Application of A Priori Codes [32]

The motivational buyer-seller marketing theory that incorporates knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, security, and well-being] "can certainly apply in international markets. In fact, these principles are highly relevant and important when conducting business across borders" [32].

Knowledge: Sellers should strive to understand the cultural, social, economic, and political dynamics of the international markets they are targeting. This includes researching local customs, laws, and regulations and gaining

insights into the needs and preferences of the target audience. By acquiring knowledge about the market, sellers can adapt their marketing strategies to be more effective and avoid misunderstandings or cultural insensitivity.

Fairness: The principle of fairness is crucial in international markets. Sellers should ensure that their business practices, including pricing, promotions, and distribution, are fair to all parties involved. This includes treating suppliers, partners, and customers equitably and transparently. Fair trade practices that consider the interests of all stakeholders can help build trust and long-term relationships.

Human dignity: Sellers should respect the dignity and rights of all individuals in international markets. This involves avoiding discriminatory practices, promoting diversity and inclusion, and adhering to internationally recognized human rights standards. Treating customers and employees respectfully and with dignity is essential for ethical buyer-seller interactions.

Hope: Sellers can contribute to hope in international markets by offering products and services that meet the needs and aspirations of customers. By providing innovative solutions, quality products, and positive experiences, sellers can inspire hope and create a sense of optimism among customers.

Unity: Fostering unity in international markets involves building bridges between different cultures, communities, and stakeholders. Sellers can engage in initiatives that promote cross-cultural understanding, cooperation, and collaboration. By emphasizing shared values and aspirations, sellers can help create a sense of unity and foster positive relationships.

Security and well-being: Sellers should prioritize their customers' and employees' security and well-being in international markets. This includes ensuring the safety and quality of products, protecting customer data, and providing employees with fair and safe working conditions. By demonstrating a commitment to security and well-being, sellers can enhance customer trust and loyalty.

Various markets, including the international market, can benefit from the principles to enhance buyer-seller interactions and promote ethical behavior. It is evident from these examples that ethical principles "can be applied to international markets to "contribute to a more positive and inclusive business environment" (Apple AI, 2024). These principles can be incorporated into marketing strategies to "assist sellers in navigating [global] cross-cultural challenges, building trust, and establishing successful business relationships" (Apple AI, 2024).

International Application of Marketing Concepts (ChatGPT3.5)

The principles of respect for the customer, buyer confidence, knowledge, equity, customer satisfaction, and co-creation can certainly apply to international markets. In fact, many successful global businesses actively incorporate these principles into their international strategies to build strong relationships with customers worldwide. Here is how these principles can be applied in international markets:

Respect for the Customer: Regardless of the cultural or geographical context, respecting customers is fundamental in any market. This involves understanding and appreciating cultural differences, language preferences, and local customs. Businesses need to ensure that their products, services, and marketing efforts are sensitive to the cultural nuances of each international market they operate in.

Buyer Confidence: Building buyer confidence is crucial in international markets where customers may be unfamiliar with the brand or product. Providing clear and transparent information, offering reliable customer support, and addressing concerns about quality and safety can help instill confidence among international customers.

Knowledge: Just as in domestic markets, knowledge about international customers' preferences, behaviors, and market trends is essential for success. Conducting thorough market research, leveraging local expertise, and adapting products and services to meet the specific needs of international customers are key strategies.

Equity: Fair and equitable treatment of customers is important regardless of geography. This includes offering fair pricing, ensuring accessibility to products and services, and avoiding discriminatory practices. International businesses need to be mindful of local economic conditions and pricing sensitivities when setting prices in different markets.

Customer Delight: Delighting customers in international markets involves exceeding their expectations and providing exceptional experiences that resonate with their cultural and personal preferences. This may involve offering localized customer support, providing culturally relevant promotions, and adapting products or services to suit local tastes and preferences.

Co-creation: In international markets, co-creation can involve collaborating with local partners, engaging with customers through localized marketing campaigns and feedback mechanisms, and involving local communities in product development initiatives. This fosters a sense of ownership and loyalty among international customers.

In summary, while there may be additional complexities and challenges associated with operating in international markets, the fundamental principles of customer-centricity, trust-building, knowledge application, fairness, customer satisfaction, and collaboration remain relevant and applicable. Adapting these principles to suit the unique characteristics of each international market is key to building successful global businesses.

Appendix E: E-Commerce: A Priori Theoretical Codes [41]

"In electronic commerce (E-commerce), the concepts of knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, security, and well-being are crucial for building trust, enhancing customer experience, and fostering long-term relationships" [41]. They "are foundational to the ethos of electronic commerce" and are therefore "embedded within the framework" [41]. Programmers develop scripts and processes that uphold democratic principles within the E-commerce framework. The empowerment concepts can be found within the framework of E-commerce:

Platforms utilize various technologies such as data analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to gather and analyze vast amounts of data about customers, their preferences, behaviors, and purchase history. This knowledge allows companies to personalize product recommendations, tailor marketing messages, and offer targeted promotions, enhancing the overall shopping experience and increasing customer satisfaction.

[Fairness] involves transparent pricing practices, honest product descriptions, and equitable treatment of all customers ... Additionally, fair competition policies within e-commerce ecosystems promote a level playing field for businesses of all sizes, fostering innovation and diversity in the marketplace.

Companies prioritize human dignity by respecting customers' privacy, autonomy, and rights. This includes obtaining consent for data collection and usage, protecting sensitive information such as payment details, and providing accessible and user-friendly interfaces for individuals with disabilities. Companies also strive to create inclusive and welcoming online environments that respect diversity and promote positive user interactions.

Hope [is instilled] by offering opportunities for economic empowerment, personal growth, and entrepreneurial success. Whether finding the perfect product, discovering new possibilities, or achieving personal goals, e-commerce provides opportunities for customers to fulfill their aspirations and dreams.... Companies foster hope by showcasing success stories, highlighting the benefits of their products and services, and offering innovative solutions that address emerging challenges.

E-commerce fosters a sense of unity by connecting buyers and sellers from different geographic locations, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic contexts. This sense of unity promotes collaboration, collective action, and mutual support among participants, contributing to a more interconnected and inclusive digital ecosystem. [Moreover], this unity strengthens customer loyalty and advocacy, driving long-term success for e-commerce businesses.

Customer well-being is provided by convenient access to essential goods and services, promoting work-life balance, and supporting sustainable consumption practices.... Companies also prioritize customer satisfaction and support, providing responsive customer service, hassle-free returns, and helpful product recommendations to ensure a positive shopping experience.... Companies invest in initiatives related to corporate social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and community engagement to enhance the overall well-being of their customers and society at large.

Security is paramount in e-commerce to protect customers' personal and financial information from unauthorized access, fraud, and cyber threats. E-commerce companies implement robust security measures such as encryption, secure payment gateways, and multi-factor authentication to safeguard customer data and transactions. By prioritizing security, companies build trust and confidence among customers, reassuring them that their information is safe and protected.

ATMs and Chatbots play crucial roles in modern banking and customer service by leveraging technology to enhance convenience, accessibility, and efficiency for users.... Incorporating principles ... into their design and functionality... contribute to a positive user experience and foster trust and satisfaction among users" [41]. How an ATM or technological application is programmed determines whether some or most consumers will interact with that medium. Complicated ATMs, AI, and automated system procedures can create negative feelings, emotions, and attitudes. Consumers may get confused or exposed to security risks when using an intricate process. This may affect perceptions of justice or lead to feelings of hopelessness, which is associated with poor learning outcomes, abandoning the complicated medium, and not seeking customer service assistance. However, financial institutions can enhance customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty by incorporating knowledge, fairness, human dignity, hope, unity, and well-being into ATM transactions [41]. Moreover, "companies can [drive] sustainable growth and prosperity in the digital marketplace" [41].

Application of the Marketing Principles to E-Commerce [41]

Certainly, the principles of respect for the customer, buyer confidence, knowledge, equity, customer satisfaction, and co-creation are highly applicable to e-commerce businesses. In fact, these principles are foundational to the success of e-commerce ventures. Here is how they apply:

Respect for the Customer: E-commerce businesses must prioritize respecting their customers' time, privacy, and preferences. This includes providing clear and honest product information, ensuring secure online transactions, and respecting customers' data privacy rights. Additionally, offering personalized shopping experiences and responsive customer service demonstrates respect for individual customer needs.

Buyer Confidence: Building buyer confidence is crucial in the e-commerce environment, where customers cannot physically interact with products before making a purchase. Providing detailed product descriptions, high-quality images, and user-generated reviews helps to instill confidence in potential buyers. Moreover, offering secure payment options and a transparent return policy can further enhance buyer confidence in e-commerce transactions.

Knowledge: E-commerce businesses rely heavily on data-driven insights to understand customer behavior, preferences, and market trends. By leveraging analytics tools and customer data, e-commerce companies can optimize their product offerings, pricing strategies, and marketing campaigns to better meet the needs of their target audience.

Equity: E-commerce businesses must ensure fair and equitable treatment of all customers. This includes offering fair pricing, providing equal access to products and services, and avoiding discriminatory practices. Additionally, offering discounts, promotions, and loyalty programs can help to make online shopping more accessible and affordable for customers.

Customer Delight: E-commerce companies can differentiate themselves by delivering exceptional customer experiences that go beyond basic satisfaction. This may involve offering fast and reliable shipping, hassle-free returns, personalized recommendations, and responsive customer support. By exceeding customer expectations, e-commerce businesses can cultivate long-term loyalty and advocacy among their customer base.

Co-creation: E-commerce businesses can engage customers in co-creation activities by soliciting feedback, reviews, and product suggestions. Additionally, offering customization options or allowing customers to participate in product design contests can foster a sense of ownership and community among online shoppers. Moreover, social media platforms and online forums provide opportunities for e-commerce businesses to interact directly with customers and involve them in brand-building activities.

In summary, the principles of respect for the customer, buyer confidence, knowledge, equity, customer satisfaction, and co-creation are essential for the success of e-commerce businesses. By prioritizing these principles, e-commerce companies can build trust, loyalty, and satisfaction among their customer base, ultimately driving sustainable growth and profitability.

Appendix F: Marketing Theory: AI-Generated [41]

The following is an AI-generated theory using a priori codes. The theoretical codes were entered in the order in which they appear in the theory. ChatGPT3.5 [41] was instructed to construct a marketing process theory using the concepts. ChatGPT3.5 approached the process theory from a critical perspective. Compare the theory to Forde's [9] *The American Founding Documents and Democratic Social Change: A Constructivist Grounded Theory*. An existing theory was used to evaluate AI theory construction capability.

1. **Knowledge Acquisition and Analysis:** The process begins with critically examining power structures, systemic inequalities, and historical injustices. This involves deconstructing dominant narratives, questioning existing knowledge frameworks, and amplifying marginalized voices to uncover hidden truths and challenge oppressive systems.
2. **Fairness and Ethical Considerations:** In the context of democratic social change, fairness and ethics are interrogated through a critical lens. Participants must critically evaluate the distribution of power, resources, and opportunities, ensuring that their actions prioritize justice, equity, and the dismantling of oppressive systems.
3. **Respect for Human Dignity:** Central to the process is a critical interrogation of human dignity within the context of systemic oppression and marginalization. Advocates and activists engage with a critical consciousness, recognizing and confronting intersecting forms of discrimination and violence that undermine the dignity and humanity of marginalized communities.
4. **Inspiring Hope and Aspiration:** Critical social change efforts aim to challenge the status quo and inspire collective action towards radical transformation. Advocates mobilize communities by exposing the contradictions and injustices inherent in existing social structures, offering alternative visions of liberation and empowerment rooted in solidarity and resistance.
5. **Fostering Unity and Collaboration:** Critical social change necessitates solidarity and collaboration among oppressed communities and allies. Advocates work to build coalitions grounded in a critical understanding of power dynamics, fostering spaces for mutual learning, accountability, and collective action to challenge and dismantle oppressive systems.
6. **Promoting Well-being and Sustainability:** Critical social change prioritizes the holistic well-being and liberation of all individuals and communities. Advocates advocate for policies and practices that address root causes of oppression, prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, and promote sustainable solutions that center on justice, equity, and collective liberation.
7. **Continuous Learning and Adaptation:** Critical social change requires ongoing reflection, dialogue, and adaptation. Advocates engage in critical self-reflection, challenging their own assumptions and biases, and remain open to feedback and accountability from impacted communities. This process of critical learning and adaptation is essential for navigating complexities and advancing transformative change.

By approaching the process of democratic social change from a critical perspective, individuals and communities can challenge power structures, dismantle oppressive systems, and work towards creating a more just, equitable, and liberated society for all.

User-Generated Formal Marketing Theory Process [41]

To illustrate the difference between AI-generated theories and user-constructed theories, AI was commanded to organize the concepts in order of priority; However, the order did not reflect what emerged during data analysis and did not tell a story—this is important in grounded theory.

User: Here is the order of my list: knowledge, co-creation, equity, respect for the customers, buyer confidence, and customer satisfaction. Do you agree and why?

ChatGPT3.5: Certainly, let's examine the order you've proposed:

Knowledge: Starting with knowledge makes sense as it lays the foundation for informed decision-making. Providing customers with relevant information about products or services helps them understand their options and make choices that align with their needs and preferences.

Co-creation: Placing co-creation second emphasizes the importance of involving customers in the product development process. By actively engaging customers and soliciting their input, companies demonstrate respect for their expertise and preferences, fostering a sense of ownership and loyalty.

Equity: Including equity early on in the list underscores the importance of fairness and equality in marketing practices. Ensuring that all customers have equal access to products, services, and opportunities is fundamental for building trust and credibility.

Respect for customers: Respect for customers is crucial in every stage of the buying process. Placing it after equity emphasizes its significance in fostering positive relationships and loyalty. Treating customers ethically, valuing their opinions, and providing excellent service contributes to a positive brand image and customer satisfaction.

Buyer confidence: Building buyer confidence is essential for overcoming skepticism and encouraging purchase decisions. By providing transparent information, testimonials, guarantees, and quality assurances, companies can instill trust and credibility in their offerings.

Customer satisfaction: While customer satisfaction is undoubtedly important, placing it last in the list suggests that it's the outcome of effectively addressing the preceding factors. By prioritizing knowledge, co-creation, equity, respect for customers, and buyer confidence, companies are more likely to deliver products and experiences that meet or exceed customer expectations, ultimately leading to satisfaction and loyalty.

Overall, the order you've chosen emphasizes the importance of laying a strong foundation through knowledge and engagement, ensuring fairness and respect throughout the process, and ultimately delivering on customer expectations to drive satisfaction and loyalty. It provides a logical progression that prioritizes building trust and meaningful relationships with customers.

User: Exactly. AI cannot understand that the first three strategies show respect for customers. The last two were borne out of respect for the customer.

ChatGPT3.5: Your insight is astute. Indeed, the concepts of knowledge, co-creation, and equity can all be seen as manifestations of respect for the customer. Let's break it down:

Knowledge: Providing customers with relevant information demonstrates respect for their intelligence and autonomy. It empowers them to make informed decisions that align with their needs and preferences.

Co-creation: Involving customers in the product development process acknowledges their expertise and values their input. It shows that their opinions are valued and respected, fostering a sense of partnership and loyalty.

Equity: Ensuring fairness and equality in marketing practices demonstrates respect for customers' rights and dignity. It emphasizes that all customers are valued equally and deserve to be treated with respect and fairness.

In this light, the first three concepts indeed lay the groundwork for building trust and meaningful relationships with customers. They reflect a deeper understanding of customers' needs and preferences, as well as a commitment to meeting those needs in a fair and respectful manner. Thank you for highlighting this perspective!

User: Continue.

ChatGPT3.5: Certainly! Building upon the foundation of knowledge, co-creation, and equity, the last two concepts, buyer confidence and customer satisfaction, are indeed outcomes that stem from the respect shown to customers throughout the marketing process.

Buyer Confidence: When customers feel respected and valued throughout their interactions with a brand, they are more likely to develop trust and confidence in the brand's offerings. Transparent information, quality assurances, and ethical practices contribute to this confidence by demonstrating the brand's commitment to meeting customer needs and delivering on its promises. Ultimately, buyer confidence is a reflection of the trust and respect that customers have in the brand.

Customer Satisfaction: Customer satisfaction is the culmination of the entire customer experience, from initial engagement to post-purchase support. When customers feel respected, valued, and their needs are consistently met, they are more likely to be satisfied with their overall experience. Satisfaction reflects the success of the brand in fulfilling its promise to customers and maintaining a positive relationship with them over time.

In essence, buyer confidence and customer satisfaction are indeed outcomes of the respect shown to customers throughout the marketing process. By prioritizing knowledge, co-creation, and equity, and delivering on these principles consistently, brands can cultivate trust, confidence, and satisfaction among their customers, ultimately driving loyalty and long-term success. Thank you for allowing me to continue the discussion!

User: (...). What does all this lead to for an organization?

ChatGPT3.5: The culmination of prioritizing knowledge, co-creation, equity, respect for the customer, buyer confidence, and customer satisfaction within an organization leads to several significant outcomes:

Brand Loyalty: When customers feel respected, valued, and satisfied with their experiences, they are more likely to develop strong loyalty to the brand. They will choose the brand consistently over competitors, even when faced with other options.

Positive Reputation: Consistently delivering on promises, treating customers ethically, and providing exceptional service contributes to building a positive reputation for the organization. A good reputation attracts new customers and enhances the brand's credibility in the market.

Customer Advocacy: Satisfied and loyal customers often become brand advocates, recommending the organization to friends, family, and colleagues. Positive word-of-mouth and referrals can significantly impact the organization's growth and success.

Increased Market Share: By prioritizing customer satisfaction and building strong relationships with customers, the organization can increase its market share. Satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and contribute to the organization's revenue growth.

Innovation and Differentiation: Involving customers in the co-creation process can lead to innovation and differentiation in products and services. By listening to customers' needs and preferences, the organization can develop unique offerings that stand out in the market.

Long-Term Financial Success: Ultimately, prioritizing these principles leads to long-term financial success for the organization. Satisfied, loyal customers drive revenue growth, reduce marketing costs (through word-of-mouth referrals), and enhance overall profitability.

In summary, by prioritizing the principles of customer-centricity, equity, and respect, organizations can achieve sustainable growth, competitive advantage, and long-term success in the marketplace. These outcomes are not only beneficial for the organization's bottom line but also for fostering positive relationships with customers and stakeholders.

User: Continue

ChatGPT3.5: Certainly, here are some additional outcomes that organizations can expect by prioritizing the principles of customer-centricity, equity, and respect:

Employee Satisfaction and Engagement: A customer-centric culture often goes hand in hand with an employee-centric culture. Organizations that prioritize customer satisfaction and respect for customers also tend to prioritize employee satisfaction and engagement. Employees feel valued and motivated when they see their efforts directly contributing to positive customer experiences and organizational success.

Operational Efficiency and Cost Savings: By focusing on understanding customer needs and preferences, organizations can streamline their operations and allocate resources more efficiently. This understanding allows them to tailor their products, services, and processes to better meet customer expectations, reducing waste and unnecessary expenses.

Adaptability and Resilience: Organizations that prioritize customer satisfaction and maintain strong relationships with customers are better equipped to adapt to changes in the market and withstand economic downturns. Customer feedback and insights serve as valuable guidance for strategic decision-making and innovation, enabling the organization to stay relevant and resilient over time.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability: Equity and respect for customers often extend to broader principles of corporate social responsibility and sustainability. Organizations that prioritize these principles demonstrate a commitment to ethical business practices, environmental stewardship, and social impact, which can enhance their reputation and attract socially conscious customers and investors.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Organizations that prioritize customer-centricity and equity are more likely to form strategic partnerships and collaborations with other businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations. These partnerships can create opportunities for mutual growth, innovation, and social impact, further reinforcing the organization's position in the market.

In conclusion, by embedding principles of customer-centricity, equity, and respect into their operations and culture, organizations can unlock a wide range of benefits beyond just financial success. These outcomes contribute to building a strong and sustainable organization that thrives in the long term while making a positive impact on customers, employees, and society as a whole.

Appendix G: Buyer Expectations [32]

| Quote | Coding |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <p>Buyers want value from sellers, products, and services. They want products or services that meet their needs and solve their problems. Buyers desire high-quality, reliable, durable products that perform as expected. They also want trustworthy, reliable sellers who provide excellent customer service. Buyers also seek competitive pricing and favorable terms to get the best value. Overall, buyers want a positive experience and a long-term relationship with sellers who deliver on their promises.</p> | <p>K, E, CS, R, C, BC, Su</p> |
| <p>Buyers also want sellers, products, and services that offer convenience and efficiency. They value sellers who make the purchasing process easy and seamless through user-friendly websites, streamlined ordering systems, or quick response times. Buyers appreciate products and services that save them time and effort, whether it is through automation, simplification, or enhanced functionality.</p> | <p>R, K, E, BC, CS</p> |
| <p>In addition, buyers want sellers who understand their specific needs and customize their offerings accordingly. Buyers highly value personalization and customization, as they want products or services tailored to their unique preferences, requirements, and circumstances. This could include personalized recommendations, flexible options, or personalized customer support.</p> | <p>K, R, E, BC, CS</p> |
| <p>Reliability and consistency are also crucial for buyers. They want sellers who consistently deliver on their promises, meet deadlines, and provide consistent quality. Buyers seek products and services they can rely on and trust to perform consistently well over time.</p> | <p>BC, R, E, CS, C, Su</p> |

Ultimately, buyers want sellers, products, and services that provide a positive overall experience. This encompasses factors such as clear and transparent communication, attentive customer support, hassle-free returns or warranties, and a commitment to resolving any issues that may arise. Buyers appreciate sellers who go above and beyond to exceed their expectations and make them feel valued.

CS, E, CC, R, BC

By fulfilling these wants and needs, sellers can build long-lasting relationships with buyers, foster customer loyalty, and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

CS, BC, E, Su,

Codes: Knowledge (K), Equity (E), Respect for Customer (R), Buyer Confidence (BC), Co-construction (C), Customer Satisfaction (CS), Sustainability (Su).