

Silent Resistance in AI-Driven Marketing: A Qualitative Study of Perceived Manipulation

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how consumers perceived manipulation in AI-driven marketing and how such perceptions lead to the emergence of silent resistance. This study employs a qualitative research approach to capture in-depth consumer perceptions and experiences in the context of AI-driven marketing. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants and analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, categories, and emerging themes. The findings reveal that while AI-driven personalisation initially enhances consumer convenience, excessive intensity and accuracy of content exposure lead to discomfort and suspicion. Consumers begin to perceive marketing practices as manipulative when they feel their autonomy in decision-making is being subtly influenced. As a response, consumers engage in silent resistance behaviours such as ignoring content, reducing engagement, and gradually avoiding brands or platforms without expressing explicit complaints. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the role of perceived manipulation as a psychological mechanism that links AI-driven marketing to implicit consumer resistance. Practically, it suggests that companies should balance personalisation with transparency and ethical considerations to avoid triggering negative consumer perceptions and disengagement. This research offers a novel perspective by uncovering silent resistance as an implicit and underexplored consumer response to perceived manipulation in AI-driven marketing through a qualitative approach.

Keywords: AI-driven marketing, perceived manipulation, silent resistance, consumer behaviour, personalisation

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has enabled companies to deliver more sophisticated personalisation in marketing (Geng et al., 2024). But in practice, it has begun to create new dynamics in consumer perceptions. In everyday life, consumers are increasingly exposed to highly specific and repetitive marketing content, such as ads that continually appear based on their search history and digital activity. This initially made it easier to find relevant products, but over time, it has led to boredom and discomfort. Some consumers have even begun to feel that the content appears too personalised and seems to know their preferences excessively (Kirk & Givi, 2025). This situation indicates a shift in consumer perceptions of AI-based personalisation practices.

This phenomenon occurs not only at the level of everyday experience but also begins to influence how consumers interpret their interactions with brands. When personalisation is perceived as too intense, consumers no longer see it as a helpful form of service, but rather as something intrusive and even suspicious. This feeling arises from the impression that digital systems are able to track and excessively utilise their personal information (Quach et al., 2022). Under certain conditions, consumers begin to question whether the decisions they make are truly based on personal preferences or influenced by systems designed to direct their choices (Shah & Asghar, 2023). This is an early indication of the emergence of perceptions of manipulation in AI-based marketing.

In marketing literature, the use of AI in personalisation has been viewed primarily from a positive perspective. Various studies have shown that personalisation can increase information relevance, enhance

consumer experience, and enhance brand satisfaction and loyalty (Rane et al., 2023). Furthermore, AI is also considered capable of helping companies deliver more targeted and efficient messages (Arora & Thota, 2024). However, as technology advances, several studies have begun to reveal another side of personalisation: the emergence of perceptions of intrusiveness and privacy concerns (Alhelaly et al., 2025). Consumers not only feel annoyed but also begin to experience psychological stress from overly intense and repetitive exposure to content.

The development of the concept of perceived Manipulation suggests that the issues raised are not only related to intrusion or privacy, but also touch on a deeper aspect, namely the perception that consumer decisions are being unfairly influenced. In this context, consumers may feel that they are being subtly guided to make certain decisions without being fully aware of the process (Chavan, 2024). This condition creates a dilemma in modern marketing, where technology that is supposed to enhance the experience actually has the potential to reduce consumers' sense of autonomy. Thus, personalisation is no longer seen simply as a marketing strategy, but also as a mechanism that has the potential to influence freedom of choice.

Although this issue is beginning to gain attention in academic research, most studies still focus on quantitative approaches by measuring the relationship between personalisation, trust, and consumer behaviour. Commonly used variables in previous research include intrusiveness, privacy, and trustworthiness. concern, and trust, which were analysed using statistical models. While this approach provides a general overview of the influence of AI in marketing, it fails to fully explain how consumers subjectively interpret their experiences. However, the perception of manipulation is a phenomenon heavily influenced by individual interpretation, requiring a more exploratory approach.

Furthermore, previous research tends to view consumer responses in explicit forms, such as satisfaction, loyalty, or purchase intention. In practice, not all consumers express their discomfort openly. Many choose not to react directly, but instead exhibit more subtle behaviours. These behaviours can include ignoring content, reducing interaction, or gradually distancing themselves from a brand without providing clear feedback (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025). This phenomenon suggests that there are forms of consumer responses that have not been widely identified in previous research.

This condition leads to the emergence of the concept of silent resistance, which is a form of consumer resistance that is implicit and not directly detected. In contrast to open complaints or rejection, silent Resistance occurs when consumers silently avoid interacting with a brand in response to an unpleasant experience (Airoldi & Rokka, 2022). This phenomenon is important because, although not explicitly visible, its impact can be significant on the effectiveness of marketing strategies (Talwar et al., 2024). If not properly understood, companies can experience a decline in consumer engagement without knowing the true cause.

Although previous studies have examined AI-driven personalisation, privacy concerns, and consumer responses in digital marketing, most of these studies primarily employ quantitative approaches focusing on variables such as trust, satisfaction, and purchase intention. Existing research also tends to emphasise explicit consumer responses, while implicit behavioural reactions remain insufficiently explored. As a result, little is known about how consumers subjectively interpret perceived manipulation in AI-driven marketing and how these perceptions gradually lead to silent resistance behaviours. More importantly, no prior study has qualitatively explored the relationship between perceived manipulation and silent resistance through consumers lived experiences in AI-driven marketing contexts. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by uncovering silent resistance as an implicit consumer response emerging from perceived manipulation using a qualitative approach. Furthermore, the relationship between perceptions of manipulation and consumers' latent responses has also not been comprehensively explored.

Therefore, this study offers a different approach by using qualitative methods to explore consumers' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations in greater depth. This research not only focuses on how consumers perceive AI-based marketing practices but also seeks to identify the boundaries between acceptable personalisation and perceived manipulative personalisation. Furthermore, this study aims to uncover forms of silent resistance that emerges in response to perceived manipulation. Thus, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of digital marketing studies and provide practical implications for companies in designing more ethical and consumer-oriented marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

AI-Driven Marketing and Personalisation in Marketing

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), AI-driven marketing has become one of the key innovations in modern marketing strategies. This technology enables companies to collect and analyse vast amounts of consumer data to generate more relevant and personalised content (Balamurugan, 2024). Through sophisticated algorithms, companies can more accurately predict consumer preferences, needs, and behaviour (Segun-Falade et al., 2024). This makes AI an effective tool in increasing the efficiency and accuracy of marketing communications (Lyndyuk et al., 2024). Thus, AI-driven marketing is a data-driven strategic approach that plays an important role in improving marketing performance.

Personalisation in AI-based marketing aims to enhance the consumer experience through the delivery of relevant content. By tailoring messages to individual preferences, consumers are expected to feel more cared for and understood by the brand. Furthermore, personalisation also contributes to increased consumer satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty to a product or service (Motlani et al., 2025). However, the effectiveness of personalization depends heavily on how consumers interpret the experience in their interactions with the brand. (Obiegbu & Larsen, 2025). Therefore, personalisation has both positive potential and the risk of negative perception in marketing practices. Consumer responses to AI-driven practices Marketing is not only influenced by the perception of manipulation, but also by other negative experiences felt during interactions with the technology.

Perceived Manipulation in Digital Marketing

Perceived manipulation emerged as a consequence of the increasing intensity of personalisation in digital marketing. Perceived Manipulation refers to consumers' perceptions that marketing strategies not only influence but also unfairly direct their decisions (Witte, 2025). This perception can arise when consumers feel that the information provided is too specific or structured to trigger a certain response. Furthermore, the intensive use of personal data can reinforce the impression that consumers are being controlled by the system (Rubin et al., 2025). Thus, perceived manipulation reflects a psychological dimension related to perceptions of control and freedom in decision-making.

Perceived manipulation can also be understood through how consumers judge the boundary between reasonable and excessive influence in marketing. When personalisation is perceived as too intense or too targeted, consumers can experience a decreased sense of control over their decisions (Moran, 2024). This condition creates feelings of discomfort, suspicion, and doubt about the authenticity of their own preferences. Furthermore, perceptions of manipulation are also influenced by consumers' level of awareness of the use of personal data in AI systems. (Kumar et al., 2025). Perceived manipulation is not only related to the marketing strategy itself, but also to how consumers interpret the experience psychologically.

Consumer Response and the Silent Concept Resistance

Besides perceived manipulation, the literature also discusses intrusiveness and privacy concern, which is a form of negative experience that underlies consumer responses. Intrusiveness refers to the level of disruption consumers feel due to unwanted or excessively frequent marketing messages (Vijayakumar et al., 2024). Meanwhile, privacy concerns relate to consumer concerns about companies' use of their personal data (Evans et al., 2023). These two concepts are often associated with negative experiences in digital marketing, especially when technology is perceived as encroaching on consumer comfort. Therefore, intrusiveness and privacy concern are an important foundation in understanding the emergence of negative perceptions towards AI-driven marketing.

Consumer responses to negative marketing experiences aren't always explicitly expressed; they're often implicit and hidden. In many cases, consumers don't express their complaints directly, but instead exhibit behaviours such as ignoring content, reducing engagement, or distancing themselves from the brand. (Wolter et al., 2023). This behaviour is difficult to detect because it does not appear in the form of clear feedback. The concept of silent resistance is used to describe forms of consumer resistance that are indirect and not explicitly expressed. Thus, silent resistance is an important behavioural response to understand in modern marketing dynamics.

Relationship between Concepts and Research Gaps

The relationship between AI-driven marketing, perceived manipulation, and silent Resistance demonstrates the complex dynamics of consumer behaviour. When AI-based personalisation is perceived as excessive, consumers can develop perceptions of brand manipulation. This perception then triggers discomfort that isn't always expressed directly, but is reflected in silent behaviour. resistance. This process shows that consumer experiences in digital marketing involve deep emotional and psychological aspects (Sudirjo et al., 2024). Therefore, the relationship between these concepts is important to explore qualitatively to understand the phenomenon comprehensively.

Although the relationships between these concepts have begun to be discussed in the literature, most research still uses a quantitative approach that focuses on measuring the relationships between variables. This approach fails to explain how consumers subjectively interpret their experiences in the context of AI-based marketing. Furthermore, exploration of the boundaries between acceptable and manipulative personalisation remains very limited. Research also hasn't explored how silent resistance is formed in response to perceived manipulation. Thus, this study not only fills a gap in the literature but also expands the conceptual understanding of the dynamics of implicit consumer responses in an AI-driven context of marketing.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the aim of exploring in depth consumer perceptions and experiences regarding perceived manipulation in AI-driven marketing and the responses that appear in the form of silent resistance. This approach was chosen because it can explore subjective meanings, interpretations, and individual experiences that cannot be measured quantitatively. Informants in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the criteria of consumers who actively use digital media and have been exposed to AI-based marketing, such as personalised advertising on social media and e-commerce platforms. This study involved eight informants with diverse backgrounds, including students and employees, aged between 18–35 years old, thus providing a variety of perspectives relevant to the phenomenon under study.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the informants' experiences and perceptions regarding AI-driven marketing practices. The semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to use guiding questions while still giving participants the flexibility to explain their experiences in greater depth. Participants were recruited voluntarily through personal approaches and online communication based on predetermined research criteria. The interviews were conducted online through platforms such as Google Meet and WhatsApp calls to provide convenience and flexibility for participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes depending on the depth of discussion and participant responses. During the interviews, the researcher used an interview protocol containing guiding topics related to personalised advertising experiences, perceived manipulation, consumer discomfort, and behavioural responses toward AI-driven marketing. The data collection process was conducted between January and February 2026. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached, whereby no new relevant themes emerged from subsequent interviews. All participants provided informed consent before the interviews were conducted, and all interviews were recorded with participants' permission for transcription and analysis purposes.

Furthermore, the data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), consisting of familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The interview transcripts were first transcribed and read repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data. Initial open coding was then conducted by identifying meaningful statements related to participants' experiences and perceptions of AI-driven marketing. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories and interpreted to develop major themes related to perceived manipulation and silent resistance. The themes were continuously reviewed and refined to ensure consistency with the interview data. To maintain the validity and credibility of the data, this study applied source triangulation by comparing responses among informants with different backgrounds to identify consistency in emerging themes. Member checking was also conducted by returning summaries of the interview interpretations to several participants to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's understanding. The identities of the informants were kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Informant Profile

This research involved informants selected based on the relevance of their experiences to AI-driven practices. Marketing. The informants consisted of eight people with student and employee backgrounds who actively use digital media. The informants' ages ranged from 18 to 35 years, representing a group of intensive digital technology users. All informants had experience being exposed to personalised advertising on social media and e-commerce. Thus, the informants' characteristics were deemed appropriate to describe the phenomenon under study.

Informants' experiences interacting with AI-driven marketing demonstrate quite intense involvement in their daily lives. They reported frequently seeing ads relevant to their previous search activity. Some also noticed a connection between their digital history and the content they displayed. This exposure occurred repeatedly across the various digital platforms they used. Therefore, informants' experiences provide a strong foundation for understanding perceptions of AI-driven marketing.

Consumer Perceptions of AI-Driven Marketing

Consumer perception of AI-driven marketing studies demonstrates the duality between the benefits and inconveniences experienced in digital interactions. Some informants believe that personalisation helps them find products that suit their needs more quickly. This convenience makes the search process more efficient than conventional methods. However, these benefits are not always felt consistently by all informants. Thus, initial perceptions of AI-driven marketing tend to be positive but not completely stable.

On the other hand, high ad frequency is a major factor triggering consumer discomfort. Informants revealed that repetitive ads annoy them while using digital platforms. Furthermore, the content displayed often lacks variety, leading to boredom. This creates a less enjoyable user experience, even though it is technically relevant (Omeish et al., 2024). Therefore, the intensity of exposure is a crucial factor in shaping negative perceptions of AI-driven marketing.

Participant 2 (P2) stated: *"At first, I felt helped because the ads matched what I needed. But after seeing the same products repeatedly, it became annoying and uncomfortable."* This statement indicates that personalised advertising initially creates positive experiences but gradually generates discomfort when the exposure becomes repetitive.

High ad frequency is a major factor triggering consumer discomfort. Informants revealed that repetitive advertisements create boredom and reduce the quality of digital interactions. Participant 5 (P5) explained: *"Sometimes I feel the system knows too much about me. I only searched once, but the product keeps appearing everywhere."* This finding reflects consumers' growing awareness of how AI systems continuously monitor and utilise behavioural data to personalise content.

Over time, consumer perceptions shifted from initially accepting to becoming more critical of the systems they used. Informants began to question the reasons behind ads that seemed too specific. They also noticed patterns linking previous digital activity to the content displayed. This led to the realisation that mechanisms were continuously monitoring their behaviour (Dang, 2024). Thus, consumer perceptions became more reflective and thoughtful.

Furthermore, the system's accuracy in understanding consumer preferences actually creates ambiguity in the user experience. Informants felt that the system knew their needs too well, causing discomfort. This feeling was reinforced by concerns about the non-transparent use of personal data (Hancock et al., 2024). Furthermore, consumers began to perceive a fine line between helpful and intrusive personalisation. Therefore, perceptions of AI-driven marketing are becoming increasingly complex and cannot be viewed simply.

Perceived Manipulation in AI-Driven Marketing

Perceived manipulation in AI-driven marketing arises when consumers perceive that personalisation has exceeded the limits of reasonableness in digital interactions. Informants revealed that ads that appear continuously after certain searches create psychological pressure to consider that product. The system's level of accuracy in displaying preferences also creates the impression that the algorithm has a very deep

understanding of personal needs (Wenqi, 2025). This condition makes consumers begin to question whether they are truly choosing freely (Shah & Asghar, 2023). Thus, perceived manipulation reflects a change in perception from accepting personalisation to feeling directed by the system.

The intensity and consistency of content appearance are key factors reinforcing consumers' perceptions of manipulation. Informants stated that repeated exposure to the same product creates a subtle coercive effect on the decision-making process. Furthermore, the simultaneous appearance of advertisements on multiple platforms reinforces the impression that they are constantly being followed by the system (Salminen et al., 2023). This situation leaves consumers feeling they have no way to escape this influence. Therefore, the frequency and distribution of content play a significant role in shaping perceptions. manipulation.

Perceived manipulation is also closely related to a decrease in consumers' sense of control over their decisions (Cutright & Wu, 2023). Informants began to doubt whether their preferences truly stemmed from personal needs or the result of repeated exposure. This feeling was reinforced by the growing awareness that the system was actively learning their behaviour. Furthermore, some informants felt that their choices had been indirectly shaped by the algorithm. Thus, perceived manipulation creates a psychological experience of loss of autonomy in decision-making.

Participant 1 (P1) stated: *"I started wondering whether I really wanted the product or whether the ads kept pushing me to think about it."* This statement indicates that consumers begin to question the authenticity of their own preferences when repeatedly exposed to highly targeted advertisements. The perception of manipulation emerges when consumers feel that marketing systems subtly influence their decision-making process.

Participant 6 (P6) explained: *"The advertisements appear too precisely after I search for something. It feels like my behavior is constantly monitored."* This finding reflects growing consumer concerns regarding surveillance, data tracking, and the lack of transparency in AI-based marketing practices. Consumers no longer perceive personalisation solely as convenience, but also as a mechanism capable of reducing their sense of autonomy and privacy.

Furthermore, the perception of manipulation raises concerns regarding the use of personal data in AI systems. Informants expressed suspicion about how their data is collected and utilised by digital platforms. These concerns are heightened when consumers lack a clear understanding of how algorithms work (Querici et al., 2022). Furthermore, the lack of transparency from companies reinforces negative perceptions of these marketing practices. Therefore, perceived manipulation not only relates to marketing experiences but also reflects issues of trust and privacy in the digital ecosystem.

Silent Forms and Processes Resistance

Silent resistance arises as a consumer response to perceived manipulation in AI-driven marketing indirect and hidden (Wang et al., 2023). Informants tend to ignore advertisements by skipping over the content without paying further attention. Furthermore, some informants choose not to read or explore the displayed information even if it is relevant. This behaviour indicates a passive rejection of marketing content that is perceived as intrusive. Thus, silent resistance is a form of implicit resistance that is not expressed openly by consumers.

Participant 3 (P3) stated: *"I usually just ignore the ads and scroll away because I feel tired of seeing the same content repeatedly."* This statement shows that repeated exposure to personalised advertisements gradually creates fatigue and avoidance behaviour among consumers. Rather than confronting the brand directly, consumers choose subtle disengagement as a form of self-protection. In addition to ignoring advertisements, silent resistance is also reflected in reduced consumer engagement with brands on digital platforms. Informants revealed that they intentionally decreased their interactions with marketing content, such as avoiding likes, comments, or clicks on advertisements.

Participant 7 (P7) explained: *"I rarely interact with those brands anymore. I stopped liking or clicking their content because it feels excessive."* This finding indicates that perceived manipulation not only affects consumer perceptions but also weakens emotional attachment and engagement with brands. Consumers gradually distance themselves from brands that are considered overly intrusive in their marketing approach (Ordabayeva et al., 2022).

Furthermore, silent resistance can develop into more significant avoidance behaviour in the use of digital platforms. Informants stated that they began avoiding certain applications or platforms that they considered too aggressive in displaying advertisements. Furthermore, some consumers chose to switch to other brands that felt more comfortable and less invasive. This behaviour indicates the medium-term consequences of negative experiences with AI-based marketing (Saptarini & Sugiarto, 2025). Thus, silent resistance can develop from passive actions to more concrete behavioural decisions.

Participant 4 (P4) stated: *“Sometimes I even avoid opening certain apps because the advertisements are too aggressive.”* This statement illustrates that silent resistance develops progressively, beginning with discomfort, continuing with disengagement, and eventually leading to active avoidance behaviour. Although consumers do not openly express dissatisfaction, these hidden responses may significantly impact long-term brand relationships and platform engagement.

The process of forming silent resistance progresses gradually from discomfort to active avoidance. Initially, consumers are annoyed by the high frequency and pattern of ad appearances. This feeling then develops into suspicion of the system and how the algorithm works. In the final stage, consumers begin to take action to reduce interaction or even abandon certain platforms (Fletcher et al., 2023). Therefore, silent resistance is an adaptive response that develops gradually in the face of digital marketing pressure.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a close relationship between AI-driven marketing, perceived manipulation, and silent resistance in shaping consumer behaviour. The findings show that personalisation that initially provides convenience can turn into a source of discomfort (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2024). High exposure intensity makes consumers feel they have no room to avoid marketing content (Drossos et al., 2024). Furthermore, the system’s accuracy in displaying preferences actually strengthens the awareness of a process monitoring their activities (GhorbanTanhaei et al., 2024). Thus, AI-driven marketing not only functions as a marketing tool, but also influences the psychological experience of consumers.

Perceived manipulation arises as a cognitive response when consumers perceive that a marketing strategy has exceeded reasonable limits (Alsaad & Al-Okaily, 2025). Informants revealed that the repeated appearance of advertisements creates indirect pressure in decision-making. Excessive relevance also triggers suspicion about the use of personal data. Furthermore, consumers begin to perceive an unconscious influence in shaping their preferences (Ofosu-Ampong et al., 2025). Therefore, perceived manipulation becomes a critical point in changing consumer perceptions of AI-based marketing.

As reflected by Informant 1: *“I started wondering whether I really wanted the product or whether the ads kept pushing me to think about it.”* This finding indicates that consumers begin to perceive AI-driven personalisation not merely as assistance, but as a subtle mechanism influencing their decision-making autonomy.

The relationship between perceived manipulation and silence resistance indicates a shift from a cognitive response to a behavioural one. Consumers who feel manipulated tend not to express their discomfort openly. Instead, they choose to avoid or ignore the content as a form of self-protection. This behaviour occurs unconsciously and often goes undetected by companies. Thus, silent resistance is a form of latent response that arises due to manipulative perception.

These findings suggest that silent resistance should not merely be understood as passive consumer avoidance, but as a psychological self-protection mechanism emerging from perceived threats to consumer autonomy. In the context of AI-driven marketing, consumers are not only reacting to repetitive advertisements, but also responding to the feeling that their preferences and decisions are being subtly shaped by algorithmic systems. This study therefore expands the understanding of consumer resistance by demonstrating that resistance in digital environments may occur implicitly through emotional distancing, disengagement, and behavioural withdrawal rather than explicit confrontation. The findings also indicate that perceived manipulation acts as an important psychological trigger that transforms consumer discomfort into silent resistance behaviours.

Silent resistance in this study was shown to have several different forms in consumer behaviour. The most common form is ignoring the advertisement without responding (Çelik et al., 2023). In addition, consumers are also reducing their engagement by no longer interacting with brand content. (Odoom, 2025). In some cases,

consumers even switch to other platforms or brands that they consider more convenient (Ryu et al., 2023). Therefore, silent resistance reflects significant behavioural changes even if they are not explicitly visible.

Informant 7 also mentioned: *“I stopped interacting with the brand’s content because it appeared too often and became disturbing.”* This illustrates that silent resistance emerges gradually through disengagement behaviours rather than explicit complaints.

The findings of this study both strengthen and expand the existing literature on technology-based marketing. The results align with the concept that personalisation can enhance marketing effectiveness (Jusuf, 2023), but also has negative consequences when overused. Unlike previous research that focused on explicit responses, this study demonstrates the existence of more complex implicit responses. Furthermore, this study reveals that consumers do not always express discomfort directly. Thus, this research provides a new contribution to understanding the dynamics of consumer behaviour in the digital age.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by explicitly linking perceived manipulation with silent resistance in AI-driven marketing contexts. Previous studies mainly focused on explicit consumer reactions such as dissatisfaction, distrust, or purchase avoidance. However, this study demonstrates that consumer resistance may emerge in more subtle and implicit forms that are psychologically driven and difficult for companies to detect directly. By using a qualitative approach, this research also provides deeper insights into consumers’ subjective experiences and interpretations that are often overlooked in quantitative studies.

The implications of this research emphasise the importance of balancing marketing effectiveness with consumer convenience. Companies need to consider the limits of their use of personalisation to avoid manipulative perceptions. Furthermore, a more transparent and ethical marketing strategy can increase consumer trust. An overly aggressive approach can actually decrease long-term engagement. Therefore, AI-driven marketing needs to be designed by considering the psychological aspects and consumer experience as a whole.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that AI-driven marketing that aims to increase the effectiveness of personalisation can actually create a perceived manipulation that ends in silence, consumer resistance. The findings reveal that high intensity and accuracy of personalisation trigger feelings of discomfort, suspicion, and a decreased sense of control in decision-making. This condition encourages consumers not to express direct rejection, but rather to demonstrate implicit responses such as ignoring content, reducing interactions, and even avoiding certain platforms or brands. Furthermore, this study also confirms that consumer responses are not always explicit and measurable; they can be hidden yet have a significant impact on the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of AI-driven marketing is not only determined by the level of personalisation but also by the company’s ability to maintain a balance between relevance, convenience, and the consumer’s perception of autonomy.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the number of informants involved was relatively limited, which may not fully represent broader consumer experiences in AI-driven marketing contexts. Second, this study focused primarily on participants within the Indonesian digital environment, limiting the generalisability of the findings to different cultural or geographical settings. In addition, the use of purposive sampling may have restricted the diversity of perspectives obtained from participants.

Therefore, future research is recommended to examine the relationship between perceived manipulation and silent resistance using quantitative approaches involving larger samples to test the generalisability of these findings. Future studies may also explore cross-cultural contexts to understand how consumers from different cultural backgrounds interpret AI-driven marketing practices. Furthermore, comparative studies across various digital platforms and industries could provide broader insights into the dynamics of consumer resistance in AI-based marketing environments.

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