PROFILICITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK OF CORPORATE BEHAVIORS AND DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

PROFILICIDADE NO MARKETING DE MÍDIA SOCIAL: UMA PROPOSTA DE ESTRUTURA DE COMPORTAMENTOS CORPORATIVOS E ESTRATÉGIAS DE ENGAJAMENTO DIGITAL

PROFILICIDAD EN MARKETING EN REDES SOCIALES: UNA PROPUESTA DE MARCO DE COMPORTAMIENTOS CORPORATIVOS Y ESTRATEGIAS DE COMPROMISO DIGITAL

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the evolving role of social media marketing strategies (SMMS) within firms, proposing a new theoretical framework based on the concept of profilicity. Social media, since its inception, has transformed corporate marketing practices, forcing firms to adapt their strategies to engage more dynamically with consumers. Profilicity, introduced by Moeller and D'Ambrosio, suggests that digital identity is curated for social validation, making it a central framework for understanding corporate behavior online. The article proposes a typology based on three main behaviors: Sincerity, where brands maintain transparency and follow traditional marketing norms; Authenticity, where companies build emotional connections based on their values; and Profilicity, where brands constantly adjust their digital presence for maximum engagement and social validation. The research addresses the gap in existing literature on SMMS by offering a comprehensive framework for analyzing firm-generated content and online brand management. Additionally, it suggests that SMMS should be evaluated not only by traditional engagement metrics but also through a firm's ability to curate its identity online. Future research is encouraged to test this framework empirically, focusing on industry-specific applications and cross-cultural variations in SMMS.

Keywords: Digital Corporate Behavior. Social Media Engagement. Digital Marketing Strategies.

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RESUMO

O artigo explora a evolução do papel das estratégias de marketing de mídia social (SMMS) nas empresas, propondo uma nova estrutura teórica baseada no conceito de perfil. A mídia social, desde seu início, transformou as práticas de marketing corporativo, forçando as empresas a adaptar suas estratégias para se envolverem de forma mais dinâmica com os consumidores. O perfil, apresentado por Moeller e D'Ambrosio, sugere que a identidade digital é selecionada para validação social, o que a torna uma estrutura central para a compreensão do comportamento corporativo on-line. O artigo propõe uma tipologia baseada em três comportamentos principais: Sinceridade, em que as marcas mantêm a transparência e seguem as normas tradicionais de marketing; Autenticidade, em que as empresas criam conexões emocionais com base em seus valores; e Profilicidade, em que as marcas ajustam constantemente sua presença digital para obter o máximo de envolvimento e validação social. A pesquisa aborda a lacuna na literatura existente sobre SMMS, oferecendo uma estrutura abrangente para analisar o conteúdo gerado pela empresa e o gerenciamento on-line da marca. Além disso, ela sugere que o SMMS deve ser avaliado não apenas pelas métricas tradicionais de engajamento, mas também pela capacidade da empresa de selecionar sua identidade on-line. Incentivamos pesquisas futuras a testar essa estrutura empiricamente, concentrando-se em aplicações específicas do setor e variações interculturais no SMMS.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento corporativo digital. Envolvimento com a mídia social. Estratégias de marketing digital.

RESUMEN

El artículo explora la evolución del papel de las estrategias de marketing en medios sociales (SMMS) dentro de las empresas, proponiendo un nuevo marco teórico basado en el concepto de profilicidad. Desde su aparición, las redes sociales han transformado las prácticas de marketing de las empresas, obligándolas a adaptar sus estrategias para interactuar de forma más dinámica con los consumidores. La profilicidad, introducida por Moeller y D'Ambrosio, sugiere que la identidad digital se elabora para la validación social, lo que la convierte en un marco central para entender el comportamiento corporativo en línea. El artículo propone una tipología basada en tres comportamientos principales: Sinceridad, donde las marcas mantienen la transparencia y siguen las normas tradicionales de marketing; Autenticidad, donde las empresas construyen conexiones emocionales basadas en sus valores; y Profilicidad, donde las marcas ajustan constantemente su presencia digital para obtener el máximo compromiso y validación social. La investigación aborda el vacío existente en la literatura sobre SMMS ofreciendo un marco integral para analizar el contenido generado por la empresa y la gestión de la marca en línea. Además, sugiere que el SMMS debe evaluarse no sólo por las métricas tradicionales de compromiso, sino también a través de la capacidad de una empresa para curar su identidad en línea. Se anima a futuros investigadores a probar empíricamente este marco, centrándose en las aplicaciones específicas de la industria y las variaciones transculturales en SMMS.

Palabras clave: Comportamiento Corporativo Digital. Participación en las redes sociales. Estrategias de marketing digital.

INTRODUCTION

Since its emerging in the early 2000s, social media has become one of the main ways people communicate, trade information and interact, both with other people and organizations (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024). Defined by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) as a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of content, through the years organizations saw their insertion in social media become from a differential aspect to an obligation to achieve success in their marketing strategies. The arrival of social media has transformed the way firms relate to customers, and at the same time changed internal marketing processes, becoming an important strategic tool (Martin-Rojas et al., 2020).

The importance of social media to organizations' performance is explained by the capability of social media to provide solutions to build and enhance relationships between its parts through information exchange (Wu et al., 2020). As stated by the authors, "social media technologies have changed the rules of marketing and market dynamics" (Wu et al., 2020, p. 1). This relevance was brought to academic attention, with many authors studying the effect of social media in consumers attitudes, beliefs, intentions and behavior (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024; Osei-Frimpong et al., 2022).

Only in recent years has the academy turned its attention to investigate firms' marketing efforts and strategies on social media, with the Social Media Marketing (SMM) term becoming more used and investigated (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024). In a social perspective, the presence of firms on social media has become mundane, with 93% of social media users affirming that companies must have social media presence (Pham & Gammoh, 2015). This social pressure has shaped the behavior of firms online, with their SMM strategies becoming more and more important over the years.

Although in recent years the study of SMM and firms' behavior on social media had grown, the majority of research focused on individual SMM behaviors, using a variety of theories and adopting a narrow perspective on the matter (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024). In other words, SMM studies remains fragmented across multiple theories and individual applications (Wu et al., 2020), with marketing literature urging a way to investigate how firms manage their branding and positioning online through social media.

In addition to the academic gap stated before, Bartoloni & Ancillai (2024), in their literature review about the subject, stated that SMM literature, in addition to being fragmented, focused mainly on the user-consumer perspective. The firm perspective, which involves the main objective of the present paper, becomes more important each year, as

firms' environment is surrounded by dynamism changing and turbulence, with very intense competition and dispute over consumers' attention (Martin-Rojas et al., 2020). Following this perspective, it becomes relevant the development of a SMM strategies model, which typifies firms' behavior in social media in order to analyze, in a second stage, the relationship between a firm's behavior and its performance, both in terms of financial results and social media engagement.

The present study follows the question: how to classify firms' behavior on social networks, with the aim of further analyzing their performance based on this classification? In other words, the main objective of this paper is to develop and propose a theoretical framework that allows both marketing researchers and professionals to analyze firms' behavior in their SMM efforts, classifying these behaviors to understand which of these classifications brings a better performance, independently on performance's measure.

In order to achieve an applicable model for researchers and marketing professionals, this article uses the theory developed by H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio (2021) in their book, You and Your Profile: Identity after Authenticity. The authors present an analysis about the changes in identity formation in a society dominated by digital culture and social media. The authors explore how the traditional concept of authenticity, which valued the discovery of a true "self" behind social masks, is being replaced by a new model of identity that they call "profilicity".

Although the main objective of the book is to analyze people's behavior when immersed on digital culture and mainly on social media, the present research aims to amplify this view, analyzing firm's social media presence and behavior in their SMM efforts through the lens of profilicity perspective. As stated before, social media has become an inevitable channel for organizations to communicate with people and even other organizations. Therefore, the way they present themselves must be evaluated and classified in order to further the analysis of performance and engagement levels.

The present research seeks to fill two main literature gaps on marketing and social media. Firstly, it follows Bartoloni & Ancillai (2024, p. 450) research agenda, with states that new research should focus on "develop fine-grained constructs and measures that consider a holistic perspective on firms' SMM behavior as a multifaceted concept comprising adoption decisions and social media marketing activities". The proposed framework aims to propose a classification on firm's behavior on social media that is multifaceted and mainly focused on firms' activities on social media, such as posts, texts and videos. Li et al. (2021,

p. 63) also back this view, affirming that, "up to now, the preparatory phase for designing SMM has been overlooked, and that therefore there is a need to shed more light on this because of its decisive role in achieving positive results".

The second perspective aims to address the profilicity perspective on marketing studies and research agenda. While there are many studies on branding, digital marketing, and the use of social media by companies (Luo et al., 2021), the direct application of profilicity theory to create a classification of companies' positioning on social media seems to be unexplored territory. Most studies focus on authenticity, engagement, and branding, but the concept of profilicity, which focuses on the curation of an identity for social validation, brings a new perspective to the analysis of firms' online behavior.

In summary, the present research could provide a theoretical framework that helps categorize and understand different strategies that companies adopt on social media. This would include analyzing how companies seek to create and maintain profiles that not only promote products but also engage with audiences in ways that maximize social validation. Proposing a classification based on profilicity might provide a new tool for academics and digital marketing professionals to analyze and compare the performance of social media strategies and on firms' performance in general. In addition, the proposed classification could be used to identify good practices and point out areas of risk for companies that rely heavily on their digital presence.

This paper is structured in six main sections. In addition to the presented introduction, the theoretical background presents SMM definitions and state of art literature, in addition to the deepening on H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio (2021) profilicity theory; the typification proposal addresses the profilicity-based framework proposed; the case studies aim to apply the proposed framework on SMM real strategies and typify it; the discussion section proposes a reflection on the implications of typification for the theory and practice of digital marketing; and the conclusions section aims to summary the research findings and suggest future research agenda for the proposed framework.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Recent years had seen a development on firms' relationships with their customers, with it becoming more complex, multifarious and intensified (Li et al., 2021). Much of this change can be attributed to social media, as it has become one of the main channels used to trade information and create interactions (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024; Corral de Zubielqui

et al., 2016; Grover et al., 2022; Pham & Gammoh, 2015). Based on that perspective, understanding the role of social media as relevant agents in marketing strategies and efforts has become critical for both researchers and professionals (Felix et al., 2017).

As stated by Colicev et al. (2019), social media literature and studies have two main focuses: firm generated content and user generated content. The present research focuses on firm generated content (FGC), which is defined as the type of content created by marketing professionals on professional channels and pages (Kumar et al., 2016). It might involve texts, videos, photos and other kinds of online content. FGC strategies and characteristics on social media have relevant importance on firms' behavior online (Colicev et al., 2019).

The firms' perspective on social media extends beyond simple brand visibility or content creation. Social media allows for active participation in public discourse, enabling firms to monitor trends, adjust strategies dynamically, and engage in two-way communication with their audiences (Li et al., 2021). Furthermore, it opens new opportunities for firms to personalize their interactions with consumers, thus fostering deeper emotional connections Bartoloni & Ancillai (2024).

This shift in the role of social media in the business environment aligns with the concept of social listening, where companies monitor conversations around their brand, competitors, and industry, collecting valuable insights (Stewart & Arnold, 2018). By practicing social listening, companies might strengthen their relationships with customers and stakeholders and also base their own content creation on feedback.

The growing importance of social media on firms' marketing strategies and efforts developed the Social Media Marketing area, which has become more strategic imperative over the years. In this strategic perspective, social media effective usage might allow the exchange of resources in a way that enhances firms' performance (Martin-Rojas et al., 2020). The present research follows Li et al. (2021, p. 54) definition on SMM, as "an organization's integrated pattern of activities that (…) transform social media connectedness and interactions into valuable strategic means to achieve desirable marketing outcomes".

As stated by the authors, SMM strategies, or SMMS, emphasize that social media users must be motivated to engage with firms, having a more relevant participation on firms' marketing online actions and strategies (Li et al., 2021). The authors also highlight that SMMS expands the notion of value in consumer behavior, not only including purchase

behavior, but also involves engagement, comprising and others. In other words, SMMS expands the idea of firm performance, increasing the relevance of the matter on marketing literature and professional aspects (Felix et al., 2017).

Ananda et al. (2016) highlight that the adoption of social media marketing strategies allows companies to better position themselves in relation to their marketing goals, facilitating the creation of customer relationships and the expansion of their brand presence. The model proposed in the article suggests that SMMS integrate the marketing organization with the objective of maximizing the value created for consumers and increasing the efficiency of marketing activities through customer relationship, brand presence, transactional and relational actions and in providing insights about market tendencies.

Bartoloni & Ancillai (2024) highlight the fragmentation on SMM existing literature, indicating two main streams of studies. The first one focuses on social media marketing activity (SMMA), that investigates the effect of firms' activities on brand equity and purchase intention (Sohaib & Han, 2023), maintaining the focus of analysis on firm performance through social media presence (Kim & Ko, 2012). The second one focuses on the usage of social media itself, attempting to understand how firms design their SMMS, focusing more on the process itself than on the results. This second approach is the one that guided the present research, that aims do address the lack of typification on SMMS in a way that connects the study of the matter on a complete framework. Following Bartoloni & Ancillai (2024, p. 437) idea that "these studies remain relatively disconnected from one another", this paper aims to not only propose an integrative framework for SMMS analysis, but also that can be used in the future for performance analysis, integrating both streams listed above.

In terms of framework attempts that aims to explain SMMS, three main works stand out. Felix et al. (2017) proposes an integrative model for strategic social media marketing, focusing on the dynamic and multidimensional nature of this phenomenon. The central objective is to present a comprehensive framework that allows companies to identify how to manage their social media marketing activities more strategically and stakeholders oriented.

The authors model divides SMMS into four interrelated dimensions. These dimensions seek to capture the different approaches that companies can take when using digital platforms to engage with their audiences. The first dimension is the scope of SMM, which varies between companies that use social media in a conservative and unilateral

way, as an extension of traditional advertising, and those that adopt a collaborative and interactive approach, seeking genuine engagement with their stakeholders. The second dimension is the culture of SMM, which reflects the degree of openness of the organization to digital marketing practices. Companies can adopt a more conservative approach, where control over the message and communication is centralized, or a more modern approach, encouraging transparency and spontaneous communication with the audience.

The structure of SMM is the third dimension, which addresses how responsibility for digital marketing activities is distributed within the organization. Organizations can adopt a hierarchical structure, with control centralized in a small group or department, or a more distributed approach, where different teams and individuals have autonomy over how to act on social media. Finally, SMM governance is about the rules that guide an organization's use of social media. Governance can be highly centralized, with strict rules that limit who can communicate and how messages should be structured, or decentralized, allowing employees greater freedom to engage on the platforms and contribute to company-generated content.

These four dimensions developed by Felix et al. (2017) form a continuum, and organizations position themselves differently on each of them, depending on internal and external factors. The model suggests that the strategic combination of these approaches can influence digital marketing effectiveness, with companies that adopt more flexible and interactive structures better leveraging the opportunities for engagement and innovation on social media.

The present research aims to develop a deeper understanding of SMMS. The model proposed by Felix et al. (2017) presents a classification of strategic marketing on social networks based on four dimensions: scope, culture, structure and governance. However, the model is broad and focused on how companies use social networks in general. The inclusion of profilicity theory, proposed by the present research, in the proposed article allows for a refinement of these dimensions, by introducing a new perspective that considers how companies not only use social networks, but also curate and project their digital identities to obtain social validation and SMMS efficiency.

Li et al. (2021) proposes a comprehensive analysis model for social media marketing strategies (SMMS). The model conceptualizes the development of a SMMS into four main components: drivers, inputs, throughputs and outputs, offering a clear view on how companies can integrate their social media activities with their marketing objectives.

Through a taxonomy of SMMS, the article categorizes strategies into four types based on the degree of strategic maturity: social commerce strategy, social content strategy, social monitoring strategy and social CRM strategy.

According to the authors, drivers refer to companies' marketing objectives and consumers' motivations when using social media. Objectives can be proactive or reactive, while consumer motivations range from entertainment to relational engagement. Inputs include companies' initiatives to engage consumers, such as financial rewards and sensory experiences, as well as consumers' behaviors on social media, which can range from passive to active.

Throughputs refers to the interaction between companies and consumers, anchored in social exchange theory (Cook & Emerson, 1987), which proposes that social interactions are exchanges of benefits, generating stronger bonds and reciprocity between the parties. Finally, the outputs are the main result is customer engagement, which is a measure of the degree of participation and connection of consumers with the company's activities on social media.

Li et al. (2021) highlight that the level of engagement is directly related to the success of SMMS initiatives and the benefits for the company, such as greater loyalty and contribution to innovation. In summary, the authors proposed a model that aims to identify customers' engagement levels based on both firms and customers actions in social media.

One potential criticism of the model proposed by Li et al. (2021) is that it does not fully explore the role of dynamic corporate identities on social media. The model focuses primarily on consumer interactions and engagement but could benefit from incorporating how the construction and maintenance of curated profiles impacts the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Furthermore, the emphasis on engagement as a measurable outcome leaves out how identity curation can influence intangible outcomes, such as perceived authenticity and social validation, which are crucial in the modern digital environment (Martin-Rojas et al., 2020). Incorporating profilicity into the SMMS model can fill this gap by highlighting the importance of how brands are observed and validated, adding new metrics to assess the success of social media marketing strategies.

Finally, Ananda et al.'s (2016) N-REL model aims to identify and classify strategic SMM actions within organizations. The central proposal of the article addresses how companies can develop and implement their SMMS, both for transactional and relational marketing. The authors state that the adoption of social media marketing strategies (SMMS)

allows companies to better position themselves in relation to their marketing goals, facilitating the creation of customer relationships and the expansion of their brand presence.

The N-REL (Networking, Representation, Engagement, Listening-in) model structures SMMS into four main types of strategic actions (Ananda et al., 2016). Networking, which involves the focus on connecting the company with consumers, suppliers and business partners. This includes the development of relationship and cooperation networks in both B2B and B2C context.

Representation focuses on actions related to promoting the company's brand and products, often through advertising content and public relations campaigns, reinforcing the brand's identity and presence on social media. Engagement involves actions that promote direct interaction with consumers, such as product customization, customer participation in the development of new products and encouraging co-creation. Finally, listening-in is the passive actions that allow companies to monitor conversations, trends and feedback from consumers, using this information to adjust their strategies and improve decision-making based on market knowledge.

Profilicity theory (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021) can make the N-REL model more robust by adding a theoretical layer that explores how companies construct and manage their digital identities on social media with a focus on social validation and profile curation. In the context of the N-REL model, profilicity can enrich each of the framework's pillars by providing insights into how companies can not only engage but also curate their online presence for ongoing validation and social relevance.

The three presented models, as stated along the present research, might be enriched by the Profilicity theory developed by H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio (2021). The theory of profilicity offers a new way of understanding how identity is constructed and validated in the digital age and on digital channels. The central proposition of the concept is that, instead of seeking an internal and individual authenticity, people create and maintain in those environments public profiles designed to be observed and validated by others. This process of ongoing curation and validation, central to the construction of digital profiles, replaces the idea of authenticity as the primary means of identity formation.

This concept, initially developed to describe how individuals operate in a digital world, can also be applied to the way companies construct their corporate identities on social media and in the digital environment, as will be discussed in the context of marketing

strategies. H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio (2021) themselves, in the same work, analyze the idea of personal branding or self-branding, arguing that the idea of branding itself has changed over time, as today people and companies are focused on their identity itself more than products or services. As stated by the authors, "companies today need to manage the production of their corporate identity almost more urgently than the production of their goods or services" (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021, p. 30).

As the main objective of the present research is to develop a profilicity-based framework to explain and define SMMS, the focus is the action of firms in terms of marketing. By introducing the concept of identity curation, this theory offers a new lens for understanding digital interactions, whether from individuals or brands, and how these interactions are designed to maximize social validation. To understand the dynamics of profilicity theory, the concepts of sincerity, authenticity, curation and profilicity, as well as their links, must be analyzed (H. G. Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019).

The authors' theory revolves around the concept of identity. According to H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio (2021), identity is a fluid and dynamic concept, shaped by the interaction between any individual and the public. Identity ceases to be a fixed essence and becomes a public project, where each element of a self-presentation is carefully selected to gain social approval.

H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio (2021) state that, in traditional and premodern societies, the concept of sincerity was the status quo in a identify formation perspective. In societies where social roles were clearly defined and stable, an individual's identity was constructed based on conformity to these roles. Being sincere meant complying with the expectations imposed by society, without questioning or deviating from established norms. This sincerity did not imply a search for an inner "self," but rather acting in accordance with the responsibilities and expectations imposed by social structures (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021). In other words, the sincerity consists of individuals seeking to fit into a complex environment that gives great importance to social rules, in order to functional in an efficient way.

Modernity and the idea of individual standing off has brought to the fore the concept of authenticity, which replaces the social conformity of sincerity with the search for a "true" and unique identity (H. G. Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019). Authenticity refers to the idea that identity should be a genuine expression of a person's "inner self" rather than being defined

by pre-established social roles. This concept emerged as a response to the constraints of traditional societies, where conformity was imposed.

As modernity gave room to digital transformation and the digital era, profilicity emerges as the dominant identity technology, overtaking both sincerity and authenticity (H. G. Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019). The concept of profilicity, according to Moeller and D'Ambrosio, describes the way in which identity is constructed to be observed and validated by others on public platforms such as social media. Identity is no longer an internal pursuit, but an external project, carefully curated and maintained to maximize its social acceptance.

Profilicity suggests that individuals create profiles, both on social media and in other public spaces, that are designed to attract attention and generate engagement. These profiles are continually shaped based on audience feedback and social expectations, creating an identity that is not static, but dynamic and adaptable. This concept might encompass personal branding, where individuals might see their online image as a way of pursuing social approvement.

Another concept related to profilicity is the curation. Curation, in the sense proposed by the authors, involves the act of carefully selecting and organizing aspects of one's own identity or that of a brand, in order to make it attractive and validated by others (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021). In the digital world, this occurs through social media profiles, where individuals and companies build their public image through carefully planned interactions, posts, and communications. The goal of curation is to keep the identity relevant and congruent with social expectations, continually adjusting the profile so that it resonates with the public (H. G. Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019). Unlike authenticity, which seeks to express a true "inner self", curation is a strategic activity, aimed at maximizing acceptance and engagement from others. This profile curation is not a static process, but rather a dynamic one, in which each new piece of feedback or change in social trends can lead to adjustments to the profile.

In short, the process of curation aims to create and manage a profile in social media based on the idea of profilicity, based on selecting content based on the attractiveness and validation of others. Profilicity theory, therefore, tries to address the shift in individuals' behavior online, based on the idea of giving more and more importance to others' preferences and perceptions. Rather than sincerity or authenticity, profilicity tries to explain digital behavior based on the idea of social approval on social media channels.

Giving the presented context, the main objective of the present research is to expand H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio (2021) work, proposing a profilicity-based framework to firms' social media behavior. Social media marketing strategies, as discussed before, have no uniform or unified way to be classified or typified (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024). Therefore, the profilicity theory is used here to fulfill this gap. Next section addresses the proposed framework itself.

A PROFICILITY-BASED FRAMEWORK

As stated by H. G. Moeller & D'Ambrosio, p. (2019, p. 19), "identity formation, as a necessary response to the mind–society problem, is therefore unstable and provisional, and a continuous 'work in progress'". This identify refers to how individuals present themselves to the exterior in social media channels, and how they want to be recognized or positioned. In addition, the dynamism of social media makes it practically impossible for people and companies to connect with only one coherent identity in order to address their audience (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021).

For companies, this means that building a brand identity should be seen as an ongoing process of observation and adaptation, where each marketing action or interaction with the public can alter external perception. Curation allows companies to flexibly manage their identities, adjusting their messages and practices to maximize social acceptance. In short, profilicity theory proposes that curation is the process by which identities are kept relevant and validated in the public space and is an essential practice for both individuals and companies in the contemporary digital environment.

In other words, regarding corporate context, profilicity highlights how companies construct their online brand identities, adjusting their marketing strategies to maximize engagement and social validation. Corporate identity is not a reflection of a fixed essence, but an ongoing performance that must be adjusted based on audience reactions. Companies, like individuals, need to adjust their identities according to the feedback they receive, maintaining their relevance and legitimacy in the public space.

Profilicity theory offers a novel approach to understanding identity strategies and social validation in the digital environment (H. G. Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019). Originally applied to the study of the construction of personal identities, the theory can be broadly applied to analyze how companies develop their SMMS. The concept of profile curation, central to profilicity, offers a solid framework for exploring how companies manage their

identities and seek public validation on digital platforms, allowing for a deeper analysis of their interactions with consumers. Given the growing importance of social media for brand success, profilicity theory provides a theoretical lens that can transform our understanding of digital marketing and online branding practices.

Companies operate in an environment where building digital identities is a strategic necessity (Lacarcel & Huete, 2023). On social media, brands need to maintain a consistent and consistent presence, while adapting their messages to attract and engage different audiences. The concept of curation is fundamental to understanding how these identities are formed and maintained (H. G. Moeller & D'Ambrosio, 2019). Just as individuals curate their social media profiles to present themselves in an attractive way and be socially accepted, companies also build their brand identities with the aim of generating social validation, measured by metrics related to performance, such as engagement, followers, and interactions (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024).

The profilicity theory goes beyond authenticity and sincerity, since it does not necessarily require companies to be "true" in their essence, but rather coherent and validated. This is especially relevant in digital marketing, where the success of a campaign is often measured by the ability to resonate with the target audience and generate engagement. By focusing on building and maintaining digital profiles, profilicity theory might help to understand how brands need to continually adjust their strategies to meet audience expectations and remain relevant.

Based on the definitions presented in the previous section, three major types of strategies emerge based on profilicity theory. Firstly, sincerity is traditionally associated with conformity to well-established social roles and a predictable and trustworthy approach to interactions (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021). In business, sincerity can be seen in brands that strictly follow conventional patterns of communication and behavior, respecting norms and expectations without trying to innovate or deviate from industry standards.

Companies that exhibit sincerity-based behaviors in digital marketing generally focus on clear, formal, and confident messages, where the focus is transparency and keeping established promises. In the digital environment, this can be seen in companies that avoid controversy or bold messages. They maintain an institutional tone, focus on campaigns that emphasize their products and services directly, and use conservative strategies. These companies generally stay away from more informal interactions with consumers on social media, preferring one-sided messages, where the brand controls the flow of

communication. In the context of digital marketing, sincerity behavior can be effective in segments where trust, tradition and status quo are paramount.

On the other hand, authenticity represents a step up from sincerity regarding attendance, especially in the modern marketing context. Authenticity involves a search for a genuine identity (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021), and, in corporate and SMMS reality, that is perceived by consumers as true to the brand's core values. Companies that embrace authenticity as a behavior in their digital strategies seek to differentiate themselves from the competition through narratives that reflect the brand's history, values, and mission in a transparent and often emotional way.

In digital marketing, authentic behavior is seen in brands that adopt a personal and emotional tone, establishing a direct and affective connection with their consumers. They invest in meaningful content, such as campaigns that highlight social, environmental, or community issues that are directly linked to their values. Companies that prioritize authenticity often position themselves as advocates for causes greater than their products, promoting transparency about their internal practices, such as sustainable production, diversity, or social responsibility.

Authentic behavior has become a fundamental part of modern digital marketing, especially given consumer demand for brands that are transparent and accountable but must be done with caution and truth (Andonopoulos et al., 2023). Companies that adopt this approach often build deeper relationships with their customers, fostering brand loyalty and emotional engagement through a content that reflects the firm's values and reason of existence.

Finally, in digital marketing profilicity behavior involves building identities to maximize social validation (H.-G. Moeller & D'ambrosio, 2021). Brands that adopt this approach are constantly adjusting their communications, social media posts, and interactions with consumers to ensure that their curated identities are accepted and reinforced by their audience. The success of these companies is not necessarily measured by the internal coherence of their values, but by their ability to adapt to audience demands and trends.

Companies that follow profilicity behavior in digital marketing are highly responsive to social media trends, adjusting their messages and profiles according to audience reception. This behavior can be seen in brands that constantly reinvent themselves to stay relevant, exploring new niches and adjusting their communication tone to appeal to different audiences. Examples of this are companies that quickly engage with emerging social

movements or use real-time data to modify their campaigns based on immediate consumer feedback.

Profilicity suggests that brands are always in a process of second-order observation, adjusting their public identities as they are observed and commented on by others. This results in a fluid and flexible approach, where brand identity can change dramatically to adapt to new expectations or opportunities.

The curation process, defined before in the present research, is essential for companies that want to adopt profilicity-based SMMS, with the goal of gaining and maintaining social validation. This means that the company needs to be constantly adjusting its messages, campaigns and interactions based on audience feedback, closely monitoring social media trends and expectations. Flexibility and adaptability are key, as success in profilicity depends on the ability to shape and reshape the corporate identity according to the perception of the target audience. In addition, the company must invest in actively monitoring consumer reactions and interactions to ensure that its digital profile remains relevant, attractive and socially validated, quickly adapting its strategies whenever necessary to meet the new demands of the digital environment.

It is important to notice that the profilicity-based typification proposed is not exclusionary in its classification. As it is shaped to classify social media marketing strategies and not companies themselves, firms might use any of the three types of strategies, accordingly to the identified necessities across time. The main objective is not to framework a way to classify companies, but to classify strategies instead. Table 1 brings a summary of the proposed classification.

Table 1. Summary of proposed classification of SMMS

Type of SMMS	Main Characteristics	Companies' focus
Sincerity	Focus on compliance with traditional norms and clear, formal messages. Transparency and predictability in interactions. Avoids innovations or bold approaches.	Maintain a conservative and reliable stance, meeting traditional market expectations. Focus on reputation and credibility.
Authenticity	Search for a genuine identity, faithful to the brand's core values. Emotional and personal connection with consumers through authentic narratives and values. Transparency and accountability are central.	Establish a deep, emotional connection with the audience. True or performative authenticity generates loyalty and engagement.

Profilicity	Continuously curate digital identity to maximize social validation. Quickly adapt to trends and audience feedback. Focus on flexibility and dynamically adjust messaging and profiles to stay relevant.	Constantly adjust identity to reflect social expectations and emerging trends. Actively monitor and respond to audience feedback and demands.

Font: elaborated by the authors

The typologies of sincerity, authenticity, and profilicity provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for categorizing the different behaviors regarding SMMS. By categorizing strategies according to these approaches, it is possible to analyze how their interactions and the construction of their online identities vary according to their goals and target audience. More conservative and traditional brands may opt for strategies based on sincerity, while more innovative and progressive brands may adopt authentic or curated behaviors to ensure relevance and social engagement.

By studying digital marketing strategies through these three lenses, it becomes possible to understand how brands construct their identities in the digital space, how they manage public perception, and ultimately, how they maximize their impact and engagement on social platforms. This theoretical approach also opens up space for empirical analyses that explore which of these strategies are most effective in certain sectors or with specific audiences. Next section aims to analyze companies' behaviors through the proposed profilicity lens.

SMMS ANALYSIS THROUGH PROFILICITY THEORY

The present section aims to analyze companies' social media content in order to test the profilicity theory-based framework proposed in this research. To achieve the proposed objective, three papers where digital marketing content was analyzed or classified according to the proposed framework.

The first one was Murukutla et al. (2022) content analysis of e-cigarette marketing on social media. The paper aimed to analyze the differences and similarities between social media content of e-cigarette companies in three countries (Mexico, Indonesia and India). For the purpose of the present objective, the authors classified marketing tactic and message framing in several types, which are presented in table 2, together with the proposed profilicity-based framework analysis.

Table 2. Analysis of social media content on Murukutla et al. (2022) based on profilicity theory

Marketing Strategy	Description	Profilicity framework classification
Direct advertising	Sale or use of tobacco and new nicotine and tobacco products.	Sincerity
Price promotion	Promotes the sale or use of tobacco products through price discounting.	Sincerity
Events, occasions, sponsorships	Pairs the tobacco product brand with events, occasions, sponsorships and contests.	Authenticity
Corporate social responsibility	Pairs the company/brand or product with socially responsible activities.	Authenticity / Profilicity
General profile raising	Intended to raise the profile of the brand/company.	Profilicity
Community celebrations and festivals	Posts commemorating a specific event or community celebration.	Authenticity
Entertainment	Posts that promote the product as being entertaining and fun.	Authenticity
Environment eco-awareness	Any post that addresses climate change, conservation, sustainable development goals, or support for environment.	Authenticity / Profilicity
Glamorization	Posts that associate use of products as aspirational, luxurious or part of an ideal, fashionable lifestyle.	Profilicity
Health Claims	Posts that present the product as healthier than other products or as less harmful than conventional tobacco products.	Sincerity
Informational	Posts that instruct viewers how to use a product.	Sincerity
Personal care and wellness	Posts that associate products with relaxation or stress management.	Authenticity
Product features	Posts that primarily emphasize the available choices of product flavors and design.	Sincerity
Social welfare	Posts that showcase activities sponsored or supported by the company/brand that are meant to improve their public image.	Authenticity / Profilicity

Font: based on Murukutla et al. (2022).

Firstly, it is important to notice that Murukutla et al. (2022) typification was not based on a theory itself, but rather constructed as a one-time usage tool, highlighting the importance of a theoretical proposal of social media content classification. As stated before, the profilicity-based framework aims to fill that literature gap.

Sincerity-based content aims to maintain a conservative and reliable stance, meeting traditional market expectations. By those means, content that aims to show product features, advertising and promotion, product prices and even health claims are related to this type. Authenticity-based content, on the other hand, aims to align the product with certain lifestyles and personalities, such as events, festivals and wellness, establishing an emotional connection with the audience and stablish and affective connection.

Unlike sincerity and authenticity, profilicity does not necessarily seek to reflect a true "inner self" or conform to social roles, but rather to dynamically adjust the brand image based on social media feedback, seeking to maximize engagement and relevance. In this sense, strategies such as product glamorization, entertainment, raising the general profile, and community celebrations are clear examples of profilicity behaviors.

The distinction between these three SMMS is essentially a question of how brand identity is constructed and validated in the digital environment. Sincerity strategies focus on maintaining a stable and predictable posture, where the focus is on providing straightforward information and building a reputation for trustworthiness. On the other hand, authenticity strategies go beyond conformity and seek to express a genuine and emotionally engaging identity, creating a deeper connection with the audience by emphasizing the brand's values and principles. Finally, Proficiency strategies are the most dynamic and flexible, where the brand identity is constantly curated to reflect audience expectations and maintain social relevance.

In this approach, the company is less concerned with being faithful to an "essence" and more focused on adjusting its image according to what is valued by consumers at a given time. This classification helps to understand how companies might adopt different behaviors to manage their digital marketing strategies, depending on their objectives, the nature of their products and how they want to be perceived by their consumers. It also reveals how companies can use these three approaches strategically to build and maintain their identities in the competitive and ever-evolving social media environment.

The second analysis was extracted from Coelho et al. (2016) work, where the authors aimed to measure the impact of post type on two interaction metrics, namely likes and comments. This paper shows the importance of both classification of SMMS and performance metrics. Table 3 shows de classification used in the paper, and also the profilicity-based typification.

Table 3. Analysis of social media content on Coelho et al. (2016) based on profilicity theory

Marketing Strategy	Description	Profilicity framework classification
Advertising	Posts to promote brands in social media present publicity items which cross the digital sphere and posts with entertaining content.	Profilicity
Fan	A fan is responsible for the main idea of post, or for sending the photo. Their participation is always mentioned in the	Authenticity

		post.	
Events	Posts, with photo and video media, directly connected to brands or otherwise.		Authenticity
Information	Content with data about events, places, opportunities, people, or celebrities, directly connected to a brand or otherwise.		Sincerity
Service	Links and publicity items with a direct link (virtual shop) or information about how to acquire a specific product.		Sincerity
Promotion	Posts with quizzes, which promote participation of followers through rewards.		Profilicity

Font: based on Coelho et al. (2016).

As described by the authors, advertising and promotion posts, by their definitions, includes posts with entertainment elements that aim to attract the public's attention and increase the number of likes and comments. This demonstrates an active curation of the brand's profile, with a focus on maximizing social validation through engagement. Fan and events posts align with authenticity's behavior, as the brand is trying to build an emotional connection with its consumers. This type of content demonstrates a concern for the community, where genuine fan participation is valued and recognized, creating a feeling of authenticity and belonging around the brand.

Finally, information and service posts are linked with sincerity-oriented strategies, as the main goal is to provide clear and direct information. There is not necessarily emotional curation or active search for public validation, but rather the delivery of data or facts that are relevant to the audience. The focus is on facilitating the process of purchasing or using the product, without actively seeking to build an emotional narrative or sophisticated curation of the brand profile.

The third and final analysis was extracted from Nieves-Casasnovas & Lozada-Contreras (2020). The main objective of the paper was to determine what type of marketing communication objectives were present in the digital content marketing developed by luxury brands. In other words, the authors analyzed the SMMS of luxury brands, using an only-context classification, a method used by the majority of state-of-the-art literature, as stated before (Bartoloni & Ancillai, 2024). Table 4 highlights the classification developed by the authors and the proposed classification based on profilicity theory.

Table 4. Analysis of social media content on Nieves-Casasnovas & Lozada-Contreras (2020) based on profilicity theory

Marketing Strategy	Description	Profilicity framework classification
Brand awareness and salience	Reflect the image of the brand or showcase the brand attributes, offerings, slogans, and uniqueness.	Sincerity
Convey detailed information	Contain elements that support product attributes.	Sincerity
Create imagery and personality	Contain four personality traits a brand can display (excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness)	Authenticity
Build trust	Contain elements that build trust by asking customers to share information, tag a friend, comment on posts.	Authenticity
Elicit emotion	Evoke intangible emotions about the product or brand.	Profilicity
Inspire action	Evoke an action from their followers or stimulate immediate or near future purchases through monetary or promotional incentives.	Profilicity
Instill loyalty	Contain elements of appreciation towards the customer or employees or that emphasize loyal customers or customer loyalty.	Authenticity
Connect people	Types of brand messages that would motivate them to pass these messages along to others.	Profilicity

Font: based on Nieves-Casasnovas & Lozada-Contreras (2020).

The analysis on the work by Nieves-Casasnovas & Lozada-Contreras (2020) had similar results to the previous two, showing consistency to the proposed framework. Brand awareness and detailed information showed themselves as sincerity posts, as they try to inform about the product itself or its attributes, maintaining a conservative and reliable stance.

Personality, trust and loyalty involve a genuine demonstration that the brand is trustworthy and authentic, bringing its values and image to its social media through its posts. These objectives reflect an attempt to connect emotionally with the public, showing that the company is true to its values and that it deserves the trust and loyalty of its consumers. Elicit emotion, inspire action and connect people, on the other hand, are related to the profilicity type of SMMS, as they pursue engagement and response through curation. By inspiring a response or action, the brand is curating its identity to generate a specific reaction and thus validate its relevance in the digital environment.

The three analyses highlight the capability of profilicity theory to classify SMM strategies, and therefore its power to serve as a tool to coordinate those strategies in a corporate perspective. As stated before, social media must work as a way for firms to communicate with other stakeholders and must be done with method and in an efficient

manner (Ananda et al., 2016; Li et al., 2021). The next section brings the conclusions to the present research.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The research aimed to propose a framework to classify social media marketing strategies based on profilicity theory. The discussion and posterior analysis indicated the importance of using profilicity theory to study digital marketing strategies on social media (SMMS). The classification of corporate behaviors, based on sincerity, authenticity and profilicity, has proven to be an effective theoretical framework for analyzing how companies build and manage their digital identities in the social media environment. Each of these strategies offers a distinct way for brands to position themselves in the digital environment: while sincerity seeks to conform to traditional norms and communicate more objectively, authenticity focuses on genuine values and emotional connection with the audience, and profilicity explores the creation of a curated and socially validated identity.

The use of these three approaches provides clear insight into contemporary digital branding practices and how brands adjust their identities and interactions to maximize their engagement and relevance in the market. Sincerity has proven to be a useful strategy for brands that want to maintain a trustworthy and informative stance, ensuring that consumers receive clear and objective information. Authenticity has been adopted by companies seeking to establish a deeper, more emotional connection with their consumers, promoting transparency and ethical values. Finally, profilicity reflects brands that actively curate their online presences, adapting to audience expectations and social trends to ensure ongoing validation.

As research agenda, future works might explore several areas of investigation. First, a broader empirical validation of the typology of sincerity, authenticity, and profilicity would be valuable, using other detailed case studies and quantitative data that can objectively measure the impact of these strategies, especially for firm performance and content analysis. It would be of high interest to investigate how the adoption of these strategies directly influences companies' performance and customer loyalty, especially in specific sectors such as technology, fashion, and financial services.

Furthermore, future research could explore how profilicity theory can be extended to other contexts beyond social media, such as e-commerce platforms, marketplaces, and even emerging environments such as the metaverse. The fluid and adaptive nature of

profilicity can offer new insights into how companies curate their identities in innovative digital environments, where social validation becomes increasingly important. Finally, it would be relevant to examine how cultural and regional factors influence the adoption of each of these strategies. Global brands may adopt different approaches depending on where they are located, and understanding these variations could offer valuable insights for applying the theory in a global context.

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