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# Humanistic Marketing and Digitalization for Quality of Life and Sustainability: a Theoretical Approach

## *Marketing humanista y digitalización para la calidad de vida y la sustentabilidad: una aproximación teórica*

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**Abstract:** Marketing plays a key role in the configuration of human and organizational actions through the design, digitalization and communication of social and economic values.

In a digital age, Marketing strategies are at the center of several controversies like the growth of consumeristic practices, environmental damage and public opinion manipulation among others. However, Marketing is a scientific discipline and practice that demonstrated its capacity to increase people's quality of life.

The objective of this paper is to present a theoretical framework of Humanistic Marketing for the promotion of quality of life based on Human-to-Human Marketing, Strategic Orchestration and Social Marketing models.

**Keywords:** Human-to-human Marketing, Quality of Life, Digital Transformation, Strategic Orchestration.

**Resumen:** El marketing desempeña un papel clave en la configuración de las acciones humanas y organizativas a través del diseño, la digitalización y la comunicación de los valores sociales y económicos.

En la era digital, las estrategias de Marketing están en el centro de varias controversias como el crecimiento de las prácticas consumistas, el daño al medio ambiente y la manipulación de la opinión pública entre otros. Sin embargo, el Marketing es una disciplina y una práctica científica que ha demostrado su capacidad para aumentar la calidad de vida de las personas.

El objetivo de este trabajo es presentar un marco teórico del Marketing Humanista para la promoción de la calidad de vida basado en los modelos de Marketing Humano a Humano, Orquestación Estratégica y Marketing Social.

**Palabras clave:** Marketing Humanista, Calidad de Vida, Transformación Digital, Orquestación Estratégica.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In an age of globalized, networked and increasingly digitalized society, whether Internet, blockchain and other technologies collapse time and spaces generating tectonic social and cultural transformations, marketing strategies are at the center of several controversies like the growth of consumeristic practices, environmental damage and public opinion manipulation among others. Netflix' docudrama "The Social Dilemma" (Orlowski, 2020) is a clear example of that: it states that Facebook and Twitter manipulate people's attitudes and behaviors, spreading fake news and disinformation as well as provoking addictions and mental health problems.

Some studies (Abela, 2006) report a detrimental impact of Marketing on people's quality of life. The growth of sophistication, message frequency and persuasiveness of marketing tactics may be related to the diffusion of consumer culture. "The claim that marketing does not cause consumerism because consumerism antedates marketing is thus inadequate. While it is quite possible that a tendency towards materialistic behaviour exists within human beings – because whenever we are given the opportunity we tend to exhibit this behaviour – we cannot ignore the extensive and striking parallels between the growth of consumerism and the growth of modern marketing" (Abela, 2006: 9):

In 2022, digital advertising market is projected to reach USD 616bn, representing 67% of global ad spend, with an annual growth of 14.7% (Statista, 2021). Simultaneously, 69% of firms have placed strategies to digitalize different type of processes, particularly in marketing and communications Kotler et al. (2020), p. 74.. Recent studies consider digitalization of commerce (named as e-commerce and promoted through different digital advertising strategies and techniques) as a social negative issue that facilitate firms the ability to manipulate consumers' cognitive and behavioral weaknesses influencing negatively their decision-making processes and wellbeing Manwaring (2018). In fact, exposure to digital marketing of unhealthy products through social networks and Internet, as well as perceived peers opinion regarding them, increase negative consumption behaviors among young people (Buchanan et al., 2018)).

However, the role of marketing in society, organizations and management is far to be intrinsically negative. Historically, advertising was considered as a positive way of educating consumers to take right decisions (Fogg-Meade, 1901). Digital transformation of commerce and advertising during

COVID-19 pandemics played a key role in economic recovery (Cavallo et al., 2022). Furthermore, it would facilitate positive relationships, global collaborations, intercultural understanding and dialogue, transparency, freedom and knowledge accessibility among other opportunities.

Based on the impact of social marketing strategies on people quality of life, the objective of this article is to introduce a humanistic framework based on the Human-to-Human (Kotler et al. (2020). and Strategic Orchestration models (Sull & Ruelas Gossi, 2010). The new framework would be useful for designing a relational and person-centered digital transformation. This theoretical paper will present some definitions and core concepts about innovative and sustainable marketing approaches and strategies from a quality of life perspective, as well as provide some insights that would facilitate the development of a new definition of marketing based on a humanistic framework, focused on collaboration, service and stakeholders value creation.

## II. A HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO MARKETING

Markets are socio-economic mechanisms of interactions (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2009: 28) in relational physical or digital spaces where people and organizations (producers, sellers, consumers, etc.) communicate and collaborate each other to create value and achieve goals, usually through the exchange of services, objects, ideas, meanings and financial resources. Those exchanges are service oriented relationships towards the solution of a problem or need (Godin, 2018) through a praxis that guide and assist a person<sup>1</sup> to make a progress that is trying to achieve in a particular circumstance (Christensen et al., 2016: 47). That progress is a process or job towards a goal or motivation that has a meaning for the agents involved in the relationship.

Although some refer to marketing as a science, strategy or practice that search to control the producer-consumer relationship to obtain a result (con-

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1 The article's author intentionally uses the word "person" instead of "individual" or "self" to highlight a reality that transcends the exclusively physical, psychological or consumeristic dimensions. The conceptualization of "person" exceeds the study's objective, but to clarify the sense of the following paragraphs it may help to consider that: "The human person is that someone with a brain, mind, body, sensations, emotions, ideas, etc. Personal existence is confirmed when we consider the human being's human being's capacity for self-awareness, self-reflection and self-organization of his life in an individual biography." (Laborda et al., 2018: 13) We could add that body, mind, agency and transcendence cannot be separated: the acting personal is not an isolated individual but a relational being. For more insights see Al-Amoudi & Morgan (2019).

sumption), its ultimate purpose is to facilitate a dialogue and collaborative relationship between two agents around a job or solution. From this perspective, marketing is a communicative process that seeks to promote a relationship in which the user's identity and needs are identified and known, and can be adequately satisfied. Only in this way, marketing would facilitate positive decision-making and development. Indeed, marketing is more than an organizational function managed with an instrumental logic: its strategies facilitate social interactions of tangible and contingent goods, services, prescriptive social norms, persuasive ideas to act in certain ways and reasons for activating social commitments (Bagozzi, 1975).

Considering the socio-cultural and ecological impact of organizations and business, some authors are proposing non-utilitarian and human-centered perspectives of value creation processes, which are not focused on resources or shareholders' interests, but also stakeholders' and environmental goals and needs.

In that context, humanistic philosophy proposes the human individual, its rational and learning capabilities as the starting point for strategies focused on human development (flourishing) and not exclusively on wealth or financial results generation. Those are the main principles that should orient a humanistic marketing "... focus not on the short-term gratification of wants but truly on the wellbeing derived from the satisfaction of needs/interests; in business reward effective and efficient provisioning for healthy prosperity rather than limited and limiting competitive growth-derived profit maximizing" (Varey & Pirson, 2014: 6).

A humanistic approach to marketing is not egocentric and does not emphasize rivalry, advantage, differentiation and superiority. It proposes an allocentric orientation that "... takes a broader perspective and incorporates the various partners in the network as the unit of analysis. An allocentric view allows executives to recognise and, more importantly, seize a whole range of opportunities that could only be pursued by a network rather than an individual firm, no matter how powerful. An allocentric orientation does not imply that managers ignore the interests of their own company. Rather, they recognize that the value lies in the network, which they cannot own" (Sull & Ruelas Gossi, 2010: 60). Promoting not only economic but human values (like dignity, solidarity, friendship, beauty, justice, etc.), an allocentric perspective searches to understand the customer as a person to help, with emotional and not only functional needs, who have ultimate concerns and goals in life. The-

refores, a humanistic marketing could facilitate empathy and long-term relationships.

Humanistic approach requires balancing quality and profit, financial and ecological sustainability, freedom and reasonable regulation for securing the promotion of common good, growth and sustainability. Although that balance would imply serious challenges, they may catalyze innovation and higher brand reputation, especially in a context of empowered users and customers. The agents involved in marketing relationships look for and share within their social networks the emotions experienced in the exchange process that is not finalized solely to a consumption act, but to manage their identity and make meaning in life. “The meaning making perspective on consumption calls on managers to satisfy consumers’ self-actualization needs for awareness, comprehension, dreams, growth, purpose, and shared understandings” (Varey & Pirson, 2014: 152). Objects, symbols and ideas exchanged in marketing relationships are parts of the social and personal identity of those who used them. Marketing strategies applying a humanistic perspective recognize the key role of subcultures and communities’ well-being in the decision-making process of choosing a value (product, service, idea, etc.) delivered in a market.

Well-being, defined as personal satisfaction in a life domain, is a central concept in humanistic marketing (Varey & Pirson, 2014). Integrating business financial sustainability and objectives with society’s common good and positive relationships lead to customer satisfaction, brand positioning, trust and long-term commitment. Among other conditions, researchers highlight the importance of virtues development in marketers in order to be able to design and implement successful strategies that increase their targets’ quality of life.

Quality of life is a concept broader than well-being and happiness. It is “... the perception each individual has of his/her position in life, within the cultural context and system of values in which he/she lives, in relation to his/her expectations, interests and achievements” (Tonon (2020: 2). Marketing would improve people’s quality of life (Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021) if:

- increase positive consumption effects on the person and its environment,
- reduce negative side effects towards stakeholders,
- generate long-term economic, social and environmental positive results,
- understand and dialogues with users’ social structure (socio-demographic features), cultural traits, psycho-social characteristics of its community.

“The QOL movement is an attack against what was seen as an economic society. It involves an attack on conventional economics as a body of normative theory and analytic methods - in particular, against misplaced confidence in the market as a measure of the value of things” (Sirgy 2001: 4).

Quality of life paradigm provides marketing a useful path and purpose “... which is to be defined in terms of consumer needs, preferences, satisfactions, and well-being. The objective is then to maximize consumers’ well-being” (Sirgy et al., 1985: 221). Therefore, the quality of life approach would provide new insights to marketing strategies and better understanding of the audiences, as well as improving organizations’ strategies, programs’ effectiveness and results (financial, social and environmental).

Stakeholders’ value and environmental orientation, allocentric and co-creation network perspectives, the growth of digital interactions and purpose-driven economies, service-centeredness and quality of life paradigms are factors related to the development of an innovative model of humanistic marketing: the human-to-human marketing (H2H). H2H “... puts the human being and the solution of relevant human problems (H2H problems) at the center of its attention in order to tackle what is lacking presently: credibility, honesty, integrity, empathy for each other, vulnerability, and constructive dialogue as well as sustainability and other problems. [It] ... relies on Design Thinking as a means of participating in all (especially the early) stages of innovation, as well as the digitalization and S-DL [Service-Dominant Logic (Lusch & Vargo (2014))] that provide a fertile environment for both incremental (exploitation) and ground-breaking (exploration) innovations” (Kotler et al., 2020: 21 & 25)

H2H model represents a relevant step forward regarding previous literature on humanistic perspectives of marketing. Together with social marketing approach, it would guide organizational sustainable and ethical digitalization and marketing strategies with a positive impact on people’s quality of life and the common good.

### III. HUMANISTIC MARKETING: A PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

A preliminary literature review focused in the key terms (humanistic AND marketing) is a useful methodology to identify issues and concepts that were analyzed by previous studies.

After conducting a literature review in two scientific databases (Web of Science and Scopus), without any limitation on years of publication, and searching “humanistic AND marketing” within article title, abstract and authors’ keywords, we identified 348 articles with an H-Index between 3 (Web of Science) and 8 (Scopus). Duplicates and articles not related to marketing were deleted. The final dataset included 21 articles that are listed in Table 1 and ordered by number of citations.

Publication year	Citations	Author/s	Title
1986	440	Hirschman, Ec.	Humanistic Inquiry In Marketing-Research - Philosophy, Method, And Criteria
2013	37	Burroughs, J.E.; Chaplin, L.N.; Pandelaere, M.; Norton, M.I.; Ordabayeva, N.; Gunz, A.; Dinauer, L.	Using motivation theory to develop a transformative consumer research agenda for reducing materialism in society
2011	23	Tobacyk, J.J.; Babin, B.J.; Attaway, J.S.; Socha, S.; Shows, D.; James, K.	Materialism through the eyes of Polish and American consumers
2021	17	Camargo, B.A.; Vázquez-Maguirre, M.	Humanism, dignity and indigenous justice: the mayan train megaproject, Mexico
2018	17	Song, S.Y.; Kim, Y.K.	A human-centered approach to green apparel advertising: Decision tree predictive modeling of consumer choice
2018	17	Ahmad, N.	Toward advancing debates on Islamic marketing: a renewed perspective
1996	15	Hutton, J.G.	Integrated relationship-marketing communications: A key opportunity for IMC
2017	10	de Peyrelongue, B.; Masclef, O.; Guillard, V.	The Need to Give Gratuitously: A Relevant Concept Anchored in Catholic Social Teaching to Envision the Consumer Behavior

Publication year	Citations	Author/s	Title
2016	7	Tadajewski, M.; Jones, D.G.B.	Hyper-power, the marketing concept and consumer as 'boss'
2019	6	Oduro, S.; Haylemariam, L.G.	Market orientation, CSR and financial and marketing performance in manufacturing firms in Ghana and Ethiopia
2019	5	Werder, O.	Toward a humanistic model in health communication
2001	5	Walle, A.H.	Machiavelli, humanistic empiricism and marketing research
2021	3	Shamsudheen, S.; Valangattil, A.; Rosly, S.	Towards development and validation of scale for ethical decision-making model in marketing A religious-humanistic approach with special reference to ethical philosophy in Islam
2015	2	Rishi B.; Halder S.	Demystifying the Islamic consumer segments
2022	1	Wijaya, T.; Nasuka, M.; Hidayat, A.	Salesperson ethics behavior as antecedent of Islamic banking customer loyalty
2012	1	Vandermerwe, S.	The transformation of customer focus: Lessons from emerging markets
2015	0	Borgerson, J. L.	Humanistic marketing
2022		Yu, Y.; Gao, J.; Yukari, N.	Analysis on the Correspondence between Sustainable Social Service Design and Humanistic Aesthetic Design and Cognitive Psychological Utility
2021		Chan, C.S.	A humanistic turn of place branding in public relations: From marketing to a social science and sustainability perspective
2020		Ghafoury, M.; Roosta, A.; Hajjipour, B.	A phenomenological study of customer disvalue
2015		Hutton, J.G.	The Critical Link Between Corporate Culture and Marketing: a Humanistic Perspective

Table 1 - Humanistic Marketing Papers (Source: Authors based on Web of Science and Scopus)

In order to check the results, another search in Google Scholar using Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007) software was conducted. 976 potential papers were identified. After analyzing their abstract and deleting duplicates, only 18 were included in the dataset (see Table 2, the papers were ordered by number of citations).



HUMANISTIC MARKETING AND DIGITALIZATION FOR QUALITY OF LIFE AND SUSTAINABILITY: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

Publication year	Citations	Author/s	Title
2001	394	Sirgy, M.G.	Handbook of quality-of-life research: An ethical marketing perspective
2000	258	Smith, W.; Higgins, M.	Cause-related marketing: Ethics and the ecstatic
2010	239	Tadajewski, M.	Towards a history of critical marketing studies
2008	157	Sirgy, M.J.; Lee, D.J.	Well-being marketing: An ethical business philosophy for consumer goods firms
2012	151	Jafari, A.	Islamic marketing: insights from a critical perspective
2018	57	Song, S.Y.; Kim, Y.K.	Theory of virtue ethics: do consumers' good traits predict their socially responsible consumption?
1987	39	Kotler, P.	Humanistic marketing: Beyond the marketing concept
1988	31	Cato, B.; Kunstler, R.	Preferred leisure activities and reasons for participation: A comparison study with implications for marketing leisure services
2015	27	Markley Rountree, M.	Values-based education for sustainability marketers: Two approaches for enhancing student social consciousness
2016	7	Ghazali, E.; Mutum, D.S.	Islamic marketing: Compatibility with contemporary themes in marketing
2019	5	Arkipova, N.I.; Gurieva, M.T.	The preconditions for the development of humanistic marketing in the nowadays context
2017	3	Paramonova, T.N.; Ramazanov, I.A.	The concept of socio-humanistic marketing as a necessary condition for the functioning of companies in the era of global markets
2017	2	Paramonova, T.N.; Ramazanov, I.A.	Concept of Socio Humanistic Marketing as a Requirement for Companies in the Era of Global Markets
1987	2	Firat, F.	Humanistic marketing; beyond the marketing concept
1977	2	Kotler, P.	Considerations in a theory of humanistic marketing
1972	0	Mathews, D.H.	Humanistic marketing
2013	0	Dierksmeier, C.	Philosophical Bases of Humanistic Marketing
2021	0	Dierksmeier, C.; Laasch, O.	ALLSAFE: Responsible Freedom in Action

Table 2 - Humanistic Marketing Literature (Source: Authors based on PoP search)

Results show that humanistic marketing is a relatively new perspective in research. In fact, the first publication on humanistic marketing is thesis submitted in 1972 to the Faculty of the Union Graduate School (Tennessee, US). Mathews defines Humanistic Marketing as "... meaning that a firm considers its most important goal to be sensitivity to the needs of individuals — not profit, not expansion, not dividends for the stockholders, not the mere gaining of customers. Humanistic Marketing would insist on the responsibility of the firm to market its goods in accordance with the needs of man" (Mathews, 1972: 2).

Accordingly, to Mathews the core of humanistic marketing is the firm and the process includes eight stages:

- "Discovering man's needs
- Development of sound and safe products
- Testing
- Legal
- Service follow-through
- Pricing
- Revising and improving goods and services when necessary
- Information and relating services and products to the overall resources" (Mathews, 1972: 3).

The context of that process are both the person (Mathews refers to it as "man") and the environment. In fact, the author states: "I would advocate the need for a Humanistic Marketing Concept — one that would benefit man in the market place as well as in his environment" (Mathews, 1972: 19). The dissertation clearly represents a milestone, although its limited or null dissemination among scholars and practitioners.

The authors adopted a critical perspective to marketing effects and only Sirgy includes quality of life paradigm. It is important to highlight that Philip Kotler, the author that proposed the H2H model recently, published about the topic since 1977.

In order to explore and visualize connections and similarities between the core literature on humanistic marketing, the review results were normalized (since they were obtained from three different databases) and analyzed with VOS Viewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2007), a method and software for designing, mining and visualizing bibliometric networks. In this case, considering the objectives of the study, the focus of the analysis was the topic of the core literature (humanistic marketing). A text mining and cluster analysis of

the keywords were conducted. The results (see Figure 1) show three main research categories or clusters in core literature:

- one group (in red at the left) focused on management and culture (CSR, RBV theory, consumer culture, critical studies, Islamic marketing, etc.);
- a second group (in green at the center) that gathers topics of communication and sustainability (brand, perceptions, sustainability, segmentation, marketing education, etc.);
- a third cluster (in blue, at the bottom right), which includes topics related to ethics (trust, gratuitousness, quality, ethical decision-making, etc.).

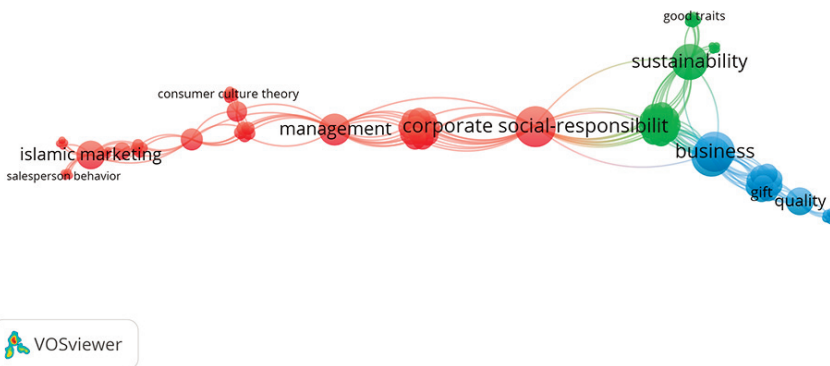


Figure 1 - A keywords map of humanistic marketing core literature

Incorporating the publication year in the analysis, the results show (see Figure 2) an evolution in the research towards ethical and cultural issues. While the starting point was the reflection about humanistic perspectives and their contribution to business, publications that are more recent are focused on sustainability, quality, ethical decisions and cultural dimensions (e.g. Islamic marketing).

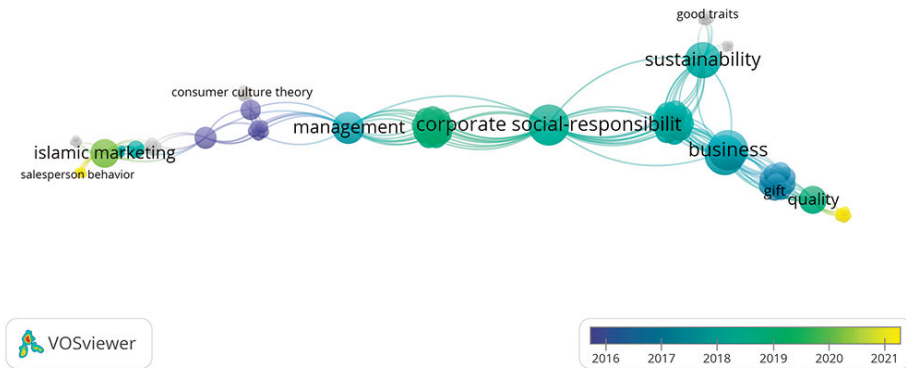


Figure 2 – The evolution of humanistic marketing core literature

The preliminary literature review confirms that humanistic marketing is an innovative research perspective offering specific paths and models for transforming the discipline and its practice in an ally for sustainable development and people’s quality of life. Social Marketing approach would contribute to achieve that goal.

#### IV. HUMAN-TO-HUMAN MARKETING AND THE SOCIAL MARKETING APPROACH

Social marketing is a key tool and practice that became relevant for all kind of organizations. Since its inception in 1971 (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971) it received different meanings and definitions (For a review see: Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021). Without trying to summarize the scientific literature on the topic we would highlight some key characteristics:

- It is applied using basic components or marketing mix.
- Social ideas, causes, healthy and pro-social behaviors, risky consumption prevention and positive policies are the main objects exchanges in social marketing relationships.
- Ethical principles, audience and partners insights and sustainability guide social marketing strategies.

Social marketing is not societal or socially responsible marketing(Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021: 7) and from a humanistic perspective, it would be de-

defined as a relational approach of marketing to solve human and ecological problems oriented by multiple disciplines (communication theory, sociology, anthropology, etc.), empirical evidence, and ethical principles.

Social Marketing is an approach for designing, implementing and evaluating communication and social action programs as well as processes promoting full personal development of its publics. It creates and guides "... exchange relationships, through a marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, public, policies, partnership - Weinreich, 2010) based on an analysis and segmentation of audiences and competition, to produce a voluntary change of behavior in the target audience and its social structures, to translate certain ideas and knowledge, positive for the common good, into attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles, in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner" (Rivera, 2016: 52-53)<sup>2</sup>.

In this context, the human is a person or "... dialogical subject who orients his or her existence on the basis of free rational actions. ... besides sustaining that the personal being is endowed with reason, will and affectivity; I assume Polo's transcendental anthropological approach according to which man is '... being that co-exists ... Man is not limited to being, but human being is coexistence (co-being or being-with).' (Polo, 2012: 150). That is the basis of its relational being" (Rivera, 2016: 53).

Social marketing is a framework for planning and implementing social change with a positive impact on quality of life and sustainability (Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021). Nowadays, it is a key tool for accepting, promoting, encouraging, changing, modifying, discouraging, rejecting, or abandoning ideas, values, attitudes, conducts, or behaviors. Since it can increase people's quality of life, it is applied in different areas, such as public health and welfare, education, governance, or environment issues. Although it was initially used by public and non-profit organizations, businesses are also implementing social marketing to tackle negative externalities and non-beneficent marketing effects.

A social marketing approach guided by a humanistic perspective and quality of life philosophy is the basis for a marketing characterized by:

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2 Although several authors use only four elements in the Marketing mix, recent publications highlight the theoretical evolution and flexibility of the concept. The seven elements model chose in this article facilitates the connection between Marketing and non-commercial strategies (e.g. social and cause-related marketing).

· Strategies focused in a **purpose**, which differs but complements organization's objectives. "The beneficiaries of social marketing strategies have superordinate goals or ultimate concerns that maximize long-term life satisfaction (psychical, spiritual, and physical). Incorporating "purpose" in the marketing mix implies recognizing that the product should be designed for helping people to solve a problem, becoming meaningful for the strategy's beneficiaries and stakeholders, as well as for the organization itself. Social marketers should identify, through scientific research and impact evaluation, the means-ends chain to attain those goals. From that perspective, a quality-of-life perspective helps to establish a clear connection between organizational mission and vision and its marketing strategy" (Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021: 19).

· Marketing value proposition co-created through **relationships oriented by empathy, dialogue and understanding**. People in all the sides of the marketing processes are the "heart" and ultimate goal of marketing. That aspect of the approach requires not only research (interdisciplinary, qualitative and quantitative), but a sound understanding of agents' culture, lifestyles and ultimate concerns through dialogical practices. Co-creation does not stand only for participation or practices like open innovation, but for experiences and meanings emerging from the relational and communicative actions between all the actors involved in the process, which occurs publicly in a market. From this perspective, humanistic marketing is the praxis that facilitates the emerging of relational goods<sup>3</sup>.

· **Relational goods** as the "product". Relational or social goods are "... those goods that emerge between people, insofar as they can be produced and enjoyed by them only together (through voluntary sharing)" (Donati, 2010: 118). From this relational perspective, the interactions between the agents involved in a marketing process, which are a continuum of touch-points during a circular journey, generate a value that transcends the economic dimension of an exchange. In fact, marketing strategies look for loyalty and long-term relationships with users and customers.

· **Transcendent, spiritual and moral dimensions** as key influence factors on human behavior and decisions.

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3 Some literature uses the word "good" as physical products. Other publications equates "good" to products and services. In this article the word "good" states for tangible (physical objects, device, etc.) or intangible (service, idea, etc.) result of a process of value generation (see Morgan & Ranchhod, 2010).

• **Design-driven marketing:** Roberto Verganti starts the chapter 1 of his book with this quote: ‘Market? What market? We do not look at market needs. We make proposals to people!’. Those words express what design-driven innovation is about: the focus is not the product or its position in the market, but the people who build them. “Design-driven innovation is not about being creative. Rather, it is about setting a direction and investing in relational assets. We call the radical innovation of meanings design-driven innovation, or design push, because it is propelled by a firm’s vision about possible breakthrough meanings and product languages that people could love” (Verganti, 2009: 35 & 101). “Creating innovations of meaning brings your interaction with customers to a higher level: the level of love. It focuses on what worth really is: value for a person. People do not fall in love with a better performance. That’s a date. Love for a person, as well as for anything in life, comes from meaning. The best metaphor for describing innovation of meaning is to think at it as a ‘gift’”(Verganti, 2017: 18). To be a design-driven marketing is to become humanistic in the sense that innovation, value proposition generation and communication processes are ways of giving gifts to people and serving them with high quality goods (the meaning of “love” in this marketing context). People are far more than customers or users but part of a network of meaningful relationships. It is clear that a humanistic paradigm could be the bridge between marketing and the civil economy perspective (Zamagni & Bruni, 2013).

• **Relational segmentation** that replace targeting strategies based on attitudes, declared values or individual behaviors with the relational styles: “Interpersonal relationships, especially those that occur in spaces and structures like the family, configure types of reflexivity that from a theoretical point of view could differentiate individuals’ goals and ways of living or lifestyles. Relational models ... can guide the development of proposals that overcome both individualism and collectivism by using relationships of service and the exchange of relational goods as the main foundations and prioritizing recognition of the ‘other’ as a person who is part of a basic community, such as the family and, more broadly, the Motherland” (Rivera, 2016: 494 & 499).

• **Quality of life** indicators for impact evaluation: a humanistic marketing strategy should have a positive impact on individual and social quality of life that should be publicly demonstrated through transparent indicators.

• **Strategic orchestration and collaboration:** from a humanistic perspective, marketing is a praxis that play a key role in the configuration of hu-

man and organizational actions through the design, communication and distribution of value. That value is not generated by competition or profit-led agreements, but within collaborative networks that create and capture value through effective and efficient strategic orchestration of goals, capabilities, resources and talents.

Strategic orchestration is an approach that advocates an allocentric view based on a vantage point principle: "... the Vantage Point principle of allocentrism seeks to orchestrate the strengths of the market players according to the particular strengths that the firm is bringing to the relationship. Every node will be playing at its best, always enhancing its particular strengths. Weaknesses must be orchestrated, not improved. One's weakness is a strength of another node" (Ruelas Gossi, 2016: 55).

Strategic orchestration of value creation is oriented by the Vantage Point principle and the service-dominant logic perspective (S-DL). S-DL theory suggests that value is co-created in the relationships between different actors of a network or ecosystem that collaborate and exchange their services and unique capabilities toward mutual and social benefits.

In S-DL, which is one of the key elements of H2H (together with design thinking and digitalization), marketing is a relationship to exchange services (not only physical goods). "For this service to materialize (e.g. a financial service, a mobility service or an entertainment service) several actors (in different roles) have to act as mutual resource integrators (value co-creators) by exchanging their resources (e.g. in the form of products/services, money, information or other social currencies, such as attention). Consequently, the beneficiary is always considered as a value co-creator of a particular service" (Burkhalter et al., 2021: 268).

S-DL is a theoretical paradigm that proposes eleven principles that could be summarized in the following ideas: marketing relationships are service propositions that are co-created through the ability to act upon tangible or intangible resources and exchanged for mutual benefit. The value designed in the process is captured and communicated by strategic orchestrators that have the competence of managing complex business ecosystems acting under the form and dynamics of networks.

Although companies like Apple, Uber, Airbnb and Ethereum are good examples of business applications of strategic orchestration, S-DL and the other guiding principles explained in this section, social marketing approach



and applications offer best practices for implementing them in marketing<sup>4</sup>. A relational approach and segmentation was applied to promote non-smoking lifestyles among teenagers, preventing them to consume drugs, reduce plastic pollution, etc. The campaigns “Donate Plasma, Donate Smiles” launched by the Laboratory of Hemoderivates in Argentina, “Portugal Sou Eu” by the Portuguese government to promote economic growth, “Pakistan without waste” promoted by Coca-Cola Company as well as some of the strategies designed for preventing the diffusion of COVID-19 pandemic are cases of strategic orchestration and S-DL. Finally, universities like Austral in Argentina and Coimbra Business School in Portugal applied design-driven social marketing for enhancing women’s empathy and providing financial support to homeless people (Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021).

## V. DIGITALIZATION, H2H AND A HUMANISTIC MARKETING FRAMEWORK

Considering previous research and applications of social marketing approach, a humanistic marketing strategy should have the following stages (Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021: 20):

1. Purpose, problem and focus definition.
2. Design-driven research. Situation and publics’ analysis.
3. Audience scoping and relational segmentation.
4. Objectives and key results definition.
5. Identification and analysis of factors influencing behavior adoption. Theory of change adoption and program design.
6. Positioning statement and campaign crafting.
7. Development of marketing key elements (marketing mix) including strategic partnerships.
8. Budgeting.
9. Implementation plan.
10. Monitoring and evaluation plan.

Design-driven marketing implies formative (diagnostic), process (during the implementation) and evaluation research. In each stage of the marketing

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4 For specific cases see: Galan-Ladero & Rivera, 2021.

strategy, data collection and analysis, communication and decision-making, continuous interactions between agents, among other dynamics, require proper access and management of digital technologies.

Parida et al. define digitalization as the “use of digital technologies to innovate a business model and provide new revenue streams and value-producing opportunities in industrial ecosystems” (Walker et al., 2021: 238). However, digitalization implies processes of dematerialization, acceleration of relationships and individualization (personalization) of the value proposition: “Digitalization furthermore is facilitating the trend towards products losing their physical form ... In the process of dematerialization, products and services are transformed into software and apps” (Kotler et al., 2020: 76).

Digital transformation is the basis of platform economy that facilitates the co-creation and orchestration of value, open communication and collaboration among active agents, transparent and decentralized relationships that generate a higher and faster flow of knowledge and knowhow. “There is an enormous increase in the importance of the customers’ social context in purchasing decisions, whereby brands have to give up a part of their power. This makes it all the more important for companies to leverage phenomena and tools like word of mouth, brand advocacy, and brand communities in order to benefit from these developments. The loss of control is a wake-up call for marketers, showing that it is no longer they who sit in the driver’s seat. Or in the form of a subtler hint, ‘Brand management should rather be a guiding activity, not a controlling one’” (Kotler et al., 2020: 144).

Digitalization transforms people, organizations and marketing, facilitating the application of humanistic approaches focused on the relationships, the stakeholders and their ecosystems.

In that context, H2H model, S-DL principles, social marketing approaches, quality of life philosophy and Strategic Orchestration approach would be the theoretical background of a new framework for humanistic marketing strategies.

Instead of suggesting a consumer-centric economic framework, humanistic marketing should put the person and its communities at the core of the strategies and processes. They should be guided by S-DL principles and designed in a systematic, scientific and human-centered way to solving problems and achieving long-term life goals. Digitalization and design-driven innovation would be used as tools and methods for crafting the marketing strategies and programs, which instead of being built around products, they would be

focused on mutual beneficial purposes supported by processes that include organizational culture, identity and talents (both leaders and collaborators working in teams).

A humanistic marketing framework is powered by S-DL, design thinking and digitalization, toward a shared purpose and built upon organizational culture and practices.

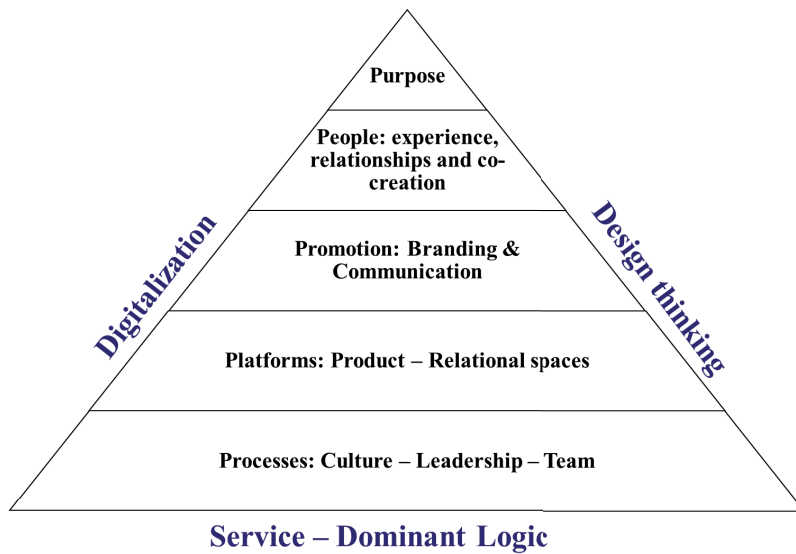


Figure 3 - Humanistic Marketing Framework (Own source based on H2H model)

Contrary to a marketing discipline built around goods or products, the new framework basement are organizational culture and teams.

Organizational processes are the basis for designing, communicating and co-creating meanings through products and services in relational spaces or platforms. Integrated communications and customized advertising campaigns generate flows of conversations with a variety of stakeholders that position the brand and its meanings in the mental networks of concepts and long-term memory that human persons use for taking a decision. The latter is more than an act of consuming an object or intangible product. The person who co-creates value in an exchange is an actor who participates in a reflexive relational process influenced by multiple factors where information exposure, understanding, cognitive response, past experiences and emotions, social relations-

hips, reflection and motivations (material and spiritual) guide the interactions that catalyze in a communicative action in the market. That would be a sale, a product review, a recommendation to a friend, etc. It would generate financial results or not, but always implies the exchange of relational goods.

Organizational culture, relational spaces and communicative actions lead to the creation of an experience whether the service is co-created and improved by allocentric relationships between the agents. One of them (usually the acting organization) works as the orchestrator in a business or socio-cultural ecosystem, guided by S-DL principles.

Integrated communications and personalized relationships, enabled by technologies, align the whole process towards a transcendent purpose that is beneficial for all the agents participating in it. The purpose has a value in a market and beyond its economic implications, it contributes to people's quality of life and flourishing.

Kotler et al. (2020). present companies implementing strategies and programs based on a humanistic marketing mindset that include S-DL, design thinking and digitalization. A new case and good example of the new framework is Anheuser-Busch InBev's BEES B2B sales platform.

The company have 169,000 collaborators in 50 countries and orchestrate more than 500 brands in a global ecosystem of stakeholders. With more than 250 distributors and a salesforce of more than 4,000 people in South America, as a part of a digital transformation global strategy (Volberda et al., 2021), AB InBev piloted in 2019 in the Dominican Republic the first global platform to connect via a mobile app with retailers and partners (BEES). In 2021, BEES reached 2.5 million users and generated 50% of company's revenues. The platform captured approximately 20 billion USD in gross merchandise value (GMV) with over 78 million orders placed (AB InBev, 2021). The fintech service has two main objectives: to accelerate profitable core business growth and to unlock new business opportunities through personalization, data-analytics and design-driven innovations. BEES applies:

- age verification tools to minimize the risk of illegal unhealthy consumption,
- instant personalized messages to offer training to retailers for improving their business and community impact.

AB InBev uses BEES for:

- disseminating tips and data for responsible consumption,

- piloting programs to improve recycling collection services (the company rewards and tracks retailers for each bottled recycled through the platform),
- connecting small- and medium-sized retailers with their customers,
- orchestrating a global network of retailers, offering them business intelligence, logistic and sales services, as well as digital and financial literacy.

AB InBev global network is based on their “ownership culture”. Their identity is defined in the following statements: “We dream big. We are building a profitable growth company. Our greatest strength is our people. Great people grow at the pace of their talent and are rewarded accordingly. Great people deliver and transform. We recruit, develop and retain people who can be better than ourselves. We are measured by the quality and diversity of our teams. We are a company of owners. Owners take results personally and lead by example. We strive to be the best at serving and partnering with our customers, who are the gateway to our consumers. We never take shortcuts. Integrity, hard work, quality and responsibility are key to building our company and our reputation” (AB InBev, 2021: 13)

Therefore AB InBev is a good example of humanistic marketing based on H2H model, Strategic Orchestration model and applying the five elements of the new framework (processes, platforms, promotion, people and purpose).

## VI. DISCUSSION

Several authors have raised concerns on the socio-cultural impact of marketing and digitalization. Research data and analysis shows that technological changes and communication strategies that promote products, services and lifestyles are not neutral. They would have positive and negative effects on people and their quality of life. Simultaneously, recent literature is highlighting the complexity of the issue, which is leading since the 70's, but particularly after the diffusion of Internet 2.0, to innovative theoretical models and mindsets in disciplines like Management, Marketing and Communication. The advent of Internet 3.0 and distributed business models are indicating that this is only the beginning of a new era, characterized more for knowledge and service orientation rather than technology.

This paper presents a new framework for marketing strategies and practices guided by humanistic perspectives. Human-to-Human and Strategic Or-

chestration models, Service-Dominant Logic and Quality of Life principles would be the basis for designing and implementing relational and person-centered marketing practices enabled by digital transformations.

Although the concepts “humanism” and “person” as well as what means to be human is left apart intentionally in this study, the review of literature, real cases of organizations and recent scientific works in the scientific field provide the basic elements for a wider and future analysis that should include more sociological and epistemological perspectives. The new humanistic marketing framework recognizes that the (marketing) discipline is built upon sociological theories (relationships, networks, culture, relational goods, civil economy) and guided by Communication metatheory (Craig, 1999, 2015).

If humans are dialogical beings that interacts with other people, social structures and ecosystems, a humanistic perspective of communicative actions that occur in the public sphere we defined as a “market” should manage the strategies and programs towards the final (tangible and intangible) transcendent goals of the actors, enlarging its models with linguistic and communication theories and insights.

It may be the time for marketing to recognize market actors conduct cultural performances mediated and influenced by multiple factors (personal, social and ecological). “Actors present themselves as being motivated by and toward existential, emotional, and moral concerns, the meanings of which are defined by patterns of signifiers whose referents are the social, physical, natural, and cosmological worlds within which actors and audiences live. One part of this symbolic reference provides the deep background of collective representations for social performance; another part composes the foreground, the scripts that are the immediate referent for action. These latter can be understood as constituting the performance’s immediate referential text”(Alexander, 2011: 29).

In conclusion, future research and development in the humanistic marketing field may incorporate cultural-pragmatic perspective to overcome instrumental and individualistic models that downgrade the complexity and richness of human beings and communities.

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