

Disaster selfies: How ethical reminders can mitigate morally questionable consumption practices

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Abstract

Joyful selfies taken at disaster sites create a controversial topic in terms of moral boundaries in digital life. While some consider it acceptable to take smiley selfies in a tragedy zone, others find this behaviour morally questionable. This article demonstrates empirically that excessive time spent on social media explains, at least partially, a greater tendency to like morally ambiguous content on social media. Specifically, this article shows that consumers tend to like more questionable content (such as smiley disaster selfies) on social media when they spend more time online. Further, this article shows that this effect is mediated by increased individualistic thinking. Responses to the survey experiment ($N = 206$) compared the tendency to *like* morally ambiguous content between groups of little, moderate and excessive use of social media, and tested for the mediating role of individualistic thinking on the relationship between time spent and *liking* behaviour. Second, the moderating role of an ethical reminder on time spent and the fact of *liking* morally ambiguous contents is demonstrated. In the presence of an ethical reminder, the effect of time spent on social media and *liking* morally ambiguous content becomes insignificant. This article contributes to theory on social media consumption by offering a novel underlying mechanism, such as increased individualistic thinking, as one variable that partly explains the liking for morally ambiguous content. This article also offers practical contributions for social media platforms and policy makers, showing that ethical reminders could be a possible and simple nudge to help consumers act more morally or become aware of morally questionable content.

KEYWORDS

ambiguity, disaster selfie, individualistic thinking, millennials, social media

1 | INTRODUCTION

Social networking applications follow users at all stages of their consumption experiences. Even though sharing content from everywhere has become a usual practice, the use of social media in sensitive contexts can sometimes create morally ambiguous situations. Dark tourism is one of the sensitive contexts, which refers to visiting places of disasters and death. Taking disaster selfies at dark tourism destinations and posting them online has become a global phenomenon (Hodalska, 2017). For

instance, on Instagram, there are countless smiling selfies taken in front of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp under the hashtag *#auschwitz*, influencer selfies in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone under the hashtag *#chernobyl*, pictures of visitors posing at the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall under the hashtag *#nanjingmassacrememorialhall* and at other disaster zones worldwide. However, many people find this disrespectful to the victims of the tragedy (Kessler, 2021).

Disaster selfies often trigger moral concerns in public (Sharma, 2020) and cause society to question moral boundaries

(Ibrahim, 2015). Nonetheless, there are countless examples of joyful disaster selfies on social media and, interestingly, they get many *likes*. For instance, a man shares a picture of himself juggling at the Berlin Holocaust Memorial and gets more than 500 *likes*; a couple posts a smiling selfie at the 9/11 Memorial receiving 4500 *likes*; or two young men share cheerful poses in hazmat suits at the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone receiving more than 1 million *likes*. These are just a few examples of many where consumers share similar pictures and get plenty of *likes*. These examples demonstrate that posting morally questionable content seems to have a considerable audience of consumers who *like* these postings.

On the other hand, the smiling selfies at dark destinations may not be an acceptable behaviour for other people. There have been strong reactions against the smiling disaster selfies in the press, public, and on social media, which were accusing posers to be disrespectful to the tragedies (Hucal, 2019; Kalinina-Pohl, 2021; Kessler, 2021). In March 2019, there were so many visitors posing on the train tracks at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp that the official Twitter account of Auschwitz Museum had to ask the visitors to remember the victims and respect their memory by avoiding such poses (Auschwitz Memorial, 2019). Despite all the negative feedback, many people consume and give a *like* to these morally questionable photos on social media.

Social media use requires interactions between users, such as *liking* each other's postings. *Liking* on social media is a conscious online behaviour representing actual liking with enjoyment and appreciation (Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2018). Furthermore, *like* means social approval among peers (Lee et al., 2020). Individuals who *like* smiling disaster selfies, whether intentionally or not, give their approval to a morally questionable content.

Previous research has attempted to understand morality in the marketplace by investigating for example when and why consumers donate to a good cause to others, act pro-social or give gifts to others (Grayson, 2014). Further, there is an extensive body of research that explores why consumers act illegally such as consuming illegal drugs, stealing from others or damaging property (Campbell & Winterich, 2018). However, literature on morally questionable behaviour, specifically during the consumption of social media, has been widely overlooked. We attempt to fill this gap. Therefore, this current research examines why some people *like* morally ambiguous content on social media has yet to be explored in the literature. This article focuses on the relation between social media exposure and the *liking* behaviour of consumers in morally ambiguous contents and attempts to offer a mechanism that at least partially explains the reasons for the relationship stated above.

Social media exposure has moral and behavioural effects on users. In a recent study, Ge (2020) has revealed that heavy use of social media, in terms of prolonged screen time, reduces moral sensitivity among young adults (Ge, 2020). The longer the screen time, the less likely users demonstrate moral sensitivity towards shared content and its possible consequences for other parties (Ge, 2020). Even though users are able to understand the ethical aspects of their actions in everyday life, they seem to let it slide on social media platforms (Ge, 2020).

Flores and James (2013) suggested a thinking framework for people. They found that young adults mostly deploy 'individualistic

thinking' while taking online actions such as giving *likes*, leaving a comment, downloading a content and writing a blog. The authors define individualistic thinking as a mere focus on potential consequences for themselves while overlooking the possible impact of their actions on others. The least frequently adopted thinking type among online users is 'ethical thinking' which represents concerns about possible impacts on unknown others and the larger community. When users are online, they tend to deploy individualistic thinking and discard ethical thinking (Flores & James, 2013). In light of the prior literature, we suggest that social media exposure increases individualistic thinking among consumers, which leads to morally questionable online behaviour such as *liking* ethically problematic content. Our sample focuses specifically on millennials because they are regular users of social media and are usually very familiar with the novel tools for computer-mediated social interaction. Rather than assuming that millennials will act differently from other age groups in general, we have selected this sample to be able to control for frequent social media exposure.

Prior literature focused on motivations behind sharing morally ambiguous content and the reactions against it to understand the appraisal process when encountered such content (Brough et al., 2020; Canavan, 2017; Sharma, 2020). To understand and explain the moral consideration process, many articles examined comments and verbal interactions (Basak et al., 2019; Bergman et al., 2011; Kowalski et al., 2014; Pettalia et al., 2013), while only a few investigated *likes*. Many scholars have studied the effects of social media exposure. However, the studies have commonly focused on psychological well-being (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019; Riehm et al., 2019; Song et al., 2020).

In the present study, we propose that excessive use of social media increases the tendency to *like* morally questionable content through the mediation of the deployed thinking type. Specifically, we pose and demonstrate empirically that this effect is mediated by increased individualistic thinking. The relationship between time spent and *liking* behaviour towards morally ambiguous content vanishes when users are reminded of ethical prospects. This article offers theoretical contributions by posing and testing a plausible mechanism that explains the effect of time spent on social media and liking of morally questionable content. Further, we offer practitioners and consumers implications that a simple reminder of ethical thinking can help nudge consumers to be more aware of what type of content they give their *like* to.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 | Social media exposure

Social media platforms have billions of users around the world. However, their matchless impact is not only connected to the number of users, but also by the time spent by billions of users on these platforms every single day (Huang, 2017). For example, a Millennial spends on average 2 h and 28 min on social media per day

(GWI, 2018). Even though the majority of users think that spending three or more hours on social media is unhealthy, many of them spend more than 3 h on various social media platforms daily (Galer, 2018).

The excessive time spent on social media is primarily the result of consumption activities, such as observing and gathering information to catch up with the digital community (Schlosser, 2005). The desire to be included in digital communities can become an addiction among young adults to suppress their anxious and avoidant attachment style in their real life (D'Arienzo et al., 2019). Individuals may be using social media intensely as a coping mechanism in the short run. However, the effects on psychosocial well-being may have more severe long-term consequences for the individual and the society (Bolton et al., 2013).

Past research has pointed out that the excessive use of social media has moral and behavioural effects on young adults (Bergman et al., 2011; Brough et al., 2020; Brunborg & Andreas, 2019; Ge, 2020; Lim, 2013; Riehm et al., 2019). Due to the heavy exposure to digital platforms, individuals are inevitably influenced cognitively, emotionally and socially (Brunborg & Andreas, 2019; Immordino-Yang et al., 2012). They tend to rely on social media platforms for their everyday life to have fun, socialize and even regulate emotions, which brings concerns about their perception of ethicality and psychological well-being (Bolton et al., 2013). Riehm et al. (2019) provided evidence that young people who spend more than 30 min on social media per day, in comparison with those that do not use it, are more prone to develop social and cognitive shortcomings, such as bullying and attention problems (Riehm et al., 2019; Song et al., 2020). The impact of the time spent is stronger for the ones who spend more than 3 h on social media per day (Riehm et al., 2019). Another research pointed out that longer screen time was associated with poor emotional and ethical regulations among the users (Song et al., 2020).

Social media platforms encourage conformity, which entails the necessity to adopt the social community (Brough et al., 2020). Deviant behaviours on social media start to set an example since the users normalize and even glamorize popular content such as *Happy Slapping* videos (Lim, 2013). In other words, users begin to think that it is natural to approach someone, slap him/her, post it online and get *likes* for that. Longer time spent on social media demonstrated a positive relationship with increased boundary-testing behaviours (Lim, 2013). In the environment of social media, users find it challenging to interpret the moral aspects of the shared content. Ethical boundaries in real life become blurry in digital life (Chiou, 2006). Ge (2020) provided consistent evidence that longer time spent on social media was associated with lower moral sensitivity. Young adults who spend excessive time on social media fail to realize and interpret the moral aspects of the content due to the lack of moral cues in the entertaining environment of social media platforms (Ge, 2020).

2.2 | Millennials and social media

We focus specifically on consumers who were born between 1981 and 1996, commonly referred to as millennials. We do so for the following reason: millennials take selfies more than any other generation; more

than half of the millennials shared a selfie on social media at least once (Ibrahim, 2015). This does not imply that the effect only holds for millennials but to anyone who shows similar quantitative and qualitative use of social media. In order to control for exposure and knowledge of social media, we address millennials specifically (Ge, 2020) and limit our data collection to this specific focus group.

They are called 'digital natives' since they are the first generation who spend their whole lives in numerous digital platforms (Bolton et al., 2013). Accordingly, as in other digital platforms, millennials were eager to make social media as part of their lives. According to a recent study of the Pew Research Center, almost all of the millennials use the internet and 86% of them regularly use social media platforms (Vogels, 2019). Moreover, many of them have active social media presence. An earlier study of Pew Research Center indicated that millennials have shared more selfies than any other generation on social media platforms (Taylor, 2014). The study also revealed that 55% of millennials had posted a selfie at least once on a social media site (Taylor, 2014). The tight bond between millennials and the social media is not only the result of their keen attachment to technology, but also the high penetration power of social media platforms. Social media use shows no substantial variation across race and ethnicity of the users; hence, it has pervasive access to numerous populations around the world (Kia-Keating et al., 2017). Social media has powerful access across the entire generation, and it plays an important role in millennials' everyday life. Millennials took the lead in spending time on social media as compared to other generations (Taylor, 2014). Indeed, they prefer spending most of their time on social media unless they are sleeping (Kia-Keating et al., 2017). Millennials' high dependence on social media gradually turns into an addiction. Longer hours of use of social media brings along real-life consequences to the users (D'Arienzo et al., 2019). Due to the strong relation between millennials and the social media, we choose them to be the focus group of the current study.

2.3 | Disaster selfies

Selfies are defined as the social currency of the present day since users share every piece of their life with the digital communities (Wight, 2020). A 'disaster selfie' can be described as taking a photo of oneself at a dark tourism destination where a natural or man-made disaster took place (Ibrahim, 2015). Disaster selfies pose a controversial issue regarding where to draw the line between 'right' and 'wrong' in digital life. Taking smiling selfies at disaster sites raises many questions concerning the ethical limits of online presence (Ibrahim, 2015).

There are different motivations and considerations behind sharing a post online. Sharing a content is not an accidental activity. Instead it is a conscious process that includes careful and thoughtful composition (Lundrigan, 2020). The conscious process of decision making in digital life involves diverse components, one of which is the ethical dimension of the online action. Users tend to evaluate their behaviour based on multiple factors including the moral appropriateness of the consumption activity (Schuckmann et al., 2018). Motivations and judgements compete with each other, and the prime ones express the

activity after all (Schuckmann et al., 2018; Valenzuela et al., 2017). In some cases, the ethical aspects of the postings fall behind users' primed motivations. Users, who aspire to manage and promote their self-presentation in an entertaining way, prime a motivation to create a digital figure who is socializing and having fun, regardless of the background (Canavan, 2017; Hodalska, 2017; Valenzuela et al., 2017). Despite the tragedy in the background, some users spread their smiling selfies that are taken at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, Tsunami Museum, terrorist attack fields in Kampung Melayu and other disaster sites.

Joyful disaster selfies generate an ambiguous discourse where some people think it is deviant and disrespectful to make funny poses in front of the death while some others think that it is a new way to express grief and empathy in the digital age (Commane & Potton, 2019). Previous literature indicated that some people think of disaster selfies as a way to neutralize death and confront with mortality (P. Stone & Sharpley, 2008; Wight, 2020). Moreover, some think that disaster selfies can prompt contemporary society to reconfigure and renegotiate the existing moral boundaries (P. R. Stone & Sharpley, 2013). This may be seen as a way how young people engage with the past and learn from it (Commane & Potton, 2019; Wight, 2020). Taking disaster selfies may be a coping mechanism for some people to bring the death back and make them immortal, embrace life and focus on the future (Ibrahim, 2015; Wight, 2020).

On the other hand, some people think taking joyful selfies at disaster sites is inappropriate and offensive. Smiling disaster selfies are seen as lack of empathy and obvious disrespect to the tragedy (Price & Kerr, 2018; Zalewska, 2017). Disaster selfies are offensive to a big part of the audience who thinks visiting dark destinations should implicate graveness demanded by the memory of the death (Hodalska, 2017; Zalewska, 2017). Taking selfies during a touristic activity may be taken for granted by tourists; however, when it comes to disaster selfies, a vast majority consider it offensive and disrespectful (Price & Kerr, 2018; Sharma, 2020).

The disaster selfie trend drew strong reactions from the public and the media. In 2019, after the HBO's miniseries 'Chernobyl' was released, dark tourists rushed into the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, where they took smiling selfies just to post them on social media (Hodalska, 2017). According to the analysis of visitor comments at the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre, many visitors stated that they found the behaviours of young tourists bothersome and disrespectful (Cui, 2020). Cooney-Petro (2019) argued that the current use of social media has changed the ethical principles in such a way that the users are not aware of what 'ethical' is anymore. In 2015, after a big earthquake in Kathmandu, tourists swarmed in the ruined Dharahara Tower to take selfies in front of the wreckage. A local reacted against the selfie-taking visitors by saying: 'They are more interested in clicking their selfies than understanding that it is a tragedy' (Bever, 2015). Tourists justify their transgressive behaviours in disaster sites as a normal touristic experience and they do not realize offensive consequences of their actions (Sharma, 2020). Some believe that respect and morality should be inherent at disaster sites

(Price & Kerr, 2018). Thus, careless behaviours at these locations do not only imply interpretation problems but they also represent conflicts of moral values (Price & Kerr, 2018).

In the light of the prior literature, joyful selfies taken at the disaster sites create a controversial topic in terms of moral boundaries in digital life. While some consider it normal to take smiling selfies in a tragedy zone, others find it offensive and morally disturbing. Therefore, in this study, we used disaster selfies to create a morally ambiguous context for the participants.

2.3.1 | Power of 'likes'

To explain the users' moral engagement on social media platforms, many scholars have focused on online interactions such as sharing a photo, leaving a comment or sending a private message (Basak et al., 2019; Bergman et al., 2011; Brough et al., 2020; Commene & Potton, 2019; Jost et al., 2014; Kowalski et al., 2014; Pettalia et al., 2013). However, very few focused especially on *likes*. Social media can operate as a super-peer that may determine new cultural norms and behaviour patterns (Brough et al., 2020). Just like other interactions, getting and giving *likes* is a part of blending in with the digital community. Users on social media share a content and expect other users to approve it by giving it a *like* (Lee et al., 2020). *Likes* stand for the quantifiable and highly visible signs of status on social media (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). Getting *likes* implies a public reward and recognition, which symbolizes social approval (Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilán, 2019).

Sharing a content on social media is not an unconscious action, and neither is sending a *like* (Lundrigan, 2020). *Liking* something on social media indeed encapsulates a silent implication of enjoyment and approval (Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2018). Respectively, it evokes positive feelings in the selfie-taking user which comes from the desire of receiving recognition and validation by the social community (Davey et al., 2010). Since a *like* carries a message of approval coming from the peers in the digital community, it can be quite powerful and encouraging for the selfie-taking user (Lee et al., 2020).

In spite of the strong reactions against disaster selfies, dark tourists keep posting their selfies on social media and pile *likes* from their followers (Hodalska, 2017). While some users think of the disaster selfies as a disrespect to the memory of tragedy, others feel free to give them a *like*. Giving a *like* means social validation (Davey et al., 2010; Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2018; Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilán, 2019). In that case, when users *like* disaster selfies, it means they approve the posted selfies and encourage the users to keep doing so. On the other hand, some other users strongly dislike the very same content. In the current study, we investigated the hidden components of this contradiction.

2.4 | Morality in digital life

The strong connection between the millennials and the social media comes with its consequences. Prior literature argued that the use of

social media platforms influences the sense of identity, moral development and relationships among young adults (Bergman et al., 2011; Brough et al., 2020; Brunborg & Andreas, 2019; Ge, 2020; Lim, 2013; Riehm et al., 2019). Young users on social media strive to adopt the social community since the design of these platforms encourages conformity (Brough et al., 2020). Thus, they seek popularity by any means. However, in the meantime, they fail to interpret the content from a moral perspective on social media because of the lack of social and emotional cues in an anonymous and entertaining environment (Ge, 2020; Lim, 2013). Malik (2014), successful tech entrepreneur and author, touched briefly on this subject by stating: 'I can safely say that we in tech don't understand the emotional aspect of our work, just as we don't understand the moral imperative of what we do'. Excessive use of these platforms leads to a decrease in empathy and moral sensitivity (Ge, 2020). In other words, users fail to fully interpret the moral aspects of the online content. The use of social media by millennials, for that matter, causes worry about indistinct moral and social norms (Bolton et al., 2013). On social media, users find it difficult to sense how other users feel and think, and so they fail to foresee other users' emotional reactions to an offending situation (Kowalski et al., 2014). Since users cannot receive simultaneous reactions from the other individuals, as in real life, they have difficulty understanding that their online actions can actually hurt the feelings of the others (Pettalia et al., 2013).

2.5 | Individualistic and ethical thinking

Previous literature explored millennials' moral reasoning to explain their ethical decision-making process (Flores & James, 2013; Weber, 2019). Weber (2019) provided evidence to a connection between millennials' social value orientation and their stage of moral reasoning based on Kohlberg's Moral Development framework (Kohlberg, 1981). Briefly, Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development focuses on how people develop moral reasoning from the childhood (Kohlberg, 1981). According to Kohlberg (1981), there are six stages of moral development, and people go through these stages beginning from childhood. However, not everyone is on the same stage at the same age, and not everyone can reach the highest stage (Kohlberg, 1981). Based on Kohlberg's framework, Weber (2019) found that millennials' social value orientation can be used to predict their stage of moral reasoning. The majority of millennials appeared to have a Personal-Competence value orientation, which means mainly concerning for the self and the personal gain (Weber, 2019). Exhibiting Personal-Competence value orientation among millennials is associated with moral reasoning at Stage 3 in which an individual's behaviour is adjusted by the conformity and social approval (Weber, 2019). Consequently, millennials are mostly concerned about consequences to the self, and the social approval is highly determinant on their ethical decision making. Accordingly, social media platforms put millennials on an environment where they seek social approval in a highly visible way (Brough et al., 2020).

Flores and James (2013) also studied the ethical decision-making process of young adults built on Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (Kohlberg, 1981). They argued that young people's approach to online life rarely includes moral and ethical considerations (Flores & James, 2013). Flores and James (2013) attempt to explain users' approach to online life based on a thinking-type framework. The framework includes individualistic and ethical thinking types. Individualistic thinking is defined as focusing on possible consequences to the self without considering others, while ethical thinking was described as acknowledging and considering potential consequences to unknown others and the greater society (Flores & James, 2013). The adoption of individualistic thinking leads users to think about possible benefits out of their actions to the self, but meanwhile they tend to ignore possible consequences to other users. Examples include downloading a record illegally without recognizing the musician's copyright, using a caption without making a citation, sharing a content from a private profile by violating the privacy rights of another user (Flores & James, 2013). Whereas the adoption of ethical thinking implies ability to be considerate of the possible consequences to the other users and the society overall. For example, avoiding cheating in an online game for the sake of fairness to the other players, reprovng cyberbullying and harmful content by thinking that it could negatively affect the other user's life and emotions, empathizing with other online figures and considering the larger impacts to society or a group of people (Flores & James, 2013).

Findings demonstrated that the individualistic thinking is the most frequently engaged type of thinking in online decision-making processes, whereas ethical thinking is the rarest one (Flores & James, 2013). Users, who primarily adopt individualistic thinking, focus on personal gain and the self without feeling consideration for unknown others. The anonymous and entertaining environment of social media causes users to overlook the moral issues and fail to detect the red flags (Ge, 2020). Even though the users convey moral consideration towards offline friends, they fail to do so when it comes to unknown online contacts and the larger society (Flores & James, 2013).

The use of social media by millennials causes worries at the societal level since the social norms do not seem to apply to the individuals as in real life (Bolton et al., 2013). Users separate online life from the real life, and this situation prevents them from paying attention to the moral issues in online life as they normally notice in their real life (Suler, 2004). Flores and James (2013) also emphasized that the participants were capable of considering the ethical aspects of their actions in real life. However, when they are online, they tend to discard ethical thinking and adopt individualistic thinking (Flores & James, 2013).

Ge (2020) suggested providing ethical reminders to the users to improve their moral perception on social media. In that way, users would be reminded of real-life ethics and could interpret moral aspects of the content more consciously. Schuckmann et al. (2018) demonstrated that the ethical reminders significantly affect the individuals' consumption choices. Thus, ethical reminders may help to

activate the users' moral judgement by facilitating the recognition of the moral issue (Ge, 2020).

In the current study, we investigate why some people *like* morally questionable content on social media while others find it morally appalling. Based on the existing literature, we hypothesized that consumers who spend excessive time on social media tend to adopt individualistic thinking, which makes them more prone to *like* morally ambiguous content. The relationship between time spent and *liking* behaviour is expected to vanish when users face an ethical reminder. We test our main hypothesis in three sub-hypotheses systematically.

In the first step, we compared the tendency to *like* morally questionable content among three groups that were clustered based on daily time spent on social media. The goal is to see if the excessive time spent on social media significantly increases the tendency to *like* morally ambiguous content.

Hypothesis 1a. *Excessive time spent on social media increases tendency to like morally ambiguous content.*

Subsequently, we examined the underlying mechanism of the relationship between the time spent and *liking* morally questionable content.

Hypothesis 1b. *Adoption of individualistic thinking mediates the effect of time spent on social media on liking morally ambiguous content.*

Finally, we investigated whether an ethical reminder moderates the mediation effect and the overall model.

Hypothesis 1c. *The provision of an ethical reminder will moderate the effect of time spent on social media on liking behaviour.*

In the next section, we discuss the method, data collection and the results of our study.

3 | EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

3.1 | Pretest

We conducted a pretest to analyse whether the social media posts we use for our manipulation are serving their purpose. In other words, we tested if the neutral posts are indeed considered neutral and the unethical posts are considered more unethical. Therefore, we recruited participants on online platforms ($N = 25$; 52.00% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.12$, $SD = 7.13$) who were asked to indicate to which extent they rate the posts for our manipulation as unethical using a five-point bipolar scale for each post from very unethical (1) to ethically neutral (5). Participants indicated that they would judge the posts we considered for the unethical manipulation indeed significantly more unethical than the posts we intended to use for the ethically neutral

condition ($M_{\text{unethical}} = 2.09$, $SD = 1.14$; $M_{\text{neutral}} = 4.72$, $SD = 0.45$; $t(24) = 11.16$, $p < .001$). This indicates that our selection of posts indeed manipulates the ethicality of the posts. We, therefore, implemented these in our experimental design.

3.2 | Sample and design of study

In total, 267 people participated the survey. Ten participants were excluded from the analyses since they were not in the millennials age group. Thirty-six participants failed to complete the survey and 15 participants failed the attention check. After excluding invalid responses, the sample size appeared to be 206 (57% female, age range from 24 to 40). Education level of the participants ranged from High School to PhD (0.5% High School diploma, 2.4% Associates degree, 63.1% Bachelor's degree, 30.1% Master's degree, 3.9% PhD).

The authors implemented between-subject design. Sample size of the control group (Condition 1 = no ethical reminder) was 102 (59.6% female) and the sample size of the experimental group (Condition 2 = with ethical reminder) was 104 (54.5% female). The data gathered from the control group are used to test Hypotheses 1a and 1b. Whereas, the data gathered from both groups is used to test Hypothesis 1c.

3.3 | Procedure

Participants were asked to complete an online survey. The survey invitation was distributed to university student groups via multiple online channels (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and email groups). At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to indicate their age group and report their total time spent on social media platforms per day. Denoted social media platforms included Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Reddit. In the next section of the survey, participants were provided with a curated Instagram feed involving 19 postings. Sixteen of the postings consisted of neutral content such as photos of animals, brides, friends practicing yoga, landscapes, memes and touristic photos in popular destinations. Besides the neutral content, three disaster selfies were addressed as morally ambiguous content. They were smiling selfies taken at different disaster zones. One of them was a smiling photo of a couple posing at 9/11 Memorial. The other one was a picture of a woman cheerfully posing in front of Sharon Tate's murder house and pointing the murder house with her finger. The last one was a picture of a woman at Chernobyl who was pretending to be happily shopping at a store that was abandoned due to the nuclear explosion years ago. Contents in the survey, whether morally ambiguous or neutral, came with its location information remarked above the photo. Thus, every participant was able to see the location where the photo was taken. For every posting in the feed, participants were asked to rate their likelihood of giving it a *like* on a scale from extremely unlikely to extremely likely.

All the posts in the survey were taken from public Instagram accounts, and yet their anonymity was preserved. Neutral photos

were scattered around the disaster selfies to ensure a smooth transaction and not to reveal the focus of the study. Participants were also asked to rate their likelihood of leaving a comment, sharing the content with friends and saving it to the collection in the exact same way with giving a *like*. The purpose of this was to prohibit revealing the focus of the study. Responses to other interactions were collected but not analysed.

The control group (*Condition 1*) was exposed to a regular Instagram feed without any manipulation and rated their likelihood of sending *likes* to the photos in the feed. The experimental group (*Condition 2*), on the other hand, was exposed to an ethical reminder before they saw the Instagram feed. The ethical reminder was intended to create awareness that some posts can be offensive and unsettling for some people. It included a short introduction text and a tweet of the official Twitter account of Auschwitz Museum (for full manipulation, please see Appendix G). The authors used this real-world nudge of an ethical reminder to demonstrate that it is crucial for online platforms to use cognitive and ethical nudges for users to reflect on their own liking behaviour online. This ethical reminder is specifically designed to raise awareness of morally questionable online behaviour. Further, the ethical reminder is unlikely to create a demand effect on the questions about individualistic thinking type based on the framework of Flores and James (2013). There is no obvious connection on what could be the hypothesis or the connection between the reminder and this construct.

The participants in the experimental group (*Condition 2*) faced the ethical reminder first. Then, they went over the Instagram feed by rating their likelihood of *liking* the provided content. Both groups had the exact same Instagram feed in the exact same order. The control group (*Condition 1*) faced a neutral introduction instead of an ethical reminder. They saw a similar introduction about travelling, taking selfies and posting photos online with a collage of tourist photos taken in various locations. Both conditions were designed exactly in the same look and order.

In the second part of the survey, participants were asked thinking-type questions. The questions were designed to deduce the way the participants think while using social media. Thinking-type questions were created based upon the thinking-types framework of Flores and James (2013). As revealed before by Flores and James (2013), millennials were expected to primarily adopt individualistic thinking while making online decisions such as sending a *like* (Flores & James, 2013). Thus, in the second part of the survey, participants were given multiple statements which implied adoption of individualistic thinking and they were asked to select in what degree they agree or disagree with the statements in question.

3.4 | Measures

3.4.1 | Liking morally ambiguous content

Participants were asked to rate each post in the curated Instagram feed in terms of how likely they would *like* it. The rating was measured

on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (Extremely unlikely) to 6 (Extremely likely). Higher rating indicates greater likelihood of *liking*. We checked for the reliability of the scale and found $\alpha > .7$. Therefore, we used the mean of the scale (Figures A1–A6).

3.4.2 | Time spent

The participants reported daily time spent on social media on a slider scale that ranges from 0 (not using at all) to 8 (using 8 or more hours per day). Participants were grouped into three: 'low use', 'moderate use' and 'excessive use'. Participants were grouped based on their reported daily time spent on social media platforms. The group ranges were determined based on the current social media usage trends. A Millennial spends averagely 2 h and 38 min on social media per day (GWI, 2018) and the majority of the users use social media between 1 and 3 h per day (Galer, 2018). As a result of a survey conducted by BBC, users think that spending more than 3 h per day on social media is too much (Galer, 2018). Seeing that, the participants who spend less than 1 h per day on social media fell into the 'low use' group. The ones who spend more than 1 but less than 3 h on social media fell into the 'moderate use' group. Lastly, the participants with more than 3 h of time spent on social media fell into the 'excessive use' group (Table 1). The groups 'low use', 'moderate use' and 'excessive use' are only used to test Hypothesis 1a. For the Hypotheses 1b and 1c, participants' reported time spent on a scale of 8 is used.

3.4.3 | Ethical thinking

Participants were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with the given statements. Eleven statements were designed to allude adoption of ethical thinking in online decision-making processes (Dufrene & Glosoff, 2004). The rating was measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Higher rating represents greater adoption of ethical thinking by the participant ($\alpha > .7$).

3.4.4 | Individualistic thinking

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements on a 14-item five-point Likert scale (Flores & James, 2013) to measure participants' adoption of individualistic thinking during online decision-making processes.

3.5 | Manipulation check

One of the groups was manipulated by the display of an ethical reminder at the beginning of the survey. Due to random assignment of the conditions and a high number of participants ($N = 206$), we can assume that the groups are statistically similarly distributed on

variables such as age, gender. We also conducted a randomness check demonstrating that participants across these two conditions did not significantly differ on time spent on social media ($p > .24$). The experimental group was expected to result higher adoption of ethical thinking and lower adoption of individualistic thinking than the control group. In order to check whether the manipulation was successful or not, we conducted independent samples t tests that aimed to assess if there was a significant difference in adoption of the thinking types between the two conditions.

The manipulation was successful between the experimental group ($M_{\text{ethical}} = 44.81$, $SD_{\text{ethical}} = 6.76$; $M_{\text{individualistic}} = 29.61$, $SD_{\text{individualistic}} = 5.87$) and the control group ($M_{\text{ethical}} = 37.71$, $SD_{\text{ethical}} = 7.40$; $M_{\text{individualistic}} = 41.30$, $SD_{\text{individualistic}} = 13.78$). Figure 1a,b illustrates the effects of the manipulation. The difference in adoption of ethical thinking emerged to be significant ($t(202) = -7.19$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = $[-9.05, -5.15]$) and the difference in adoption of individualistic thinking also revealed to be significant ($t(136) = 7.90$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = $[8.77, 14.63]$). Summary tables of the results can be found in Appendix D (Tables D1 and D2).

TABLE 1 Groups of social media use which were used during the one-way ANOVA test

Group	Time spent on social media
Low use	$t \leq 1$ h
Moderate use	$1 \text{ h} < t \leq 3$ h
Excessive use	$3 \text{ h} < t$

4 | RESULTS

We conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on SPSS to demonstrate the impact of time spent on tendency to *like* morally questionable content on social media. As Hypothesis 1a suggested, we expected to find a significant difference between the 'excessive use' group with the other two groups in terms of the tendency to *like* disaster selfies. ANOVA results showed that there is a significant difference in *liking* morally ambiguous content among the three groups ($M_{\text{low}} = 6.14$, $SD = 3.86$; $M_{\text{moderate}} = 8.03$, $SD = 2.99$, $M_{\text{excessive}} = 11.50$, $SD = 3.66$), ($F(2.99) = 18.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$). Descriptive statistics and detailed results of ANOVA can be found in Tables B1 and B2.

Pairwise comparisons were conducted after ANOVA to assess which pairs significantly differ from one another. Since the cell sizes are not equal, Gabriel multiple comparison test was conducted for the post hoc analysis. The post hoc analysis was also conducted using SPSS. Pairwise comparisons demonstrated that there was a significant difference between the groups 'excessive use' and 'moderate use' ($p < .001$, 95% CI = $[1.61, 5.33]$), and also between the groups 'excessive use' and 'low use' ($p < .001$, 95% CI = $[2.95, 7.76]$). However, there was no significant difference detected between the groups 'moderate use' and 'low usage' ($p = .24$, 95% CI = $[-0.77, 4.55]$). Details of post hoc analysis can be found in Table B3. The significant results remained controlling for covariates such as gender and education. Consequently, the results supported Hypothesis 1a.

To test Hypothesis 1b, we conducted a mediation analysis using SPSS Process Model 4 (Hayes, 2017). Mediation analysis was

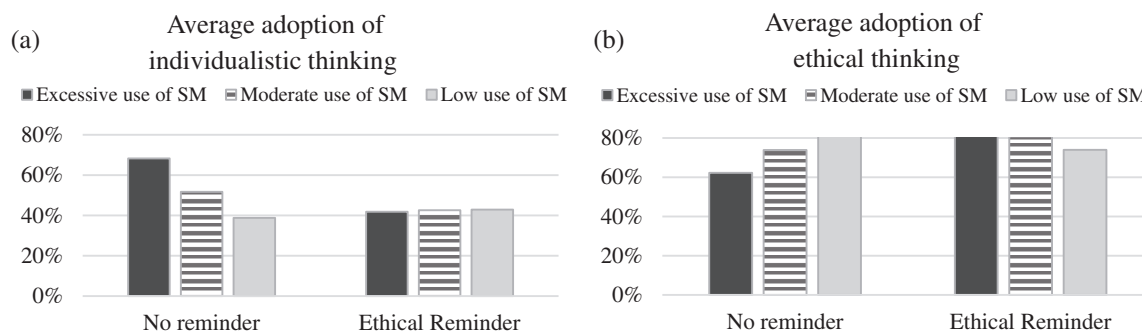


FIGURE 1 (a) Adoption of individualistic thinking drops significantly as a result of the manipulation. (b) Adoption of ethical thinking increases significantly as a result of the manipulation

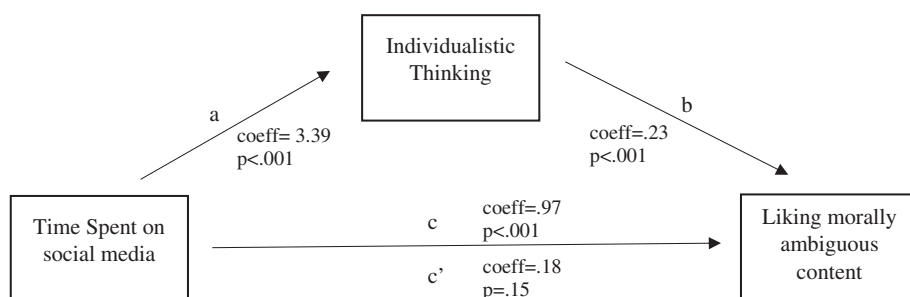


FIGURE 2 Adoption of individualistic thinking fully mediates the positive effect of time spent on social media on liking morally ambiguous content

computed with 5000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence interval. When the model regressed *liking* morally ambiguous content on the time spent (path c), the results demonstrated that higher time spent on social media significantly predicts higher tendency to *like* morally ambiguous content ($F(1,100) = 31.92$, $R^2 = .24$, $\beta = 0.97$, $SE = 0.17$, $t(100) = 5.65$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [0.63, 1.31]). The significant association between time spent on social media and tendency to *like* morally ambiguous content supported Hypothesis 1a one more time.

Results revealed that the increase in time spent on social media significantly predicts higher adoption of individualistic thinking ($F(1,100) = 34.56$, $R^2 = .26$, $\beta = 3.39$, $SE = 0.58$, $t(100) = 5.88$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [2.25, 4.54]).

In the second part of the model, the time spent and the individualistic thinking together predicted *liking* morally ambiguous content, and it appeared to be significant as well ($F(2,99) = 118.66$, $R^2 = .71$, $p < .001$). When the individualistic thinking presents in the regression model together with the time spent, the direct effect of time spent on *liking* morally ambiguous content emerged to be no longer significant ($\beta = 0.18$, $SE = 0.12$, $t(99) = 1.45$, $p = .15$, 95% CI = [-0.07, 0.43]).

On the other hand, findings indicated that the adoption of individualistic thinking significantly predicts *liking* morally ambiguous content (path b) ($\beta = 0.23$, $SE = 0.02$, $t(99) = 12.49$, $p < .001$, 95%

CI = [0.20, 0.27]). The mediation model with the summary of the results can be seen in Figure 2 and, the detailed statistics can be found in Appendix C.

Findings supported Hypothesis 1b. The indirect effect of individualistic thinking on the relationship between time spent and liking behaviour was found to be statistically significant. Moreover, findings pointed out that the adoption of individualistic thinking fully mediates the relationship between the time spent on social media and tendency to *like* morally ambiguous content.

In order to test Hypothesis 1c, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis using SPSS Process Model 7 (Hayes, 2017). We dummy coded the moderator variable ($W = 0$, no ethical reminder; $W = 1$, ethical reminder). The moderated mediation analysis was computed with 5000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence interval.

When individualistic thinking regressed onto time spent and ethical reminder together, it revealed that the ethical reminder moderated the effect of time spent on adoption of individualistic thinking. Participants in the experimental group, independent from their time spent on social media, appeared to *like* morally ambiguous content less than the control group (Figure 3).

The interaction of time spent and the ethical reminder significantly predicted the decrease of individualistic thinking ($\beta = -3.50$, $SE = 0.70$, $t(202) = -5.03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [-4.87, -2.13]). On the other hand, higher adoption of individualistic thinking was associated with greater tendency to *like* morally ambiguous content ($\beta = 0.28$, $SE = 0.02$, $t(203) = 16.91.03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [0.25, 0.31]). This finding supported Hypothesis 1b one more time. The index of conditional indirect effects also supported the overall model (Index = -0.97, CI = [-1.45, -0.53]). Confidence interval does not include zero which reinforced the significant moderating impact of the ethical reminder. Conditional indirect effect of time spent on individualistic thinking resulted as follows: when there is no ethical reminder ($W = 0$; effect = 3.39, $SE = 0.45$, 95% CI = [2.50, 4.29]), and when there is an ethical reminder ($W = 1$; effect = -0.11, $SE = 0.53$, 95% CI = [-1.14, 0.93]). Consequently, findings supported Hypothesis 1c. An ethical reminder significantly moderated the indirect effect of individualistic thinking. When participants were provided with an ethical reminder, the association between time spent and liking morally ambiguous content decreased. The moderated

Average likelihood of liking morally ambiguous content

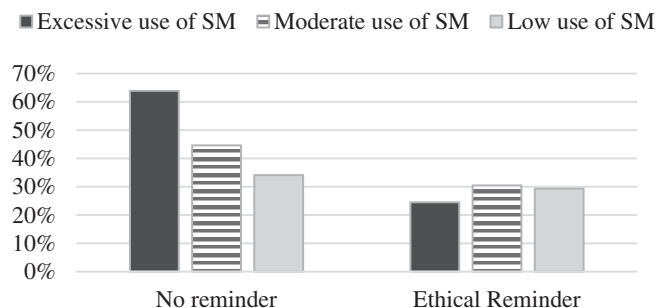
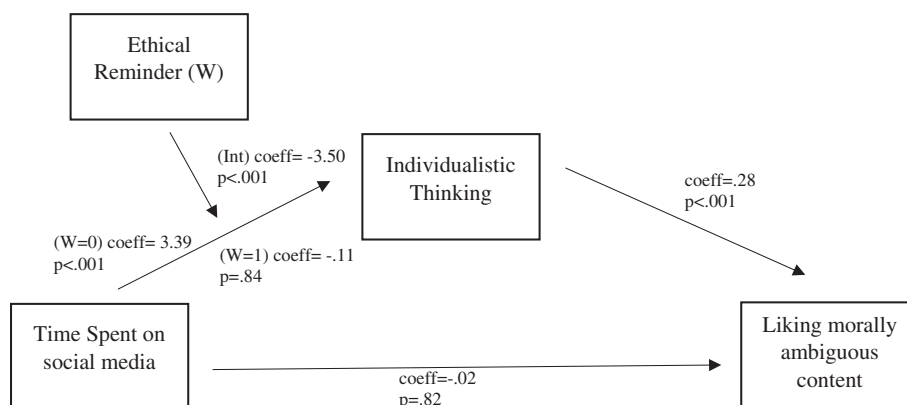


FIGURE 3 The likelihood of sending *likes* to morally ambiguous postings at two conditions

FIGURE 4 Ethical reminder moderates the indirect effect of individualistic thinking on the relationship between time spent on social media and liking morally ambiguous content (No ethical reminder: $W = 0$; Ethical reminder: $W = 1$).



mediation model with the summary of the results can be seen in Figure 4 and, the detailed statistics can be found in Appendix E.

5 | DISCUSSION

The study demonstrated that users who spend excessive time on social media are significantly more prone to *like* morally ambiguous content than the ones who spend moderate or little time on social media. On the other hand, there was no significant difference detected between the groups of participants who spend low and moderate time on social media. Hypothesis 1a is supported. Further, this study shed light to the mechanism driving the effect. Specifically, this study shows that increase in time spent on social media leads to an increase in the tendency to have individualistic thinking, which makes users more prone to *like* morally ambiguous contents such as disaster selfies. Our findings supported both Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b. Lastly, this study revealed that users who saw an ethical reminder were less likely to *like* morally ambiguous content (Hypothesis 1c).

5.1 | Theoretical implications

This study gives insights into the relationship between excessive social media use and user interactions in morally questionable contexts. It also discloses the underlying mechanism of this relationship by examining ethical thinking of online users. Existing study contributes to the literature in a few aspects.

First, instead of focusing on commonly studied social media interactions such as commenting, posting, messaging or sharing interactions (Basak et al., 2019; Bergman et al., 2011; Commane & Potton, 2019; Kowalski et al., 2014; Pettalia et al., 2013), it targets *likes*, which has not yet been studied as comprehensively as other online interactions. This study targets morally ambiguous situations on social media and spotlights its relationship with the time spent by users on social media.

Second, this study takes a close look into the relationship between excessive social media use and the act of giving *likes* to morally ambiguous contents. It demonstrates an association between higher time spent on social media with greater tendency to *like* morally ambiguous content. Users who spend excessive time on social media are more prone to give *likes* to morally ambiguous contents without questioning it in a broad ethical ambience.

Third, this study explains how a user's thinking type mediates the aforementioned relationship. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study that shows that individualistic thinking mediates the relationship between time spent on social media and *liking* behaviour in morally ambiguous contexts. Whereas past studies build a general framework on the thinking types of Flores and James (2013), this study's contribution is to apply this framework to the online context and relate it to time spent on social media. Specifically, our study contributes to demonstrate that the excessive use of social media leads

users to think in a particular way. The findings of this study may open a new door to further research on plausible mechanisms and possible impacts of the thinking types adopted in online decision-making processes. Further, these findings show that the social media environment and the nature of online relationships can profoundly change the way users feel, think and act.

Furthermore, this study supported the previously mentioned suggestion of Ge (2020) that ethical reminders could help to activate the users' moral judgement. The current study provided solid evidence that, when users are faced with an ethical reminder, they no longer tend to *like* the morally ambiguous content. When an ethical reminder is included, users tend to adopt more ethical thinking and less individualistic thinking. The users appeared to consider moral aspects of the content more than they normally do when they are reminded of ethical prospects and they took action upon their moral considerations. Regardless from the time spent on social media, they appeared to *like* the morally ambiguous content less. This demonstrated that, when one faces an ethical reminder, he/she tends to skip morally questionable content without giving it a *like*. This finding may imply that if users were reminded of real-life ethics on a regular basis, their social media presence could have been more considerate.

Lastly, the study focuses on millennials who are entitled as 'digital natives' (Bolton et al., 2013). It focuses on the very first generation who was highly exposed to technology, hence the social media, since they grew within digital life. The findings of this study add up to the existing literature by looking from another perspective to the millennials and their digital life. The current study provides insights concerning millennials' social media use and their moral reasoning behind the *likes* in morally controversial contexts. Future research could investigate if there is a difference between the way millennials think in real life and digital life, and how it affects their decision-making process.

5.2 | Practical implications

These findings are important for creators of online platforms and users of social media alike. Online platform providers could potentially implement regular ethical reminders into their online presence to avoid posting and liking of immoral content. Policy makers could learn from these findings and implement regulatory interventions or implementations of such reminders to mitigate such negative social behaviours.

5.3 | Implications for consumers

The recent Covid-19 crisis that came with worldwide lockdowns where consumers had to stay inside their homes and were not allowed to interact with others directly for months at a time (Gordon-Wilson, 2022). These lockdown policies significantly affected the behaviour of consumers. For example, consumers got involved in panic buying behaviour overbuying products they do not really need or use at that moment (Billore & Anisimova, 2021). Consumers also

binged more on alcohol or unhealthy snacks (Gordon-Wilson, 2022). Along the same vein, the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis affected the use of social media. In fact, the use of social media increased immensely during the last 2 years, especially for teenagers and young adults. This increased use of social media also amplified the risk to being exposed to morally questionable content such as fake news, violent content and disrespectful actions of users such as filming and posting content where someone pushes or beats a stranger. Oftentimes consumers are not aware of bingeing in the moment it occurs. Therefore, increasing consumer awareness of their own behaviour and reflecting more about which content they like and whom to follow, could significantly help decrease the popularity of morally questionable content. Further, helping consumers to exhibit more self-control during their consumption experience in general (Gordon-Wilson, 2022), but also during their use of social media, could be a way to decrease consuming morally questionable content online.

5.4 | Limitations and future research

This study was conducted only on the generation of millennials from all around the world. Possible location-related usage differences between social media users were not taken into consideration. We did not focus on personality traits in the ethical approach or on the cultural differences based on location and background. Differences in individual characteristics and different cultural traits could be addressed in further studies to establish a broader analysis. In the current study, we focused on reported screen times and rated tendency to *like*. Daily use of social media was self-reported by the participant but not measured.

The educational background of the participants was above than or equal to Bachelor's degree, except from a few participants. The educational level of the participant did not occur to be significant in this study. However, in future studies, other generations and another educational range might be analysed to further develop the research area.

Even though the manipulation of an ethical reminder was meant to prime users to be more aware of potentially unethical content, this priming effect of the intervention may cause a demand effect. We tried to prevent this by measuring different variables that do seem unrelated to ethical behaviour. However, future research could use more subtle cognitive primes to overcome this potential limitation. Another possible limitation is that the sample size is relatively small. Increasing the sample size could strengthen the statistical power of our results.

Another limitation of the study concerns the platform. In order to measure the user interactions, participants were provided with an Instagram feed. Arguments were grounded on the user interactions on a single social media platform. Our scope did not cover the possible impacts of specific platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and TikTok, which could be used for future research to support the existing evidence. Even though these platforms are similar in structure and purpose of use, we suggest finding further empirical evidence using different platforms to generalize these findings.

We used smiling disaster selfies as the morally ambiguous content. Our findings only implied reactions to smiling photos that were taken at dark tourism destinations. Another morally questionable context may be used to support the findings of this study. The disaster selfies that were used in the survey were taken in three specific disaster zones, namely the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone and the Sharon Tate's Murder House. Different influential powers of selected disaster zones were not taken into consideration.

6 | CONCLUSION

In the present study, we searched for an answer to the question: Why do some people *like* morally questionable content on social media while some others strongly dislike the same content? As a result of our study, we found causal evidence that users who spend excessive time on social media are more prone to *like* morally ambiguous content than the ones who spend moderate or little time on social media. We also shed light on the underlying mechanism of the association between the time spent and the *liking* behaviour by examining the mediating role of individualistic thinking. The results reflected that the adoption of individualistic thinking fully explains the association between time spent on social media and *liking* morally ambiguous contents. Longer time spent on social media is significantly associated with greater adoption of individualistic thinking among millennials. In addition, the higher adoption of individualistic thinking significantly predicts greater tendency to *like* morally questionable content. Moreover, the effect of time spent on *liking* behaviour becomes insignificant when individualistic thinking appears in the model, which implies that individualistic thinking fully mediates this relationship.

Findings revealed that millennials who spend excessive time on social media are more prone to deploy individualistic thinking, which resulted in greater tendency to *like* morally questionable content. However, when participants are reminded of ethical aspects of their online actions by means of an ethical reminder, their adoption of individualistic thinking significantly diminished, whereas that of ethical thinking significantly increased. Consequently, when users are provided with an ethical reminder, the association between time spent on social media and *liking* morally ambiguous content vanishes. In the presence of an ethical reminder, time spent, and adoption of individualistic thinking are revealed to be no longer associated, therefore the association between time spent and *liking* morally ambiguous content also disappeared. Using an experimental approach is crucial to offer causal evidence rather than just correlational data.

On a final note, our research contributes to the current knowledge of consumer marketing and consumer psychology in the domain of morally sustainable consumption and consumer attitudes and perceptions in the digital world. Research so far has largely overlooked the aspect of morality in the digital domain such as social media usage. Therefore, understanding when and why consumers act immorally in the digital domain and how to mitigate such behaviour is crucial in an ever-growing online world.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX A: SCATTERPLOTS DISPLAYING THE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES

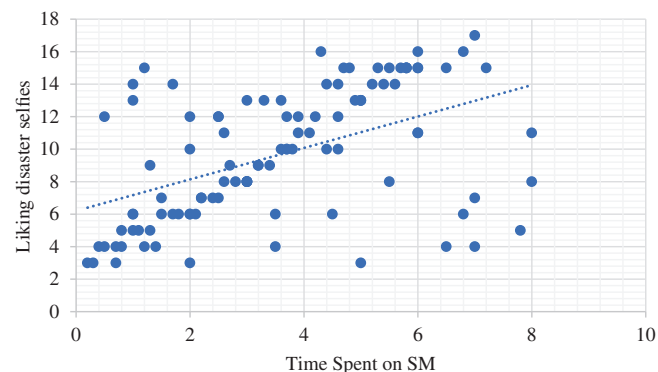


FIGURE A1 There is a positive correlation between time spent on social media and liking morally ambiguous content.

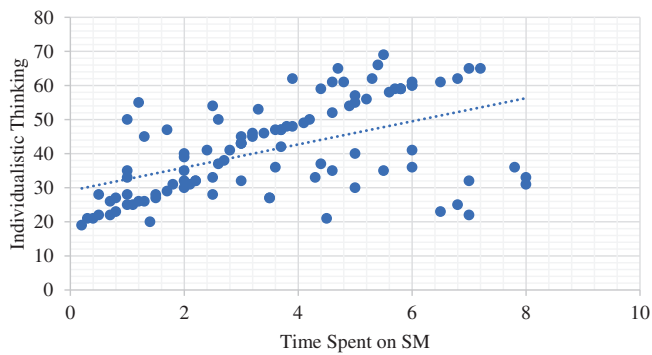


FIGURE A2 There is a positive correlation between time spent on social media and adoption of individualistic thinking.

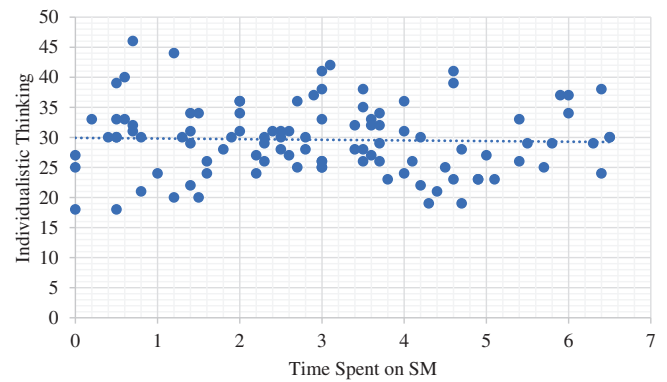


FIGURE A5 When participants are provided with an ethical reminder, the positive correlation between time spent on social media and adoption of individualistic thinking (Figure A2) vanishes.

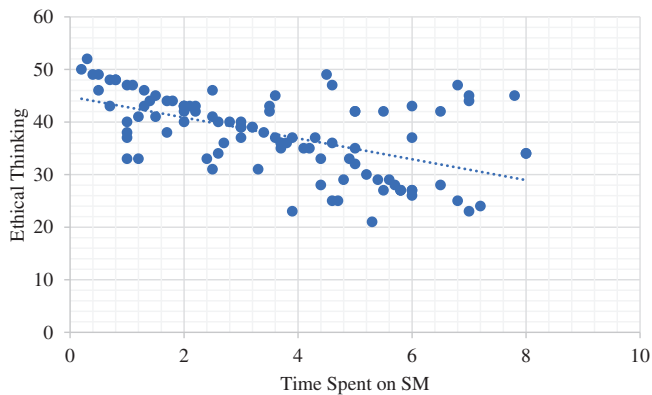


FIGURE A3 There is a negative correlation between time spent on social media and adoption of ethical thinking.

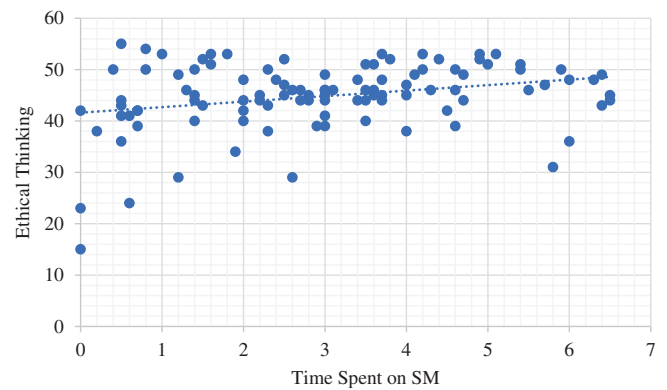


FIGURE A6 When participants are provided with an ethical reminder, the negative correlation between time spent on social media and adoption of ethical thinking (Figure A3) vanishes.

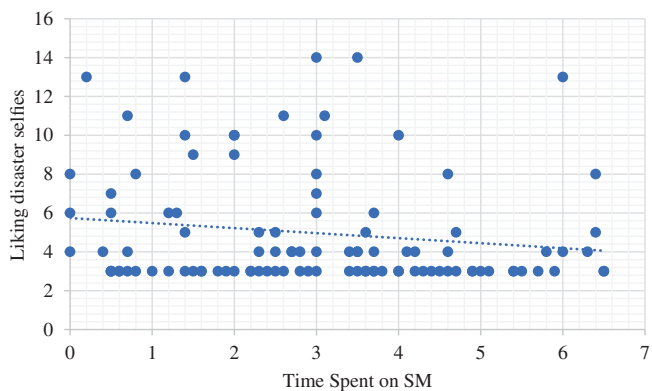


FIGURE A4 When participants are provided with an ethical reminder, the positive correlation between time spent on social media and liking morally ambiguous content (Figure A1) vanishes.

APPENDIX B: ONE-WAY ANOVA COMPARING THE TENDENCY TO LIKE MORALLY AMBIGUOUS CONTENT AMONG GROUPS OF LOW, MODERATE AND EXCESSIVE TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

TABLE B1 Descriptive statistics for control group data

	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence interval for mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
Low use	14	6.14	3.86	1.03	3.91	8.37	3	14
Moderate use	32	8.03	2.99	0.53	6.95	9.11	3	15
Excessive use	56	11.50	3.66	0.49	10.52	12.48	3	17
Total	102	9.68	4.05	0.40	8.88	10.47	3	17

TABLE B2 Results of one-way ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	447.64	2	223.82	18.36	<0.001
Within Groups	1206.68	99	12.19		
Total	1654.32	101			

TABLE B3 Pairwise comparison results of the post hoc test, Gabriel

	(I) Category	(J) Category	Mean difference (I – J)	SE	Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
Gabriel	Low use	Moderate use	–1.89	1.12	.240	–4.55	0.77
		Excessive use	–5.36	1.04	<0.001	–7.76	–2.95
	Moderate use	Low use	1.89	1.12	0.240	–.77	4.55
		Excessive use	–3.47	0.77	<0.001	–5.33	–1.61
	Excessive use	Low use	5.36	1.04	<0.001	2.95	7.76
		Moderate use	3.47	0.77	<0.001	1.61	5.33

APPENDIX C: MEDIATION ANALYSIS ASSESSING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF INDIVIDUALISTIC THINKING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME SPENT AND LIKING MORALLY AMBIGUOUS CONTENT

					95% CI	
	Observed coefficient	Bootstrapped SE	t	p	Lower bound	Upper bound
Liking morally ambiguous content (Y)						
Time spent on social media (X)	0.97	0.17	5.65	<.001	0.63	1.31
Individualistic thinking (M)						
Time spent on social media	3.39	0.58	5.88	<.001	2.25	4.54
Liking morally ambiguous content						
Individualistic thinking	0.23	0.02	12.49	<.001	0.20	0.27
Time spent on social media	0.18	0.12	1.45	.15	−0.07	0.43

APPENDIX D: T TEST ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF MANIPULATION BETWEEN THE CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

TABLE D1 Descriptive statistics for both conditions: with and without ethical reminder

Conditions	N	Mean	SD	SE
Ethical thinking				
Without ethical reminder	102	37.71	7.40	0.73
With ethical reminder	104	44.81	6.76	0.66
Individualistic thinking				
Without ethical reminder	102	41.30	13.78	1.37
With ethical reminder	104	29.61	5.87	0.58

	t	df	Two-sided p	95% CI	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
Ethical thinking	−7.19	201.61	<.001	−9.050	−5.154
Individualistic thinking	7.90	135.89	<.001	8.77	14.63

TABLE D2 Independent samples t test assessing the significance of difference in adoption of individualistic and ethical thinking in both conditions

APPENDIX E: MODERATED MEDIATION ANALYSIS ASSESSING THE MODERATOR EFFECT OF ETHICAL REMINDER ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND INDIVIDUALISTIC THINKING

					95% CI	
	Observed coefficient	Bootstrapped SE	t	p	Lower bound	Upper bound
Individualistic thinking (M)						
Time spent on social media (X)	3.39	0.45	7.48	<.001	2.50	4.29
Ethical reminder (W)	−10.68	1.33	−8.06	<.001	−13.29	−8.07
Interaction (X × W)	−3.50	0.70	−5.03	<.001	−4.87	−2.13
					95% CI	
	Effect	Bootstrapped SE	t	p	Lower bound	Upper bound
Conditional effects of focal predictors at values of the moderators						
Without ethical reminder	3.39	0.45	7.48	<.001	2.50	4.29
With ethical Reminder	−.11	0.53	−.20	.84	−1.14	0.93

APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM THAT IS APPROVED BY EVERY PARTICIPANT BEFORE BEGINNING THE SURVEY

The purpose of this study is to examine the interactions on social media. This study is being conducted through the Technical University of Munich. The information you provide in this survey will be used for research purposes only, and by completing the survey you give your consent to the research. Your responses will be anonymous and will never be linked to you personally. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Thank you for your cooperation!

APPENDIX G: ETHICAL REMINDER

The short text started by saying: ‘Social media can be a powerful environment to exchange ideas and raise awareness. However, it can

also be offensive...’. Then, it gave a brief information about the background of the tweet of Auschwitz Museum. Afterwards, the tweet of Auschwitz Museum displayed along with a collage of tourist images at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. In 2019, Auschwitz Museum tweeted about the tourists who posed on the rail tracks in front of the Concentration Camp. The tweet included a collage of photos that were posted on social media by young visitors balancing on the rail tracks. The tweet goes as follows: when you come to @Auschwitz-Museum, remember you are at the site where over 1 million people were killed. Respect their memory. There are better places to learn how to walk on a balance beam than the site which symbolizes deportation of hundreds of thousands to their deaths (Auschwitz Memorial, 2019).