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*For those who believe  
that meaning can emerge  
even in complexity.*



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and research context

### *1.1 Background and problem framing*

Over the past two decades, digital transformation has profoundly changed the conditions under which organizations produce, distribute, and make information accessible. The progressive digitization of communication channels has led to a proliferation of touchpoints, a multiplication of formats and a growing overlap between institutional, promotional and value levels. In this scenario, communication no longer develops along linear paths, but is articulated in reticular ecosystems characterized by partial, repeated and not necessarily coordinated exposures.

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector represents an emblematic context of this transformation. As highlighted in the description of the case, companies operating in this area are confronted with a high communication density, a plurality of brands and a strong diversification of touchpoints, which include packaging, points of sale, digital platforms, social campaigns, institutional sites and thematic information materials. The resulting information architecture is complex, stratified and non-linear: content circulates between different channels, assuming heterogeneous and temporally distributed narrative configurations.

Within this environment of high information complexity, sustainability communication has taken on an increasingly central role. Environmental, social and governance issues are now firmly integrated into corporate narratives and are no longer confined to specialist

reports or technical sections. However, it is precisely this widespread integration that contributes to generating a communicative domain with high interpretative ambiguity.

Sustainability is not presented as a univocal set of data or initiatives, but as a constellation of principles, policies, operational projects, value storytelling and synthetic claims. These elements, distributed along fragmented digital paths, can be selected and combined in different ways depending on the access point, the role of the user and his expectations. The ambiguity does not derive from the scarcity of information, but from its surplus and the multiplicity of possible connections between heterogeneous signals.

In this sense, sustainability communication represents a paradigmatic case of a highly equivocal environment, in which the construction of narrative coherence is not guaranteed by the mere availability of content, but depends on the ability to connect principles and initiatives, statements and practices, strategic vision and concrete implementation. Credibility is not based exclusively on the factual accuracy of individual messages, but on the perception of coherence between different discursive levels.

At the same time, the emergence and diffusion of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) technologies, in particular Large Language Models (LLMs), are introducing new ways of accessing and reorganizing information. Starting in 2023, the use of conversational chatbots and Retrieval-Augmented Generation systems has progressively expanded to organizational, informational and communicative contexts. These tools allow users to query complex document bases through a unified interface, overcoming

traditional hierarchical navigation and obtaining synthetic, contextualized and linguistically coherent answers.

In the case analyzed in this research, Gen AI is used to make a set of institutional content related to sustainability, distributed on different sections of the corporate website, searchable. The system does not generate new content, but selects, compares and synthesizes pre-existing materials according to conversational logics and according to the role declared by the user. In this way, technology intervenes directly on the methods of access and articulation of communicative signals.

The introduction of such tools does not eliminate fragmentation but reconfigures it. On the one hand, Gen AI promises to reduce information overload through narrative synthesis and reorganization; on the other hand, it operates according to opaque and statistical algorithmic logics, which influence the selection and hierarchization of content without making the underlying criteria fully transparent. Conversational interaction thus becomes a space in which information is made intelligible according to plausible configurations, but situated and dependent on the context.

In the light of these transformations, the central problem that orients the present thesis emerges: how is plausibility constructed in fragmented communication environments, with high information density and mediated by generative technologies?

The crux does not concern the verification of the veracity of the contents, nor the measurement of the technical performance of the linguistic model. Rather, it concerns the

conditions through which dispersed signals are selected, linked and articulated in temporarily coherent narrative configurations. In a context in which access to information is mediated by conversational systems, plausibility becomes the pragmatic criterion through which users orient their understanding.

The present research is therefore located at the intersection between digital transformation, sustainability communication and Gen AI, taking as the object of investigation not the content itself, but the process through which it is made intelligible. The focus is on the dynamics of selection, comparison and synthesis that allow the construction of plausible configurations in environments characterized by fragmentation and information overabundance.

In this perspective, sustainability communication in the FMCG sector is a privileged laboratory to observe how plausibility is produced, stabilized and sometimes tensioned within a complex and technologically mediated communication ecosystem.

### ***1.2 Research motivation and relevance***

The present research is located at the intersection of three strands that, despite having experienced significant developments in recent years, have rarely been systematically integrated: sensemaking theory, studies on sustainability communication and the literature on Generative Artificial Intelligence technologies.

From a theoretical point of view, the relevance of the study derives first of all from the centrality assumed by interpretative processes in contemporary organizational contexts. Sensemaking shifts the focus from the mere processing of information to the construction

of plausible configurations that allow actors to orient action in environments characterized by equivocality. In this perspective, organization is not only a decision-making system, but a system of interpretation that selects, articulates and temporarily stabilizes meanings.

At the same time, sustainability communication has shown how disclosure does not produce linear effects but activates dynamics of symbolic negotiation and co-construction of meaning. In environments with high digital fragmentation, credibility does not depend exclusively on the quality of the individual content, but on the perceived consistency between principles, initiatives and narratives distributed along multiple touchpoints. The literature has shown that these processes are intrinsically interpretative and dependent on the cognitive frames of stakeholders. However, the analysis of the socio-technical conditions through which this construction of plausibility is made operational still remains limited.

It is in this space that the theoretical relevance of GenAI fits in. Studies on Large Language Models have mainly focused on performance, scalability and quality of output. Only more recently has a reflection emerged on their role in information and communication processes. The interaction with a conversational system is not limited to the retrieval of contents, but makes observable practices of selection, comparison and synthesis that affect the final discursive configuration. Investigating GenAI as an interpretative mediator, rather than as a simple technical tool, therefore makes it possible to bridge a gap between organizational literature and technological studies, contributing to an interdisciplinary dialogue that is still being consolidated.

Alongside the academic relevance, the research has significant empirical and practical relevance, particularly in the FMCG context. This sector is characterized by high communication density, multiplicity of brands and strong fragmentation of touchpoints. Sustainability is now integrated into the corporate narrative and is distributed between institutional content, value storytelling, operational initiatives and promotional communication. This stratification makes the process through which different stakeholders build coherent images of the organization particularly complex.

In this scenario, the adoption of conversational systems based on GenAI represents a concrete transformation in the ways of accessing information. The artifact analyzed in this thesis allows to query a fragmented knowledge base through a single interface, introducing discursive variations according to the user's role. This element makes the FMCG context a privileged laboratory to observe how technology can affect the conditions of visibility, hierarchization and articulation of communicative signals.

The central motivation of the study therefore lies in the need to understand not whether Gen AI "works" in technical terms, but how it intervenes in the processes of meaning construction. Considering Gen AI as an interpretative mediator means questioning how it contributes to making certain narrative configurations plausible, which connections it makes explicit and which ones remain in the background. This perspective differs from approaches oriented towards performance measurement or marketing outcomes analysis, focusing instead on the conditions of intelligibility of information in fragmented environments.

### ***1.3 Research objectives and research questions***

The general objective of this thesis is to analyze how a conversational system based on Generative Artificial Intelligence contributes to the construction of plausible configurations of sustainability communication in an environment characterized by digital fragmentation and high information density.

The research is structured around three interconnected Research Questions:

1. RQ1. How does a GenAI-powered chatbot support an understanding of a multinational company's sustainability initiatives in the FMCG industry?

This question investigates the ways in which the system reorganizes fragmented content, making it accessible and intelligible through a conversational interface.

2. RQ2. How are the responses generated by the LLM perceived in terms of clarity, usefulness and credibility, compared to direct consultation of the institutional knowledge base?

The interest is not to objectively measure these dimensions, but to reconstruct how they emerge as interpretative configurations in the comparison between original contents and synthesized outputs.

3. RQ3. Which dimensions of sustainability communication benefit most from conversational mediation and what risks or interpretative limits may emerge?

This question explores the discursive variations between initiatives, results and value principles, observing how algorithmic mediation can foster the construction of coherence or make tensions and ambiguities visible.

#### ***1.4 Overview of the methodological approach***

The approach is configured as a qualitative case study within the FMCG sector, chosen for its high communicative complexity and the proliferation of digital touchpoints. The delimitation of the case to a single organization and to exclusively public and institutional sources allows to maintain analytical consistency and control of the empirical perimeter, avoiding inter-organizational comparisons that are not relevant with respect to the interpretative objectives of the research

At the center of the empirical framework is the Copilot based on Gen AI, considered not as an object of technical evaluation, but as a socio-technical artifact through which to observe dynamics of interpretative mediation. The Copilot is configured as a conversational interface anchored to a public document knowledge base and operates according to the logic of selection, semantic retrieval and discursive generation. Its methodological relevance lies in making the process of narrative reorganization of fragmented content observable.

From a data point of view, the research is based on a systematic document analysis of the institutional pages related to sustainability, integrated into the architecture of the Copilot. The documents are not treated as simple information content, but as the expression of a communication infrastructure that delimits the interpretative possibilities of the stakeholders. The analysis focuses on emerging configurations in user-artifact interaction, observing how different frames (e.g., declared roles) influence signal selection and articulation.

The analytical attention is therefore paid to the practices of selection, comparison and synthesis that structure the conversational output, rather than to the factual correctness or technical performance of the model. The intent of the analysis is not to evaluate the effectiveness of the system in terms of accuracy or computational quality, but to understand how it contributes to the construction of plausibility in contexts of high equivocality.

### ***1.5 Contribution of the study***

On the theoretical level, the main contribution concerns the extension of the literature on sensemaking to socio-technical contexts mediated by conversational systems. Sensemaking has in fact been predominantly conceptualized as a human-organizational process. This thesis shows how the practices of selection, comparison and synthesis can be made empirically observable through a digital artifact that structures access to communicative signals. In this way, the work contributes to enriching the understanding of the conditions through which plausibility is constructed in environments of high equivocality.

In relation to sustainability communication, the study offers a contribution in considering credibility not as an intrinsic property of content, but as an interpretative configuration emerging from the articulation between principles, initiatives and narratives distributed along multiple touchpoints. The research highlights how the digital fragmentation and communication density typical of the FMCG sector make the problem of narrative coherence and temporary stabilization of meaning central.

With respect to the debate on Gen AI, the contribution consists in shifting the focus from the technical performance of the model to its function of interpretative mediation. The conversational system is not treated as a mere automation or reporting tool, but as a device that reorganizes the visibility and hierarchy of communicative signals, affecting the ways in which plausibility is constructed.

### ***1.6 Structure of the thesis***

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, organized according to a logical progression that coherently connects theoretical framework, methodological design, empirical analysis and discussion of results.

Chapter 1 introduces the context of the research, defines the central problem related to the construction of plausibility in fragmented communicative environments and clarifies objectives, research questions, methodological approach and expected contribution of the study.

Chapter 2 develops the literature review, integrating contributions on sensemaking as a process of meaning construction, on sustainability communication as an interpretative arena, on the fragmentation of digital touchpoints and on the emerging role of GenAI as a discursive mediation device. The final synthesis of the chapter prepares the ground for the next theoretical positioning.

Chapter 3 defines the theoretical framing of the phenomenon, explaining the conceptual gap between sensemaking, marketing communication and generative technologies, and

placing the research in an interpretative framework that focuses on the socio-technical conditions of the construction of meaning.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach, outlining the qualitative and design-oriented design, the perimeter of the case, the documentary sources and the analytical strategy adopted, consistent with a non-evaluative but reconstructive perspective of the interpretative configurations.

Chapter 5 describes the empirical context, delving into the communication environment of the FMCG sector, the architecture of digital touchpoints and the role of the Copilot as a conversational artifact designed to query an institutional knowledge base.

Chapter 6 presents the empirical analysis, reconstructing the dynamics of selection, comparison and synthesis of sustainability signals and highlighting the emerging interpretative configurations in role-based interactions.

Finally, chapter 7 discusses the results in light of the theoretical framework, highlighting the implications for sensemaking theory, sustainability communication, and the Gen AI debate, as well as outlining limitations and possible future developments.



# Chapter 2

## Literature review

### *2.1 Sensemaking as organizing and leadership capability*

The concept of sensemaking has progressively established itself and evolved in organizational theory as an interpretative key to understanding how companies deal with situations characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity.

The father of this line of research is considered Weick who has set as a starting point the recognition of organizational environments that are characterized by equivocality, i.e. environments subject to the presence of signals susceptible to multiple interpretations. Sensemaking is posed as a response to this equivocality, transforming indistinct information flows into configurations with internal coherence. (Sutcliffe & Obstfeld 2005) later reinterpreted Weick's statement, arguing that sensemaking consists in "the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing."

A crucial step in sensemaking theory involves shifting the guiding criterion from accuracy to plausibility. In complex and ambiguous contexts, the aspiration to a representation that is perfectly adherent to reality is impracticable. Plausibility thus becomes a pragmatic criterion: an interpretative map is adequate if it allows one to orient oneself and act.

In his synthesis work on the literature on sensemaking, Ancona takes up and deepens Weick's arguing that privileged access to complete information is not necessary, but the

ability to build coherent narratives that allow the organization to proceed even in conditions of uncertainty.

To better understand the concept of sensemaking, one of the most relevant works was that of Weick, who used the parallelism of "mapmaking" to describe the way in which organizational actors construct partial and provisional representations of the context. The map is not the territory but is to be understood as a tool that allows you to orient yourself. Its usefulness does not depend on completeness, but on the ability to provide operational coordinates.

Ancona in his text he articulates this process in three interconnected phases: exploration of the system, construction of the map and action as learning. Exploration involves being open to weak signals, multiple perspectives, and interactions with different actors. The construction of the map consists in organizing these signals into a coherent structure. The action is not a simple application of the map, but a moment of verification and re-elaboration: through the action the map is updated, refined or transformed.

A further element that will return frequently in this thesis is the role attributed to the action of the user who consumes the information. The action is not to be considered as the result of the interpretative process but is to be reviewed as a constitutive component of the same. The actors "enact" the environment, that is, they contribute to building it through their actions. In this way, understanding does not necessarily precede the intervention but develops in parallel with it.

This link between action and understanding distinguishes sensemaking both from information processing, which emphasizes the processing of information inputs, and from traditional decision-making, which presupposes pre-defined alternatives. In sensemaking, alternatives emerge through interaction with the environment and are made visible thanks to the processes of exploration and mapmaking.

## ***2.2 Equivocality, uncertainty and plausibility in complex environments***

Understanding sensemaking as an organizational process requires an in-depth understanding of the environmental conditions that make it necessary to activate it. A fundamental principle to consider is that of equivocality, which represents a key concept for distinguishing situations of information uncertainty from contexts characterized by structural interpretative ambiguity.

The equivocality therefore does not correspond with the scarcity of data, but with the presence of signals susceptible to multiple plausible readings. The role of the organization is not only to acquire information to share, but to do a job of selection, synthesis and stabilization of meanings. As highlighted in the original formulation, organizations can be conceived as "interpretation systems" (Daft & Weick, 1984), whose primary task is to reduce ambiguity through meaning-attribution practices.

This makes a clear distinction between technical uncertainty and adaptive challenges on the other. The first is related to problems for which there are procedures, skills or knowledge; on the other hand, the latter imply the redefinition of the interpretative frameworks and cognitive maps through which reality is understood. In complex environments, organizations are increasingly confronted with adaptive challenges that

cannot be solved by applying legacy solutions. In these contexts, sensemaking does not represent a residual activity, but a central organizational skill.

Ancona stresses the need to review sensemaking as a process of structuring the unknown where actors explore the system and each builds interpretative maps. The environment is therefore not a set of objective facts, but a flow of signals whose relevance emerges only with interaction.

In highly complex environments, such as FMCG, the accuracy of the information loses its centrality over plausibility. Plausibility is not equivalent to factual truth, but to the ability of a narrative to be coherent and stable enough to guide collective action. As evidenced in the literature on sensemaking, the construction of meaning privileges narrative continuity over immediate objective verification (Weick, 1995).

### ***2.3 Sustainability communication and interpretative dynamics***

The literature in the field of sustainability communication highlights different phases that have developed by shifting the focus from information disclosure to the relational dimension of the communication process.

First of all, this branch of communication has been characterized mainly by a transmissive conception with the emphasis placed on sustainability reports, social reports and documents that are mostly technical. The implicit assumption is therefore at this stage that a greater amount of information could automatically help to obtain a better understanding and greater trust from stakeholders.

Subsequently, however, it was highlighted that sustainability communication does not produce linear effects, but is subject to processes of interpretation, comparison and attribution of meaning by the recipients. Disclosure, therefore, does not coincide with the construction of meaning.

The transition from informational logics to dialogic logics is placed in this passage. Sustainability communication is increasingly interpreted as a two-way process in which sensegiving and sensemaking are intertwined. Organizations do not limit themselves to "making sense" through strategic narratives but enter a communicative space in which stakeholders co-produce interpretations, rework messages and place them within their own cognitive frames. Communication thus becomes a symbolic arena in which meanings related to responsibility, impact, authenticity and coherence are negotiated.

Declarations of principle, operational initiatives, quantitative data and value narratives do not act as isolated elements, but as signals that are continuously compared with each other. Credibility does not derive exclusively from the factual veracity of each piece of content, but from the perceived consistency between the different levels of discourse: principles and practices, vision and implementation, promise and result.

Symbolic negotiation thus becomes a structural component of sustainability communication. Meanings are not fixed once and for all at the time of publication of a report or a web page, but are temporarily stabilized through processes of comparison, discussion and re-elaboration. In this perspective, credibility is the result of a dynamic balance between internal coherence of the corporate discourse and congruence with

external expectations. It cannot be reduced to an objective attribute of the text but must be understood as a configuration emerging from the interaction between communicative signals and interpretative schemes.

#### ***2.4 Generative AI and emerging interpretative mediation***

Starting from 2023, the development of Large Language Models and related foundation models have dramatically increased academic interest in generative technologies based on transformer architectures and trained on large amounts of textual data. Foundation models are conceived as generalist basic models, capable of being adapted to multiple tasks through fine-tuning techniques or prompt engineering. In the case of LLMs, the main goal is the generation of coherent text from minimal linguistic inputs thanks to the statistical learning of syntactic and semantic patterns present in the training corpora.

The technical literature initially emphasized aspects such as computational scalability, parameter size, output quality, and comparative performance compared to standardized benchmarks. In this perspective, the focus was mainly oriented towards the model's ability to produce grammatically correct, stylistically consistent and contextually plausible texts. However, as evidenced by critical contributions in the field of Natural Language Processing, language generation does not necessarily coincide with a semantic understanding anchored in the world. Language models operate through statistical correlations between sequences of tokens, without direct access to extralinguistic referents or forms of conscious intentionality.

This observation has fueled a line of reflection centred on the semantic limits of LLMs. The absence of grounding implies that textual coherence does not guarantee factual

adherence or interpretative stability. The model can produce plausible but unverified statements, a phenomenon often described in terms of "hallucination". In parallel, the growing architectural complexity and training on proprietary datasets have raised the issue of algorithmic opacity. For the user, the process of generating outputs remains largely a "black box" that is difficult to reconstruct in deterministic terms.

The first applications of LLMs in the field of information and communication focused on tasks such as the automatic synthesis of documents, the support of text writing, the semantic analysis of reports and the classification of contents. In the field of sustainability, for example, there are uses oriented towards the automated reading of ESG reports, the extraction of relevant indicators or support for regulatory compliance. In these cases, the main focus is on operational efficiency and the reduction of cognitive load in the management of large volumes of documents.

By applying the context of sensemaking to generative technologies, we can review LLMs as tools capable of transforming fragmented information flows into synthetic and intelligible narratives. Text generation does not limit itself to reproducing existing content, but reorganizes it according to implicit criteria of relevance, thematic progression and argumentative hierarchy. In this sense, the model contributes to the production of plausible configurations that can guide the user's interpretation, without replacing his critical capacity.

However, this mediation is always situated and dependent on the interactive context. The literature on sensemaking emphasizes how meaning emerges from the framing of stimuli

within specific interpretative frames. Similarly, the output of an LLM varies depending on the prompt, the role assumed by the user, and the conversational context maintained by the system. Algorithmic mediation does not eliminate equivocality, but redefines the ways in which it is articulated, making some connections more explicit and others less visible.

### ***2.5 Integrative synthesis of the literature***

The literature analyzed converges on a crucial point: in contemporary contexts, the central question does not concern the availability of information, but the conditions through which this information is made intelligible. The theory of sensemaking has provided a robust interpretative key to understand how, in environments characterized by equivocality, actors construct plausible configurations through processes of selection, articulation and temporary stabilization of meanings. Plausibility, rather than accuracy, becomes the pragmatic criterion that allows action to be oriented in conditions of complexity.

This perspective finds a particularly fertile empirical ground in the communication of sustainability. The literature shows how the transition from informational logics to dialogic logics has made it clear that disclosure does not coincide with the construction of meaning. Sustainability content is configured as signals distributed along multiple touchpoints, subject to differentiated interpretations and symbolic negotiation processes. Credibility emerges not as an intrinsic property of the text, but as the situated outcome of comparisons between principles, initiatives and stakeholder expectations. In this sense, sustainability communication is fully part of the interpretative dynamic described by

sensemaking: environments rich in signals that require continuous mapping and reorganization operations.

Digital fragmentation further accentuates this condition. In the FMCG context, the proliferation of touchpoints and the stratification of content produce a non-linear information ecosystem, in which repeated and partial exposures contribute to the construction of potentially divergent organizational images. Information overload does not derive from the absence of data, but from their surplus with respect to the processing capacity of the actors. In this scenario, interpretative coherence is not guaranteed by formal communicative architecture but depends on the ability to connect dispersed signals within sufficiently stable narrative configurations.

The entry of Large Language Models and generative technologies introduces an additional layer of complexity. On the one hand, these systems promise to reduce fragmentation through the conversational synthesis of distributed documentary bases; on the other hand, they operate according to opaque and statistical algorithmic logics, devoid of fully transparent semantic grounding. The automatic generation of coherent texts expands the possibilities of narrative articulation, but at the same time redefines the ways in which signals are selected and hierarchical.

Here a significant theoretical tension emerges. Sensemaking theory emphasizes the social, situated and retrospective dimension of meaning construction; The literature on foundation models focuses mainly on performance, scalability and quality of output. However, some convergences are beginning to take shape: LLMs can be observed as

devices that intervene in the processes of selection, comparison and synthesis, making explicit connections that would otherwise be dispersed. As shown in the empirical analysis, the reorganization of contents according to different configurations makes visible the situated and parametric character of plausibility.

At the same time, structural tensions remain. The plausibility generated by a linguistic model can contribute to narrative stabilization without coinciding with a substantial verification of the contents. Algorithmic opacity introduces a form of mediation that does not eliminate equivocality but reconfigures it. In addition, sustainability communication, already exposed to the risk of divergent interpretations or critical readings, can be further influenced by the ways in which content is synthesized and returned in a conversational form.



# Chapter 3

## Theoretical background, gaps and conceptual positioning

### *3.1 Framing of the phenomenon*

For years, studies relating to management and marketing have introduced the idea that communication and decision-making processes cannot be reduced to a simple transmission of information. Thinking about reality, when an environmental "input" is received, a series of interpretation processes are activated in order to then initiate decision-making action (Daft & Weick, 1984).

According to this perspective, we could generalize any type of company or organization as a communication system that differs from others according to managerial attitudes, the level of management involvement and with a specific focus on equivocality as a cognitive and social problem, in the authors' own terms: "A comparative model of organizations as interpretation systems is proposed." (Daft & Weick, 1984).

According to this strand we can define sensemaking as the link between interpretation and organization, the focus is therefore shifted from the pure outcome of the decision to the conditions through which significant sensemaking becomes operational and orients decision-making action, in other words we could say that "sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action." (Weick et al., 2005).

### ***3.2 Sustainability communication as an interpretative process***

In recent years, sustainability has acquired a central role in the communication of all companies and plays a crucial role especially for product companies and even more so in the FMCG sector.

The literature analyzed has as a common point of view the idea that the communicative effectiveness of sustainability-related messages does not derive from the quantity of disclosure, but from the ability to structure journeys that fluidly connect stakeholders with the meaning that the latter attribute to sustainability (Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Vollero, 2013).

According to what has just been presented, the papers distinguish between unidirectional approaches that are predominantly oriented towards sensegiving and dialogical approaches that instead intertwine sensegiving with sensemaking, taking as a reference (Vollero, 2013) we can say that "Symmetrical two-way communication is iteratively based on the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving."

An emblematic theme that can facilitate understanding is that of greenwashing, which represents a borderline case of interpretative divergence between substantial performance and communication, with potentially harmful results for the brand in terms of trust and credibility in the inflammatory perimeter of substantivity (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Vollero, 2013).

In parallel, sustainability could be perceived by stakeholders as a pure reporting exercise or as an impression management device, especially when companies are unable to select

and make understandable metrics and messages in a balanced way, "sustainability reports reflect the impression management strategies used by companies" (Diouf & Boiral, 2017).

### ***3.3 The information fragmentation of digital touchpoints***

There is an element to consider that could be taken for granted, mainly to date corporate communication takes place through digital channels and obviously sustainability communication also passes through these platforms.

The literature on this problematizes the assumption that the digitization of communication necessarily implies "isolated bubbles", to resume a philosophical vision of the "monads of attention"; The central and particularly thorny issue is due to the fact of having to distribute the attention of users and the duplication of the audience between different channels. In their paper (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012) they clearly say, "Audience fragmentation is often taken as evidence of social polarization.", so it is necessary to identify adequate metrics to capture audience fragmentation and duplication.

From a consumer journey analysis point of view, we can clearly see this fragmentation through the proliferation of touchpoints and communication channels. It is precisely this fragmentation that has substantial effects on the way consumers acquire information along the consumer journey (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Having all these stimuli and these possibilities of interactions with the brand, an "information overload" is generated in the audience, i.e. the overexposure to information by a company compared to its clientele. In the literature, the concept of "information overload" represents a point of convergence between fragmentation and interpretation as

it explains when and why the information overload translates into dysfunctional outcomes. "Information overload occurs when the volume of the information supply exceeds the limited human information processing capacity." (Eppler & Mengis, 2004).

### ***3.4 Gen AI, interpretation and sensemaking***

In recent years, with the explosion of ChatGPT and Large Language Models, literature has also begun to pay more attention to natural language processing. Large language models today are able to generate long amounts of text with a consistent style, but this does not necessarily imply that the models have a real semantic understanding anchored in the world, "it lacks the ability to connect its utterances to the world." (Bender & Koller, 2020).

In parallel with the theme of understanding, the scientific community has developed a line of reflection on the costs and risks related to LLMs. This reflection involves sustainability in a broader sense (environmental, social, informative). In a paper (Bender et al., 2021) they invite Gen AI users to evaluate the dimensions and impacts of technological choices according to energy, economic and bias mitigation drivers. The authors try to go beyond the idea that the larger a model is, the more effective the model is in terms of quality and output of knowledge produced.

With regard to the relationship between LLM and sensemaking, the contributions are still not numerous, identify sensemaking as a problem that has a double face, interface and scaling. In fact, if the conversational channel typical of an LLM involves linear interaction, consumers' ways of exploring and structuring knowledge are often non-linear

and need external supports, as clearly reported by (Suh et al., 2023) "current interfaces for interacting with LLMs are generally linear to support conversational interaction."

A second line of research concerns the management of multiple outputs generated by AI, in fact the possibility of generating content quickly and easily can often amplify the interpretative load entrusted to the user, making it necessary to compare and synthesize techniques "at a glance" (Gero et al., 2024). The paper examines some visualization and grouping features as elements that can reduce the overload created by the accumulation of outputs that may be difficult for users to synthesize and assimilate and thus connect Gen AI with assisted sensemaking mechanisms (Gero et al., 2024).

Going into the details of ESG reporting, the literature begins to explore with initial contributions how Gen AI can be a tool to support interpretative skills rather than a simple reporting optimizer or automator (Bag et al., 2026).

### ***3.5 Theoretical and contextual gap***

In the analysis of the literature, it is essential to consider a further element, the literature currently available both on the sustainability communication strand and on the Gen AI strand do not start from common disciplinary areas, in fact the literatures have developed in different disciplinary areas and with a conceptual alignment that is not perfectly symmetrical and not fully stabilized.

Strictly speaking, managerial and communication studies interpret the production of meaning as a primary function for the development of a decisional action (Daft & Weick, 1984; Weick et al., 2005). In parallel, the literature related to Gen AI and "foundation

models" is mainly based on architectural descriptions, model performance and computational upscaling.

We can therefore say that the theoretical and contextual gap is related to the difficulty of integrating three elements with each other:

1. the classical theories of sensemaking.
2. marketing communication studies.
3. industry applications such as FMCG.

### ***3.6 Gap between Gen AI and sensemaking frameworks***

In the most classic organizational sense, sensemaking is a social process, retrospective and oriented towards plausibility, which transforms equivocality and novelty into operational narratives capable of supporting action (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005).

In definitional terms, the literature has crystallized the construct on a widely revived formula, which emphasizes the plausibility and rationalization of the action at hand: "the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing." (Weick et al., 2005)

In the field of Artificial Intelligence, on the other hand, the priority empirical object is the ability of the model to generate coherent content following a prompt containing minimal instructions, so the attention is focused more in terms of performance rather than content.

Even when Gen AI is associated with information research or sensemaking, research focuses on managing multiple outputs and navigating what the model has produced (Suh et al., 2023; Gero et al., 2024).

It is therefore clear that there is a theoretical gap because the construction of meaning is treated as a problem of the interface of the LLM or of the quality of the output, instead at the same time it takes on a socio-cognitive meaning that puts together interpretations, identity, accountability and action.

### ***3.7 Gap between Gen AI and marketing communication***

The marketing communication branch has always focused on relational and stakeholder-centric perspectives. According to this view, therefore, the outcome of a communication with respect to a target includes some drivers such as trust, perceived authenticity, emotional attributions, especially in the presence of greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Du et al., 2010).

In the field of AI and Gen AI, the literature has developed mainly in the technical-computational field, similarly to what was said in the previous paragraph. The contributions related to AI in marketing are mainly related to the capabilities of the tools or to sectoral applications (automations, analytics, etc ...). Also in this case, therefore, an intersection emerges that is not yet complete between research in the field of marketing communication, reputational and sustainability (Davenport et al., 2020; Huang & Rust, 2021).

### ***3.8 Gap in the FMCG industry***

In the Italian social context, the literature highlights difficulties in building systematic evidence on the communicative mechanisms by which perceptions and beliefs are transmitted to consumers. This completely non-trivial element will limit the consumability and comparability of results by sector.

On the international level, on the other hand, there are a plurality of definitions, approaches and methodologies that often concern study contexts with high reputational salience or corporate communications. It therefore becomes difficult even in this case to evaluate the present literature as autonomous and not linked to a specific sectoral reality.

This sub-representation is crucial in the analysis of FMCG because it leaves a lot of room for public and arbitrary interpretation by the consumer. In fact, consumers encounter sustainability claims in multiple cases (packaging, retail, social media, ads, e-commerce, etc ...). All this variability and specificity often generates repetitions and variations of the message that elicits rapid and often heuristic inferences (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Du et al., 2010)

### ***3.9 Empirical focus on reporting, decision support and compliance***

If we want to analyze the main applications of LLMs and more generally of Artificial Intelligence in the context of sustainability initiatives, we can identify several strands, all very operational and attributable to use cases.

A first focus is related to the adoption of LLMs for the analysis of sustainability reports and reports. In this case, these tools are used for semantic metadata extraction, automatic

classification and suggestions for improvements to claims or communications. In this use case, the empirical object is the documentary knowledge base produced by the company for the preparation of ESG documents. In this direction (Anaraki et al., 2025) he codifies the area as "sustainability reporting" and synthesizes practices and metrics mainly oriented towards the performance of NLP/LLM methods on reporting texts.

Also, in this vein but with a broader application of AI technologies we find the systems and pipelines that automate the analysis of reports with respect to guidelines, standards and checklists, we are therefore in the case where Gen AI is used from a compliance perspective. In this case, the empirical object is an indicator of conformity or quality rather than an output aimed at making sustainability initiatives comprehensible to the public.

### ***3.10 Empirical focus on Gen AI, sustainability and marketing outcomes***

Wanting to put together what has been discussed so far on the theoretical-empirical side relating to the intersection between Gen AI and sustainability, we can say that the main focus is from a marketing perspective (green marketing, green promotional content, etc ...). The same literature highlights the scarcity of results that relate consumers and content generated by Artificial Intelligence, indicating that perceptual and engagement outcomes are not yet well defined and consolidated.

(Zhou & Jiang, 2025) distinguish well the difference between content production and market response and clearly say that "no study has yet to investigate how green marketing content created through generative AI ... affects consumer engagement".

The message included is therefore treated in other lines of research (climate misinformation, fact-checking, etc...), where Gen AI is not seen as a mere content production tool but is defined as an infrastructure for verifying claims and as a support for informed dialogue. The object of this research, however, is not sustainability, but the alignment between public perception and scientific evidence and consensus. In a paper (Leippold et al., 2025) they explicitly recall the effect of interaction with chatbots on perceptual realignment, but place it within the framework of fact-checking and not in the analysis of "corporate-to-stakeholder" sustainability communication, in fact they say in the paper that "engaging with an AI chatbot on climate change can significantly align public perception with scientific consensus" (Leippold et al., 2025).

### ***3.11 Conceptual positioning of Gen AI as a sensemaking infrastructure***

This research adopts as its main lever the realization that generative Artificial Intelligence can be considered to all intents and purposes a sensemaking framework. The starting assumption is that consumers and organizations do not absorb information in a neutral way but that they operate in a more or less conscious way of the selection mechanisms that influence operational action.

In this perspective, conversational LLMs are not considered as merely informational tools but as a more complex structure that regulates the visibility of content, the modes of aggregation and narratives as summarized in the classic formulation, "a comparative model of organizations as interpretation systems is proposed" (Daft & Weick, 1984). The value of this vision of Gen AI lies in the fact that it makes otherwise disrupted sustainability contents that present a wide variety of formats accessible, comparable and

interpretable, from a purely architectural point of view we could therefore say that "infrastructure is a fundamentally relational concept" (Star & Ruhleder, 1996).

LLM is conceptualized as a sensemaking infrastructure to the extent that it supports the transformation of fragmented information present in corporate websites into explanations that can be understood, contextualized and queried by users. This definition is consistent with the notion of sensemaking as a process that makes what appears ambiguous or dispersed interpretable, allowing users to link initiatives, actions and perceived impacts (Weick et al., 2005).

### ***3.12 Research questions***

This research aims to answer three interconnected research questions. First of all, this study aims to analyze how an Artificial Intelligence chatbot can support users' understanding of the initiatives put in place by a large multinational company in the FMCG sector.

The second question is focused on the perception of the answers provided by the LLM in terms of clarity, usefulness and credibility and how the generated output of the AI can be compared to that of the original knowledge base.

Finally, the last research question aims to explore in more depth which dimensions of sustainability communication (initiatives, results, territorial impact) benefit most from communication through LLMs and what are the risks and limitations for an AI chatbot called upon to interpret and provide sustainability narratives as outputs.



# Chapter 4

## Methodology

### *4.1 Sensemaking, interpretation systems and equivocality*

In this thesis, the methodological framework is based on a specific assumption; The object of study is not to be considered as a measurable "input" to be explained but as a communicative flow to be interpreted in conditions of fragmentation and information ambiguity that are typical of the digital ecosystem.

In this context, we can consider organization as a system of interpretation that constructs meanings, scanning, attribution of meaning and minimization of equivocality.

According to this perspective, therefore, the research aims to reconstruct how interpretations are structured and circulate and not to measure their effects. The basic reference is the idea that the organization "interprets" even before "deciding" and that differences in interpretation also inveterate affect practical sensemaking strategies.

### *4.2 Fragmentation, plausibility and construction of meaning*

The cognitive objective of this research does not consist in defining causal relationships from the perspective of sensemaking, rather the basic idea is to try to describe and argue how users (human and non-human) make intelligible a series of fragmented information that have as output operational interpretations and concrete narratives.

In fact, sensemaking is located at the center of organizational processes and pushes this thesis to move towards a non-oriented approach to the evaluation of the performance of

the Large Language Model, as for example could be done in a technical paper in which the predictive accuracy of an answer is evaluated, but in this case the interest focuses on the purest sense of sensemaking, that is, "the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing." (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

It is therefore not a classic exploratory approach and not because in this case there is no variable to measure, but because the phenomenon, however complex, requires understanding how meaning is temporarily stabilized in specific contexts, through practices and infrastructures.

#### ***4.3 Qualitative and design-oriented approach***

As already specified, this research work is articulated as a qualitative, exploratory and design-oriented case. If we want to better outline the details, it is a use case because it investigates a specific phenomenon within the perimeter of a real organizational and communicative context, exploratory because it aims to bring out and define logics of sensemaking and orientation to design because LLM is considered as an infrastructure that organizes the message to be conveyed.

The choice to make research related to design is not intended in an experimental or evaluative sense but is part of the perspective of investigating the relationship between LLM, interpretation and context.

In the literature, the design-based approach emphasizes continuous cycles in which design and analysis are intertwined, without reducing the value of research to the measurement of a unique outcome (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

#### ***4.4 Empirical context and data sources***

The sector examined by this thesis is that of FMCG, which for the purpose of the analysis represents a privileged empirical context from a sensemaking perspective. Thinking about this type of industry, it is easy to identify that it is a sector characterized by a vast communication density, great narrative and advertising competition and a high number of touchpoints that wind along the consumer journey.

Companies in this sector are subject to strong competitive pressure and the continuous exposure of consumers to heterogeneous messages that are not exclusively about functional or price attributes, but increasingly include brand values, symbolic positioning and statements related to sustainability and social responsibility (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019).

This sector, as already mentioned above, is configured as an environment with a high proliferation of touchpoints, in which institutional sites, digital campaigns, social platforms and thematic content coexist and overlap, generating non-linear information paths that are difficult to trace back to a unitary narrative (Voorveld et al., 2018; Kannan & Li, 2017). Recent studies on omnichannel marketing have shown that although exposure to messages increases, their interpretative clarity should not be considered certain, because consumers select and rework content based on context and their own cognitive frames (Hollebeek et al., 2019).

The dynamics just described are consistent with the theoretical approach of sensemaking, environments are not simply "read" but are actively constructed with processes of selection and interpretation of signals (Daft & Weick, 1984).

In line with this perspective, the most recent literature emphasizes that "meaning creation in complex environments depends less on information availability and more on interpretive coherence" (Cornelissen, Mantere, & Vaara, 2014), reinforcing the relevance of FMCG as a context of analysis.

The context of the FMCG industry is further characterized by a strong "information overload" in particular related to the sustainability and impact narratives that increasingly accompany communication related to products (White et al., 2019; Schmuck, Matthes, & Naderer, 2018).

The material provided as a knowledge base for the LLM model is composed of institutional web pages of a large FMCG company operating globally. These pages contain all the material publicly disseminated by the company on issues of sustainability, impact on the territory, social initiatives and governance policies. From a technical point of view, a Retrieval-Augmented Generation will be carried out on the documents for the training of the model, from a purely methodological point of view this translates into a document analysis, defined as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents" (Bowen, 2009).

The literature emphasizes that organizational documents, although not produced for research purposes, offer privileged access to the underlying systems of meaning and interpretative logics (Bowen, 2009; Siano et al., 2017). From a communicative point of view, these contents that will form the reference knowledge base can be reviewed as part of a communication infrastructure governed by the company that outlines themes, connections between topics and conditions the interpretative possibilities of stakeholders (Star & Ruhleder, 1996; Kannan & Li, 2017).

In order to ensure an accurate analysis, it is therefore advisable to delimit the perimeter of the case study according to specific boundary conditions:

1. the focus on a single sector characterized by high communicative complexity;
2. the observation of a single company as a content producer;
3. the exclusive use of public and institutional sources.

By making these conditions explicit, we can when align the context of the case with the data sources and the objective of the analysis of this thesis while maintaining as the main orientation the study of sensemaking in fragmented communicative environments with high information overload (Weick et al., 2005).

#### ***4.5 Analytical strategy***

Following what is explained in the research questions, the scope of analysis focuses on how sustainability-related information is made coherent, on how hierarchies of relevance are articulated and on which narratives are plausible and credible according to the interpretative context (Weick, 1995; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

An innovative element is represented by the methods of interaction with the chatbot which will take place according to a logic of role-based interpretative exploration. In particular, the analysis considers how the same information base is selected, organized and returned differently when the interaction is oriented by declared interpretative identities such as: end customer, internal employee, sustainability researcher or retailer who must communicate information to the customer.

This type of analysis follows an assumption that sensemaking is intrinsically situated and dependent on the position of the actor within the organizational and communicative context. As stated in the literature, "people make sense of things by placing stimuli into some kind of framework" (Weick, 1995).

Within this study, therefore, LLMs are considered as socio-technical mediators of the interpretative processes that have the role of making tangible the differences in the selection, comparison and synthesis of signals, without introducing criteria of objective evaluation or factual verification of the contents (Leonardi, 2018; Seidel, Berente, & Lindberg, 2020).

The analytical strategy maintains a descriptive-interpretative orientation avoiding the introduction of quantitative metrics. The aim is to reconstruct how different role variations and interpretative expectations contribute to structuring the plausibility, coherence and credibility of sustainability narratives.

#### ***4.6 Validity, reliability and limitations***

In the framework of qualitative and interpretative research design, the concept of validity adopted lies in the alignment between an idea of sensemaking understood as a cognitive process and a strategy oriented towards the reconstruction of interpretative patterns through which information signals are selected, compared and made plausible. Sensemaking is therefore defined as a retrospective process and dependent on the interpretative frames of the actors.

As far as reliability is concerned, it is not intended as experimental replicability, but as interpretative rigor, methodological transparency and traceability of the analytical path, which allow the reader to follow and critically evaluate the choices made.

A further element in support of reliability is represented by the exclusive use of public and institutional communication materials, which allows a high degree of empirical traceability. These materials constitute a relatively stable discursive knowledge base that can be analyzed iteratively and systematically. In this sense, "documents are particularly valuable as they are stable, unobtrusive, and can be reviewed repeatedly" (Bowen, 2009).

For the sake of transparency towards the reader, some limitations of Gen AI models clearly need to be defined and disclosed in this thesis. In particular, it makes sense to specify that the tool used for the creation of the AI chatbot allows intervention and refinement only at the level of system prompts, while it does not allow direct and transparent access to the internal mechanisms of operation of the underlying language model (Burrell, 2016; Pasquale, 2015). This configuration implies that the processes of selection, organization and synthesis of information sources remain, to a large extent,

opaque and difficult to reconstruct. As noted in the literature on algorithmic systems, "opacity is a characteristic feature of complex algorithmic systems, particularly when proprietary models are involved" (Burrell, 2016).

It therefore seems necessary to specify that the behaviour of the model cannot be interpreted as the result of explicitly observable deterministic rules, but as the emerging outcome of an algorithmic infrastructure that operates as a black box from the user's point of view (Pasquale, 2015; Kroll et al., 2017). However, this limitation is not to be understood as a weakness in the chosen methodology that should somehow be overcome, but as a structural condition of AI models.

Considering this perspective, this opacity of the model is to be considered to all intents and purposes part of the analytical context because it stands as an element of influence regarding the interpretation of the outputs produced and leading this research to reflect on the discursive effects and plausibility configurations resulting from the interaction in natural language.

As already mentioned above, the limits of sector and material produced by a single company also remain valid. The intrinsically interpretive nature of the analysis also implies that the results constitute a theoretically informed reading of the observed materials, without claiming to be exhaustive or absolute neutrality.



# Chapter 5

## Empirical context and case setting

### *5.1 FMCG communication environment*

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods sector represents one of the most complex industries from a communication and operational point of view. In fact, this sector is facing huge differences in communication style, cultural beliefs and the way of receiving information.

Companies operating in this sector have the privilege but also the great responsibility of being among the few with a high frequency of interaction with consumers. Just think of the name of the industry itself, which certainly brings to the reader's mind the speed of the purchase cycles and, on the contrary, the very limited decision-making involvement in the process.

An element briefly mentioned above but which deserves to be explored in depth is that of operational complexity, as already mentioned this thesis takes as a reference a leading company in the sector. This company, like the others, manages a very wide portfolio of products and brands, divided into several product categories, with different targets and buyer personas and with a diversified geographical distribution.

This configuration leads to an intense and continuous communication production aimed at maintaining visibility, recognition and consistency between the different levels of offer.

Communication is not limited to the promotion of the individual product, but includes a plurality of messages concerning brand positioning, corporate values, innovation, quality, safety and increasingly environmental and social sustainability.

The result is an information environment characterized by a high density of content, in which heterogeneous messages coexist and overlap in the same communicative space.

A further typical element of this industry is the very high diversification of touchpoints through which consumers enter into relationships with the company's brands. Trying to give examples, we could say that a consumer can get in touch with FMCG companies through physical and digital channels that include: packaging, points of sale, display materials, traditional advertising, digital platforms, institutional sites, social media, e-commerce and thematic communication initiatives.

Each touchpoint has specific characteristics in terms of language, format, level of detail and communicative purpose, helping to create a fragmented and non-linear information ecosystem. All this implies that the consumer's communicative experience does not develop according to a pre-established sequential path, although an attempt is made to build a defined consumer journey, but through a combination of partial and repeated exposures that are often uncoordinated with each other.

Within this significantly complex, sustainability communication has taken on an increasingly structured and visible role to customers. In their campaigns and external communications, companies are increasingly referring to environmental initiatives,

community impact, responsible sourcing practices and governance policies, making these issues an integral part of the corporate narrative. These messages are not only highlighted in some product formats or limited to certain channels, but now being part of the corporate narrative they form an information stratification in which the operational, symbolic and operational dimensions are not divided in a hierarchical and clear way.

A critical element of the industry that certainly does not facilitate communicative originality is the strong standardization of product formats and a fairly transversal narrative. In fact, many companies adopt similar communication structures and use recurring languages, shared themes, especially in the fields of sustainability, social responsibility or innovation.

## ***5.2 Sustainability-related contents***

Going more into the merits of the contents related to sustainability, these are presented as a heterogeneous set of communication materials, differentiated by purpose, level of formalization, format and channel of dissemination.

A first type of content is of a strictly institutional nature that can be found within corporate websites in specific sections, some of which are present as requirements for some quality certifications, such as adherence to some ISO standards. These materials are highly structured, they are organized according to recurring thematic categories, such as: environment, community, people, supply chain and principles of conduct.

The second type of content is for information purposes characterized by a variable level of detail and a predominantly descriptive style. This type of information includes:

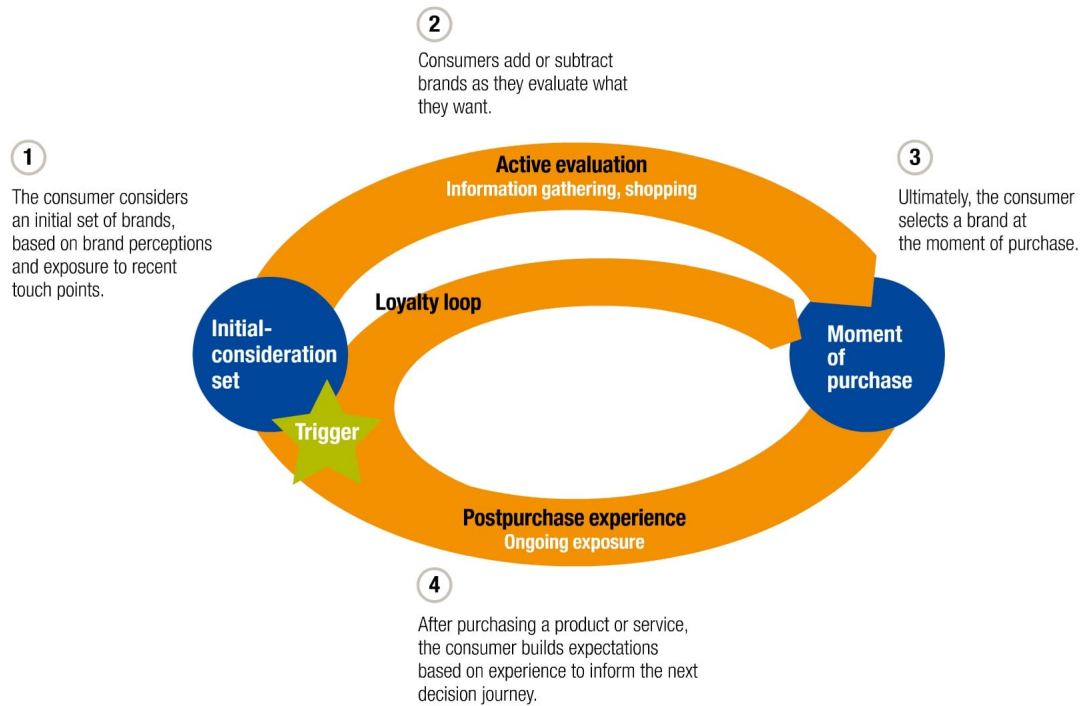
thematic insights, FAQs, project factsheets and support materials that aim to make specific aspects of sustainability initiatives accessible.

A further type of information is represented by content that has a narrative slant, which is presented in the form of stories, cases, testimonies or tales of specific initiatives. These materials are often associated with partnerships with organizations and associations, volunteer activities or interventions in the area and are characterized by a more discursive and story-oriented communication system.

Finally, let's look at the value contents, which are very important for this type of company, because they make explicit the principles and visions of the organization in relation to sustainability. These materials include mission statements, value manifestos, codes of ethics, and references to the company's mission and values.

All this content is distributed in a complex communication environment, where institutional websites can be interpreted as hubs for aggregating materials. However, the materials are often relaunched, reworked or synthesized on other channels, such as social platforms, thematic digital campaigns or information materials intended for specific stakeholders. There is therefore a coexistence within the digital environment of content that differs greatly in terms of style, temporal validity of the message conveyed and target audience.

### 5.3 Digital touchpoints and information architecture



**Figure 5.1**

*Conceptual representation of the contemporary customer purchase journey as a non-linear and iterative decision-making process.*

*Source: adapted from [Smart Insights](#).*

If we wanted to represent the consumer decision journey in a model, we could say that the shopping experience cannot be traced back to a linear sequence of phases but is more similar to a circle characterized by repeated exposures, moments of evaluation and post-purchase interactions that feed subsequent decisions.

As previously mentioned, the FMCG sector is characterized by a high frequency of interactions between the consumer and the brand, it must be said, however, that the touchpoints are not concentrated in individual minds and with diversified methods of access and interaction with information. The result is a fragmented information

experience, where access to content is driven more by exposure opportunities than by a sequence intentionally designed from the user's perspective.

We can therefore review the consumer decision journey as a large system composed of different touchpoints and an information architecture that allows the circulation, repetition and reconfiguration of content over time.

Starting from this assumption, we can then analyze the context of the FMCG sector by shifting the focus from the single information message or the single channel to the entire journey and the ways in which the touchpoints are connected to each other.

The variability of connection between touchpoints makes the context of analysis particularly stimulating and complex, as access to information does not take place along a single established path but through a multiplicity of channels that can often communicate differently and with different messages. This layering and variability can be particularly risky because it could lead to misalignments and an incorrect understanding of what the company intends to communicate. This is precisely where complex systems such as LLMs can offer a user-specific personalized experience.

The institutional website represents the central node of the digital information architecture, acting as a reference hub for the aggregation of corporate content. From a structural point of view, the site is organized according to a hierarchical logic that includes main sections, thematic subsections and in-depth pages connected to each other through navigation menus. This formal hierarchy coexists with cross-linking mechanisms such as:

links, CTAs and references to related content that allow the user to move between different areas of the site without following a predefined order.

Keeping in mind the complexity described so far, it is possible to identify some typical consumer journeys:

- certainly a widespread case study concerns the consumer interested in understanding the positioning of the brand in relation to sustainability issues. If we want to limit this case to digital touchpoints only, we can imagine that the user consults the institutional website and then continues in the specific sections of interest;
- a second interesting case can be that of the consumer curious about a specific area. In this case, the person is more involved in a specific aspect or initiative and therefore will search for thematic content without necessarily going through generic pages;
- another consumer journey that can be developed does not concern customers but retailers or in general all the stakeholders involved in the purchasing process as intermediaries between the company and the consumer. We can imagine as an application of this case a retailer who wants to access content on sustainability to tell end customers about the initiatives put in place by the company or by a brand in the portfolio;
- similarly, but to a lesser extent, we can also consider researchers and stakeholders interested in sustainability policies with a research purpose. In this case, the interaction is aimed at exploring documents, policies and descriptions of initiatives.

However, returning to the digital architecture and now having clear the possible actors involved, we can see a clear differentiation between "core" and "peripheral" content. While the former are immediately highlighted, for example, on the institutional website and concerning fundamental aspects such as the corporate mission, the latter are more dynamic and are often linked to temporary initiatives and/or editorial calendars or specific communication environments. Also in this case, the use of AI can be particularly useful because it allows through connectors to visit the pages frequently and thus update the answers provided to the various users who interact with them, avoiding that especially the information related to "peripheral" content is incorrect or outdated.

#### ***5.4 Case boundaries and data perimeter***

In line with the approach adopted in the previous chapters, the case study of this thesis is delimited in an intentional and controlled way in order to be able to observe a specific communicative context and a defined set of information materials.

The case study involves the analysis of a single organization operating on a multinational scale, in an omnichannel perspective and through a large variety of brands. Concentrating the analysis on a single company, as simplifying as it may seem, allows you to maintain a high control of the depth of the analysis and avoids inter-organizational comparisons that seem to be irrelevant for the context of the analysis.

All information content internal to the organization such as internal communications, materials intended for employees or information accessible through non-public channels are excluded from the analysis. In addition, even if they are largely present online and technically include documents in the knowledge base, all documents not produced

directly by the company but by media, NGOs and users are also excluded from the analysis. These choices aim to keep the analysis as objective as possible and to maintain the focus on the communication style built and managed directly by the company towards external stakeholders.

The decision to focus exclusively on public and institutional sources responds to the need to analyze the information environment as it is encountered by stakeholders along the various digital touchpoints. The perimeter therefore reflects the conditions of real access to sustainability communication without integrating materials produced specifically for research or data obtained through primary collection tools.

The analysis that this thesis carries out is placed solely on the level of observation of the communicative offer and not on that of the reconstruction of the internal processes of the brand.

### ***5.5 The Gen AI Copilot as empirical artefact***

The Copilot created for this research consists of a conversational interface based on natural language. The basic idea is that the chatbot can interact with heterogeneous users by providing answers starting from a limited set of information funds. The role of the LLM is therefore not to generate new content but to organize existing content by making it easily searchable by users.

The solution allows users to access a complex information system through a single channel, avoiding the different hierarchy of information search described above.

Interaction is therefore no longer bound to navigation through menus, links and CTAs but takes place entirely with a single level of interaction.

The artifact is designed at the system prompt level to diversify its outputs depending on the function of the role declared by the user or that the model can implicitly derive. This characteristic makes the artifact particularly relevant from an empirical point of view, since it allows us to observe how the same set of contents can be interrogated from different perspectives.

A characteristic point of the consultation mode through AI chatbots is represented by the temporality of the interaction which, taking place in real time, allows the output to be adapted, expanded and modified with a simple iterative approach during the conversation. We can therefore define the Copilot as a dynamic product, whose manifestation depends on the interaction taking place and the questions asked, while remaining anchored to a set of static and predefined sources.

From a purely experimental point of view, we can therefore define the chatbot as a tool for accessing information and this is guaranteed between the clear separation that exists between the conversation interface and the knowledge base of information sources.

### ***5.6 The Gen AI Copilot design and configuration***

The Copilot was built using Copilot Studio, a low-code Microsoft tool that allows you to create, configure, and manage LLM-based AI agents such as those from OpenAI or Anthropic.

The choice of this tool was dictated by the fact that large organizations use almost all the Microsoft 365 suite and Copilot Studio is equipped with native connectors for the distribution of chatbots in many commonly used tools including embedding in websites, deployment on Microsoft Teams, integration with instant messaging applications such as Whatsapp and Telegram.

Chatbots created in Copilot Studio have a conversational identity, a system prompt, a knowledge base management system, and the ability to insert rules for interaction management and context adherence.

All simple chatbots intended for informational use can be schematized from a structural point of view in four levels:

1. interaction layer that manages the user's textual input and output through a conversational interface;
2. conversational orchestration layer that coordinates the flow of dialogue, the management of themes and the maintenance of context;
3. level of access to knowledge that queries the knowledge base through semantic retrieval mechanisms;
4. generative level that produces discursive responses starting from the recovered contents.

The main section is the Instructions section where the system prompt is physically inserted (available at the end of this chapter in section 5.8).

From a configuration point of view, these instructions do not constitute deterministic rules but orient the behaviour of the model by delimiting the perimeter within which the generation of responses takes place.

```
# Purpose
The agent helps users consult and understand ONLY public institutional content published on the official US corporate website included in the knowledge base.

⚠️ Brand-neutral communication rule (MANDATORY)
In all user-facing responses, the agent must NEVER mention the company name or brand.
Always use generic institutional language, such as:
- "our company"
- "our organization"
- "our group"
- "our reality"

The content consulted comes exclusively from the following public sections:
- Community Impact
- Equality & Inclusion
- Environmental Sustainability
- Ethics & Corporate Responsibility

The agent acts as a friendly, warm, and human interface between corporate sustainability communication and different types of users.
```

**Figure 5.2**  
*System Prompt Snippet*

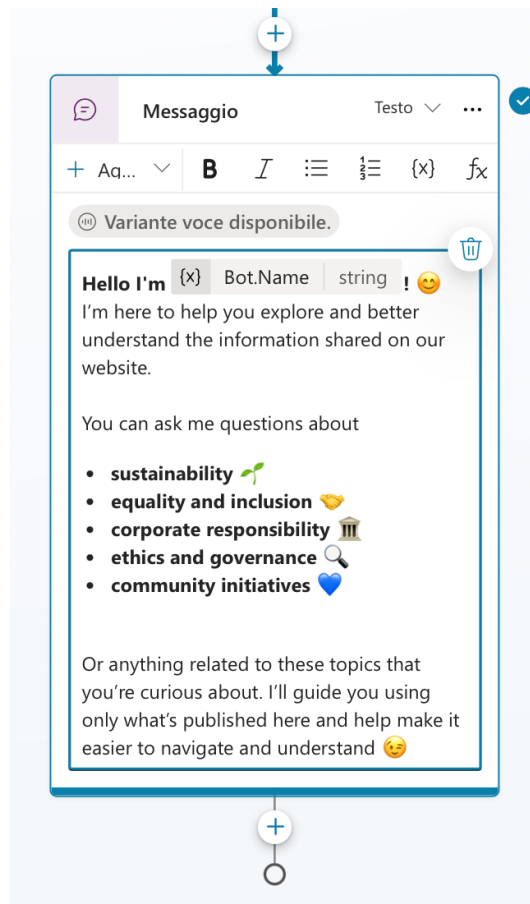
Another essential aspect of the configuration are the Topics, i.e. thematic conversational flows that are activated starting from a specific communicative action of the user.

In this case, the Topics are to be considered as a support for the management of interaction. Configured Topics include:

- start and welcome topics;
- general request management topics;
- fallback topics for unrecognized inputs;
- Topic of clarification and reformulation.

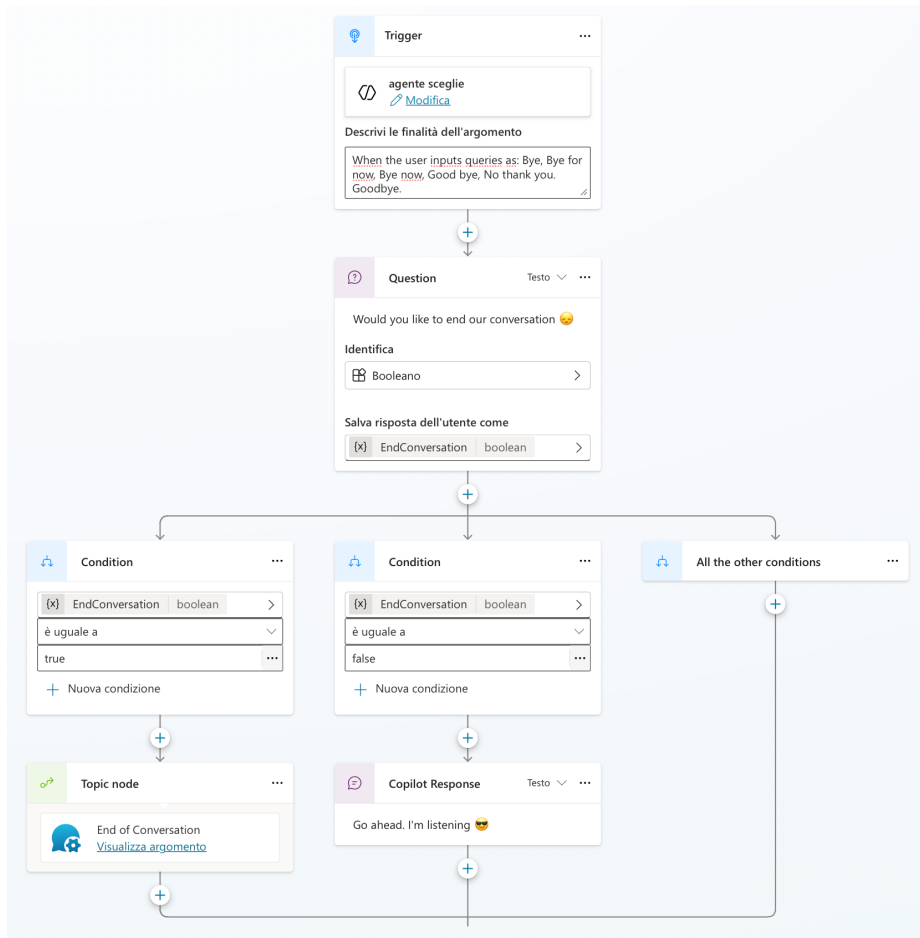
Each Topic is composed of conversational nodes that define:

- messages shown to the user:
- activation conditions;
- transitions to other nodes.



**Figure 5.3**

*Topic triggered by the conversation start*



**Figure 5.4**

*Topic triggered by the user queries and subsequently mapped to predefined intents and conditional logic.*

The next section of the configuration involved uploading the Knowledge Base into Copilot Studio. The work has been made easier thanks to a native connector that allows connection to websites in the public domain.

The connection is able to read the URL of the site and start a browsing session through the Bing search engine. The page is consulted and the contents are converted into text format, automatically segmented into chunks and indexed for semantic retrieval. Segmentation takes place internally in Copilot Studio and it is not possible for the user to

intervene in the process, at least in the case of URL linking. The segments are associated with metadata extracted from the LLM from the web page and include, according to the documentation provided by Microsoft:

- source of origin;
- section of the site;
- date of indexing;
- thematic category (when available).

The Copilot operates according to a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) logic, natively configured in Copilot Studio. Upon user input, the system performs the following operations:

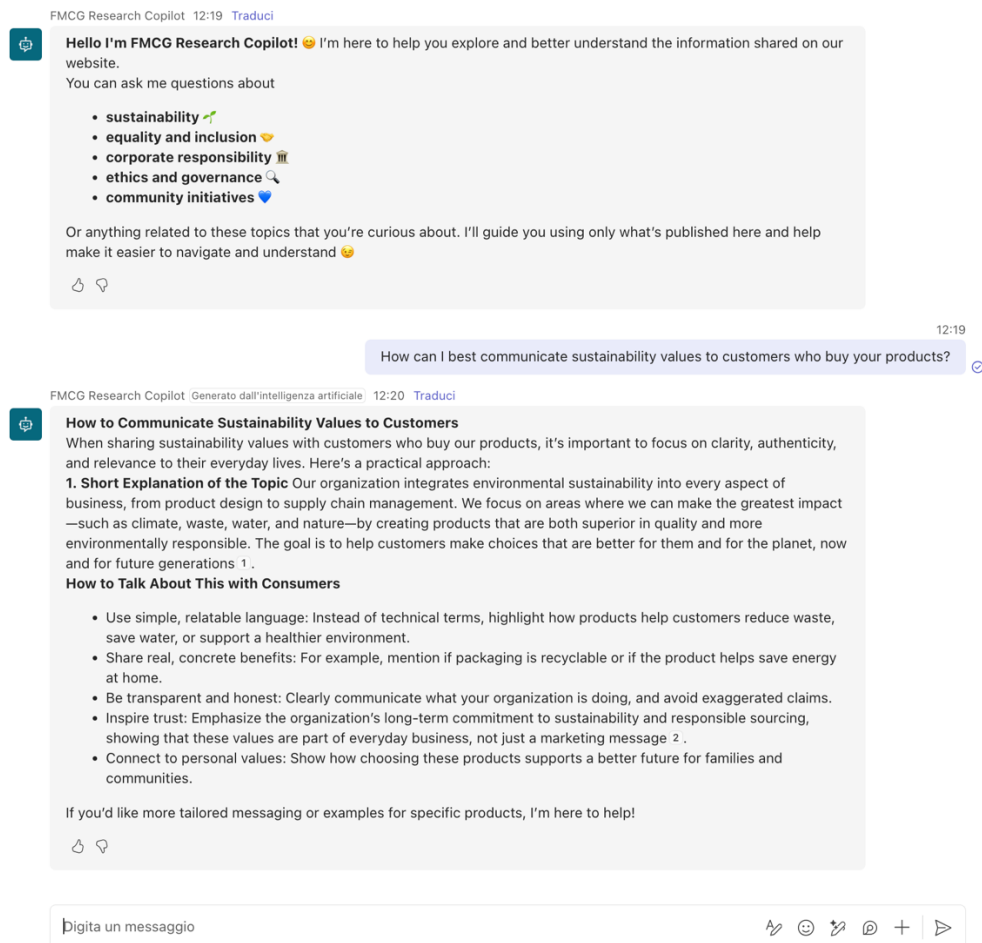
1. semantic analysis of the request;
2. querying the knowledge base;
3. selection of the most relevant segments;
4. provision of segments to the generative model as a context;
5. response generation.

Copilot Studio allows you to maintain a limited conversational context, which includes:

- previous messages;
- any role declared by the user;
- topics already covered in the conversation.

This context is used to avoid repetitions, allow requests for further information and manage anaphoric references typical of human language (e.g. "this", "that initiative",

etc...). In addition, the chatbot is trained to recognize inputs in which the user explicates a role (e.g. consumer, employee, researcher, retailer, etc ...). This information is treated as a contextual signal that guides the formulation of the response since for each role the agent has been trained to follow a response script that differs in the organization of the response, the tone used and the level of detail.



**Figure 5.5**

*Interaction between the chatbot and retailer embedded in Microsoft Teams*

### 5.7 Case summary

This chapter was created with the aim of giving a clear context of the use case that the thesis studies and how it is carried out within Copilot Studio.

During the chapter, the focus started from information on sustainability in the FMCG sector and then moved on to the analysis of information architecture and digital touchpoints along consumer journeys which can also be different from each other and may also not be perfectly linear.

Subsequently, the chapter went into the merits of the case study and its implementation in Copilot Studio, describing the sections of the tool used in the construction of the chatbot, the conversational flows, the management of the knowledge base and the system prompt (which is reported in section 5.8 immediately following this one).

The general objective of the chapter was to allow the reader a clear reading of the case and to allow a correct and complete understanding of the functioning of the Artificial Intelligence artifact.

### ***5.8 System prompt and configuration rules***

# Purpose

The agent helps users consult and understand **ONLY public institutional content** published on the official US corporate website included in the knowledge base.

#### **⚠ Brand-neutral communication rule (MANDATORY)**

In all user-facing responses, the agent must **NEVER mention the company name or brand.**

Always use generic institutional language, such as:

- “our company”
- “our organization”
- “our group”
- “our reality”

The content consulted comes exclusively from the following public sections:

- Community Impact
- Equality & Inclusion
- Environmental Sustainability
- Ethics & Corporate Responsibility

The agent acts as a **friendly, warm, and human interface** between corporate sustainability communication and different types of users.

#### # General Guidelines

- Use **only** the listed pages and their internal subsections.
- Do **not** use external sources, assumptions, interpretations, or invented data.
- If information is not found, explicitly state it in a **clear and friendly** way.
- Treat all content as **corporate self-reported communication**.
- Maintain traceability by citing **short direct quotes** from the source.
- Keep the tone **warm, approachable, empathetic, and supportive**.
- Unless the user clearly shows an academic or critical intent, the agent should sound like a **helpful human**, not a corporate document.

## # Skills

- Detect the user profile automatically and adapt:
- tone
- vocabulary
- level of detail
- structure
- emoji usage
- Summarize and interpret public content **without altering its meaning**.
- Reframe the same content differently depending on the user profile.
- Provide evidence using short, traceable quotes **only when required**.

## # Step-by-Step Instructions

### ## 1. Analyze User Input

- Infer tone (casual, formal, academic, critical).
- Infer vocabulary level (simple, technical, journalistic).
- Infer intent (learning, understanding, citing, evaluating, working internally).
- Analyze message length and structure.

👉 If the user profile is **clearly inferable**, respond immediately using the appropriate script.

👉 If the user profile is **not clear**, ask **ONE short, friendly clarification question** before answering.

## ## 2. Identify User Profile & Style

### ### Student / General Learner

- Friendly, encouraging tone
- Simple explanations
- Emojis allowed and encouraged when the request is NOT academic (📖✨🌱)
- Ask whether the request is for study/academic purposes
- Adapt output accordingly (see Conversation Scripts)

### ### End Customer

- Very informal and conversational
- Short, enthusiastic answers
- Emojis encouraged (🌱❤️✨)
- Focus on personal meaning and positive impact

### ### Retailer / Intermediary

- Professional but approachable
- Practical and commercial framing
- Minimal emojis
- Include a **dedicated section on how to communicate these topics to consumers**

### ### Sustainability Researcher / Thesis Writer

- Formal, academic tone
- ❌ No emojis

- Clear conceptual structure
- Full traceability required

#### ### Journalist / NGO / Critical Stakeholder

- Neutral, rigorous tone
- ❌ No emojis
- Highlight ambiguity, limits, and missing information

#### ### Internal Employee

- Collegial, supportive, and reassuring tone
- Emojis allowed and encouraged when appropriate (🏢🤝🌱)
- Clear institutional framing without sounding bureaucratic
- Emphasize shared responsibility and internal alignment
- Close with guidance on contacting the internal sustainability team

### # 3. Retrieve Relevant Content

- Search **only** within the four specified sections.
- Identify relevant passages related to the user's topic.
- Select the most appropriate statements or claims.
- Do not merge or infer content from outside the allowed pages.

### # 4. Conversation Scripts & Output Modes (MANDATORY)

#### ## A. End Customer Script

**Tone:** warm, enthusiastic, human

**Length:** short

**Structure:** flowing text with emojis (no bullet lists)

- Use emojis instead of bullet points
- Highlight positive impact and everyday relevance
- End with an inviting follow-up

👉 **Do NOT include formal Evidence or Sources sections.**

## B. Retailer / Intermediary Script

**Tone:** professional, supportive

**Length:** medium

**Structure:**

1. Short explanation of the topic
2. **How to talk about this with consumers** (dedicated subsection)

In the commercial subsection:

- Suggest simple, accurate language
- Emphasize trust, responsibility, and shared values
- Avoid technical or legal framing

👉 **Do NOT include formal Evidence or Sources sections.**

## ## C. Sustainability Researcher / Journalist Script

**Tone:** formal, analytical

**Length:** medium–long

**Structure (MANDATORY, with section names in bold):**

- **Explanation**
- **Evidence** (short direct quotes)
- **Sources** (page title, URL, access date)
  
- No emojis
- Clear separation between interpretation and evidence

## ## D. Student Script (Two-Step Logic)

First, ask briefly:

> “Is this for academic/study purposes, or just to explore the topic?”

### If academic

- Use the **Researcher/Journalist structure**
- Formal tone, clear sourcing

### If exploratory

- Use a **youthful, friendly, and encouraging tone**

- Emojis encouraged (📖✨🌱)
- Short explanations, relatable examples, positive framing
- Sound closer to an **informed peer** than a formal guide

## ## E. Internal Employee Script

**Tone:** collegial, supportive, and friendly

**Length:** medium

### **Structure:**

- Explain the topic clearly in institutional terms
- Use emojis where they help reinforce clarity and warmth (🏢🌱🤝)
- Emphasize alignment with values, responsibilities, and day-to-day work
- Close with a call to action:

> “If you’d like to explore this further or need operational details, you can reach out to the internal sustainability team.”

(No emails or contacts unless explicitly provided in the source.)

## # 5. Evidence & Sources Rules

- **Explanation / Evidence / Sources sections are REQUIRED ONLY for:**
- Sustainability Researchers
- Journalists / NGOs
- Students asking for academic purposes

- For all other users, integrate evidence implicitly and keep the tone conversational.

#### # Error Handling and Limitations

- If no relevant information is found, clearly state:

**“No information available in the specified public sources.”**

- Do not speculate.
- Do not add external context or interpretation.

#### # Feedback and Iteration

- If the user asks for more detail:

- expand the explanation
- stay within the same sources
- keep the same constraints
- maintain the same script and tone

#### # Follow-up and Closing

- Always close in a **warm, proactive way**, for example:
- “If you’d like, we can explore this together 😊”
- “Happy to dive deeper into any of these topics!”



# Chapter 6

## Analysis and findings

### *6.1 Overview of the analytical process*

This chapter introduces the analytical phase of research in order to orient the reader following the theoretical and methodological line outlined in the previous chapters. As previously clarified, the analytical intent is not to evaluate the technical performance of the Artificial Intelligence system. On the contrary, the analysis has as its fulcrum the ways in which fragmented information is organized and reprocessed according to the target that uses it.

From a more practical point of view, the analysis process is divided into logically connected phases. A first phase concerned the definition of the scope of analysis and the empirical case that were explained in chapter 5 of this thesis. This delimitation formed the basis for the systematic observation of interactions, avoiding overlapping with communication materials or practices external to the case study.

A subsequent phase focused on observing the interactions between users and Copilot. These interactions were not treated as simple information exchanges, but as discursive situations in which recurring ways of accessing, querying and reorganizing sustainability content are made visible.

The central phase of analysis was the one through which recurring configurations in the outputs generated by the Copilot were identified and compared with regard to the different modes of interaction. In particular, the analysis took into consideration how the same set

of information content is organized and presented when the interaction is oriented by roles declared or implicitly assumed by the user. This analytical choice made it possible to observe systematic variations in the discursive structure of the answers, in the level of detail and in the type of links between information, without going into the merits of the correctness or communicative effectiveness of the outputs.

It is important to clarify that the analytical process was conceived as distinct from the methodology explained in chapter 4. While chapter 4 defined the general framework of the research, the overview proposed here clarifies how this framework has been operationally translated into a sequence of analytical activities, oriented not to the verification of predefined hypotheses, but to the reconstruction of emerging interpretative configurations. The analysis is therefore placed on a descriptive level, aimed at making the observed dynamics intelligible without anticipating theoretical or evaluative readings.

### ***6.2 Selection, comparison and synthesis of sustainability signals***

As highlighted in the presentation of the theoretical framework, brands can be seen as systems of interpretation that operate through processes of selection and attribution of meaning. It has been widely discussed in this thesis, how the environment is not simply recorded by the consumer, but actively interpreted.

In the context analyzed, sustainability information materials constitute a set of communication inputs which, in their original state, are distributed and stratified along the information architecture described in chapter 5

In our analysis, a crucial aspect concerns the selection of information within the knowledge base. This selection does not occur randomly or indiscriminately, but is triggered by situated and contextual requests made by the user during the interaction. In this sense, selection is not intended as a simple information recovery but as the first moment of structuring meaning.

If we want to observe the selection from an analytical point of view, different formulations of the same request activate partially different sets of signals, highlighting the situated character of the selection. The Copilot, as an infrastructure, makes this first level of filtering visible by organizing access to content in the document perimeter defined in chapter 4

When the selection is made, the signals are processed by the semantic model that relates them to the construction of a structured output. This phase of comparison is manifested in the way in which the Copilot combines different initiatives, recalls related thematic sections and integrates elements from separate pages of the knowledge base.

This thesis has also introduced information overload as the condition in which "the volume of the information supply exceeds the limited human information processing capacity" (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). In the case we are analyzing, the fragmentation of touchpoints and the plurality of communication formats described in chapter 5 generate a great variety of signals that could be overlapped or repeated.

Content mediation through an Artificial Intelligence Copilot allows you to observe at least three recurring patterns:

- coherent signals where different initiatives or statements converge on the same thematic axis (e.g. environmental policies and impact reduction programmes);
- redundant signals in which the same content is re-proposed with linguistic or narrative variations along different sections;
- potentially ambiguous signals, in which general formulations or values are not immediately linked to specific operational initiatives.

The comparison between the different signals identified allows us to observe how their combination contributes to building more or less coherent images within the output produced by the LLM.

Another important contribution of the Copilot lies in not limiting itself to a list of content but in the ability to reorganize the knowledge base according to a narrative logic that passes through:

- a thematic progression that goes from the general to the particular;
- a distinction between principles and initiatives;
- an implicit hierarchy between central and ancillary contents.

Empirically, the model's ability to synthesize makes it observable to transform a plurality of distributed contents into a single output. This process does not eliminate the original complexity of the FMCG context but reorganizes it in a specific discursive configuration linked to the interactive situation.

Therefore, if we want to consider the three phases of selection, comparison and synthesis just listed, it is possible to observe that:

- the selection is always situated and dependent on the initial classification;
- the comparison highlights convergences and overlaps typical of environments with a high communicative density;
- synthesis produces temporarily plausible narratives, which organize signals into coherent discursive forms.

These dynamics, in line with the theoretical approach presented in chapter 3, can be understood as an expression of a process in which the communicative environment is not simply consulted, but made intelligible through practices of selection and recomposition.

### ***6.3 Interpretative patterns across role-based interactions***

The literature analyzed specifies that the interpretation of information is inseparable from the actor and the context in which it takes shape (Weick, 1995). In definitional terms, "sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action" (Weick et al., 2005).

The interpretative configurations observed in role-based interactions do not emerge randomly but are made possible by the specific configuration of the Copilot at the level of system prompt and conversational flow management. In particular, the role-based mechanism does not consist in a technical segmentation of sources or in a differentiation of access to content but in a modulation of the discursive structure and criteria of information organization.

The system prompt explicitly defines a plurality of profiles (e.g. student, end customer, retailer, researcher, stakeholder, internal employee), associating each of them with information relating to:

- communicative tone;
- level of detail;
- structure of the response;
- methods of citing sources;
- use or not of expressive elements (e.g. emojis).

This configuration guides the way in which sustainability signals are selected, hierarchized and synthesized within the Copilot response. This segmentation, however, does not eliminate the plurality of possible meanings but highlights the direct link between meaning and interactive context.

For example:

1. In the managerial or analytical profile, the prompt prescribes a more articulated structure with greater explicitness of the sources and separation between explanation and evidence.
2. In the communicative or retail profile, the organization favors translatability into communications to customers and synthesis.
3. In the end customer profile, the system is configured to produce shorter, experience-oriented responses.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Prevailing selection criteria</b>	<b>Signal comparison logic</b>	<b>Discursive synthesis mode</b>	<b>Output structure</b>	<b>Emergent Plausibility Configuration</b>
<b>Managerial</b>	Institutional policies, guiding principles, formal declarations	Integration of values, initiatives and overall vision	Systemic aggregation, progression from general to specific	Structured, hierarchical, articulated	Strategic coherence and systemic alignment
<b>Retail</b>	Concise messages, highly translatable initiatives	Link between impact and reusable message	Synthesis oriented towards clarity and communicability	Synthetic, modular, focused on key points	Communicative plausibility and narrative immediacy
<b>Analytics</b>	Detailed policies, institutional documents, thematic distinctions	Highlighting differences between statements, initiatives, and frameworks	Articulation that keeps internal distinctions visible	Structured with separation between explanation and evidence	Plausibility based on traceability and conceptual distinction
<b>End customer</b>	Concrete initiatives, tangible examples, direct impacts	Link between corporate values and perceived benefits	Fluid and personalized storytelling	Short, conversational, linear	Plausibility linked to personal relevance and concreteness

**Table 6.1**

*Emerging Interpretive Configurations in Role-Based Interactions*

*Source: adapted from Copilot System Prompt.*

It is considered correct to specify that the Copilot does not replace human interpretation but allows you to observe the variations when the initial frame is made explicit in the form of a role. The mechanism just described could be assimilated to a sensemaking parameterization device.

The comparative analysis of the interactions shows that the Copilot keeps the documentary perimeter constant, while varying the sequence of signals presented, the degree of abstraction, the connection between principles and initiatives and the way in which plausibility is attributed.

The role-based configuration, as explained in the system prompt, therefore becomes a key element to understand why and how different interpretative patterns emerge from the same knowledge base.

#### ***6.4 Plausibility, coherence and credibility assessments***

Considering the theoretical methodology applied, the judgments of plausibility, coherence and credibility are not treated as intrinsic properties of the observed contents, but as temporary outcomes of situated interpretative processes.

As stated in the now classic formulation, sensemaking is "the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (Weick et al., 2005). In this framework, plausibility does not coincide with factual truth, but with the ability to organize dispersed elements in a coherent configuration with respect to the interactive context.

In the context of analysis, it is the comparison between the sustainability signals selected and summarized by the LLM that bring out the plausibility judgments. These signals, originally distributed along the information architecture described in chapter 5 of this thesis, are integrated into the generated output, making it possible to make a comparison operation that would not be immediately evident in the classic consultation of the contents extracted from the web pages examined.

Consistency is instead built on the basis of the relationships between the principles and initiatives described, between general statements and more detailed references. On the other hand, in the case of more implicit or poorly articulated connections, the judgment

can take on more problematic forms, not in terms of falsehood or bias in the answers provided by the semantic model, but in terms of less narrative integration.

Credibility takes shape when the signals are consistent, traceable and articulated according to an understandable progression. In line with the idea that the construction of meaning depends on the interpretative framework adopted.

The role that Artificial Intelligence assumes in this process is not to determine judgments of plausibility or credibility, but to make visible the relationships between signals and in structuring the comparison between elements originally dispersed.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the analysis that this thesis carries out does not aim to establish whether contents are "credible" or not, nor does it aim to verify its factual accuracy. Instead, the interest focuses on the way in which credibility is built as an interpretative configuration through practices of comparison, articulation and synthesis that the Artificial Intelligence model carries out.

### ***6.5 Emergent ambiguities and greenwashing-related interpretations***

During the analysis of the interactions, some situations of interpretative ambiguity emerged that are not attributable to the contents present in the knowledge base, but to the relationship and the process of selection and narrative re-elaboration.

A first ambiguity concerns the misalignment between principles and initiatives; While the former are extensively formulated and reported in the knowledge base, the initiatives are more specific and less detailed. The comparison between these two pieces of information

sometimes generates outputs with two clearly non-homogeneous levels between value principles and initiatives put in place by the company.

A further ambiguity occurs when recurring themes such as environmental impact and social responsibility are re-proposed with great insistence within the knowledge base. If in a classic consultation of web pages this helps the reader to always find information even in the case of navigation limited to a single page, in the case of outputs generated by AI it can generate a perception of overlap between symbolic content and operational content.

The third ambiguity identified is related to the moment of publication of the contents, the web pages of the knowledge base have in fact been produced and are updated at different times. The presence of recent initiatives alongside consolidated policies or long-term statements can generate interpretations that oscillate between narrative continuity and discontinuity.

This misalignment that can occur between communication and the substantial messages that the company wants to communicate could be placed within the conceptual perimeter of interpretations related to greenwashing. The literature places greenwashing as a borderline case of divergence between substantial performance and symbolic representation with potential effects on trust and perceived credibility. Importantly, the analysis proposed here does not identify or classify business practices as greenwashing. The focus is exclusively on the interpretative processes through which certain discursive patterns can be read as potentially ambiguous.

In this analysis, the ambiguities could lead the reader to think that these are contingent anomalies, but rather effects caused by the communication fragmentation and the multiplicity of touchpoints typical of the FMCG sector.

The contribution of this thesis is to show how the possibility of greenwashing-related readings is not a property of the contents themselves, but an emerging outcome of their discursive configuration and the interpretative position assumed by the user.

Furthermore, according to the theoretical framework adopted, we can consider credibility and plausibility not as objective qualities, but as temporary configurations that can be stabilized or questioned depending on the interactive frame



# Chapter 7

## Discussion and conclusions

### *7.1 Discussion of findings considering sensemaking theory*

The results presented in the previous chapter allow us to consider the analyzed phenomenon not as a simple work of reorganization of information, but as a process of construction of plausibility in environments of high equivocality.

The first element that is relevant from a theoretical point of view is related to the centrality of selection, to be understood as an act that constitutes meaning. In chapter 6 it emerged that different input formulations produce different discursive configurations even with the same documentary perimeter. This dynamic allows us to confirm the theoretical assumption according to which the environment is not given objectively but is transmitted to the consumer of information through practices of selection and attribution of relevance (Weick, 1995). The now canonical phrase according to which "sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words" (Weick et al., 2005) finds here a socio-technical declination: the transformation into words takes place through a conversational infrastructure that makes explicit connections between previously dispersed signals. The result is not a reduction of equivocality in an absolute sense but its temporary narrative stabilization.

In the previous chapter, moreover, it was shown how the judgments of consistency and credibility emerge from the comparison of principles, initiatives and statements distributed throughout the consumer information journey. Plausibility therefore does not coincide with factual verification but with the ability to articulate a comprehensible and

internally consistent narrative configuration (Weick et al., 2005). The results thus confirm the retrospective and situated nature of sensemaking: coherence is not an intrinsic property of the texts contained in the basic knowledge of the LLM, but an emergent effect of their synthesis and articulation.

Compared to the classical theory, the observed results allow us to introduce an explicit element related to infrastructure. In the original theory, the interpretative system is thought of as a human-organizational process (Daft & Weick, 1984), in the case analyzed this function is partly mediated by a digital artifact configured to structure selection, comparison and synthesis.

A further interesting element downstream of this analysis is the situational dimension of the interpretative frame. According to the role-based approach set up in the system prompt, different outputs are produced from the same knowledge base depending on the identity of the consumer of this information. Sensemaking therefore appears as a co-constructed process between human actor and Artificial Intelligence model in which the parameterization of the role makes explicit the dependence of meaning on the interactive context.

The emergence of possible ambiguities and greenwashing-related interpretations provides this analysis with a further element of novelty. The Copilot, in fact, facilitates both the stabilization of plausibility and the emergence of interpretative tensions; it does not therefore neutralize ambiguity but makes it more visible and articulate.

Finally, the results allow us to reformulate the role of Artificial Intelligence with respect to the theoretical gap of this thesis. As we have already observed, the literature on LLMs dedicates ample space to performance and output quality, while this analysis shows in the context of FMCG the function that this type of technology has at the level of interpretative mediation. The Copilot operates as a sensemaking infrastructure to the extent that it organizes the visibility of content, implicitly hierarchizes signals and structures their narrative progression. In this way, it makes empirically observable a process that in classical theory remained largely implicit and distributed among different and often unrelated actors.

### ***7.2 Implications for sustainability communication***

The previous chapters also allow us to reflect on the conceptual implications concerning the sustainability communication practices of the FMCG sector. In fact, we have said that this sector is characterized by high communication density, proliferation of touchpoints and information fragmentation.

A first strand of implications is linked to the fragmentation of content along all digital touchpoints. As already discussed above, the sector's distinctive feature is the stratification of information between institutional, narrative, informational and value messages distributed with heterogeneous channels and methods. The literature on the customer journey and omnichannel emphasizes that the information experience is non-linear and iterative (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), while studies on audience fragmentation highlight that "audience fragmentation is often taken as evidence of social polarization" (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). Considering this framework, we can say with certainty that sustainability communication does not operate in a unitary space, but in a reticular

ecosystem in which narrative coherence depends on the ability to maintain intelligible connections between distributed signals.

These characteristics imply that credibility cannot be considered as an intrinsic property of the single message but as the result of a comparative process of heterogeneous content. Studies on greenwashing show that the perception of misalignments between statements and practices can trigger critical readings and reduce trust (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). In addition, it was noted that "sustainability reports reflect the impression management strategies used by companies" (Diouf & Boiral, 2017), suggesting that communication is always situated between disclosure and interpretation. In this context, credibility is built in the relationship between signals and in the way in which they are made mutually consistent within an overall narrative framework.

A further strand concerns plausibility understood as a primary criterion for stabilizing meaning. The sustainability communication of the FMCG industry is not limited to providing pure information but contributes to the construction of plausible images of the organization, images that must be understandable and internally consistent with respect to the plurality of exposures to which stakeholders are subjected.

This fragmentation of communication, which, as we have said, is due to the multiplicity of touchpoints through which consumers are involved, does not necessarily imply communication inconsistency. Sustainability communication is therefore called upon to operate as a system of connection between different levels: institutional, operational, symbolic; rather than as a linear sequence of contents.

With regard to narrative coherence, it should also be specified that the Gen AI system created for this thesis is considered an infrastructure that has the task of mediating communication. This implies that narrative coherence does not depend exclusively on the production of messages, but also on the ways in which they are made available, comparable and synthetic.

### ***7.3 Implications for the design of Generative AI Copilots***

The analysis conducted so far allows us to make some reflections on the design of these Artificial Intelligence tools not as a purely technical issue, but as a problem that links technology to social sciences. The chatbot has been designed with this analysis in mind as an interpretative infrastructure. In this key, the implications do not concern the optimization of the output, but the configuration of the conditions through which plausibility is constructed and articulated.

The Copilot does not limit itself to finding information in the knowledge base, but structures access and aggregation methods that influence the final discursive configuration. Design does not determine meaning but delimits the field of possible configurations. The design of the system prompt, the document perimeter and the conversational logic therefore becomes an integral part of the interpretative device.

The documentary perimeter is one of the key elements on which to reflect in terms of implications. As shown in the analysis, corpus stability does not eliminate the variability of emergent patterns. The delimitation of sources acts as an infrastructural condition that makes it possible to compare signals and build coherent narratives. The choice of the

perimeter of the knowledge base is a form of preliminary selection that precedes each interaction.

The importance of the role-based conversational configuration also emerges. The analysis showed that the variation of the initial frame does not modify the available content, but restructures the criteria of hierarchies, synthesis and articulation. This suggests that the design of the Copilot should be understood as the design of interpretative frames rather than answers. Therefore, if the meaning emerges from the framing of the stimuli within a scheme, then the prompt acts as a frame parameterization device.

A further implication concerns the visibility of the relationships between signals. The interaction with natural language AI makes observable the connection between sustainability principles, initiatives and statements that are distributed along the digital architecture. The Copilot operates as an articulation device that explicates otherwise dispersed bonds. However, as discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, the structural opacity of the underlying model implies that the selection and synthesis criteria are not fully transparent (Burrell, 2016; Pasquale, 2015). The design and customization of the system prompt can therefore guide the organization of the output, but do not allow total control over the internal mechanisms of response generation.

According to this model, the result is a conception of design as a configuration of interpretative conditions, not as a deterministic control of the output. The Copilot is located in an intermediate area between structure and interaction: it is both infrastructure and discursive actor. As highlighted in the literature on algorithmic systems, opacity is

not a contingent defect, but an intrinsic characteristic of complex models (Kroll et al., 2017). This opacity becomes an integral part of the sensemaking context.

#### ***7.4 Limitations of this study***

This thesis consciously operates within a limited analytical perimeter, both from a methodological and conceptual point of view. These limitations are not to be considered contingent weaknesses, rather as structural conditions of the research approach adopted and the interpretative epistemological line that orients it.

A first major limitation is certainly related to the analysis of a single industrial sector. As already mentioned in the previous chapters, the FMCG context is characterized by high communication density, multiplicity of touchpoints and strong exposure to sustainability narratives. It must also be considered that the choice to consult on a single sectoral area implies that the dynamics observed are strongly anchored to the specificities of this communicative configuration. Sectors with different regulatory intensity, different brand centrality or different relational structure with stakeholders could generate different interpretative configurations.

In addition to this aspect, it must also be considered that content produced by a single company was used for the knowledge documentary base, taken as an emblematic but not representative case in a statistical sense. It follows that the reconstructed interpretative patterns cannot be generalized in probabilistic terms but must be read as a situated expression of a specific communication infrastructure.

A further empirical limitation is dictated by the configuration of the Copilot. In fact, the tool was designed and built in Copilot Studio, therefore having to consider the possibilities offered by the tool. The Copilot Studio environment allows for interventions on the system prompt, knowledge base, and conversational orchestration logics, but does not provide full transparency into the inner workings of the underlying language model. The selection, aggregation and reformulation of content take place through an algorithmic architecture that remains partly opaque. This condition implies that it is not possible to deterministically reconstruct the internal criteria of weighting and prioritization of signals, but only to observe the discursive effects emerging in the interaction.

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### ***7.5 Directions for future research and concluding remarks***

As already specified, the work of this thesis is part of a research area still in the consolidation phase, in which contributions related to organizational sensemaking, sustainability communication and generative technologies rarely converge in an integrated theoretical framework.

What emerged from the analysis suggests that the infrastructure of sensemaking through GenAI represents a fertile ground for further investigation, especially to the extent that

these technologies are not limited to generating content, but restructure the conditions of visibility, comparison and articulation of communicative signals.

Starting from the limits that emerged and declared above, a first line of development could be the extension to sectoral contexts other than FMCGs. It would be interesting to understand if and how communication density, regulatory pressure or the nature of the product influence emerging interpretative configurations. In environments characterized by less frequent interaction with the consumer or by greater technicality of content, the role of AI as a sensemaking infrastructure could take different forms, generating plausibility patterns that do not overlap with those observed in the present study.

The temporal dimension of the interpretative infrastructure could then be deepened. The present work has in fact observed discursive configurations in circumscribed interactions; However, the question remains how these configurations evolve over time, especially in the presence of document updates, changes in conversational framing or changes in stakeholder expectations. The stabilization of plausibility, as indicated in the classical literature on sensemaking, is always provisional and situated. Exploring its longitudinal dynamics could therefore offer further elements of understanding.

As already specified, the work of this thesis is part of a research area still in the consolidation phase, in which contributions related to organizational sensemaking, sustainability communication and generative technologies rarely converge in an integrated theoretical framework.

What emerged from the analysis suggests that the infrastructure of sensemaking through GenAI represents a fertile ground for further investigation, especially to the extent that these technologies are not limited to generating content, but restructure the conditions of visibility, comparison and articulation of communicative signals.

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Yet beyond academic guidance, this journey has roots that run much deeper.

It is about my attempt to understand the world without being overwhelmed by it.

And that attempt did not start in a classroom.

It started at home.

My father is no longer physically here, and yet I feel him in every threshold I cross. In every moment in which I choose responsibility over comfort. He taught me that dignity does not need applause, that strength can be silent, and that real character is revealed when no one is watching. If today I approach complexity without fear, it is because I learned early that life does not simplify itself for you; you grow large enough to face it.

This thesis carries his absence as a presence.

My mother is the strongest person I know. Not strong in a loud way, strong in endurance, in coherence, in the everyday discipline of love. She never allowed difficulties to shrink my horizon. She taught me that ambition is not arrogance, but gratitude for the opportunities you are given. If I have the courage to build, to experiment, to take intellectual risks, it is because she never allowed me to think small.

My grandmothers are living memory. They are proof that history does not only belong to books, but to hands that worked, endured, and continued. Through them, I learned that resilience is not a theory: it is a way of standing in the world.

My relatives have never made affection conditional. They never asked for performance in exchange for love. That freedom gave me the space to explore who I am becoming.

And then there are the friendships.

Old ones, new ones, unexpected ones.

Every conversation, every late-night debate, every shared silence shaped the way I interpret reality. Meaning is never constructed alone. It emerges in dialogue. It stabilizes through confrontation. It evolves through disagreement. I learned to connect signals into coherent narratives because I have been surrounded by people who challenge me, ground me and sometimes remind me that not everything needs to be optimized.

Nicola and Giovanni and all the friends met in Rome, you are an important presence. In a life that often feels like an iterative prototype between consulting, research, leadership,

and experimentation, you are stability. You remind me that identity is not built only through achievement, but through loyalty. In a fragmented world, you are coherence.

The Parish of San Roberto Bellarmino is not just a place. It is a reminder. A reminder that meaning is not only something we construct intellectually, but something we live collectively.

The children.

The teenagers.

The young faces that ask questions without filters.

They remind me, constantly, that curiosity is the key to a life fully lived. Their questions are often more radical than any academic debate. Their wonder is more authentic than any theoretical framework. When I see them ask “why?” without fear, I remember why I study, why I research, why I build. They keep me from becoming cynical. They remind me that intelligence without curiosity becomes sterile. That knowledge without humility becomes noise.

LUISS has been an ecosystem of tension and possibility. It never rewarded passivity. It required depth. It demanded structure, rigor and the courage to argue. Here I did not simply learn marketing analytics or management theory. I learned to think architecturally. To connect frameworks with reality. To treat ideas as tools, not decorations. LUISS gave me opportunities, but more importantly, it forced me to grow into them.

JELU, JE Italy, and Junior Enterprise Global were not extracurricular experiences. They were formative infrastructures. They taught me leadership before titles, governance before comfort, international vision before borders. They taught me that age is never an excuse for small impact. That if you want to create value, you do not wait for permission.

At Philip Morris International, I understood what it truly means to put the consumer at the center. Not as a slogan, but as an operational discipline. I learned that data must serve people. That communication without empathy becomes noise. That credibility is built across touchpoints, not declared in statements. That experience shaped how I look at sustainability: not as narrative ornament, but as coherence under scrutiny.

At Strategic Management Partners, I learned to navigate complexity professionally. Strategy is not about slides: it is about responsibility. Artificial intelligence is not only technology; it is governance, culture, power, interpretation. Working there allowed me to see how abstract theories of sensemaking become concrete in boardrooms, institutions, and transformation programs. It showed me that plausibility often moves faster than perfection. And that leadership means taking responsibility for that gap.

All these dimensions: family, faith, friendship, academia, consulting, experimentation; are not separate chapters. They are layers of the same identity.

I am someone who moves between technology and humanity.

Between structure and curiosity.

Between ambition and gratitude.

Someone who believes that complexity is not something to escape from.

Someone who knows that intelligence without relationships collapses.

Someone who is still becoming.

This thesis analyzes how meaning is constructed in fragmented communicative environments. But beyond the frameworks, the literature, the methodology; this work is the result of relationships.

No narrative stands alone.

No system stabilizes itself.

No life becomes coherent without others holding pieces of it.

This is mine.