

Careless food marketing a caring agenda for studying food

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper uses ethics of care (EoC) to scrutinise and transform food marketing scholarship in world-leading journals over the last decade. Having identified caring deficits in this scholarship, this paper aims to explore caring opportunities to make research in marketing more caring towards contemporary challenges of food.

Design/methodology/approach – A two-stage systematic literature review was adopted to understand research on food in world-leading marketing journals. Stage 1 analysed food research in papers published in 4 and 4* (CABS ranking) marketing journals. Findings were interpreted through Tronto's (2013) EoC and caring deficits identified. Stage 2 analysed food research in papers published in 3 (CABS ranking) marketing journals and 4 (CABS ranking) related disciplines. Findings were interpreted identifying caring opportunities, derived from caring deficits.

Findings – Deficits in world-leading scholarship derive from a predominantly narrow focus on atomistic consumers at the choice point, investigated through positivistic research using psychologically driven frameworks. In revealing the cyclical nature of these caring deficits, this study proposes a caring agenda with caring opportunities, based on exemplars from excellent marketing scholarship and related disciplines.

Research limitations/implications – This study develops a research agenda for ethically driven scholarship in food marketing and consumer research.

Practical implications – A transformative caring agenda is proposed to go beyond scholarly epistemological and theoretical divisions and revolutionise the discipline.

Social implications – A caring approach to scholarship enables responses to the wicked problems within contemporary food marketing.

Originality/value – This paper contributes to the special issue by bringing an ethical dimension to current debates on the limitations of the field and proposes a caring agenda for future research.

Keywords Marketing, Food, Systematic review

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

This paper contributes to this special issue “From Revolution to Revolutions” by proposing a novel caring agenda for transforming food marketing scholarship. Our agenda emerges from the findings of a systematic literature review (SLR) examining research on food in leading marketing literature. We argue that scholarship published in world-leading marketing



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journals exhibits cyclical caring deficits; is too narrow in scope, incremental in focus and positivistic in design and theoretically driven by psychological theories. Attention has been mainly given to atomistic individuals at the moment of consumer “choice”. We posit that this limits our knowledge and the contributions that our discipline can bring to the interdisciplinary field of food studies which investigates the role of food in human existence, integrating food science, social sciences and arts and humanities (see [Albala, 2013](#)). It also limits the potential for marketing academia to have an influential voice in the food sector, one that encompasses an entire value chain and a multiplicity of stakeholders.

Having identified caring deficits in world-leading scholarship, the paper discusses a caring agenda which is based on opportunities to overcome such deficits. Cyclical caring opportunities emerging from exemplars of internationally excellent marketing scholarship and related disciplines, encompass attention to experiential aspects of consumption of socially contextualised consumers, investigated through pan-disciplinary theoretical approaches. A more heterogenous set of epistemologies has been adopted to address current systemic problems of interest to multiple stakeholders.

Ethics of care (EoC) is the theoretical underpinning which has been used for scrutinising current world-leading food marketing scholarship and developing a novel caring agenda. As others have recently shown, reflecting and acting upon marketing knowledge production and re-production cannot be fully embraced without a declared ethical stand ([Penaloza et al., 2023](#)). EoC was selected for its transformative potential to systematically problematise food marketing scholarship by showing “what is happening” and “orienting towards a moral evaluation of what should be happening” ([Nair, 2024](#), p. 13). As such it has been used to critically reflect on current research and to show that other ways of doing research in food marketing are possible.

2. Caring: an ethical underpinning

Reviews of the knowledge production in our field show the deficiencies of our scholarship, its persistent hierarchies of knowledge production with “narrow concerns of research rather than broad ones” ([Svensson and Wood, 2006](#), p. 457). [Penaloza et al.’s \(2023\)](#) SLR on gender in marketing journals (ABS 4*, 4 and 3 journals) reveals a hierarchical dominance of experimental studies with a simplistic view of gender serving as “commitments to the quantitative paradigm and positivist metaphysic, as well as commitments to biologically based gender theories” (2023, p. 858). They also reveal the very urgent need to discuss the underpinning ethical stances motivating marketing scholarship.

Our own ethical stance is based on the feminist EoC which, we argue, allows us to scrutinise the current caring deficits of knowledge production and envision caring opportunities, since to neglect the latter would be an ethical shortfall ([Nair, 2024](#)). EoC refers to a way of living one’s life with responsibility for enhancing the wellbeing of others and for protecting the world around one as well as by enacting an attentiveness and sensitivity to the interpersonal consequences of one’s actions and choices. As [Tronto \(2013, p. 19\)](#) says, caring is an “activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex life-sustaining web” ([Fisher and Tronto, 1990](#), p. 40; [Tronto, 2013](#), p. 19). Tronto explicitly embraces a post-humanist perspective, arguing that EoC serves as a theoretical and practical tool to decentre the human and incorporate the values of social and natural environments. She explicitly refers to “the possibility that caring occurs for objects” ([Tronto, 1993](#), p. 103), although this notion remains underdeveloped. [Ruddick \(1989\)](#) who moves the concept beyond the domestic and dyadic relationships of mother–child, argues that maternal thinking

provides practices and values that can be exported to other aspects of public life, for example in promoting social justice and peace. Influenced by Ruddick, Held (2006) highlights that care consists of “value and practice” (ibid, p. 9) since it puts into practice specific values including benevolence, attentiveness and respect to humans and non-humans. Failure to engage in caring practices is a form of “privileged irresponsibility” (Tronto, 1993) where powerful stakeholders fail to recognise their positions as potential care givers thus disengaging in care responsibilities for the world around them.

Since its original development, EoC has been widely applied beyond direct human relationships as its core values of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness are applicable to a diversity of topics affecting our lives and practices. In business studies, EoC has been used to look at phenomena beyond human relationships including design thinking (Hamington, 2019), leadership for sustainability (Nicholson and Kurucz, 2019) and entrepreneurship (Power *et al.*, 2017). Beyond business studies, EoC has been used to study climate change (Allison, 2017), contemporary urban transport planning (Legacy *et al.*, 2024) and AI (Villegas-Galaviz, 2022). EoC has also been used for conducting SLRs (Suri, 2020). Considered an epistemological orientation providing guidance for a “critical engagement with the relevant research”, EoC has been celebrated for its transformative and participatory potentials, allowing researchers to conduct a review which “remains relevant to generating actionable knowledge for transforming their practice” (Suri, 2020, pp. 43–44).

The process of EoC, as conceptualised by Tronto, provides a systematic understanding of care as values and practices that “occurs for objects” (Tronto, 1993, p.103). We adapt Tronto’s understanding as a process in which various phases of care are used to scrutinise current food marketing scholarship in world-leading marketing journals but also to examine advancements of care in internationally excellent marketing scholarship and related disciplines. The first phase, “caring about”, is based on the value of attentiveness which is critical for the carer to recognise what attention is needed to “maintain, continue, and repair our world” (Tronto, 2013, p.19). We adapted this phase considering what has been given attention to and thus what topics have been seen as valuable to study and to know. “Caring for” is based on the value of responsibility which guides the carer to take a responsible stance towards the object of care. We shape this phase considering what theoretical stances have been adopted to study the selected research topic. The third phase, “care giving”, is centred around the value of competence and considers how care is enacted. We engage in this phase by looking at how the research topics have been studied under specific methodological choices. The last phase, “caring with”, refers to benevolence towards society which emerges as an effect of the reiteration of the caring process over time. We adapted this phase examining the discipline’s benevolence towards addressing the food challenges of our time.

2.1 A caring exercise

Following guidelines for conducting a SLR implies acknowledging “the ethical reviewing practices and the importance of tailoring methods to the nuances of the field” (Schucan Bird *et al.*, 2023, p. 1055). As feminist scholars who have worked in the field of food marketing for decades, we reflexively adopted an EoC approach to review food marketing scholarship highlighting “what we might take for granted” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 410) in our field and questioning how prevailing research on food “pre-suppose and embody particular epistemological and political views of the world” (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, p. 81). As we tailored our methods to uncover “the nuances of the field” (Schucan Bird *et al.*, 2023) we also looked outside world-leading marketing scholarship, reviewing published papers in internationally excellent journals and in journals outside our discipline. Our caring exercise

adopted a framework-based review as documented by Paul *et al.* (2021) and successfully used in the marketing discipline (Lim *et al.*, 2022). It consisted of two distinct and chronologically ordered stages which were internally organised according to three steps (Assembling, Arranging and Assessing) as described by Paul *et al.*, 2021 (see Figure 1 for an overview of our procedures and rationales).

Stage one focussed on 4 and 4* marketing journals, while stage two focussed on 3 marketing journals as well as 4* and 4 journals from related disciplines. As Penalzoza *et al.* (2023, p. 850), we selected 4*, 4 and 3 marketing journals as listed in the 2021 Academic Journal Guide provided by CABS since these journals are “used in faculty evaluations in most nations across business disciplines, including marketing, and has a broad scope that includes theory, methods, practice, and policy”.

2.1.1 Stage 1. During the phase of assembling from the eight marketing journals into the category of 4 and 4*, we searched the electronic database Web of Science for each journal from January 2013 to the current issues using “food” as our topic search term. We began in January 2013 to give a little over 10 full calendar years of coverage at time of data collection. This allowed for consideration of the most contemporary work in the field and theoretical developments over time. This resulted in 266 articles for consideration.

During the phase of arranging, we recorded the bibliographic details of the considered papers. The full texts of all 266 articles were screened for relevance to this review. We excluded articles where food was not the main focus or the research questions or did not relate to issues pertinent to food. This resulted in a final 189 articles for consideration (Table 1).

The phase of assessing was conducted via an initial thematic analysis of the eligible articles instead of using bibliometrics (Paul *et al.*, 2021). A review protocol was developed, and the research team jointly coded the focus, theory, methodologies and contributions of

	Stage One	Stage Two
Assembling	<p>Identification</p> <p>Domain: Food in marketing (4 and 4* journals) Research question: How has food been studied in world-leading journals? Source type: Peer-reviewed journal articles. Source quality: CABS Academic journal Guide (2021).</p>	<p>Identification</p> <p>Domain: Food in marketing (3* journals) and related disciplines (4 and 4*) Research question: How has food been studied in world-leading journals? Source type: Peer-reviewed journal articles. Source quality: CABS Academic journal Guide (2021).</p>
	<p>Acquisition</p> <p>Search mechanism and material acquisition: Web of Science Source period: 2013-2024. Search keyword: 'food' as topic Total number of articles returned from search: 266</p>	<p>Acquisition</p> <p>Search mechanism and material acquisition: Web of Science Source period: 2013-2024. Search keyword: 'Food' as topic Total number of articles returned from search: 16 (marketing) and 183 (related disciplines)</p>
Arranging	<p>Organization</p> <p>Organizing codes: Article title, journal title, author name, publication year, focus, adopted theories, context, method, sample, contributions. Organizing framework: ICCM framework (Paul <i>et al.</i> 2021).</p>	<p>Organization</p> <p>Organizing codes: Article title, journal title, author name, publication year, focus, adopted theories, context, method, sample, contributions. Organizing framework: ICCM framework (Paul <i>et al.</i> 2021).</p>
	<p>Purification</p> <p>Articles type excluded: We excluded articles where food was not the main focus of interest or where it was just the context, but the research questions did not relate to issues pertinent to food. Total number of articles included: 189</p>	<p>Purification</p> <p>Articles type excluded: We excluded articles where food was not the main focus of interest or where it was just the context, but the research questions did not relate to issues pertinent to food. Total number of articles included: 252 (marketing) 129 (related disciplines)</p>
Assessing	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Analysis method: Content analysis and thematic analysis. Agenda proposed method: thematic gap analysis.</p>	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Analysis method: Content analysis and thematic analysis. Agenda proposed method: thematic gap analysis.</p>
	<p>Reporting</p> <p>Reporting conventions: Thematic analysis presented as 'care deficits.' Limitations: Review limited to world-leading journal articles. Source of support: No funding received.</p>	<p>Reporting</p> <p>Reporting conventions: Thematic analysis of identified care deficits (see reporting stage one) Limitations: Review limited to selected journals Source of support: No funding received.</p>

Figure 1. Overview of our systemic literature review of Stage 1 and Stage 2

Source: Authors' own work

Table 1. Bibliometric search results of CABS 4 and 4* marketing journals

Journal title	Search of “food” 2013–2024 in topic via Web of Science	Relevant articles
<i>Marketing Science</i>	22	16
<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	25	19
<i>Journal of Retailing</i>	19	14
<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	24	20
<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	62	46
<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	58	29
<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	47	35
<i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i>	13	10
Total	266	189

Source(s): Authors’ own work

each article in Excel. The protocol followed a combined inductive-deductive approach in which [Tronto’s \(2013\)](#) phases of care were used to systematise the preliminary findings of our analysis. Reporting, which is the final part of assessing, is organised around the various phases of care and constitutes our findings.

2.1.2 Stage 2. Stage 2 ran after Stage 1, and findings were analysed and interpreted, informed by Stage 1 findings. While Stage 2 follows the same steps and criteria as Stage 1 in terms of assembling and arranging, the final step of assessing and its associated reporting were conducted differently. During the first step, assessing, we identified 12 relevant marketing journals classified as 3 ([Table 2](#)) and identified relevant food articles beginning in January 2013 following the same criteria as stage one (see [Figure 2](#) for details). In parallel we conducted a similar analysis on a selected number of 4 and 4* journals from organization studies, entrepreneurship, sociology and human geography ([Table 3](#)). These disciplines and their highly ranked journals were selected as they are often referred to when discussing marketing boundaries (see e.g. [MacInnis et al., 2020](#)). We are aware that this justification

Table 2. Bibliometric search results of CABS 3* marketing journals

Journal title	Search of “food” 2013–2024 in topic via Web of Science	Relevant articles
<i>Industrial Marketing Management</i>	42	29
<i>Journal of Advertising Research</i>	12	3
<i>Journal of Advertising</i>	11	5
<i>International Marketing Review</i>	17	7
<i>European Journal of Marketing</i>	104	60
<i>Psychology and Marketing</i>	106	67
<i>Journal of Public Policy and Marketing</i>	70	49
<i>Journal of International Marketing</i>	6	4
<i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>	11	4
<i>Marketing Theory</i>	13	7
<i>Marketing Letters</i>	22	15
<i>Quantitative Marketing and Economics</i>	2	2
Total	416	252

Source(s): Authors’ own work

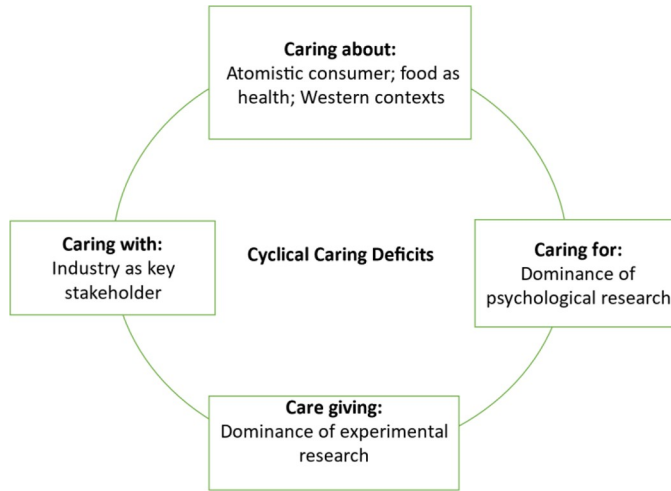


Figure 2. Cyclical caring deficits
Source: Authors' own work

Table 3. Bibliometric search results of a selection of CABS 4 and 4* journals from outside of marketing

Journal title	Search of "food" 2013–2024 in topic via Web of Science	Relevant articles
<i>Organization Studies</i>	16	9
<i>Human Relations</i>	12	6
<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>	14	0
<i>American Sociological Review</i>	3	0
<i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>	4	1
<i>Sociology</i>	30	28
<i>Sociology of Health and Illness</i>	48	40
<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	2	2
<i>Journal of Business Ventures</i>	3	0
<i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i>	12	11
<i>Journal of Economic Geography</i>	12	6
<i>Regional Studies</i>	27	26
Total	183	129

Source(s): Authors' own work

departs from the criteria of a SLR, and that the resultant review in stage two is more selective and less consistent than the one provided in the previous stage. In line with previous SLRs based on EoC (Suri, 2020), we tailored our methods to reveal “the nuances of the field” (Schucan Bird *et al.*, 2023. p. 1055) and to provide exemplars of caring works outside our discipline.

During the phase of arranging, we recorded the bibliographic details of the considered papers. The full texts of all 575 articles were screened for relevance to this review, 416

articles from 3* Marketing Journals (Table 2) and 183 articles from outside the field (Table 3). We excluded articles where food was not the focus of the research questions, or the discussion did not relate to issues pertinent to food. This resulted in a final 252 marketing articles and a further 129 articles outside the field. The final stage, assessing, started with a thematic analysis which followed the same criteria used in stage one, applying an EoC lens to the focus, theory, methodologies and contributions of each article in Excel. Reporting however focused only on articles which were identified as exemplars with insights relevant to addressing caring deficits identified in stage one. These articles were analysed and interpreted in relation to some of their specific contributions to care deficits and possibilities for future care opportunities. Findings of this analysis were used in framing a caring agenda.

3. Caring in leading marketing journals

In presenting the finding of the first stage of our review (4 and 4* journals), we follow Tronto's values and phases (see Table 4) and start by questioning the attention that has been provided to certain foci of research rather than others (caring about). This is then followed by examining how the selected foci have been cared for, such as how responsibility has been taken in conducting research via the selection of specific theoretical underpinnings. Next, we examine the competency of the care given in terms of the methodological choices that have

Table 4. Caring in leading marketing journals

Care aspect	Values	How care informs SLR	Identified care deficits
Caring about	Attentiveness	Research questions and topics that receive attention	Contextualised consumer experiences have been neglected Non-US based research has received little attention Large aspects of the food system ignored in deference to "choice" moments
Caring for	Responsibility	How marketing knowledge has been developed from selected focus	Dominance of psychological frameworks and theories and exclusion of other theoretical traditions Food reduced to a context among others
Care giving	Competence	How the identified topics have been studied	Dominance of positivist, experimental design leads to narrow approach to problem solving Samples dominated by young, privileged, Western consumers under-representing alternative and vulnerable perspectives
Caring with	Benevolence towards more abstract entities	Implications of the produced knowledge	Academia, manufactured food and retailing industry are privileged interlocutors Other actors such as policy makers, consumer groups and activists and producers are not considered

Source(s): Authors' own work

been made. Finally, we question how world-leading research addresses broader caring concerns in terms of current contributions to knowledge. While acknowledging that some care has been provided, we identified cyclical care deficits which prevent other forms of care from rebalancing current scholarship in the examined marketing journals.

3.1 *Caring about: a matter of attentiveness*

In examining attentiveness, we consider what has been given attention to and thus what topics have been seen as valuable to study and to know. The examined scholarship pays particular attention to consumers at the “choice” moment. Purchase intentions (e.g. [Ailawadi et al., 2018](#)), consumer motivation (e.g. [Gardner et al., 2014](#)) and product preferences (e.g. [Khare and Chowdhury, 2015](#)) dominate the research agenda. The focus on influencing choice and attracting customers is even more evident in the domination of studies on labelling ([Adalja et al., 2022](#)), packaging ([Ale-Chilet and Moshary, 2022](#)) and instore display ([Zhang et al., 2021](#)).

Consumer choice has been studied through a focus on the “product” and an isolated consumer who makes individualised choices. The consumer is homogenised, a singular abstract character described by scant demographic notes, who exists within a hermetically sealed vacuum of product decision making. We find close attention to granular sensory aspects of the choice experience such as scent (e.g. [Biswas and Szocs, 2019](#)), temperature (e.g. [Yamim et al., 2020](#)); or visual attractiveness ([Hagen, 2021](#)) though surprisingly few studies on flavour (e.g. [Crollic and Janiszewski, 2016](#)). These studies artificially free consumers from the complexities of choice including financial and time constraints, to name the most common.

Attention has been given to the study of nutritional information displays on packaging and menus (e.g. [Ale-Chilet and Moshary, 2022](#)). Studies make full consideration of options for nutritional information display, especially at time of legislative change (e.g. [Kim et al., 2022](#); [Adalja et al., 2022](#)). They, however, omit consideration of consumers experiences of these changes in naturalistic food environments. While we recognise the interest in how markets react to legislative initiatives on packaging, we ask why so much care has been given to this particular aspect of consumer choice as only one of many potential influences on food selection. We speculate that this might be an attempt to care for the pressuring needs of the food industry at times of legislative change. This leads us to ask by what mechanisms other thorny issues such as food insecurity could become as valued by our academy.

Phenomena of the global north and the USA dominate in the articles. Commonly, no justification is offered on the selection of the geographical context, which is briefly mentioned using generic references to the site of data collection. Policy initiatives are discussed in terms of a Global North or USA contexts, without specifying their geographical and cultural peculiarities (e.g. [Kim et al., 2022](#)). This means that while the Global North is well “cared about” there is little consideration of diversity in populations, experiences and food systems and little recognition that exploring different geographical contexts can provide diverse findings and ways of theorising.

While scant attention has been given to wicked food problems, six papers investigate food waste. [Van Lin et al. \(2023\)](#) find that price promotions do not increase food waste; while [Raghunathan and Chandrasekaran \(2021\)](#) find a relationship between higher BMI and food waste aversion; and [Grewal et al. \(2019\)](#) investigate how aesthetic premiums leads consumers to reject safe, edible, yet unattractive, fruits and vegetables, which results in food waste. [Gao et al. \(2023\)](#) suggest strategies for mitigating consumer food waste such as enhancing sharing obligations, while [de Visser-Amundson et al. \(2021\)](#) discuss promotional appeals that can encourage consumption of re-directed food waste. Amongst these studies,

Gollnhofer *et al.* (2019) is the only article taking a systemic approach to food waste, considering other actors and the role of consumer movements. As they argue, to fully understand wicked food problems attention needs to be paid to market systems which are complex and with multiple actors contributing to their evolution and functioning. We see much potential for more articles in which the marketplace rather than the consumer is the main caring focus, yet we note their current marginal position within the food debates in world-leading journals.

3.2 *Caring for: responsibility to look beyond*

Following Tronto, responsibility refers to taking on the duty to deal with something demanding care. In our review we ask how responsibility has been enacted in terms of what theoretical framings have been selected to deal with a research focus demanding attention. As predicted by recent reviews (Silchenko *et al.*, 2020), we found a lack of clearly identified overarching theoretical positions which was counterbalanced with a closer attention to methods and data analysis. The dominance of psychological frameworks is well-documented as a limitation in the marketing literature (Davies *et al.*, 2020), and we find this perpetuated in our sample. For example, papers drew from process theories of motivation (Huh *et al.*, 2016); sensory cues (Biswas and Szocs, 2019); psychological determinants of satiation (Sevilla *et al.*, 2016); and norms and health behaviours (Costello *et al.*, 2024) among others.

The selected frameworks are discussed mainly in terms of the presentation of conceptual models and discussion of constructs, rather than a more critical engagement with their theoretical underpinnings [e.g. Crolic and Janiszewski's (2016) use of hedonic adaptation and escalation]. Papers in our sample were neither explicit about which theoretical conversation they wish to join nor what their distinctive contributions may be to that conversation. This approach has been problematised in management studies (Cornelissen *et al.*, 2021) with warnings that this scholarship fails to abstract out from the particulars of their chosen topic or move to a general way of understanding which could be interrogated and developed in subsequent studies.

Moreover, food is used as a merely contextual aspect to investigate other phenomena such as packaging design (Ton *et al.*, 2024); store brands (Steenkamp and Geyskens, 2014) or in-store versus online decision-making (Chintala *et al.*, 2023) as examples. Considering the framing of food simply as a category of consumption among others, it is not surprising to see that theoretical underpinnings are based on relatively generic marketing concepts such as in-store decision making. Food choices are conceptualised as a mere matter of dichotomic choices between healthy/unhealthy (Hagen, 2021) or functional/hedonic (Weilrauch and Huang, 2021) and so on. Yet our discipline could be drawing upon a wider lexicon of foundational thinking. Abarca (2015, p. 215) argues that “food can function as a medium of understanding existing theories *and creating new ones*” yet we see little attempt to create new theories on or with food.

The small sample of interpretivist works show more clarity of theoretical definition and positioning. Weijo *et al.* (2018) and Gollnhofer *et al.* (2019), for example, are both situated within the theoretical debate of consumer movements with the former developing this by using concepts of creativity and the latter working with concepts of value. Both articles generate theoretical abstraction and provide novel perspectives on the established theory of consumer movements. For example, in Weijo *et al.* (2018), their theorisation of the relationship between creative freedom and structure and how these effect the legitimacy of movements helps us better understand how consumer movements can change their market contexts. This speaks to Cornelissen *et al.* (2021) who suggest that interpretive modes of theorizing offer openness to alternative conceptualizations while the explanatory modes, of

the more dominant experimental studies, zoom in on existing forces or mechanisms to explain manifestations, dynamics, and outcomes. We concur with their argument that pluralised theorizing as opposed to privileging certain theorizing could become a disciplinary asset.

3.3 Care giving: building disciplinary competence

As this phase refers to practical aspects of care (how care is administrated with hands-on work), we look at most empirical parts of the examined papers, such as the methodological choices and their broader implications. Through our review, we do not question methodological rigour of the articles which has been checked through a review process, rather we posit broader questions about the empirical tools that have been commonly selected and the ones that remained notably marginal.

It is striking how our sample reflects a narrow range of methodological competence. The examined papers are overwhelmingly positivist relying on cross-sectional methodologies (168 out of the 190 papers). Experimental design dominates with 54% of articles based solely on experimental studies, while 30% provide a combination of lab experiments with other methods (mainly field experiments). When interrogating these experimental studies, we noticed a scant descriptions of recruitment processes and sampling techniques. Samples are described in minimal terms: sample size is accompanied with some basic demographics, mainly age, sex and occasionally income. The geographical location of the recruitment is often described in national terms (e.g. the USA) or in case of student samples, location is identified with the university (e.g. a Northeast University). While the lack of these details reflects established methodological conventions, we posit that it would be useful to provide richer and broader information to support the claimed generalisability of these works (see [McQuarrie et al., 2012](#)).

The dominance of two types of samples (students or panellists) within these studies implies an over-representation of certain populations driving food marketing research findings. First, 27% of papers are based on samples of only students (mainly undergraduate students). While we do not want to repeat the well-documented criticism on the use of students as a user-friendly convenient population ([Aguinis et al., 2021](#)), we see little attempt to improve the scant reporting details, since “a detailed reporting would help assess the influence of sample characteristics (low mean age and limited life experience, restricted variance) on findings” ([Ashraf and Merunka, 2017](#), p. 301). Considering their different demographic and psychological profiles from the heterogeneous adult population, we consider their over-representation a caring concern towards the advancement of our knowledge on food marketing.

A second sample group, panellists from external companies including Prolific, CloudResearch and MTurk were also common. Studies with a combination of students and panellists represented 33% of the sample. Panellists, who are usually based in the Global North, have been shown to significantly differ from the general population on several dimensions that could impact their food decisions including age, gender, education level, marital status, children living at home and sexual orientation ([Ipsen et al., 2021](#)). Concerns about construct validity and panellists’ overrepresentation have been raised due to the professionalisation of panellists who specialise in specific topics of research, create online communities and thus lose their naiveté ([Aguinis et al., 2021](#)).

Turning to the 17 papers which are not classified as positivist, only seven conduct primary qualitative research, and in only three journals (*Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* and *Journal of Marketing*). In these works, consumers are described in more granular and diverse terms: as keen home cooks ([Kozinets et al., 2017](#)),

dumpster divers in Germany (Gollnhofer *et al.*, 2109), craft beer aficionados in the Southwestern United States (Maciel and Wallendorf, 2017), parents in the UK (Hosany and Hamilton, 2023), food activists in Helsinki (Weijo *et al.*, 2018) and middle-class Slow Food advocates in a metropolitan area of the Midwestern United States (Thompson and Kumar, 2022). In all these studies, the consumer becomes more multi-dimensional: their passions, social positions and constraints are brought to light such that we begin to see how external conditions may impinge on their rationality and ultimately their consumption.

Experiences are captured through individual or paired interviews (Hosany and Hamilton, 2023) while archival data, prolonged online and onsite observations enrich the data set (Kozinets *et al.*, 2017; Gollnhofer *et al.*, 2019). Individual experiences are situated against other actors in the marketplace including producers and entrepreneurs (Thompson and Kumar, 2022; Weijo *et al.*, 2018). These methodological choices recognise the limits of consumer accounts in exploring complex phenomena (Mazzei and Jackson, 2008), thus observations over time in naturalistic settings are used. This breadth of evidence included in these studies together with rigorous description of sampling techniques and participants' profiles, provide a robust justification of the methodological care that has been taken in studying food practices within a specific geographical and socio-cultural context.

3.4 *Caring with: contributions to broader caring concerns*

Caring with refers to broader effects of the process of care through its reiteration over time and space. Benevolence towards society, a key effect of the reiterative nature of care, means that caring has broader implications going beyond the mere enactments of care. In framing theoretical contributions as a matter of caring with, we reflect on the broader implications of the produced knowledge by world leading scholarship.

Given the prominent focus on consumer choice, it is not surprising that the main contributions in our field surround individual consumers, thus remaining very much within the dyad of consumer/food. In these studies contributions either posit consumers as rational individuals seeking to balance dichotomies such as health versus indulgence (Woolley and Fishbach, 2016) or physiologically driven, beholden to senses and sensations in their choices (Krishna and Schwarz, 2014). Amongst the "rational consumer" contributions, consumers are argued to pay attention to packaging, labels (e.g. Szocs *et al.*, 2022), menus (Berry *et al.*, 2018) and debates around "healthy" or "indulgent" food (Choi *et al.*, 2019). There is also a group of works framing consumers as driven by their senses which unconsciously shape their decisions. For example, Krishna and Schwarz (2014) propose that olfactory imagery (smellising) affects consumer response including salivation, consumption and desire to eat. In these groups of studies, dyadic conceptualisations of food are perpetuated – the isolated consumer is understood in relation to the food object.

Contributions also maintain a functional understanding of food in terms of health versus indulgence, healthy versus tasty, health versus convenience. Consumers are assumed to share the researchers taken for granted (and never discussed) dichotomy "healthy versus indulgent" (Choi *et al.*, 2019), which hides a moralising understanding of food described also in terms of "vice" or "virtue" (Ikonen, *et al.*, 2020). Problematically, no paper in our sample has discussed the meanings of "healthy and indulgent" or "vice and virtue", which are considered "objective", value-free, universal and commonly shared between consumers and researchers. As others have pointed out (Silchenko *et al.*, 2020), this moralising way of classifying food according to reductive notions of "nutritionism" contributes to normalise a moral system of classification in which food items are unequivocally good or bad. The pervasiveness of such moralisation of self-control impacts the discipline's ability to address

global concerns including obesity, malnutrition, and eating disorders since it carries simplistic judgements on what, how and how much to eat.

There are a limited number of studies which expand beyond this dyadic. Within the positivist tradition there are a few experimental papers investigating parental choices, thus contributing to understanding of choices made for others (Hogreve *et al.*, 2021; Schumacher *et al.*, 2021). Parental choice is further unpacked in the interpretivist paper by Hosany and Hamilton (2023) providing insights on how limited resources for domestic labour and the cost of food impact on what and how families eat. The ethnography by Weijo *et al.* (2018) on consumer movements and collective creativity shows how consumers support local and extemporaneous food offerings for reasons that go beyond taste such as their desire to support their local communities and protest against policy makers. This set of works shows the potential of food scholarship to care beyond the individual and the domestic and that food choice can be considered for its cultural and political meanings.

Contributions are often stated in ways that can help industry more effectively manipulate the consumer and their choices. Ale-Chilet and Moshary's (2022) study of Chilean nutritional labelling initiatives to reduce fat and sugar in the cereal market discusses reformulation by manufacturers to fall below warning thresholds, bunching around the "least bad" nutritional profile rather than seeking to make meaningful health impacts. Their findings don't critique this action, the resultant impact on the aims of the initiative nor how such commercial "misbehaviour" limits the health of the consumer. Instead the article focuses on producing knowledge caring for the interests of the industry.

Finally, the dominance of studies based in the USA and the Global North, causes caring implication for marketing knowledge and its relevance outside academia. While others have pointed out the limits of such knowledge in terms of theoretical advancements (Kravets and Varman, 2022), we reflect that the contributions of these studies are positioned as "international" with little justification and support. To make such global claims we agree with Greeff (2023) that there is a need to decolonise our own practices and to question who benefits in maintaining parochial contributions that are presented as global.

3.5 Cyclical caring deficits

Tronto (2013) sees EoC as a progressive succession of phases, although she mentions that care is iterative since phases do not necessarily follow a chronological order. Others have also shown how caring practices are interconnected and travel across different spheres, blurring the boundaries of the work-life divide (Nair, 2024). Inspired by the iterative nature of caring, we have looked at how caring deficits connect and affect each other and propose a cyclical framework capturing their cumulative effects (see Figure 2).

The starting point of the cyclical caring deficits is related to caring about, such as the focuses that are worth attention and occupy significant space in leading journals. For Tronto (1993), the antithesis of attention is ignorance, which she sees it as an active state maintaining the status quo, rather than simply neglect. In our study we understand ignorance as an active state perpetuating what is worth knowing and what is not. In our case, atomistic consumers from the Global North dominate the focus of attention; they are young and free from familial and financial constraints. They are not pressured for time and can engage with marketing material (labels and packaging) and make considered choices. Food is framed around the dichotomy health versus indulgence and little attention given to cultural and social meanings of food. Branded foods and their symbolic meanings are absent. Choices (or lack of) and experiences of marginal consumers, such as those experiencing food insecurities or living with disabilities are absent. No attention is given to the embedded labour in food

production and distribution; experiences of producers and sellers occupy very marginal space.

Deficits in caring about refer to the limited marketing knowledge which has been applied to the selected foci. Given the dominance of individual consumers at the point of choosing a food item, it is unsurprising to see psychological theories dominating alongside physiological theories. This dominant theoretical position implies an understanding of food as disconnected from social and cultural contexts of consumption and production. In many cases food is mainly used as a contextual element of the study to advance theoretical understandings of more generic marketing topics. While the examined 4 and 4* journals have been home to seminal marketing works which profoundly changed our scholarship, we see little evidence of them in our sample. For example, the groundbreaking work from [Holbrook and Hirschman \(1982\)](#) on experiential consumption, seems to have been completely ignored in most of the examined studies which are still based on prevailing information processing models. There are exceptions, such as the [Kozinets et al. \(2017\)](#) work, but these remain exceptional interruptions to a prevailing theoretical stand.

In terms of care giving, there is a dominance of positivistic choice which fits the celebration of decontextualised consumption, albeit in specific and privileged socio-cultural and geographical locations. It also reinforces the domain of psychological and physiological understandings of food and consumption. However, this neglects care to those who sit at the periphery of the food chain, such as vulnerable consumers, precarious producers and any other actors whose unprivileged life experiences are not captured through experimental works.

Fourth, in terms of caring with, the current knowledge produced and valued in leading journals is ill-equipped to understand wider and pressuring issues. Knowledge implications are mainly framed for industry. As [Rao \(2022\)](#) demonstrates, industry funded research is more likely to be around health, which might explain the dominance of healthy/unhealthy dichotomies in leading marketing journals. While this might seem an inconsequential matter, it perpetuates the debates that are valued by industry and consequently have a space in leading journals. We could also argue that the care that has been given to industry results in research that is manipulative of consumers and their purchasing behaviour. As such the attention dedicated to individual consumers serves the interest of industry above collective well-being.

As illustrated, the four deficits are interlinked and reinforce each other creating a cycle in which only certain topics and ways of knowing are valued and celebrated. Such a cycle perpetuates what and how we know about food and demonstrates that leading scholarship remains insulated from the theoretical advancements occurring in the very journals where they are published. Caught in a perpetual loop with a limited focus on a halcyon consumerist past and a theoretically and methodologically selective stance, leading scholarship perpetuates an understanding of food consumption within an unsustainable system without critical engagement with current wicked problems. There have been successful attempts to break such a cycle with works proposing different methodologies, theories and foci and we have celebrated them in our review. Yet, the cycle is hegemonic and seems to remain impervious to these challenges.

3.6 Towards other ways of knowing: a caring agenda

How do we move away from such a deficient scholarship? How do we take care of the notable absences including food systems, sustainability, food culture and a multitude of vulnerable or simply “other” consumers? To answer these questions, we look at care as it happens within marketing journals classified as 3 and in related disciplines. While these

marketing journals replicate some of the identified deficits, we have identified some caring interventions addressing these. Building on these interventions, we propose a caring agenda which turns caring deficits into caring opportunities. Our intent is not to provide a prescriptive list of tools and actions for care, but rather establish opportunities for care which are aimed at a more comprehensive understanding of food and the marketplace (see [Figure 3](#)).

3.7 Opportunities for caring about: redressing the deficit of the atomistic consumer

There are numerous attempts to move away from decontextualised consumers to individuals located in their contexts, identities and roles, including intercultural couples ([Rogan et al., 2018](#)), children at school ([Oncini, 2020](#)) or “people experiencing hunger” ([Bublitz et al., 2019](#), p. 136). These are important starting points for our caring agenda, as they gradually change assumptions about taken-for-granted ways of understanding consumers as “free” from constraints.

The special issue on Families and Food in this journal provides a collection of papers demonstrating that by looking at family, rather than the individual, as a unit of analysis it becomes evident that food consumption is not a function of isolated actions dictated by will and choice but rather emerges from a complex assemblage of routines, material arrangements and familiar relationships which need to be considered by any interventions for health, environmentalism or other global challenges ([Dyen et al., 2018](#)). Others show how food can be a source of tensions with the family but also a resource for solving intragenerational differences and intercultural conflicts ([Rogan et al., 2018](#)). The power of branded food is also explored through a socio-historical analysis showing how brands do not simply change what we eat but reshape the practice of eating, in this particular case the practice of the everyday breakfast in Italy ([Pirani et al., 2018](#)).

In the effort to move away from the atomistic consumer, a positive step is also represented by articles that consider the role of other actors in the food system. For example, [Pizzetti et al. \(2024, p. 171\)](#) look at the role of renowned chefs in “weaving a web of care targeted at both supporting and training consumers and other stakeholders in the food supply chain”. [Mars \(2023\)](#) investigates how the heroic identity of localised food entrepreneurs, can

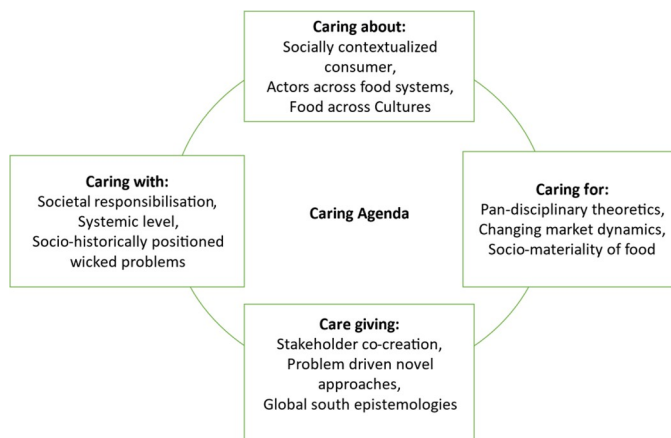


Figure 3. A caring agenda
Source: Authors' own work

jeopardise the effectiveness of localised food movements. We celebrate these works as a caring attempt to move attention from acquisition to other stages of the food cycle including production and disposal. Also, they show the importance of other actors in shaping the way food is appreciated by consumers.

Outside the marketing discipline, the label “consumer” is hardly used, and food consumption is mainly framed in socio-cultural contexts. For example, [Oncini \(2020\)](#) shows how primary school pupils’ food dispositions – including table manners, gastronomic capital and understanding of nutrients and health – are shaped by familial endowments and construct social divisions. [Woods-Brown and colleagues \(2023\)](#) investigate how men in Scottish prisons use foodwork with limited resources to escape the monotony of their isolation and bond through commensality.

These works highlight the centrality of food in human culture and the associated practices of production, preparation and consumption. Food helps to define individual and collective identities and ways of working within market systems. Food supply chains are structured with inherent power dimensions which define access to and choices of food. These examples show the potential avenues for marketing academia to have an influential voice in the food sector, one that encompasses an entire value chain and a multiplicity of stakeholders.

3.8 Opportunities for caring for: dismantling dominant theoretical domains

The examined marketing literature has shown attempts to question the dominance of research on healthy food versus unhealthy food or “vice” and “virtue” (see [Ikonen, et al., 2020](#)). Critical marketing works have provided promising attempts to dismantle the dominance of theorising food only in terms of nutrition. For example, [Cronin and Malone \(2019, p. 129\)](#) adopt a de Certeauan approach to tactics, to show how consumers’ biographical, rather than purely psychological origins shape their tactical circumvention of “certain ideological mandates” around nutritionism. [Bublitz et al. \(2019\)](#) show the centrality of conceptualising food in terms of well-being as a means of fully grasping how individuals and their communities live with food (or lack of food) rather than simply consuming it. This means theoretically framing food well-being as the results of elements operating at different societal level, including food availability, socialisation, marketing, literacy and policy.

Work outside the field of Marketing provides examples of a broad set of theoretical lenses to support these wider understandings of food. In Economic Geography, we see different ways of conceptualising food and particularly a greater attention to wicked problems. [Mahadevan and Suardi \(2014\)](#), for example, consider issues of food security but with a view on how policy needs to be local and flexible and that various forms of social exclusion: gender, caste and religion need to be considered when developing food security policy leading to region-specific differences. Within the same context, [Moragues-Faus et al. \(2020\)](#) consider how agrifood economies can address food security challenges by addressing economic and health inequalities. Their work suggests food infrastructures have the potential to act as sociopolitical devices, with territorialized agrifood economies that champion diversity and redistribution of value with the aim of delivering wide societal and material benefits, enhancing democracy and increasing the socioecological resilience of food systems. [Mouat et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Sexton \(2020\)](#) consider how new markets and new food stuffs in the form of alternative proteins, lab grown meats, synthesised milk and other cellular and plant-based substitutes create opportunities for new market paradigms. They argue that ethical practices are central to the formation of value in these nascent industries. These practices enable new ways of global capitalism because they provide workers and consumers willing to be parts of new supply chains for their own, specific reasons such as environmental ethics or a desire to be at the vanguard of technology.

Work within organisation studies, meanwhile, has argued for the necessity of taking a less human-centred view when theorising around food. In their introduction to a Special Issue on food organizing in Organization Studies, Moser *et al.* (2021) argue that food can be thought of as having agency through its very nature, its “biomateriality”. Food is distinct, it is a critical element for human sustenance and survival and is something around which societies and practices are structured (Moser *et al.*, 2021). In work studying alternative food networks, Pascucci *et al.* (2021) explore food organizing processes through the lens of sociomateriality. They argue that food should not be thought of as just another empirical context rather as agentic and living and able to effect organising through its entanglement with human agency.

Showing ways to broaden the focus of marketing food scholarship beyond narrow individualistic consumer confines necessitates wider theoretical underpinnings than have been used by most food marketing scholarship to date. If we value food in terms of its social connectivity and centrality in cultures and widen our gaze to entire value chains and multi-level perspectives, we need to pull on broader theoretical foundations and adopt pan-disciplinary approaches.

3.9 Opportunities for care giving: valuing other ways of knowing

In a time when business schools are called to decolonise their teaching and research practices and to proactively engage with stakeholders, there are opportunities to value other ways of knowing. Transformative Consumer Research scholarship has legitimised participatory action research within the marketing discipline (Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008) and offered a galvanising space for developing novel ways of doing research with stakeholders. For example, Bublitz and academic colleagues and practitioners from an NGO tackling food insecurity (2019) wrote a piece about their collective effort to understand how hunger affects people’s relationship with food. In examining how hunger affects various aspects of food well-being and how the NGO addresses every aspect, they show how holistic local solutions and community effort have positive outcomes for individuals and their communities.

Working with stakeholders outside the academy is also a theme covered in the *European Journal of Marketing* special issue on a design thinking approach for food experience (Bata and Addis, 2021) This special issue provides an exploration of how design thinking implemented through an experiential perspective can help researchers, marketers, institutions, policymakers and the food industry to enhance the food well-being of consumers by designing healthy, pleasurable and innovative food experiences. We focus notably on Bogomolova *et al.* (2021) specifically as an example of a method which engages different stakeholders, namely, consumers and staff of a supermarket, who cocreate ideas for promoting healthy food choices through co-design workshops.

While decolonising marketing has been recognised as an urgent theoretical and methodological priority of Marketing (Kravets and Varman, 2022), very few empirical works have found a space in marketing journals. Nwoba *et al.* (2022) is one rare example providing a novel lens to understand different eating behaviour in families in Nigeria. The authors note that Western theories on family roles are ill-equipped to understand food consumption within families. Cultural norms to build strong caring women, emphasise a home-based role for women focused on cooking and eating whereas the men within families have more freedoms for leisure. These differences in the obesogenic environment for men and women in Nigeria mean that the roles of men and women within the family unit have distinctive influences on individual consumption behaviours and consequently their likelihood of obesity.

These works represent a promising path towards valuing other ways of knowing since they challenge our epistemic assumptions and provide some novel and promising ways of dismantling inequity in knowledge creation.

3.10 Opportunities for caring with: addressing broader societal concerns

Moving away from obsessively studying the atomistic consumer at the acquisition stage provides an opportunity to do “caring with” and engage with broader and pressuring wicked problems in a more holistic way. Marketing scholarship has recently started to consider those problems and reflect on how marketing could contribute to a better understanding of these. Ruzeviciute and Thürriidl’s (2023, p. 97) commentary in *Journal of International Marketing* makes a compelling case for addressing the neglected topic of overconsumption of meat with an international marketing perspective. This would contribute significantly to addressing this problem since food preferences and food waste affect both Western and non-Western countries but “the underlying causes are very different due to variances in infrastructure, shopping practices, and knowledge of and investment in proper food storage.” The special issue in *Industrial Marketing Management* on food waste offers an excellent starting point to show how marketing (with its different epistemologies) offers an understand of food disposal across different contexts and spanning from “production and supply chain, retail and services, household and consumer, or multi-stakeholder and circular economy perspectives” (Gibbert *et al.*, 2023, p. 3).

The *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*’s special issue on food and well-being (Scott and Vallen, 2019) provides an excellent example of how marketing knowledge can be put at the service for societal good. It shows how marketing can move away from looking only at the individual’s well-being and address broader societal concerns. For example, Parker *et al.* (2019) explore how and why collaborative food consumption practices can result in overconsumption and waste of food. They demonstrate that while sharing food increases individual well-being through generosity and reciprocity, it has a negative societal consequence resulting in food waste. At the very opposite end of consumers’ experience of eating, Bublitz *et al.* (2019, p. 147) examine consumers living with hunger and the detrimental consequences for individuals and their communities. In demonstrating that food access and availability is only one of the dimensions of food hunger, they advocate that shifting the responsibility from individuals to society “provides a mechanism to hold governments accountable to ensure all people have affordable access to healthy and safe food”.

These special issues show that care is taken to address wicked problems moving away from individual consumer perspectives, without losing sight of how people live with (or without) food. While effort has been taken to look at current food systems, it would be beneficial to systematically work with stakeholders. Building on de Ruyter *et al.* (2022) who consider that co-creation with stakeholders will be critical if academia is to contribute meaningful change to grand global challenges, we suggest a framework for solidarity-based research addressing food marketing’s grand challenges.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Two decades ago, Tapp (2004) criticised marketing academia for being out of touch and for caring only for some stakeholders including privileged consumers or industry (see also Sinkovics and Schlegelmilch, 2000). Two decades later, we still agree with this assessment noticing the ethical implications of being out of touch. Using an EoC framework, we interrogate the underlying ethical values driving current marketing scholarship noticing

ethical deficits and opportunities around the presence or absence of research topics, valued or devalued theoretical and methodological tools, and privileged or marginalised stakeholders.

In mapping out the caring deficits and opportunities through EoC we make two contributions to Tronto's work. First, we use EoC as a lens to look beyond the individuals and their needs and contribute to the growing body of works on care towards objects. This allows us to consider the existing literature (our object of care) beyond the work of individual authors and to demonstrate that some stakeholders and topics are privileged and that consequently scholars become incentivised to produce work within the same areas of privilege. Second, examining how care practices are interconnected (Nair, 2024), we look at the cyclical relationships of caring and uncaring practices and their results such as caring opportunities and caring deficits. Considering care deficits and opportunities as a cycle of practices and values is an important theoretical development because it demonstrates their interconnectedness and allows us to consider the interventions across the cycle necessary to challenge recognised issues in our hierarchies of knowledge production (Kravets and Varman, 2022). In proposing the caring deficits framework, we show how deficits operate through active practices of silencing, disregarding and devaluing other ways of knowing, other consumers and other communities. As we note, the opposite of care is not passive neglect but is an active state of privileged irresponsibility which Tronto (1993) describes as failing to recognise caring needs and perpetuating a status quo with its inequalities and injustices. We also show how these deficits condemn marketing scholarship to sit at the periphery of timely interdisciplinary debates on how to tackle wicked problems.

In our broader examination of wider scholarship, we see some examples of a more caring scholarship. This values and celebrates caring needs as opportunities for academic interventions. It is within this scholarship that we create our caring agenda, as a cyclical relationship of caring opportunities. Just as deficits reinforce each other becoming hegemonic in our knowledge production so too aspects of care can become virtuously reinforcing. The interventions that we identify from Special Issues and communities such as TCR (see Ozanne *et al.*, 2021, p. 2024) show how caring practices and values operate within marketing. However, our optimism is tempered by caution; beyond the vehicle of the special issue which provides the opportunities of change and challenge we see that the cycle of knowledge production remains largely impervious to challenge and change. We argue that this is because we have not until now embraced a caring agenda. It is insufficient to challenge in isolation: research focus, theories, methods or audiences, rather there is a need to challenge the cycle of knowledge. We propose that each aspect of disciplinary care influences the other. Address these together will be essential to tackle the wicked problems facing food marketing scholars.

Our caring agenda starts from *caring about* since to embrace the full potential of caring opportunities we need to focus on what is needed in our communities. We second the TCR community's call to work more closely with communities and various stakeholders to create a relational engagement approach (Ozanne *et al.*, 2017) that move away from sporadic engagements in which research findings are simply handed back to stakeholders for their application. Ozanne *et al.* (2021), introduce a typology of relational engagements showing how the researcher is only "one actor in a complex network" (p. 133). This is not a surprise, but it needs to be fully recognised in considering how knowledge production tends to operate via a top-down logic rather than a more community-oriented one. While we optimistically advocate for a more collaborative approach to knowledge production, we are aware of its challenges. The recent impact task force (Ozanne *et al.*, 2024, p. 192) argues that caring and meaningful impact necessitates "a longer time horizon that does not align with current university reward structures" and that the academic community often lacks training on how

to sustain caring relationships over time (see Preece *et al.*, 2025). It is only after having identified broader societal concerns and key stakeholders that we can address methodological and theoretical opportunities for a caring approach to scholarship.

Finally, we make a contribution to the disciplinary potential of Food Marketing. By showing the limitations of care within extant scholarship we make evident those spaces where we are not currently maximising our voices and scholarly impact. We also consider that EoC as an underpinning framing becomes a means to challenge our discipline to care for new and more fundamental issues. In the current climate of disciplinary decolonisation and the impact agenda, we as marketers need to go beyond established conversations and ways of knowing, EoC gives us a position from which to take a stance on the wicked problems of our time. Making care central to our work would allow marketing scholars to go beyond tribal divisions on epistemic or ontological positions and invest our intellectual resources and competences in making marketing knowledge matter for societal good. While EoC may not align with everyone's ethical stance, taking academic responsibility for improving food systems is common ground for all regardless of our intellectual and ethical background.

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