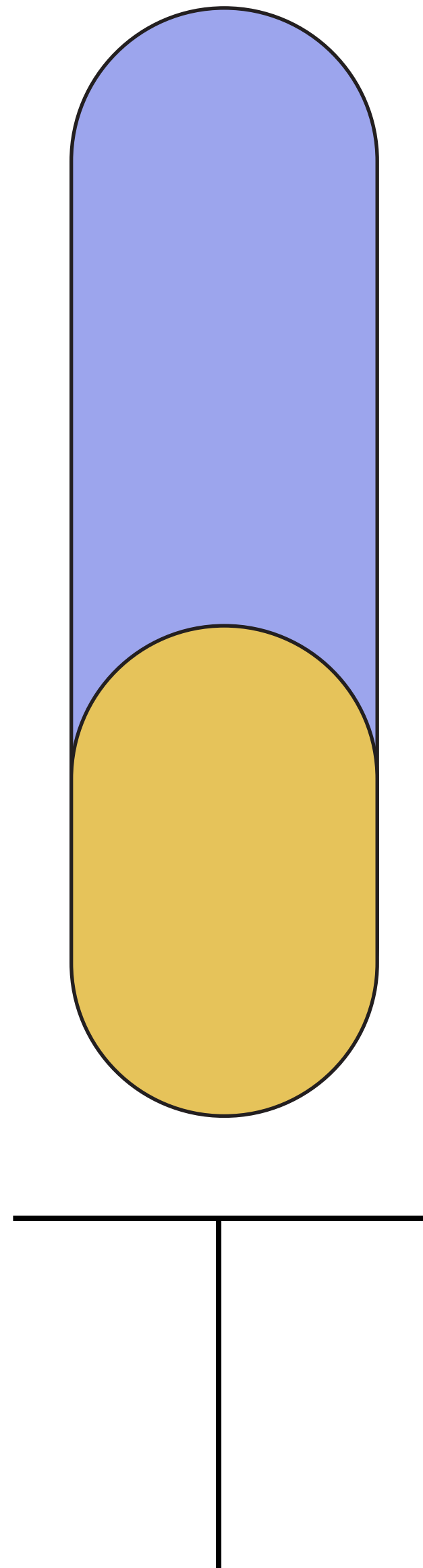


Social Sustainability in Tech (SST)

A definitive report and playbook for cultivating responsible and ethical leadership in the field of emerging technology for inclusive innovation.

2023 - 2024

xeno | ddc



○ This report is created by:



Xeno Co-lab Pvt. Ltd.

Xeno Co-lab is a service design and social innovation consultancy aimed at connecting the seemingly disconnected behaviours, trends and realities through deep insights and collaboration with diverse stakeholders. By merging empathic, analytical and business thinking, the consultancy designs solutions that create lasting social and business impact. Xeno Co-lab's mission is to help organisations become innovation leaders by understanding their users intimately and business context comprehensively. Xeno Co-lab believes in creating a better future through a holistic end-to-end approach and compelling human-centric experiences.



Darjeeling Design Co. Pvt. Ltd.

Darjeeling Design Co. is an interdisciplinary strategic consultancy based in Bengaluru, India. Established by a dynamic team encompassing expertise in technology, creativity, and marketing, the firm excels in providing human-centered transformations tailored to the distinctive needs of its clients' businesses and brands. Emphasizing collaborative efforts, the consultancy flourishes in cultivating partnerships through a distinctive human-centric approach, wherein its leadership not only assumes the role of strategists but also actively engages as creators.

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Purpose

The age-old philosophical debate about the co-existence and co-dependence of technology and society has resurfaced at different points in history, triggered by radical technology that is experimented with more than it is understood. In recent times, Artificial Intelligence has reignited this debate. The philosophical perspective on technology suggests that it should be grounded in human and ethical values. However, documentaries such as **"The Social Dilemma"** vividly portray a somber yet truthful picture of how technology is, in fact, shaping values and behaviours in society that are deeply concerning.

As technologists, researchers, designers, and leaders, we must ponder: How can we seamlessly integrate the business value of technology with human values, specifically emphasising social sustainability in emerging technology?

Social Sustainability in Tech (SST) report serves as a comprehensive guide for leaders and future leaders seeking to transition towards innovative business models and products that bridge the gaps between technology's

business value and user value. It is intended to assist companies in comprehending, implementing, and leveraging the potential of harnessing the social sustainability around emerging technologies while navigating the current challenges around data privacy, social biases and overall digital well-being of the consumers. It aims to expedite the adoption of responsible and ethical design practices while promoting inclusive and sustainable technological development.

This comprehensive study, developed through rigorous secondary research, provides an in-depth review of perspectives on responsibility and ethics in the tech world. Drawing on insights from 10 global experts through primary interviews, the study underscores the challenges faced by digital citizens, including information deficits and a lack of agency, leading to vulnerability in data use and unintentional privacy compromises. The report delves into the broader societal impacts of technology, addressing emotional, psychological, and environmental effects. By delving into the nuances of SST, the report underscores the crucial role of decision-makers in facilitating ethical practices without compromising profitability.

The primary objective of this report is to empower companies with the necessary knowledge and tools to thoroughly evaluate their existing SST landscape. Through a comprehensive diagnostic analysis, companies can discern their current strengths, challenges, and gaps, emphasising key design principles and a

building-block approach.

The report delineates prevailing challenges and conflicts, offering a blueprint as a step-by-step solution to address these barriers by amalgamating existing resources with new developments by introducing Shared Value Framework (SVF).

More importantly, the report serves as a rallying call to policymakers, decision-makers and stakeholders in the emerging technology landscape for those who are striving to formulate a social sustainability roadmap for their respective companies. Addressing responsible and transparent practices and considering scalability are integral components of a sustainable strategy for maintaining relevance in today's intertwined digital and social landscape.

We have created this report because we believe that business value, user value and social value are not conflicting. In fact, it's where our creativity can shine by imagining business models and offerings that marry them to derive social sustainability. Our design toolkits have the potential to identify better choices, mitigate risks and design a future of technology that prioritises people and society. The question is, are we courageous enough to chase it?

Note: The content and data is true as of March 2024.

“

Today, there is no set criteria to measure responsibility in handling technology. Usually there is creative tension between engineers and philosophers. Engineers, driven by a quest for solutions and breakthroughs, propel us into the future, while philosophers anchor us, prompting us to question not just what we can do, but what we should do. So, the responsible handling of technology lies at the intersection of innovation and introspection. It requires a more abstract approach.

ANUSH MOHANDASS

Chief Product Officer and Co-founder, asato.ai

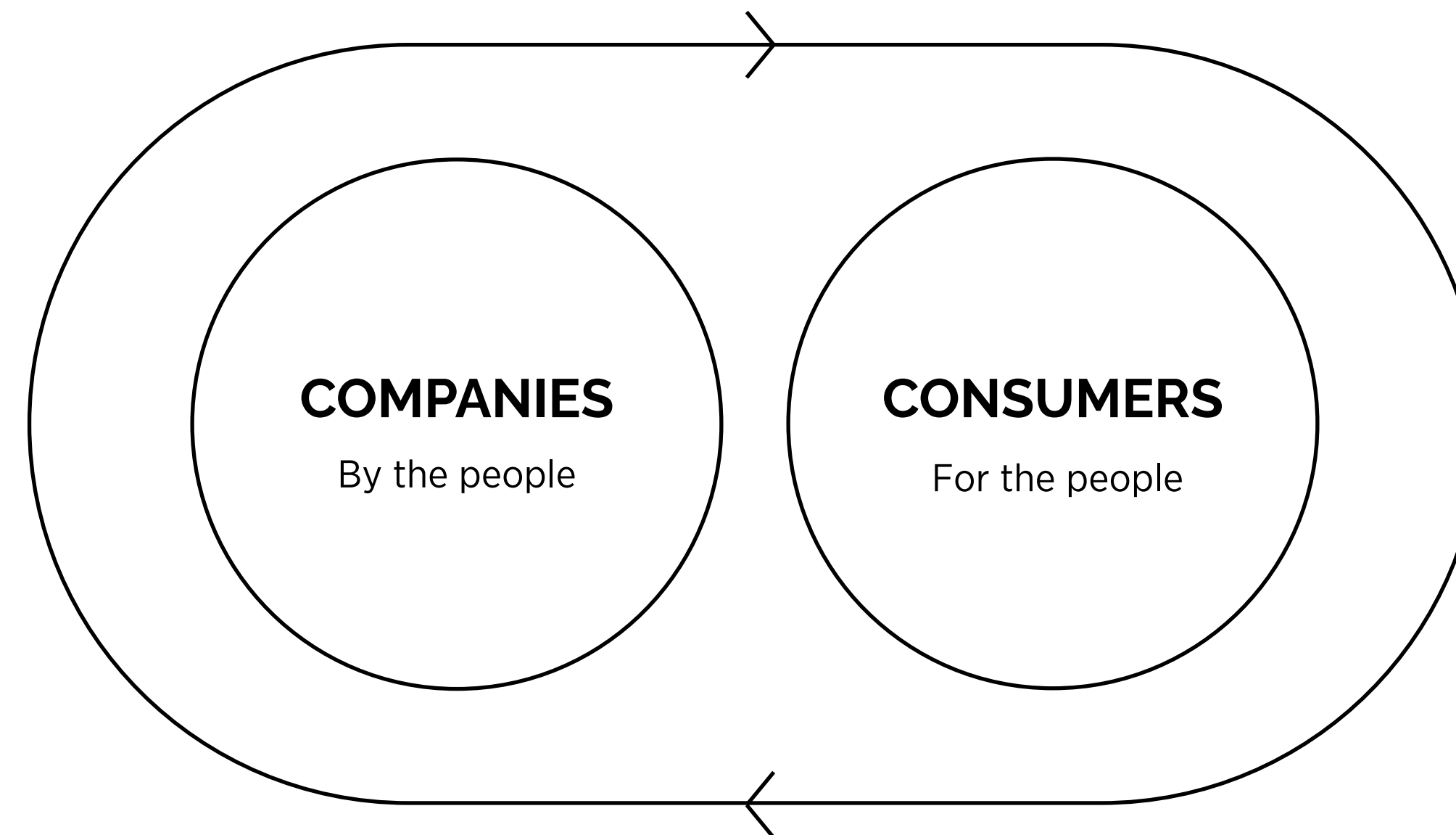


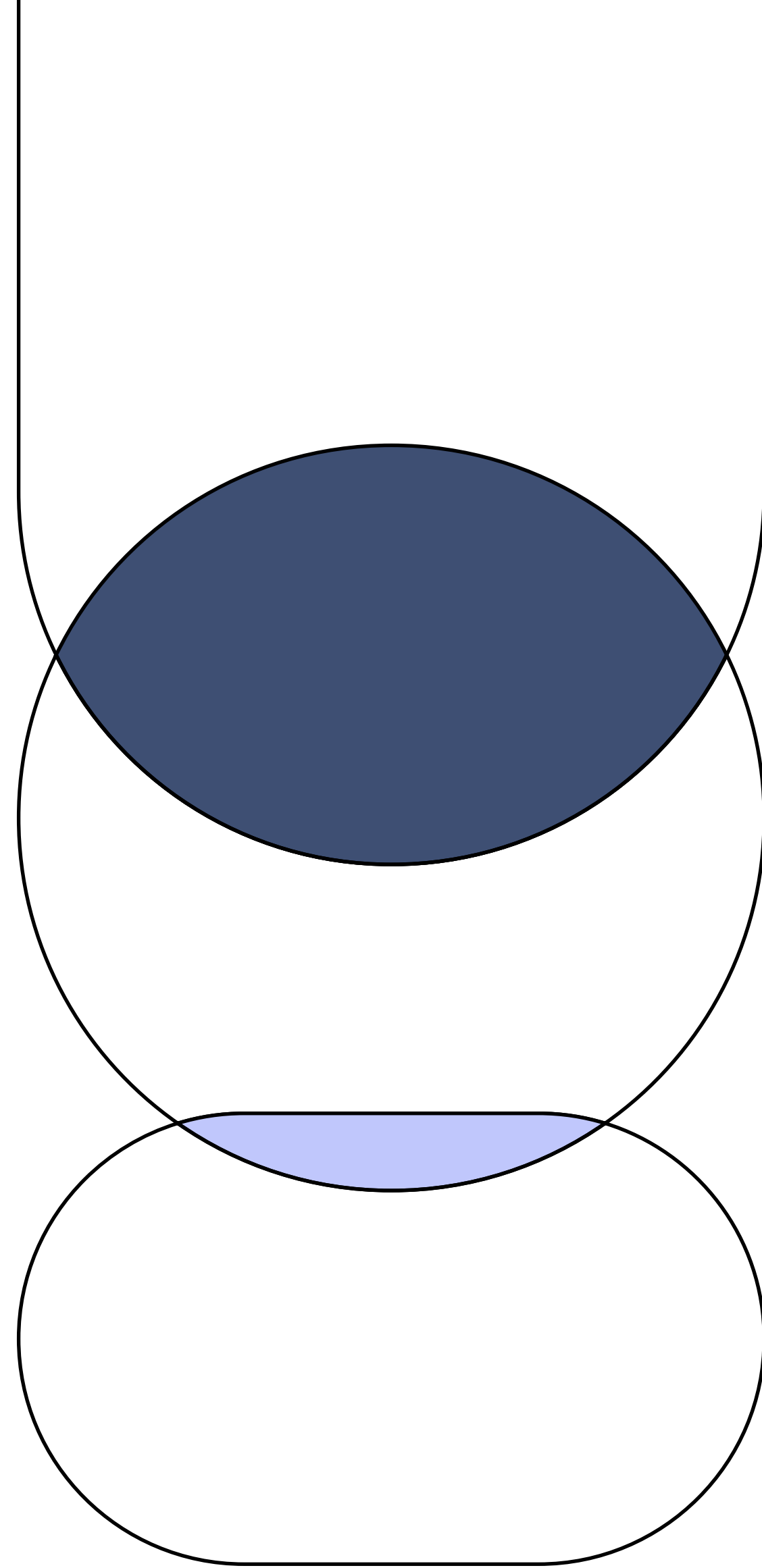
Modern tech landscape and concerns



Within our interconnected digital ecosystem, companies conceive products and introduce services for consumer utility, establishing a global virtuous cycle to ensure sustained growth and support innovation.

This enduring cycle is subject to ongoing scrutiny concerning the responsible use of consumer data and associated risks for the benefit of corporate entities, startups, and governmental organisations, with concerns raised about the potential undue advantage enjoyed by the latter.





Growing concerns around ethics and responsibility

Today, technology has tightly woven itself into the social fabric on a global scale. This has largely been due to the rise in penetration and wide adoption of digital devices, services and the internet. The increase in dependency on technology and reach of technology to wider audiences has also opened the doors for increased risks associated with it.



Increase in device penetration

According to **Statista**, in India, a country with the largest population in the world, the rate of penetration of smartphones is going to reach 96% in 2040 from 71% in 2023, with an estimated **1.6 billion internet users in 2050 in India alone**. New internet users are more vulnerable than the tech-native population who have more digital confidence and more digital awareness from their experience as digital citizens over the years. It is crucial for us to think of how do we design a safe digital environment for all.

Influence of social media platforms

For many consumers globally, using the internet is synonymous to using WhatsApp or Facebook. Popular platforms like Telegram, WeChat, WhatsApp and Meta's Messenger boast a massive active user base. This user base is exposed to the harm caused by design choices made by companies that impact their personal well-being and also the society they live in. There is increased anxiety around how personal data is being tracked, used or sold, data breaches and the role these platforms play in socially and politically volatile situations.

WhatsApp reports its two billion users send more than 100 billion messages each day; that's 1.1 million messages per second. Source: Omdiyar Network's report, Trustworthy Messaging in a Viral World

Rise in the mainstream AI applications

According to **PwC's research**, AI is projected to add \$15.7 trillion to global GDP by 2030, demonstrating its immense commercial potential. The US and China are expected to benefit the most from this economic growth. As we tap into this technology for economic growth, it is equally, if not more, important for us to think of its consequences on people, society and the environment. While AI won't replace humans, it is crucial to set boundaries and be intentional about its usage to mitigate unintended harm. Experimentation without intentional limits can have adverse effects on people, society, and the environment.



DAVID PAGE

Partner, The Magnetic Collective

AI brings with it cultural baggage. Fictional narratives of robots taking over the world frequently appear in movies, TV shows, and comic books. The emergence of AI tools has made these fictional narratives suddenly feel like a looming reality.

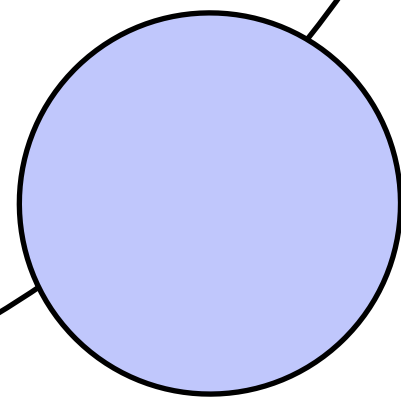
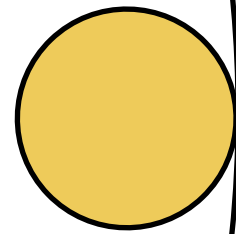
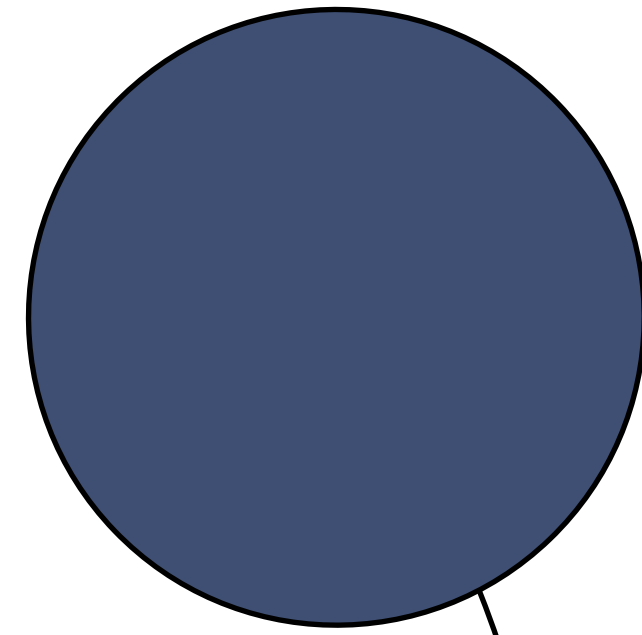
Rise in digital privacy concerns

Increased tech dependence has given rise to concerns and anxiety in consumers globally about the exchange of data shared versus value gained. While most consumers voice concern, they are unsure of the threats, implications or even choices that they may have in how their data is used to offer them services of value. This needs to be deeply understood also from a cultural lens because their awareness, comfort and points of concern significantly change based on geographies and socio-cultural aspects.

Evolving regulations and policies

Growing worries about data breaches and Personal Identifiable Information (PII) management have prompted governments and regulators to establish frameworks like **GDPR** and **CCPA**. These regulations impose penalties on non-compliant companies. To evade hefty fines and develop future-proof solutions, companies are proactively devising standardised processes for compliance.

One company incurred a fine of \$180 million for a data breach that included login and payment information for nearly 400,000 people. Source: McKinsey & Company's The Consumer data opportunity and privacy Imperative



The internet took a good ten years before it became even remotely available to the rest of the world. Mobile phones, on the other hand, took less than half that time to penetrate the market. Generative AI is likely advancing 100 times faster than that. Plus, you're going to see it just about everywhere.

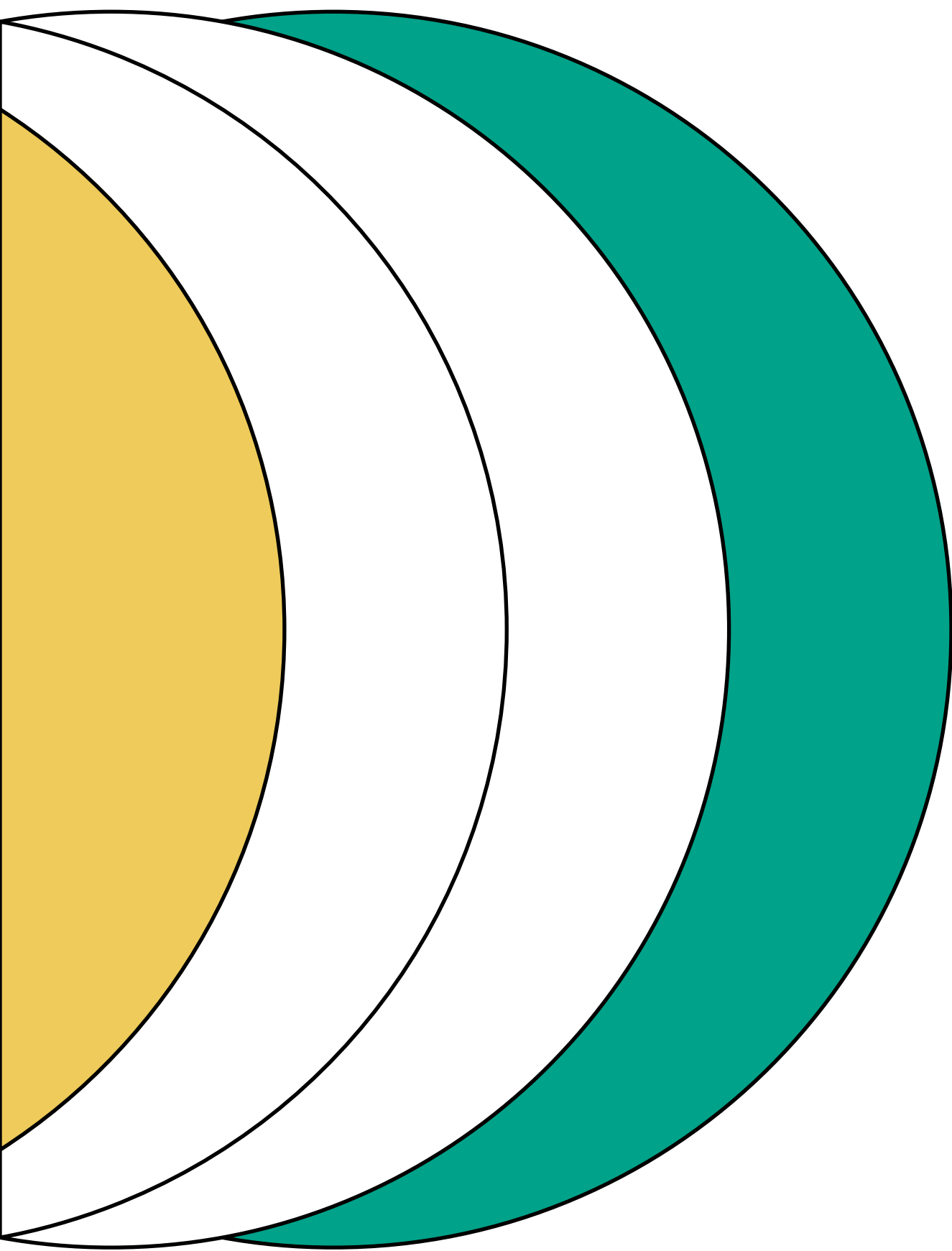
ARUN K. SUBRAMANIYAN

Founder & CEO, Articul8 AI



**Technology
impact on
digital privacy
and well-being**





AI is amplifying concerns related to ethics and responsibility

Since concerns around AI are driving a large part of the conversation around ethics and responsibility within tech, it is important to investigate the potential opportunities and the risks it presents now, and in the future.

There are aspects of AI that continue to seem unexplainable, less understood and more vague to most laypersons. A **report by the World Economic Forum** breaks down this 'AI foreignness' into three main aspects: the lack of explainability of its sources when producing information, the unpredictability of outcomes owing to the self-learning quality of AI and the fact that it may behave differently than humans which can again, increase the chances of unpredictability in outcomes.

Due to these reasons, the potential of AI cannot be discussed without discussing the associated risks involved with it.



Lack of explainability and traceability

Applications of AI, especially in healthcare, have the potential to greatly benefit consumers through diagnostic services and personalised healthcare plans. However, reliance on AI alone may be limited due to the lack of explainability in outcomes. In the same **report by World Economic Forum (in collaboration with Deloitte)**, Mount Sinai trained an AI system to predict diseases but couldn't provide explanations for its suggestions. **PwC predicts** that AI will aid, not replace, human physicians in the healthcare sector.

Concerns also arise regarding copyright infringement with AI-generated content. **Microsoft** has paved the way for assuring its consumers by committing to taking responsibility for copyright violations and covering legal costs for lawsuits. While this may be one solution to assume responsibility and provide confidence and assurance to consumers, the questions remain unanswered as to how may we prevent copyright violations in the first place.



Perpetuating stereotypes and discrimination

AI systems have inherited biases from their creators. Representational bias in images generated by AI, depicting people based on gender, race, or appearance, reflects the tech industry's bias, lack of diversity, and representation. However, this can also cause harm and contribute to disparities. For instance, in industries like finance, AI used to decide credit access of an individual can perpetuate bias, discriminating against marginalised individuals. At the same time, AI can significantly impact personalised financial solutions, offering faster and more informed decision-making. So how do we strike a balance between providing short-term value and avoiding potential long-term harm?

Moreover, Arun K. Subramaniyan, Founder and CEO of Articul8 AI explains, "An obvious bias is easy to detect, but hidden biases can be much more challenging to uncover. For instance, when generating an image, there may be a tendency to consistently generate western images. Similarly, when referring to a successful businessperson, the generated image often portrays a white male."



67% fear being a pedestrian in a world of autonomous car. Source: This article refers to the Brand in Motion 2018

Study, released by WE Communications.





Lack of predictability in desirable decisions

Within the automotive industry, automated driver assistance systems have been discussed as possible applications of AI for some time now. However, the ethical dilemmas associated with it do not have a straightforward answer. Along with training systems to provide predictable and ethical outcomes, it is going to be an uphill battle to build consumer trust in these systems without proof of consistency or predictability in outcomes.

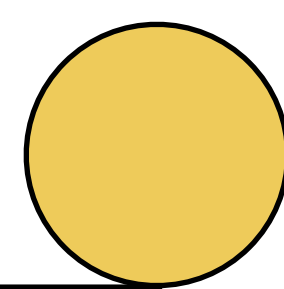
In summary, AI can have a transformative impact across all key industry sectors globally, improving personalisation, efficiency, and effectively addressing the limitations it is accused of.

For example, while AI tools are being analysed and criticised for their inherent bias, **Pipeline**, an AI platform created by Accenture helps fight gender bias to achieve gender equity within organisations. Similarly, **Pymetrics** is a Manhattan-based startup that is data-driven and uses audited AI to create a fair hiring process. In the end, AI is a tool that brings up the essential question again, how are we going to use it? Just because it can do something, do we want it to? What are the unintended consequences of its applications? What is the cost versus value? It all amounts to: How do we design with intention and integrity?



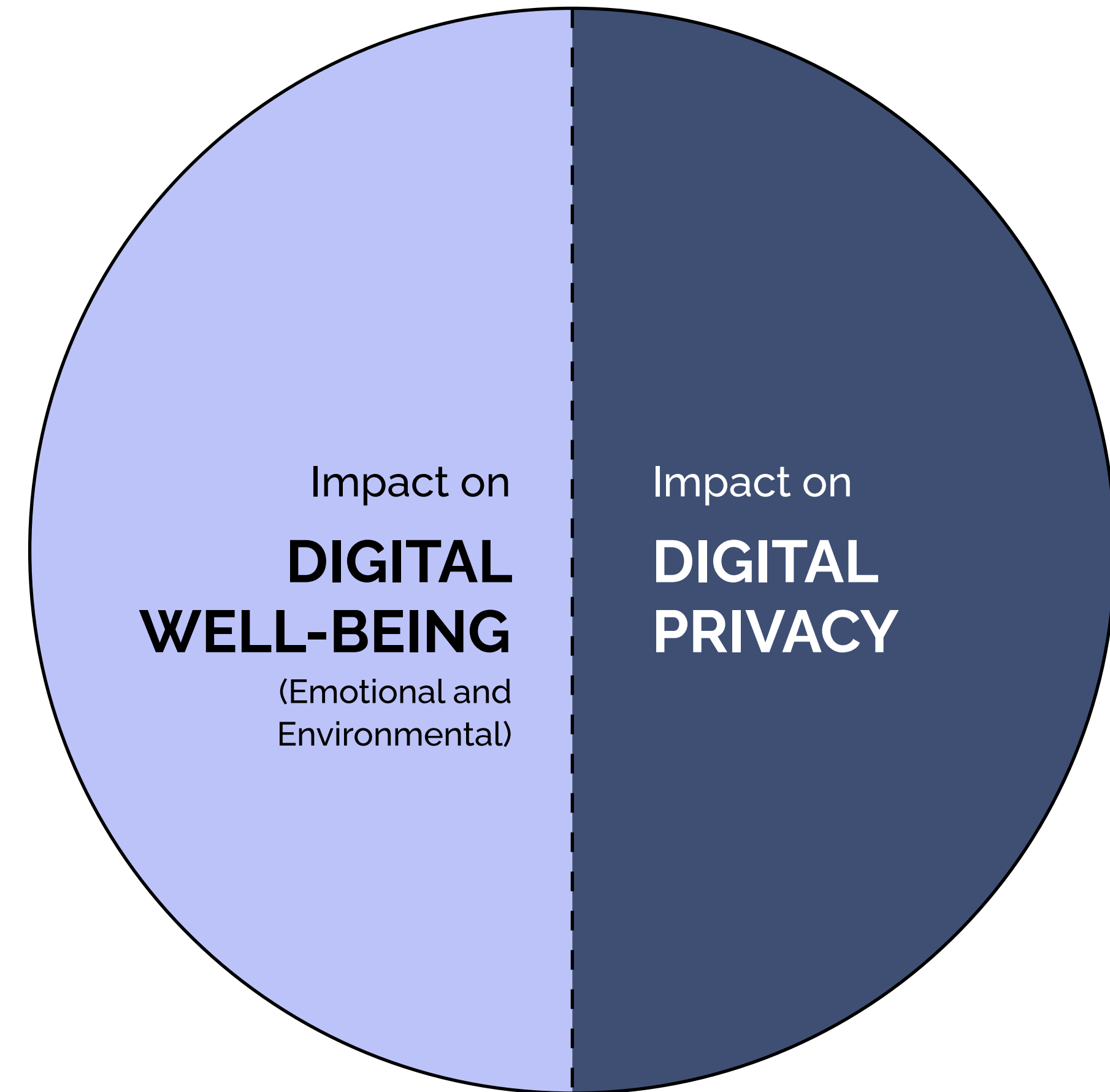
PRAVEEN YASARAPU
Founder and CEO, Stealth Startup

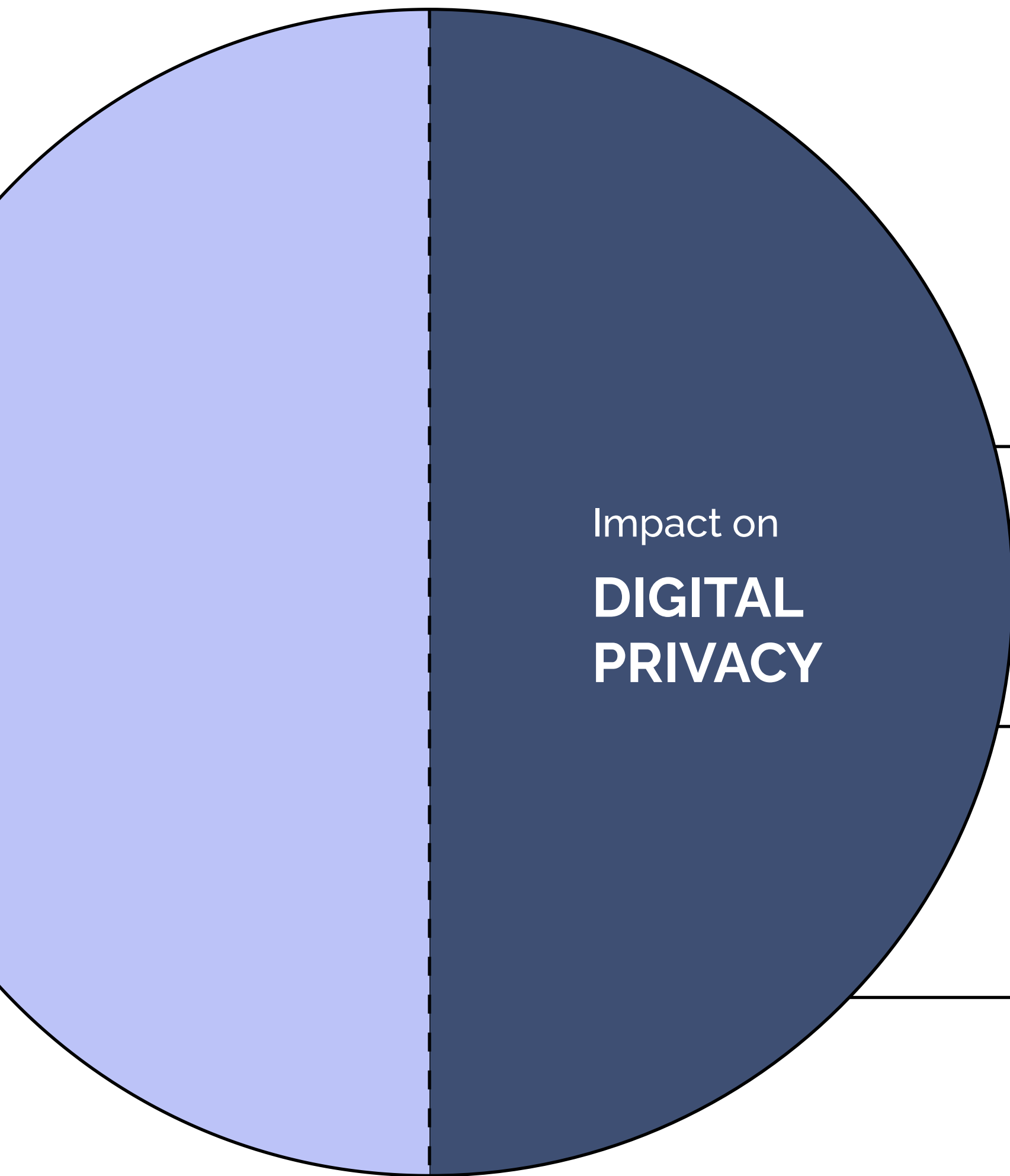
There is a pressing need to introduce responsible AI tools and certifications that are aligned with regulations. As an example, consider refrigerator licensing and certification, where government-imposed regulations must be adhered to. Drawing a parallel, we should treat AI like any other product which is regulated over time.



How is AI impacting the consumers?

The Impact is two-fold





We start by elaborating on the reality of consumers as digital citizens. The lack of information and the lack of agency in making decisions around how their data is used or exploited leaves them feeling powerless and vulnerable.

1

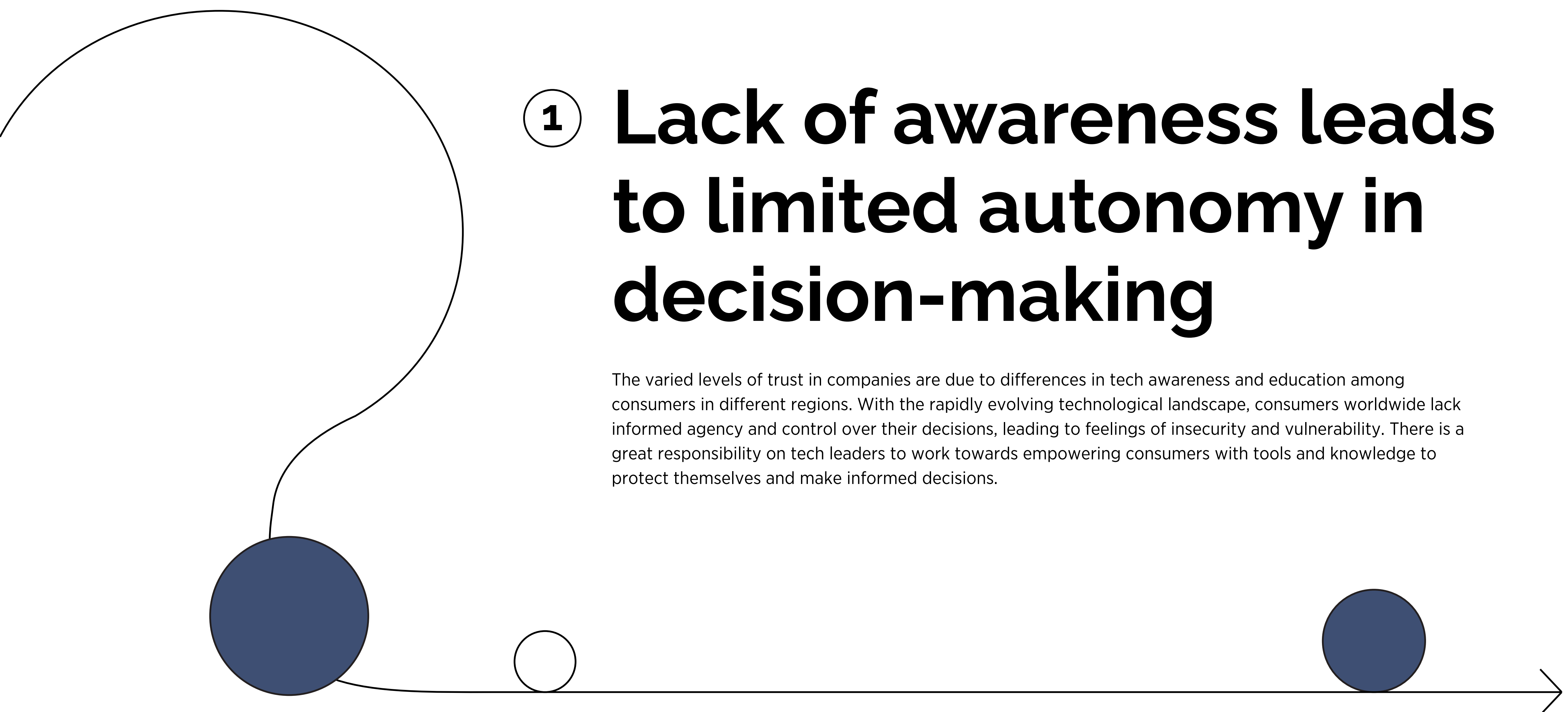
Lack of awareness in users leads to limited autonomy in informed decision-making

2

Consumers often unwillingly trade off their privacy in exchange for the offered service

3

Consumers do not trust companies unless they display proof over promise



① Lack of awareness leads to limited autonomy in decision-making

The varied levels of trust in companies are due to differences in tech awareness and education among consumers in different regions. With the rapidly evolving technological landscape, consumers worldwide lack informed agency and control over their decisions, leading to feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. There is a great responsibility on tech leaders to work towards empowering consumers with tools and knowledge to protect themselves and make informed decisions.



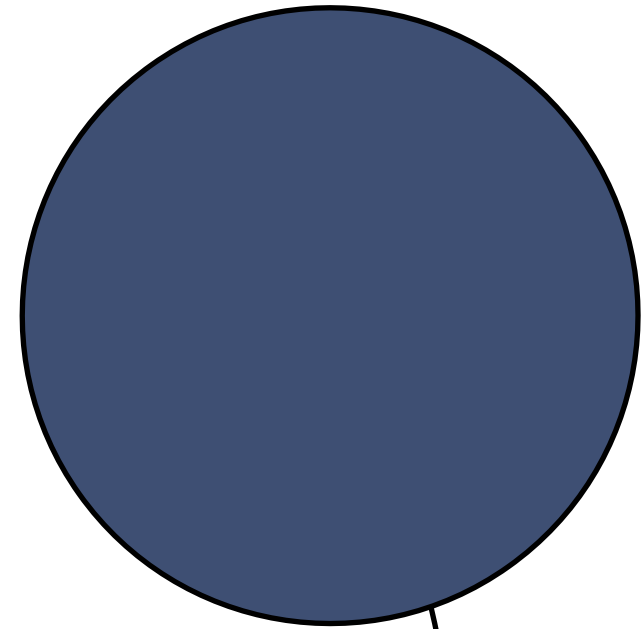
Firefighting problems for privacy and security

Through consumer research that our teams have conducted over the years, we have observed that, when asked if they are concerned about their digital privacy and security, most consumers would answer positively but rarely take preemptive safety measures. Digital privacy and security is always thought of when a breach occurs or consumers experience a personal threat, it may be financial scams or sharing of sensitive or personal information. In less tech-savvy consumer segments, concerns center around unauthorised access by strangers, while the potential threat from third-party companies accessing, storing, or selling their information is often overlooked. That concept still remains vague for many and the threat therefore, remains less concerning.



SIMON ROBERTS
Partner, Stripe Partners

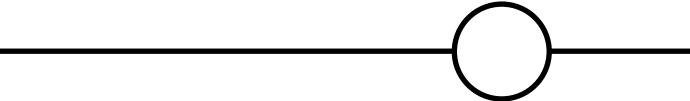
Things like electricity and water, you don't think about them until you don't have them. Privacy is similar in this respect. I don't think about my data from my credit card. I go do what I need to do and leave, unless I get a call saying my account has been hacked. Then you realise how you have been putting yourself at risk and that tends to be, I think, how many people operate.



The Cambridge Analytica case prompted people to wonder how companies acquire information about them. It takes significant events in the tech world for consumers to think and question.

DAVID PAGE

Partner, The Magnetic Collective



Culturally diverse perceptions around digital privacy and security

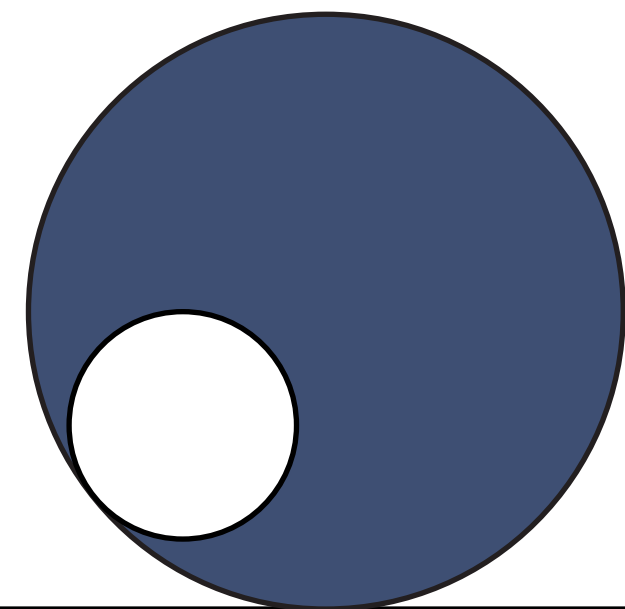
The biggest reason for why consumers feel vulnerable towards plausible harm is the varying level of tech awareness and limited understanding of how to stay safe online. Each market shows different concerns and fears around digital privacy and security based on the tech maturity of the region and cultural conditioning. Based on our experience of conducting consumer research in India and also as per the **research done by Dalberg & Omidyar Network** in Nigeria, some key concerns of consumers from India and Nigeria is of their account being hacked on social media platforms or fintech platforms or about their information getting leaked and used for blackmail. Parents overseeing children's online safety are primarily concerned about access to age-appropriate content. In India, safety, privacy, and trust perceptions in digital services are influenced by societal views. Shared beliefs and opinions, often fueled by scare stories and information on social media, shape perceptions about companies or platforms. The **same research** states consumers from the USA fear government surveillance, monitoring of conversations for targeted ads, physical access of accounts by government operatives, spies in group chats, anonymity/access to personal information.



DAVID PAGE

Partner, The Magnetic Collective

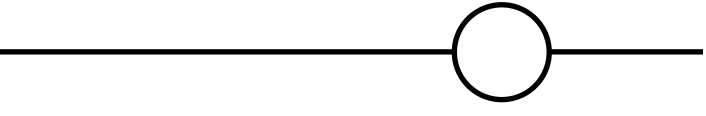
In Japan, there is a belief that companies will do the right thing for society; people have more trust in big corporations. Whereas in the US, there is more cynicism, as people believe companies will do the right thing for the company, not for society.





Taking responsibility on oneself

The consumers' lack of clear and holistic understanding of how to protect themselves and not knowing how to hold the companies accountable, where or who to direct their concerns to, leads to consumers taking the onus on themselves to safeguard their safety and privacy. Most often the consumers take the responsibility on themselves to find solutions and workarounds that make sense to them or blame themselves in case of any mishap leading to a sense of - "I should have known better." In India we have seen consumers sharing a feeling of, "You have to take care of yourself. Why would a big tech company worry about what is happening with their one single customer?" That is because consumers consider the big tech companies too big to be concerned about their issues instead of holding them accountable. Consumers in-turn try to use measures independently like app locks, ad blocks or antivirus software, etc. to keep their app data safe and private.



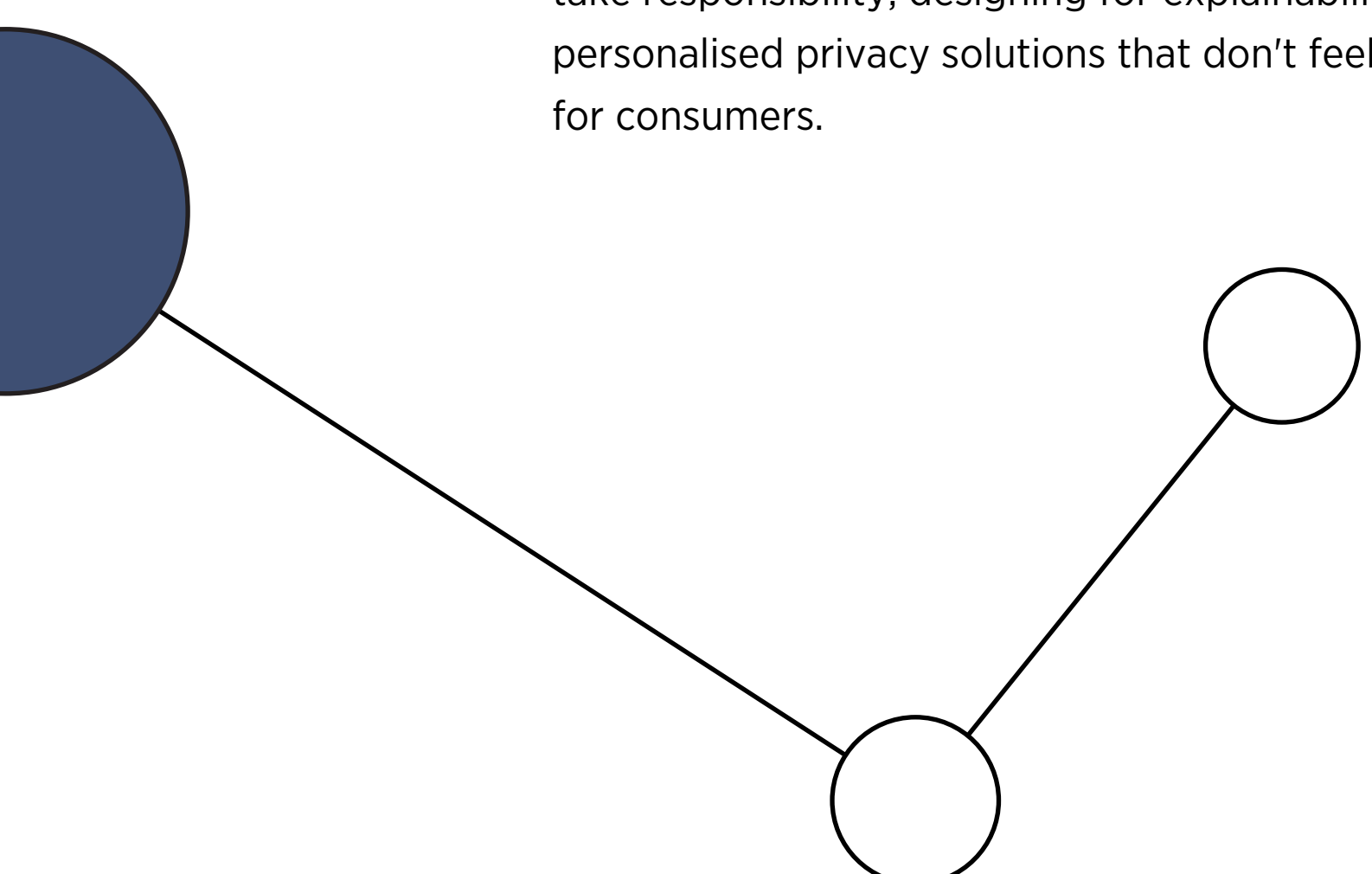
Limited tools to take control and make informed decision

Despite low awareness or lack of clarity in information, consumers have strong intentions and a desire to protect themselves. There are limited tools available for the layperson to take control of their digital data, information and actions. Consumers seek this control to make informed decisions for themselves instead of accepting the norms of the platform as is. Advanced consumers or tech-savvy consumers also experience an illusion of choices as they use platforms where they may feel like they have access to choices under 'Settings' but in reality, they struggle with finding a personalised solution to address their unique and nuanced privacy concerns. Such consumers face dilemma between the illusion of choices that they experience and the reality of choices that they have while using a platform to moderate and control their data security and safety.

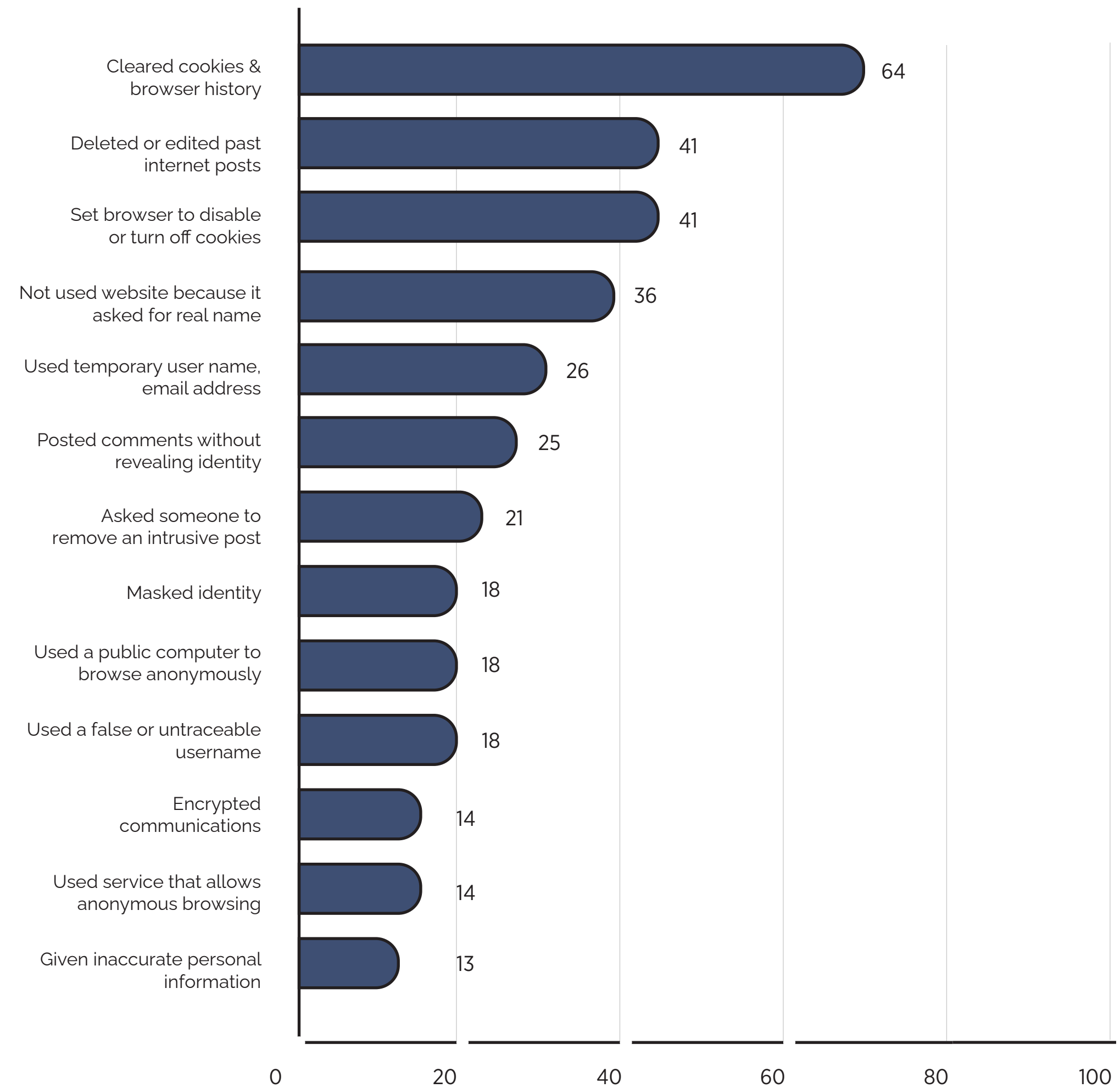
Consumer concerns over data collection and privacy are mounting, but few take adequate protective precautions

Consumers find workarounds to address gaps and minimise shortcomings of a platform, for example, **switching into airplane mode so that other consumers won't be able to tell if they have read their message**, clearing cookies and browsing history regularly, or using incognito mode to browse. The workarounds that consumers use also forces them to alter their ideal usage or current behaviour. The research conducted by **McKinsey & Company** with 792 participants points out protection precautions that consumers take; 41% of them have deleted or edited past internet posts and 36% do not use a website because it asked for a real name.

The lack of education and understanding requires companies to take responsibility, designing for explainability and offering personalised privacy solutions that don't feel like compromises for consumers.



Percentage of people who realise what are they sharing



Respondents taking action % (n=792)

Source: McKinsey Survey of North American Consumers on Data Privacy and Protection, 2019



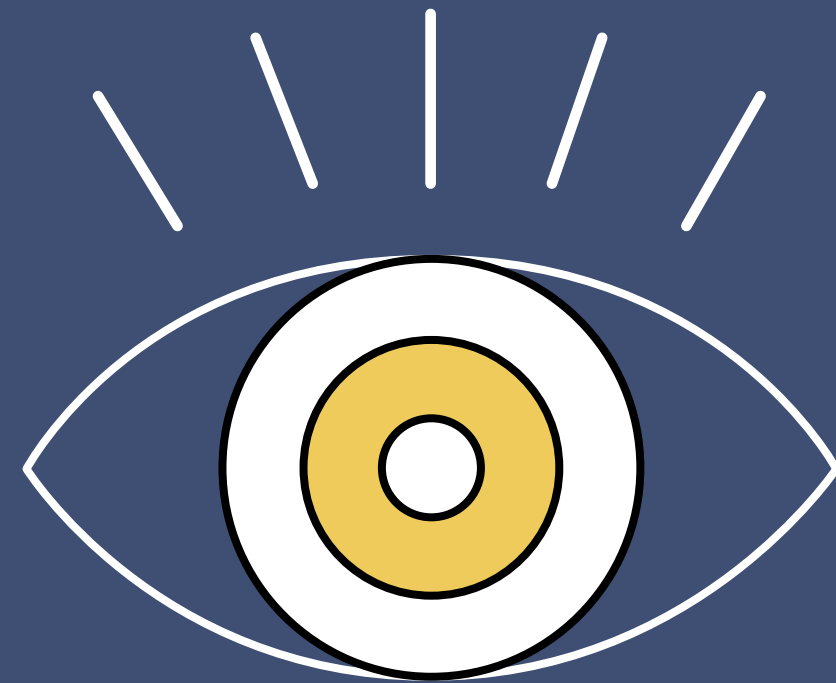
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Expanding consumer choices, like providing more privacy settings, empowers them. If one company adopts this approach, others will likely follow suit to meet consumer demand, shaping industry standards. Currently, limited online choices can leave consumers feeling vulnerable.

ASIF BAKI

Founder & CEO, Listen Labs

REALITY CHECK



The world's first law on regulating AI

The EU initially led the global effort to establish AI regulations with the release of its first rulebook draft in 2021. However, the surge in generative AI prompted European officials to quickly revise the proposal, which was intended to set a global precedent.

In 2023, industry leaders, including executives from OpenAI, Google DeepMind, and Anthropic, warned of AI's potential existential threat, equating it to risks like pandemics and nuclear wars. The Center for AI Safety, with over 350 signatories, emphasises the need for global prioritisation to mitigate the risk of **AI-induced extinction**.

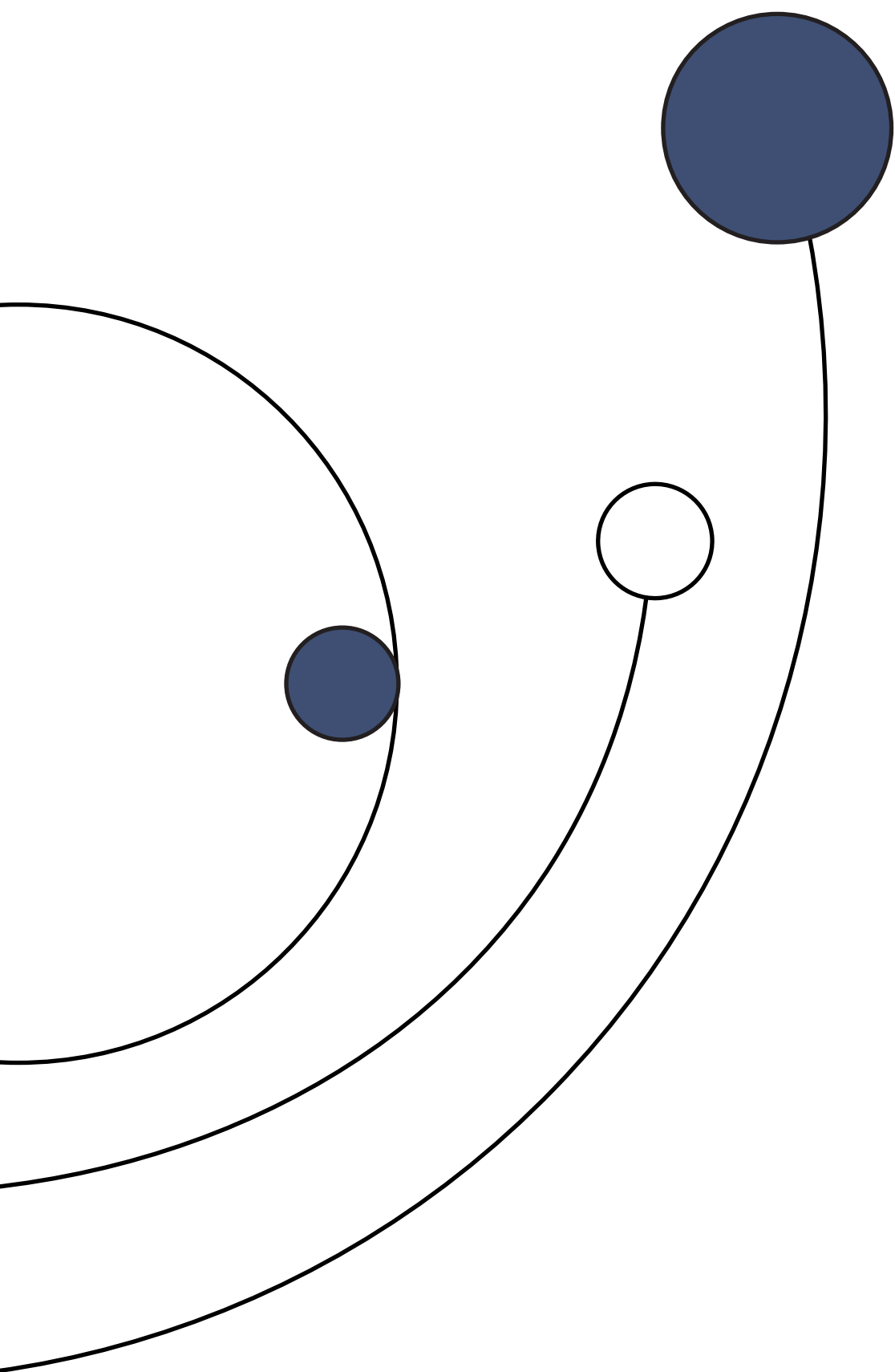
On December 8, 2023, after three days of extensive negotiations, EU legislators reached a political agreement on the world's first standalone law regulating AI: the **EU's AI Act**.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the AI Act would help the development of technology that does not threaten people's safety and rights. Further calling it a "**unique legal framework** for the development of AI you can trust."

"The EU (European Union) and AI Act were thoughtful in some places and flawed in some places. It's a good idea to take a tiered approach to AI risk like using AI for screening people for jobs - that's high risk, so let's make sure to mitigate that risk," said **Andrew Ng**.

"Technological leadership requires a balance between innovation and regulation. Not micromanaging progress but holding actors responsible when they violate public trust. We've long said that AI is too important not to regulate, and too important not to regulate well," said Google's **Kent Walker**.

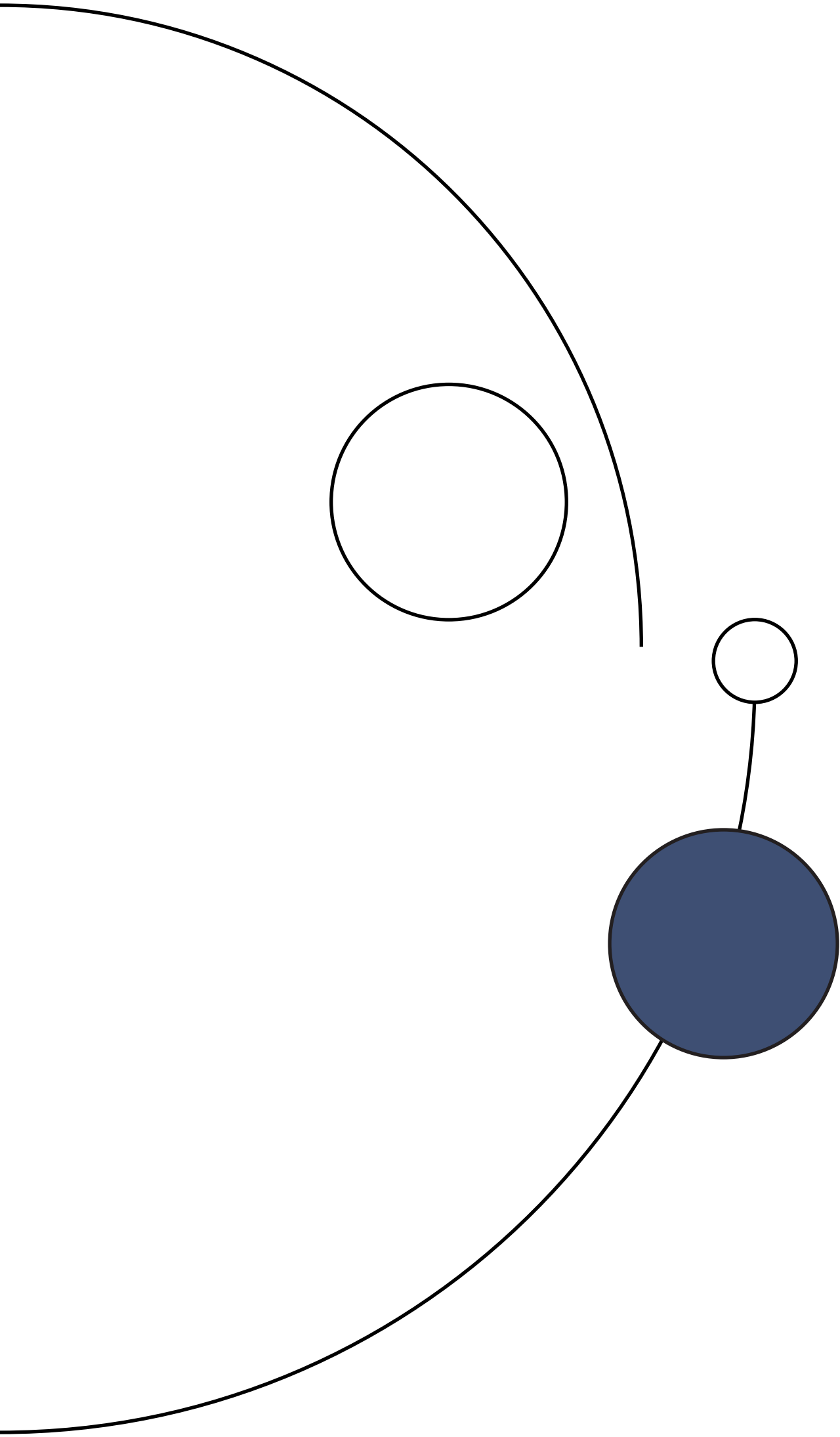
While these rules are being set into motion, a new incident has been brought to light. The New York Times has sued OpenAI and Microsoft over **copyright infringement**, alleging the companies used millions of its articles to train chatbots. This training allegedly poses a competitive challenge to the news outlet. An OpenAI spokeswoman expressed hope for a mutually beneficial resolution, noting that they're implementing similar strategies with other publishers.



“

Just as the United Nations has Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), data privacy should be elevated to a comparable level of international consideration. While some companies currently practice due diligence, a significant number do not. This is a matter that could potentially become alarming in the future. The implications extend beyond the realm of software technology and can profoundly affect future generations. Therefore, it is imperative that data privacy reaches a level of seriousness where international bodies prescribe a standardised approach.

ANONYMOUS



② Consumers trade-off their privacy in exchange for the service offered, often unwillingly

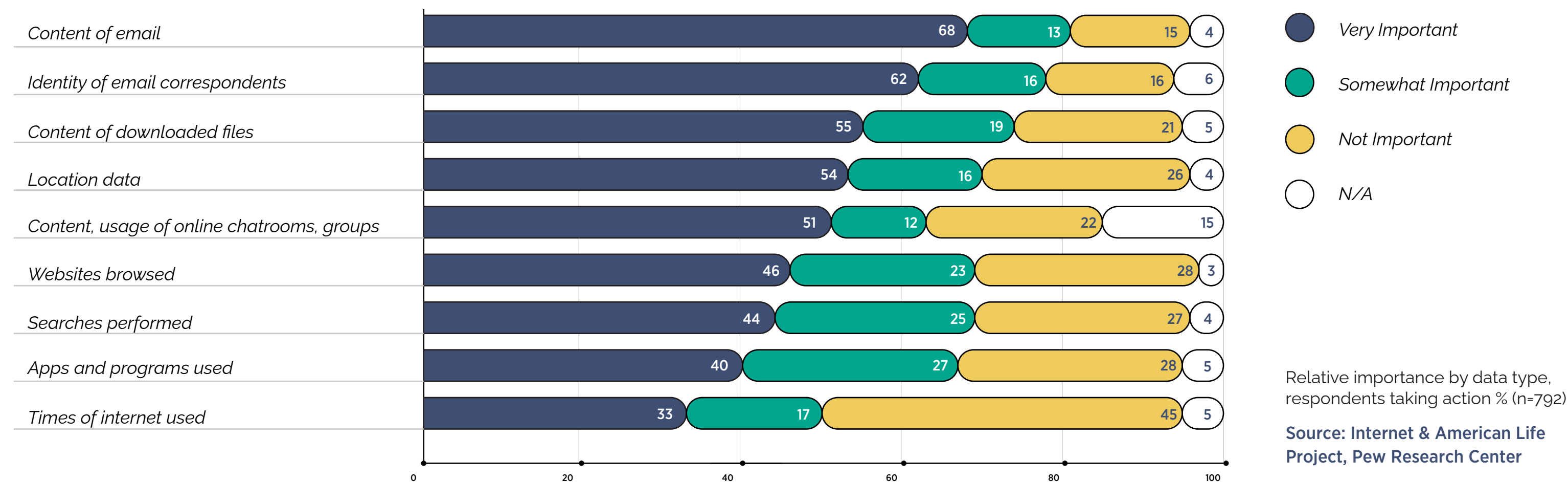
In a survey of 1,000 North American consumers, **McKinsey & Company** found that consumers are becoming more intentional about the types of data they share - and with whom. However, there's a tension between the value a tech platform offers for consumers' convenience and the concerns around using consumer's personal data for business benefit. The consumers find a balance between protecting personal information and privacy, and trading it off in exchange for the service value of the platform. Consumers often trade-off privacy willingly or out of helplessness in exchange for the value that technology adds to their ease of life.

Trade personal data for service value

Even though regulations like GDPR empower European consumers with better control and visibility of the personal data that companies hold or use, that is not the case for consumers from other markets. Evolved consumers understand well that companies need consumer data to improve their services and products, and to provide better experiences. However, consumers expect the companies to be transparent and explicit about their policies around tracking, processing, sharing and selling of user’s PII (Personal Identifiable Information) and digital data. Consumers are more likely to trust a company that asks only for information relevant to its products or that limits the amount of personal information requested. Consumers are comfortable to compromise on the privacy of a certain type of data and information for the perceived value that they get from the platform. There is a need for better design choices made by companies that would make the consumers feel less compromised or powerless.

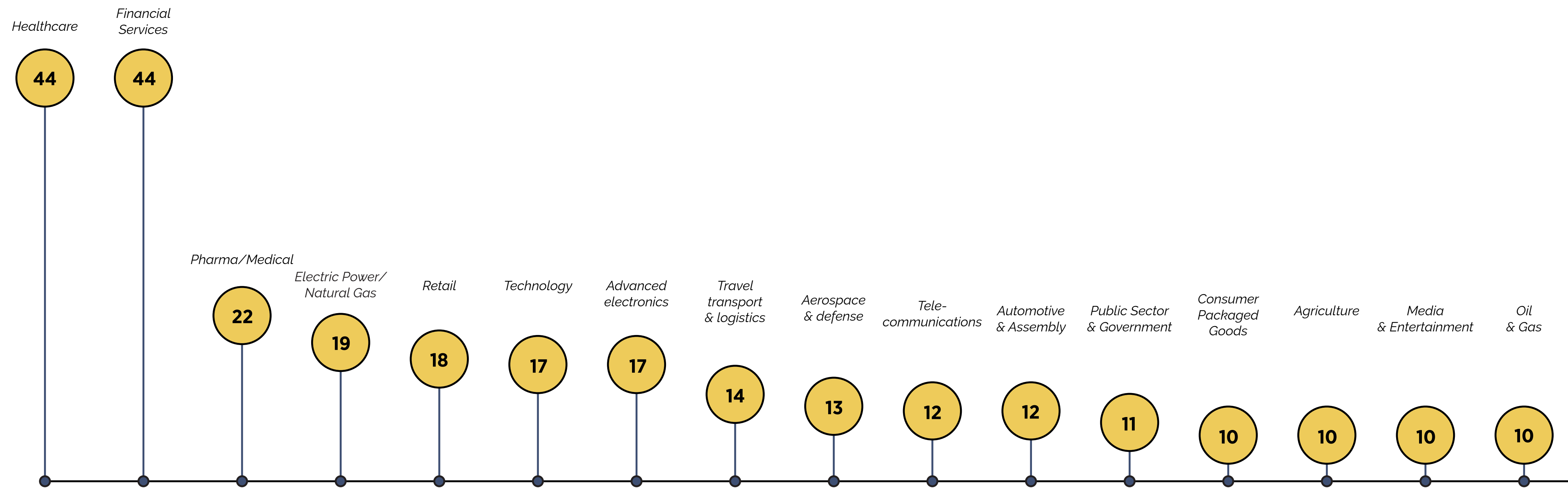
Consumers have a very unique equation with the type of data they are comfortable with trading off with companies. For example, **McKinsey & Company’s** research says 68% of participants in the research felt the content of the email is very important to protect compared to the time spent on the internet.

Consumer privacy and protection concerns vary by type of digital data.



Higher trade-offs in healthcare and financial services

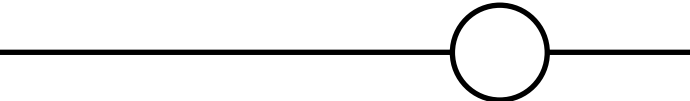
While consumers are conscious of the type of digital data that is shared with companies, they are also consciously thinking of the industry sectors that companies work within which determines their openness and willingness to share data. Consumers are more willing to exchange their PII for healthtech and fintech services for the perceived higher value in daily life. Out of the 1000 participants that **McKinsey & Company** conducted research with, 44% of them felt that healthcare and financial services companies are more trustworthy with their data. We see very low trust in companies from industries like entertainment, FMCG, telecom, travel etc. to protect the privacy of consumer data.



Consumers view healthcare and financial-services businesses as the most trustworthy

Respondents choosing a particular industry as most trusted in protecting of privacy and data 5 (n=1,000)

Source: McKinsey Survey of North American Consumers on Data Privacy and Protection, 2019



Lack of choice to exchange personal data

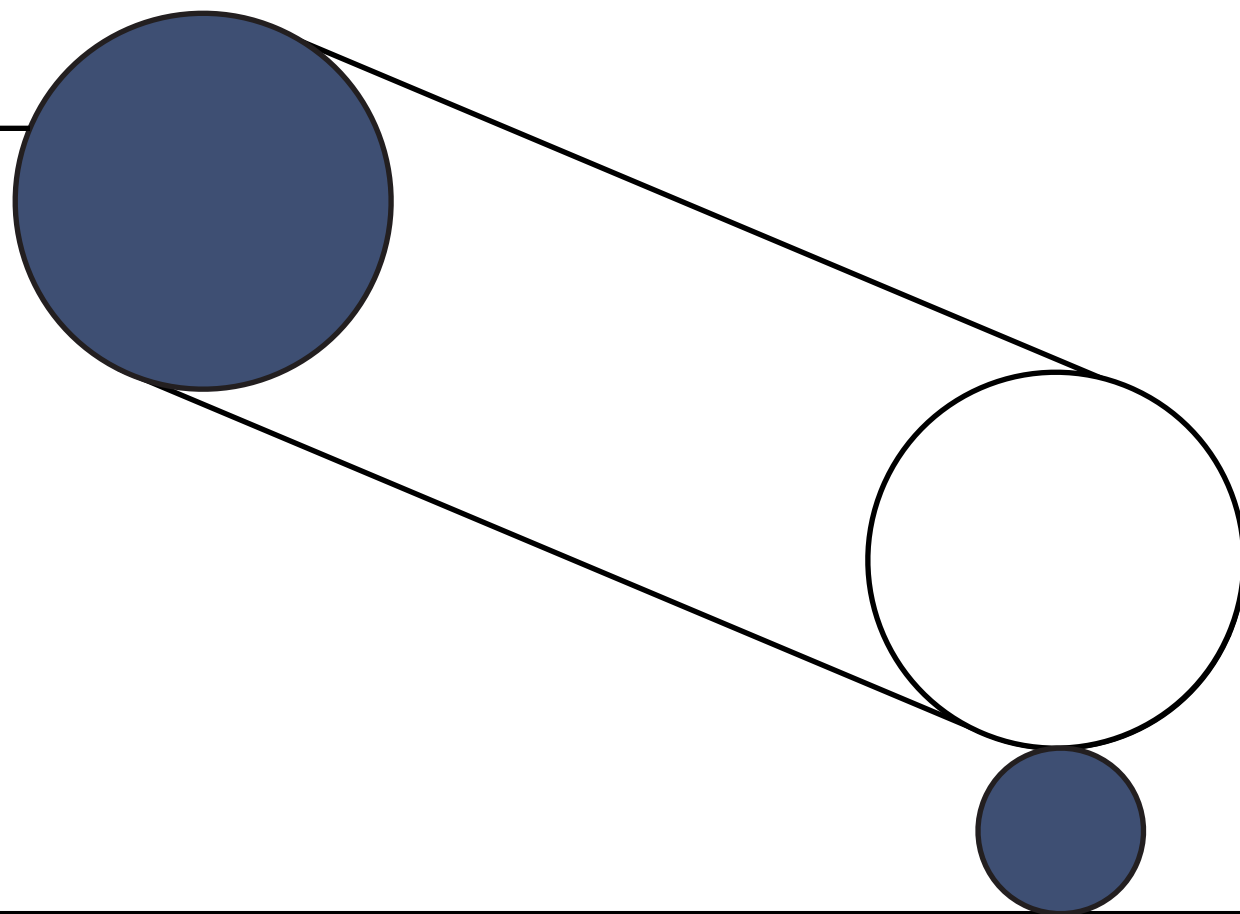
It is most commonly felt by consumers that they don't have much of a choice but to agree to share their personal data with companies. In the privacy terms, (which is very difficult to comprehend for a layperson because of the technical language and how text-heavy it is) it comes across as that either the consumers have to accept the terms to use the platform or not use it at all. There is no in-between for the consumers to customise or personalise it to their ideal choice of sharing data and what they feel comfortable with.



ASIF BAKI

Founder & CEO, Listen Labs

Consumers are the most vulnerable within the ecosystem. The only other choice (other than accepting to company's terms) for them is to not use it. Period! Not be included! People experience FoMo-social outcasting that happens and that's when they give-in. They are giving away their comfort which sounds like a small thing, but it is not!





③ Consumers do not trust companies unless they display proof over promise

Today, technology has made it easier than ever to collect, monitor, and exchange personal information. However, the impact of this on consumer safety, security, and privacy raises important concerns. Consumers no longer find it acceptable for companies to simply promise ethical use of their Personal Identifiable Information (PII) or draft ethical guidelines, but they expect to see these principles put into action.



Mistrust in companies' ethical use of personal data

Most consumers expect companies to use their personal information with care and integrity. However, there is a common concern among consumers across the globe that their data isn't secured, or companies collect more data than they need to. Consumers want companies to take accountability for safety and security when storing, sharing, and selling their data through transparent communication. This mistrust leads to the consumers feeling vulnerable and unsafe in a world driven by technology which seems to be bigger and powerful to challenge as an individual.



In America, there are specific areas where people are much more aware, typically health data. People are aware that in the private healthcare systems, data can be used to increase premium or deny care, so they are more sensitive to their healthcare data being shared or compromised.

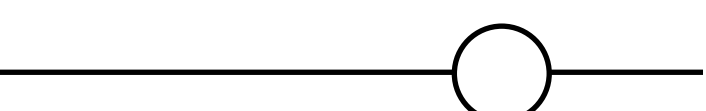
SIMON ROBERTS,
Partner, Stripe Partners



Consumers' loyalty dictated by company's ethical actions

Based on research conducted by **McKinsey & Company**, which involved 1000 North American participants, consumers are likely to disengage from companies that do not handle their personal sensitive information with care or lack proper security practices. The research reveals that 71% of participants stated that they would cease doing business with a company if it disclosed sensitive data without permission. These findings highlight the importance of companies taking concrete actions rather than simply having policies and guidelines in place.

80% of the US consumers changed their spending habits due to brands security practices. Source: World Economic Forum



Expectation to handle data breaches with care

Consumers from tech-matured markets like the US, UK and Europe with higher tech awareness scrutinise the actions taken by companies closely with scepticism especially when it comes to how they handle crises like data security breaches. Such situations make consumers feel the most vulnerable and highly dependent on the company to protect themselves. They expect companies to take accountability for any threat or risk that their consumers may be exposed to and protect their interests without compromising their safety and security due to breaches or crises.

In two breaches at one large corporation, more than 3.5 billion records were made public. Breaches at several others exposed hundreds of millions of records. The stakes are high for companies handling consumer data: even consumers who were not directly affected by these breaches paid attention to the way companies responded to them. Source: McKinsey & Company

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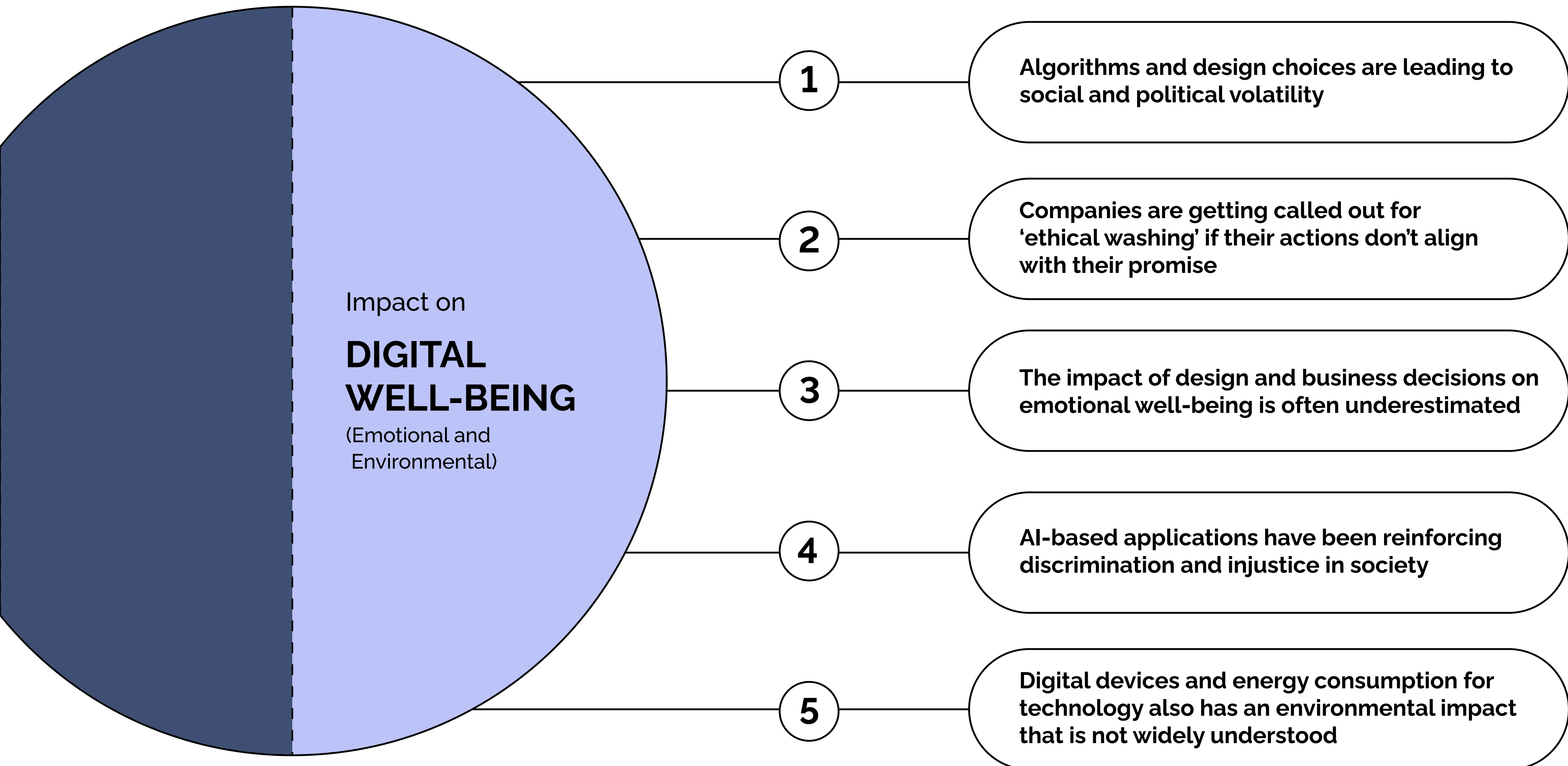
SIMON ROBERTS
Partner, Stripe Partners

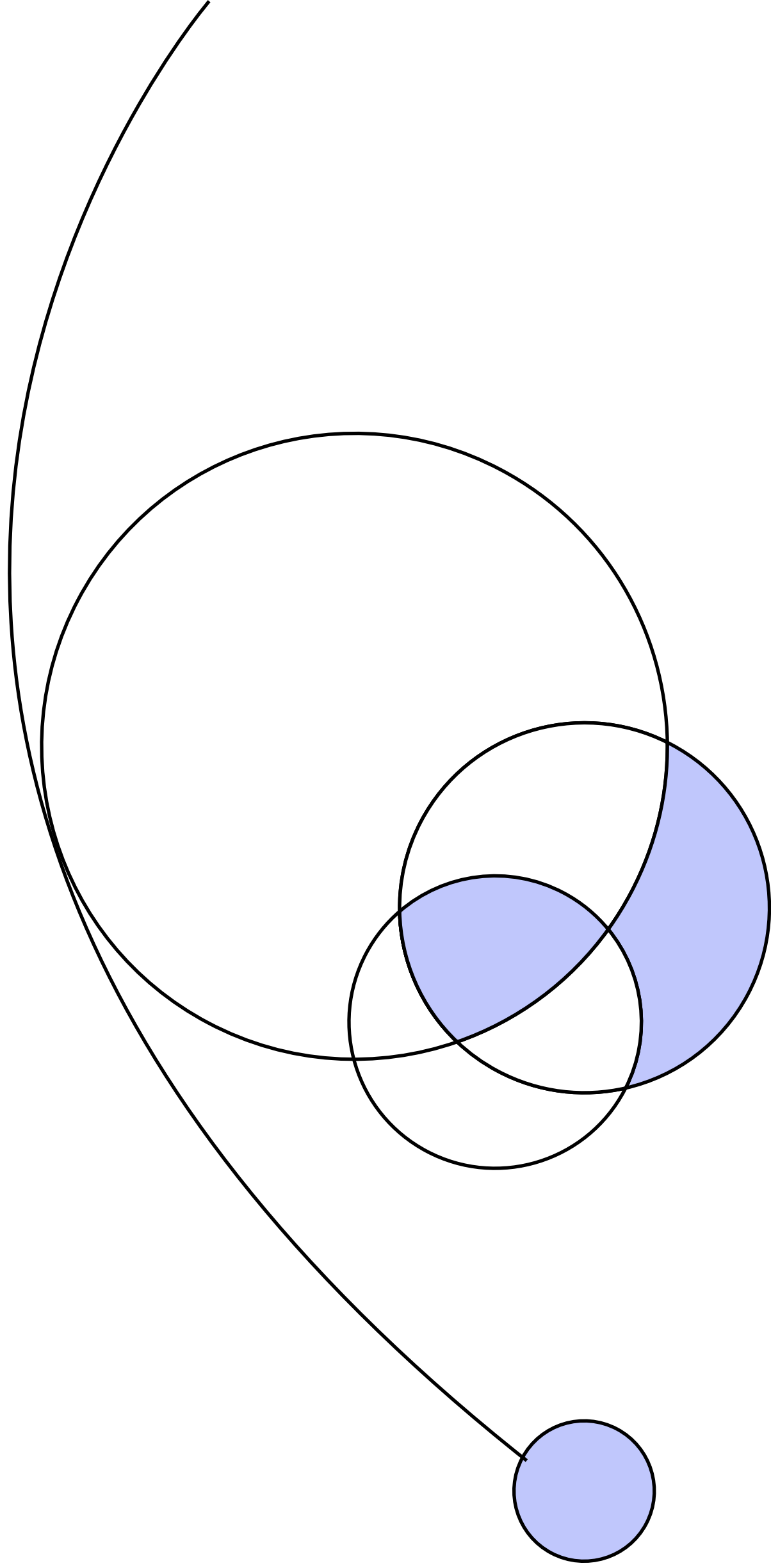
Apple has positioned privacy as a central differentiating factor for their company. They emphasise that people do care about privacy and make it commercially advantageous for users. Apple showcases alternative ways that companies can operate, prioritising user privacy as a fundamental value. However, this commitment to privacy can sometimes affect their products, such as Siri having limited data to operate on compared to competitors like Alexa.

A graphic element consisting of a white rounded rectangle containing two dark blue quotation marks. A thin black line extends from the bottom of the rectangle, ending in a small dark blue circle.

ANONYMOUS

Apple differentiates between storing data locally and using the cloud for certain functions. Siri, for instance, relies on cloud processing, while local data processing is utilised for features like the camera. When data processing occurs locally, it is limited to just the user's data, resulting in a narrower training dataset. As a result, performance may be more restricted compared to cloud-based processing that leverages aggregated data from millions of users before delivering output to individual devices.





① **Algorithms and design choices are leading to social and political volatility**

The design choices made in the way algorithms and platforms are crafted today significantly impact the behaviours of consumers and trigger a butterfly effect of consequences that harm the stability of society and the well-being of people.



Filter bubbles creating silos and polarisation

Algorithms on social media and private messaging platforms track preferences, creating filter bubbles that distance the individual from diverse perspectives. These bubbles, designed by algorithms, may lead to social polarisation and widen disparities by favouring consumers with existing advantages over those who could benefit more.



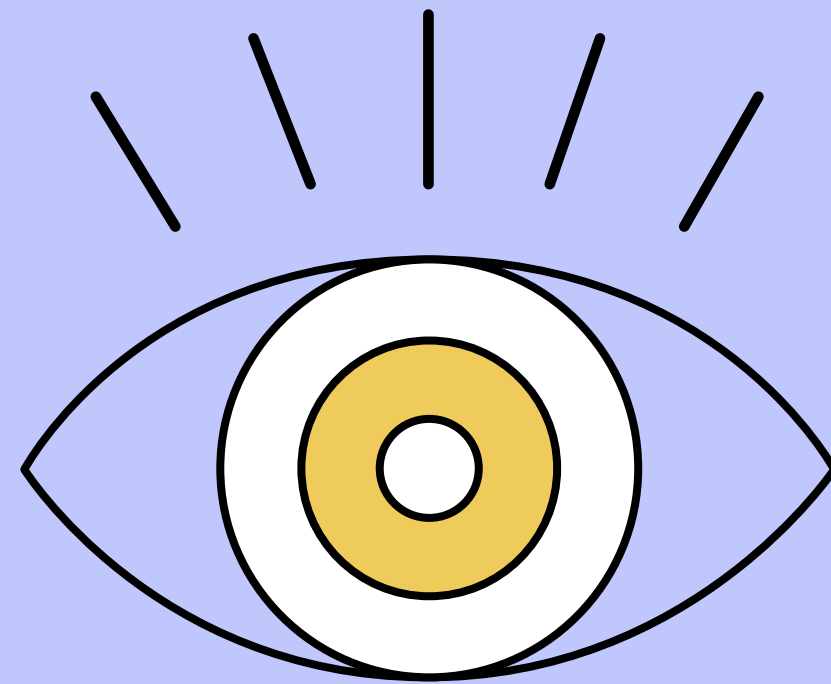
TOM VEST

A Research Scientist

Algorithms will most benefit the minority of individuals who are consistently 'preferred' by algorithms, plus those who are sufficiently technically savvy to understand and manipulate them (usually the same group).

Laureen Knudsen, Broadcom's Chief Transformation Officer, deems this potentially 'divisive', **citing it as a tech industry ethical crisis**. Globally, with the imperative to foster unity against polarisation and extremism, the revelation that 64% of extremist groups join on Facebook is attributed to recommendation tools like "Groups You Should Join" and "Discover," prompting reflection on when and how to curb technology's potential harm. **This article** talks about how algorithms can create ethical harm.

REALITY CHECK



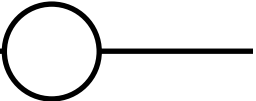
How leadership can directly dictate the political volatility through a digital platform

There has been an **alarming rise in hate speech on X (previously Twitter) since Elon Musk took over** the leadership of the company. Imran Ahmed, the chief executive of the Center for Countering Digital Hate stated, “Elon Musk sent up the Bat Signal to every kind of racist, misogynist and homophobe that Twitter was open for business. They have reacted accordingly.” This surge in hate speech was also followed by problematic changes that **increased activity from accounts** that would be previously removed by Twitter, including those banned after ISIS was classified as a terror group or **far-right conspiracy groups like QAnon receiving verified status** on X.

This along with the lay offs on 4th November 2022, included around 4400 contract workers, responsible for monitoring and moderating hateful and toxic content on the platform is deeply concerning. For people who believe the direct impact of this in the form of reduced moderation of toxicity and volatility is only speculative, **the fact that the civil society organisations** and security teams at **companies like Meta receive no response from teams** they used to previously work with at Twitter to alert them about security concerns/threats is proof beyond speculation. This lack of response, especially in addressing disinformation or foreign influence campaigns impacting elections, indicates a significant shift because of the layoff of the content moderators. In a world where we all understand the value

of human oversight for technology to work the way we desire, the fear of this anonymous content moderator who worked as a contractor at X until 2020 seems reasonable - “I have actively searched the worst parts of Twitter—the most racist, most horrible, most degenerate parts of the platform. That’s what’s going to be amplified.” **(Source)**

This is not smart business or smart leadership. High-level leaders responsible for privacy, protection, cybersecurity, compliance and regulations have resigned. It has snowballed into advertisers leaving the platform due to the rise in hate speech. This has also forced Elon Musk to admit to company staff that the company could go bankrupt if it doesn’t find new ways of making money. **(Source)**

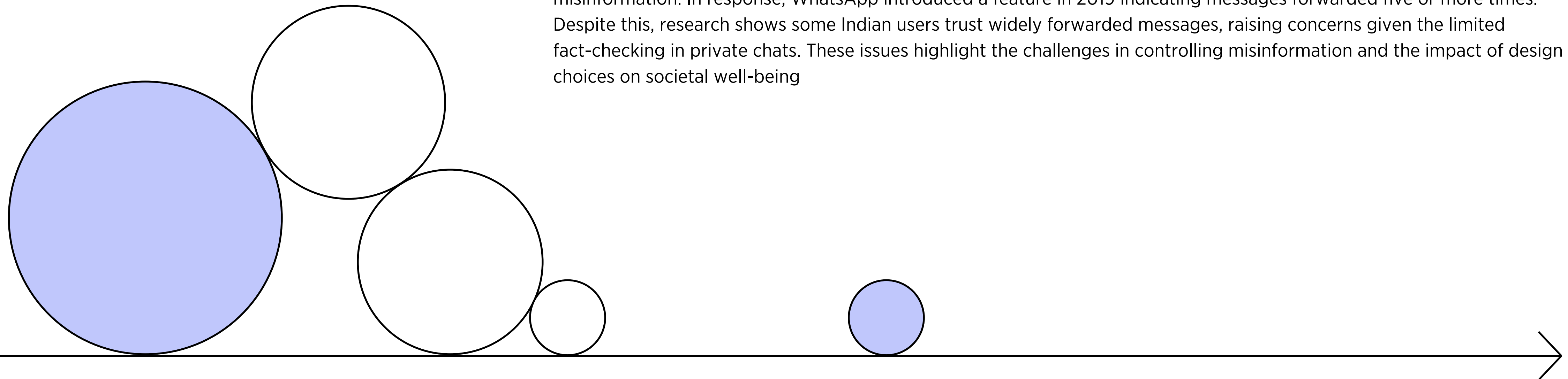


Design of group dynamics and virality of 'fake news'

The virality of fake news is driven by user interactions and online community dynamics. This phenomenon is influenced by deliberate design choices made by social networking platforms, aiming to foster large user groups. However, this approach may have unintended consequences for consumers. While these platforms were initially intended to empower consumers and enable influence, there is a risk that privacy measures can be exploited by extremists or radical movements.

Sociologists have found people are less likely to exercise their agency, question information, call out bad behavior, or report crimes when in groups—all of which are needed to combat mis- and disinformation online. Source: Omidyar Network- Beyond Encryption

The rise of platforms like Facebook Messenger, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp has amplified concerns about misinformation. In response, WhatsApp introduced a feature in 2019 indicating messages forwarded five or more times. Despite this, research shows some Indian users trust widely forwarded messages, raising concerns given the limited fact-checking in private chats. These issues highlight the challenges in controlling misinformation and the impact of design choices on societal well-being





② **Companies are getting called out for ‘ethical washing’ if their actions don’t align with their promise**

Ethics washing, like greenwashing in some respects, is the practice of pretending ethical consideration to improve how a person or organisation is perceived. There is increasing expectations towards companies to be responsible for social good as they innovate but many companies pay lip service towards these issues and goals without acting on it proactively.

Creation of ethical guidelines by companies

Since 2018, with the rapid advancement in technology and AI specifically, conversations around the ethical use of tech have accelerated, leading many companies to establish ethical guidelines and practices. These guidelines may seem vague and difficult to act on in some cases, with a lack of action to support the principles. But one of the biggest questions that gets asked regularly is, can companies be trusted to self-audit? So, it is important to think about the applicability of these guidelines, who is measuring the impact, and how it is measured to create responsible tech applications.

Calling off initiatives due to public backlash

A few companies did share tangible actions towards the guidelines and promises they had made but it did not last for long. Google formed an AI ethics board called **Advanced Technology External Advisory Council** (ATEAC) to guide responsible development of AI. However in only a matter of days, due to the backlash on the inclusion of a few members in the council, **Google dissolved** the board. “It’s become clear that in the current environment, ATEAC can’t function as we wanted. So we’re ending the council and going back to the drawing board. We’ll continue to be responsible in our work on the important issues that AI raises, and will find different ways of getting outside opinions on these.” A spokesperson for Google told **Vox**.

Ethics washing is a reality in the performative environment in which we live—whether by corporations, politicians, or universities. Much lip service is given to virtues such as diversity, equity, and inclusion, even as the goals and means to achieve them remain ill-defined and elusive.

Similarly, Meta (formerly known as Facebook) had its own responsible innovation team called the Responsible AI (RAI) team, which was praised for its commitment to ethical decision-making. The RAI team which was officially formed in 2020 **merged with the social-impact team as the AI team** went through staff reduction in 2022. As quoted by Business Insider in the same article - Most of the RAI layoffs this year (2023) hit roles focused on impacts for the end user, including jobs in product design, user experience, and user-and-policy research, according to three of the people familiar. One person said RAI is now “a shell of a team.” However, by September 2023, this team was disbanded. Most RAI members will transition to Meta’s generative AI product team, and others will focus on the company’s AI infrastructure. Meta AI communications representative Nisha Deo, **reportedly said** that “the company will continue to prioritise and invest in safe and responsible AI development. though members of the RAI team are now in the generative AI organisation, they will “continue to support relevant cross-Meta efforts on responsible AI development and use.”

These examples illustrate how some companies have struggled to maintain long-term efforts towards responsible AI development, facing obstacles and needing to reassess their approaches.

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JOEL ROSENTHAL
 Carnegie Council President

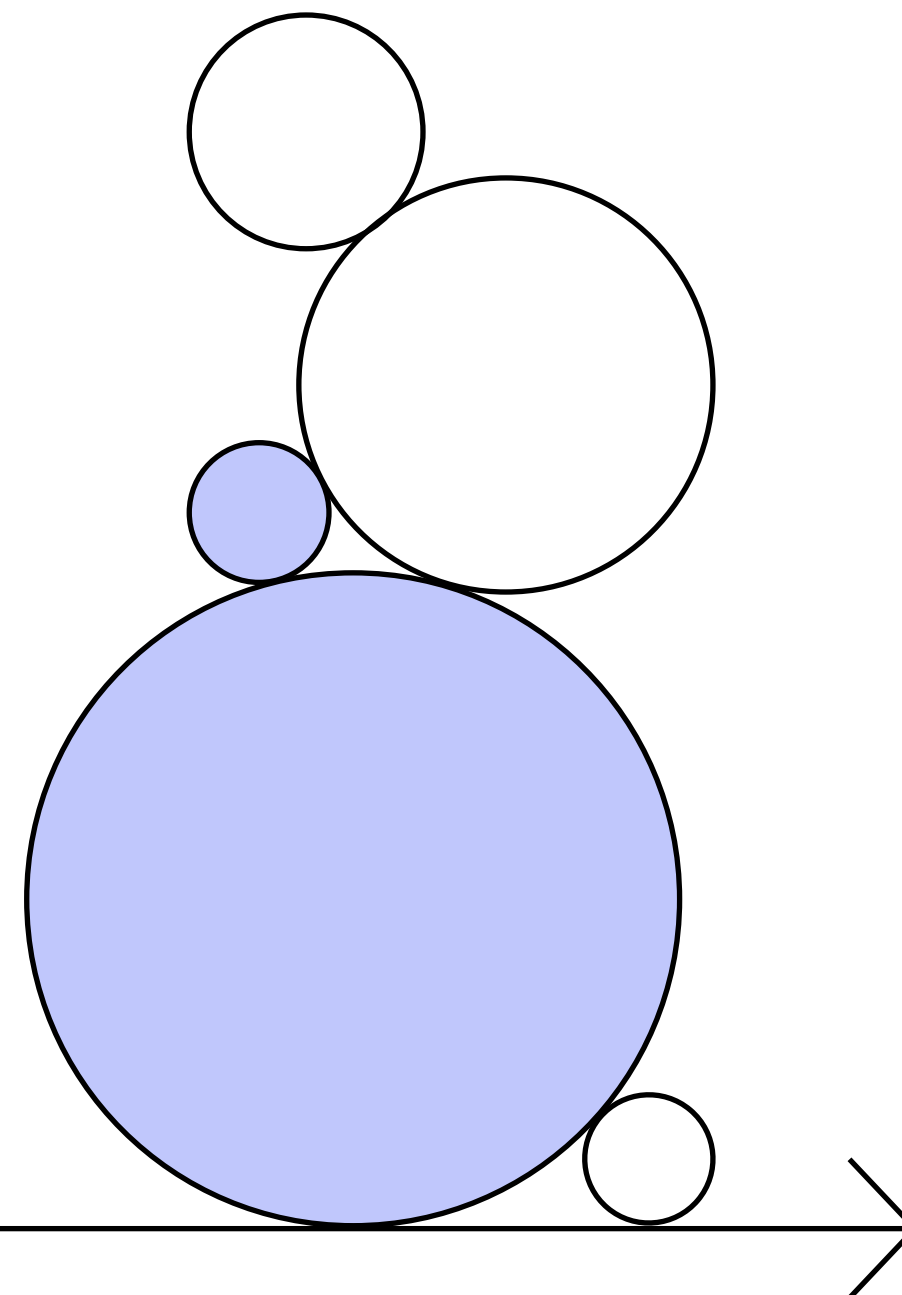
③ The impact of design and business decisions on emotional well-being is often underestimated

The constant connectivity and screen time concerns, especially for parents of young ones, reflect a reality we reluctantly accept. This sense of helplessness highlights technology's rapid development, surpassing our ability to address these concerns, and intensifying anxiety, especially with emerging technologies like Deepfake.

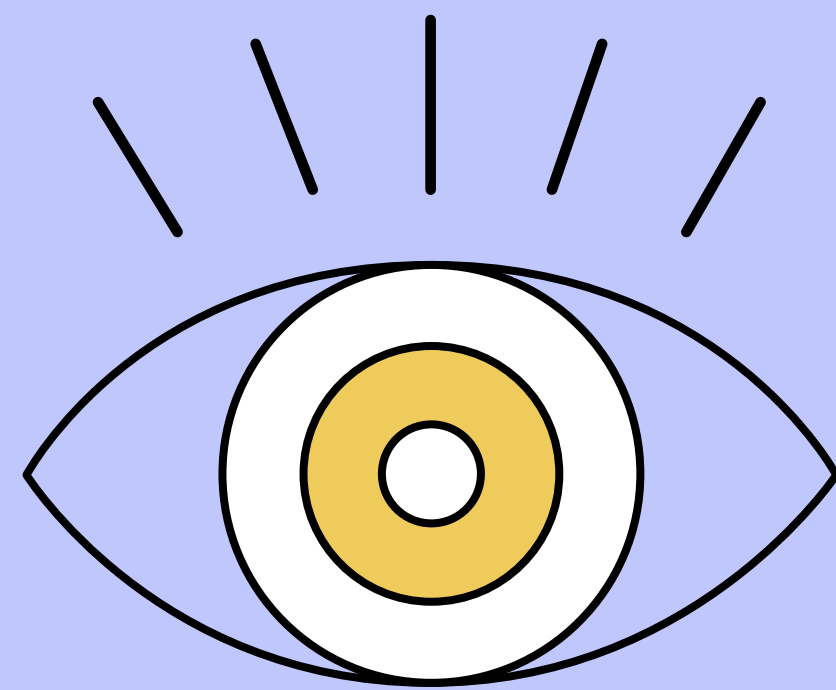
According to the latest data, the average person spends **6 hours and 58 minutes of screen time**. If 'continue watching' was a metric of success for companies this data may sound like success to them, but for the consumers, an **increase in social media use is correlated to a decline in physical and mental health**. That in no terms sounds like success for consumers and therefore, for any smart company.

Social media's addictive engagement loops prompt criticism for causing psychological harm. The uncertain potential and dark sides of deepfake technology, showcased in Netflix's **Deep Fake Love, Social Dilemma** and **Black Mirror** episodes, fuel concerns about mistrust and insecurities (read more [here](#)). At the same time, it is not a far stretch of the imagination when it is being used by **scammers to defraud companies** even today. We cannot make the same mistake of experimenting with technology before we fully understand its potential and make ethical decisions about how it may be used in a way to prevent psychological, emotional and financial harm instead of propagating them.

In just one year from 2019 to 2020, the number of deep fakes grew from 14,678 to 100 million videos, a 6,820-fold increase. Source: Psychology Today



REALITY CHECK



33 US states are suing Meta for causing mental harm to youth and teens

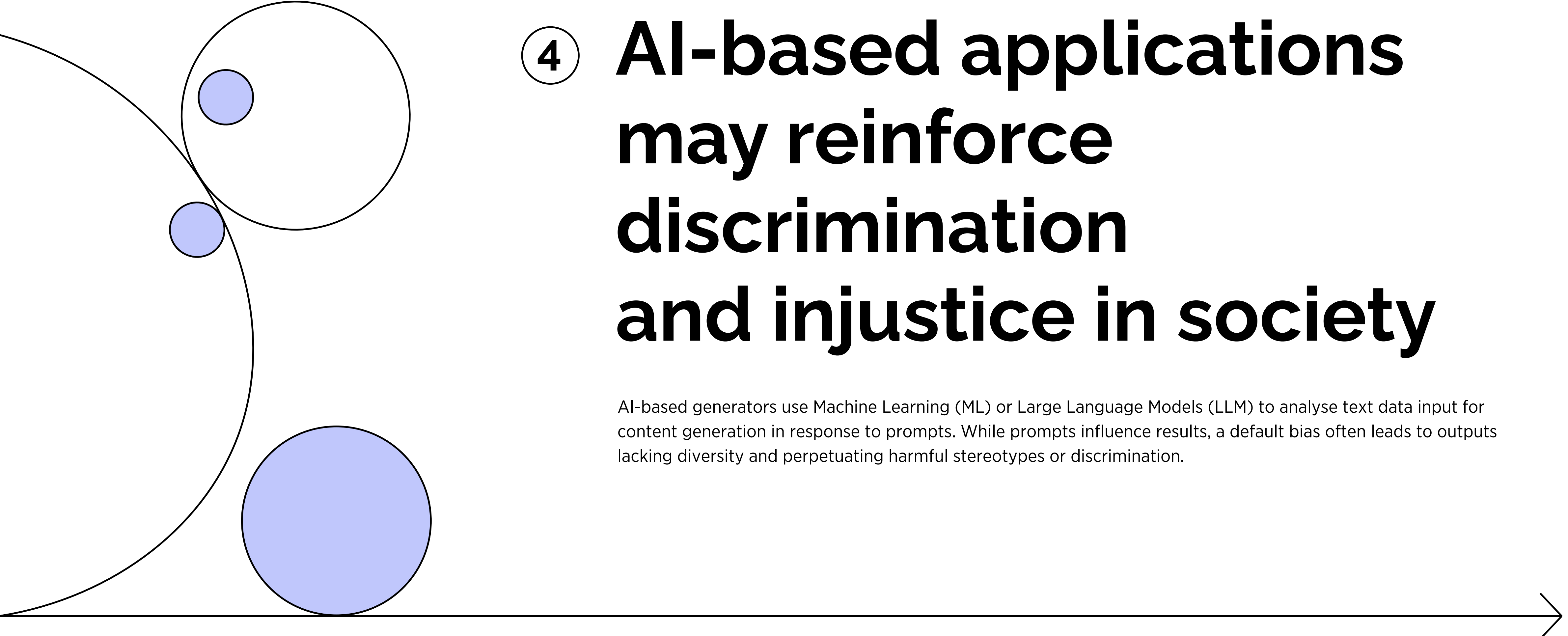
Instagram and other platforms owned by Meta are being sued by 33 states in the US for misleading its consumers about its potentially harmful psychological impact, especially on youth and teens. **The complaint filed in the California Federal Court reads:** “Over the past decade, Meta has profoundly altered the psychological and social realities of a generation of young Americans. Meta has harnessed powerful and unprecedented technologies to entice, engage, and ultimately ensnare youth and teens. Its motive is profit, and in seeking to maximise its financial

gains, Meta has repeatedly misled the public about the substantial dangers of its Social Media Platforms.”

While their approach of engaging and enticing teens to an addictive platform that endangers mental health seems eerily similar to the approach taken by Big Tobacco, **Mark Zuckerberg in his note** mentions how it also provides support in times of need for teens and helps them deal with isolation. On the same note, Mark Zuckerberg mentions that “The reality is that young people use technology. Think about how many school-age kids have

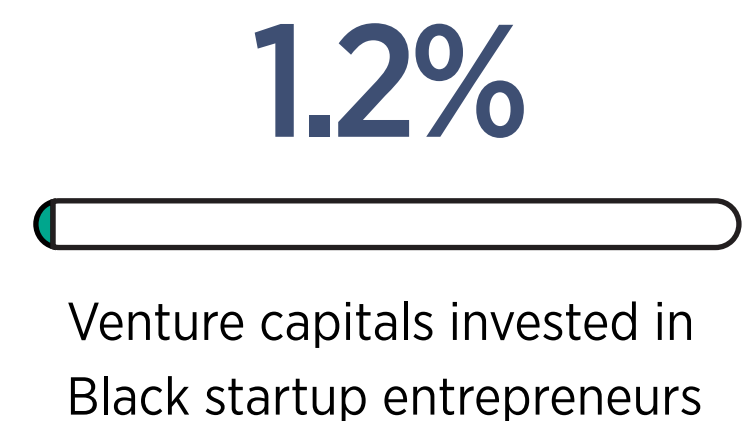
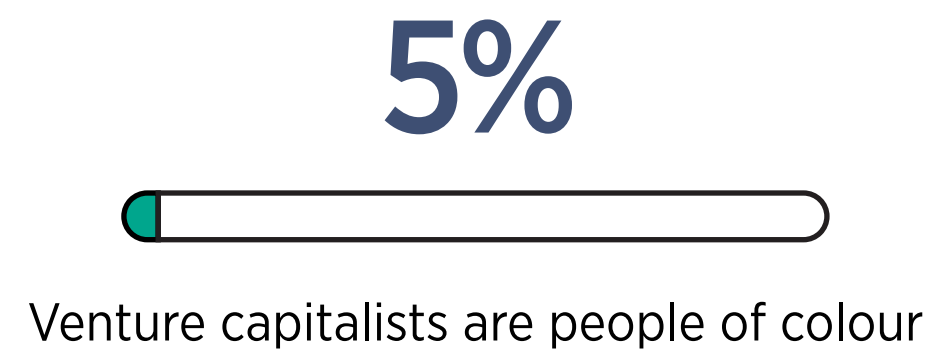
phones. Rather than ignoring this, technology companies should build experiences that meet their needs while also keeping them safe. We’re deeply committed to doing industry-leading work in this area. A good example of this work is Messenger Kids, which is widely recognised as better and safer than alternatives.”

Recognising the need for a holistic approach and joint efforts between government and companies is crucial. However, the notion of solving technology-created problems with more technology raises valid concerns.



④ AI-based applications may reinforce discrimination and injustice in society

AI-based generators use Machine Learning (ML) or Large Language Models (LLM) to analyse text data input for content generation in response to prompts. While prompts influence results, a default bias often leads to outputs lacking diversity and perpetuating harmful stereotypes or discrimination.



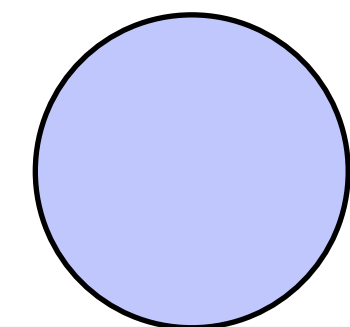
Source: Our Vision for a Responsible Tech Future, Omidyar Network

This article by **The Conversation** illustrates how Mid Journey, a text-to-image AI generator, showcased seven biases in over 100 images across six months. These biases encompass Ageism, Sexism, Racial Bias, Classism, Conservatism, Urbanism, and Anachronism. This issue is not unique to Midjourney but extends to various AI-based text-to-image generators. This issue also came to light when **Google failed to train its data to identify people from diverse races** which resulted in a huge malfunction with its Photos app tagging Black people inappropriately as gorillas. In the past, facial-recognition systems have also misidentified people of colour more often than white people. Women were more likely to be falsely identified than men, and the elderly and children were more likely to be misidentified than those in other age groups. Beyond AI-based applications, there has been gender bias in **Google’s voice recognition demonstrates gender bias** as it recognises the voices of men better. Gender bias has also seeped into **safety tests wherein car-crash dummies based on ‘average’ males with huge data gaps on how a crash may impact a female driver.**

When AI-based tools are applied in the context of **hiring** or the **justice system**, there is fear that it will perpetuate the discrimination that we have fought so hard against as a society over generations.

“
 ANONYMOUS

There have been instances where AI models have been developed to predict criminal history based on facial expressions. However, these models have shown clear examples of bias. For instance, training the model using prisoner mugshots would result in a biased dataset as prisoners tend to exhibit certain facial expressions in mugshots. This does not accurately represent their facial expressions in everyday life activities. It is important to address and mitigate such biases in AI models.



The question of solving bias in AI is misplaced. It should be a broader, philosophical inquiry into the design and application of technology. Evidence of bias and discrimination in various technological applications and research underscores the need for a comprehensive approach.

Unless bias is spoken about in a more open, defined, and specific way to prevent possible harmful consequences, the tech industry will continue to face the brunt of people and media for it. It is important to define bias in such technology and investigate the reason for it whether that is because of data gaps in research or old data sets being used for machine learning. Arriving at the specifics from the ambiguity of the idea of bias will help us find answers to tough philosophical questions like how we can build systems that help us move forward towards equality instead of taking us two steps back into the cycle of discrimination and disparity that we have fought so hard against.



SUNITA VENKATARAMAN

Co-Founder, Face the Future Today

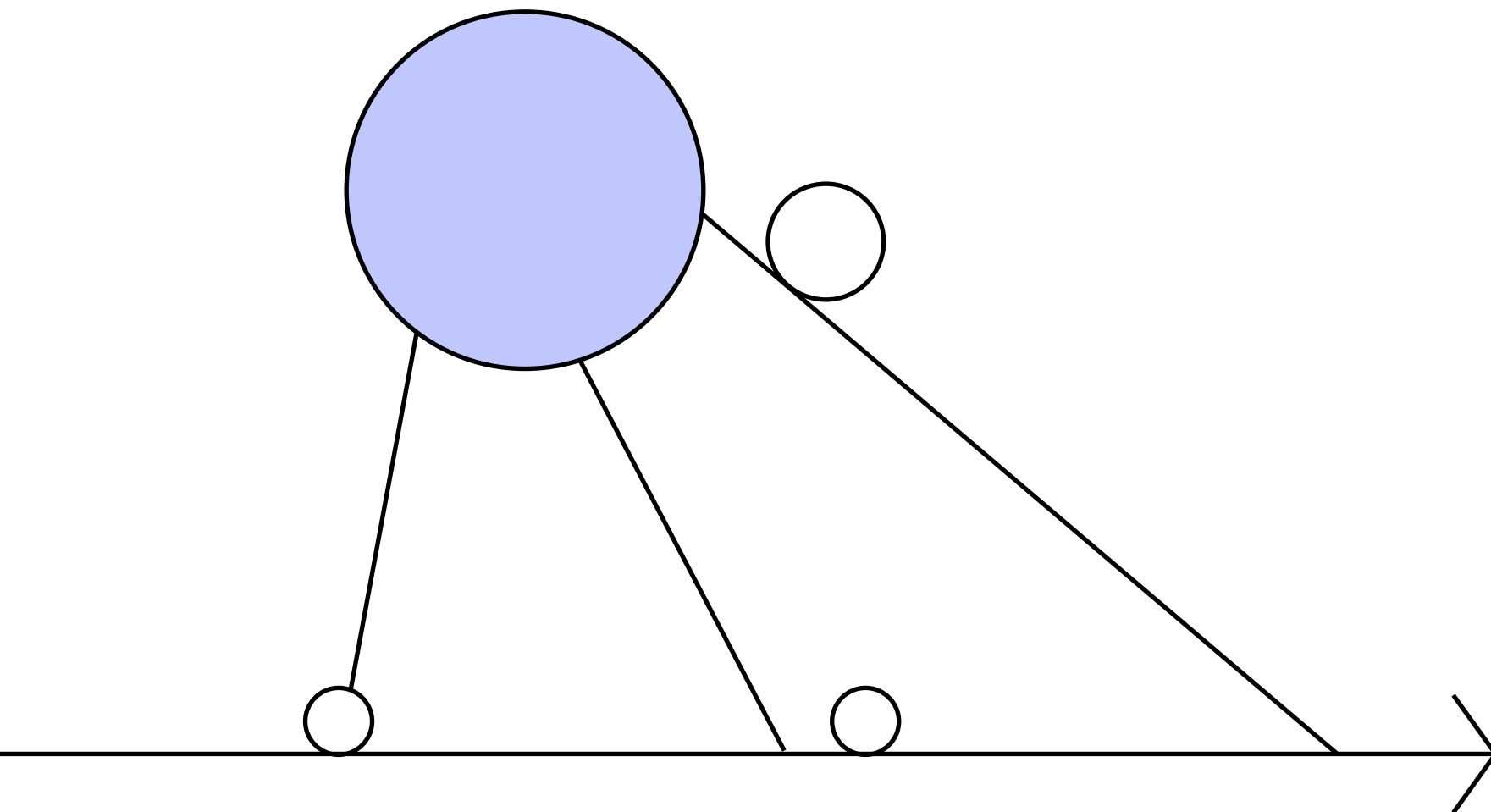
How can companies initiate the development of guidelines that assist individuals in interpreting the outcomes of general AI, traditional AI, machine learning, or even basic Google searches? It is essential for companies to proactively consider and offer training programs that foster human common sense and creativity. This training should empower individuals to scrutinize biases, safeguard privacy, and uphold principles of sustainability and equity.

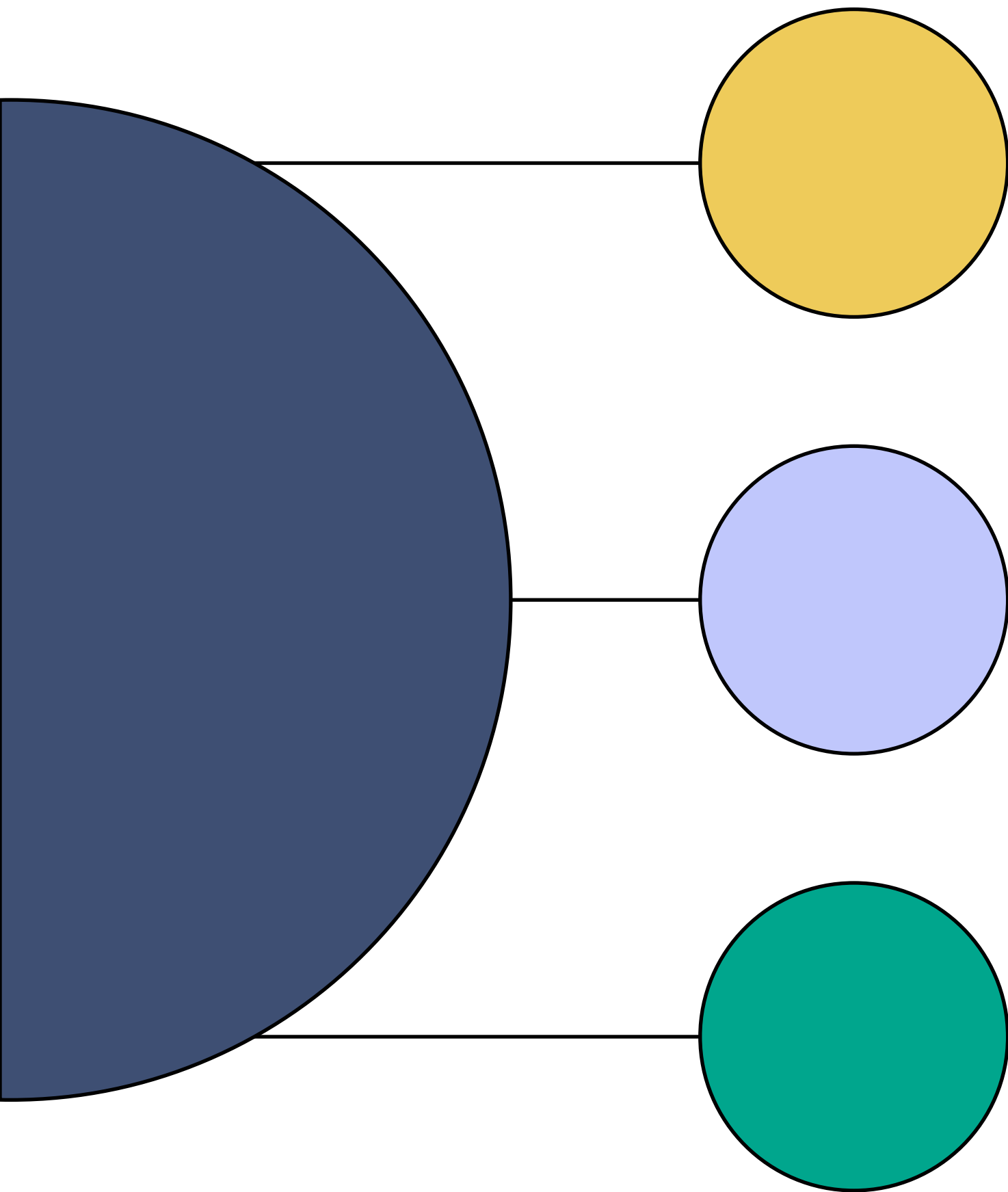
⑤ Digital devices and technology's energy consumption has an environmental impact that is not widely understood

The most recent ad by Apple - **Mother Nature Status 2023**, reignited debates on the tech industry's environmental accountability. Despite this, there is still insufficient transparency and clarity on quantifying the impact of energy consumption and carbon emissions, hindering meaningful action.

A research study at the University of Massachusetts Amherst found that training a single LLM in natural language processing (NLP) produces a carbon footprint equivalent to about 300,000 kg of CO2 emissions, comparable to 125 round-trip flights between New York and Beijing. The tech industry's environmental impact includes e-waste, fossil fuel-driven energy consumption, and manufacturing-related environmental effects. Increasing pressure from governments, consumers, and employees urges companies to go beyond harm reduction and actively pursue positive change. The **global climate strike** and **Tech Workers coalition** are evidence of the fact that for companies to be relevant in the future, they will have to take into account their impact on the environment.

The challenge is that there is low awareness of the impact of current practices on the environment to identify areas of improvement. It is important to first start to acknowledge the impact of technology on the environment and find the best ways to take action.

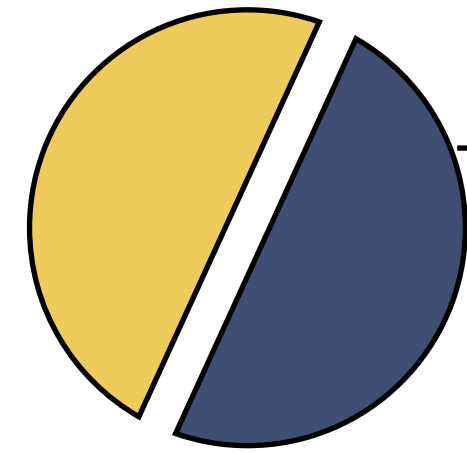




The unintended consequences of designing digital products and technology are evident for people, society, and the environment

Despite efforts from various stakeholders, including governments, organisations, and tech companies to understand their responsibility in creating tech solutions, unintended harms persist. Companies and governments must recognise their influential position and actively work towards solutions that not only prevent harm but also proactively benefit society and the environment.

Here are some of the negative impacts on the consumers and environment which may exponentially increase if not monitored and acted upon intentionally.

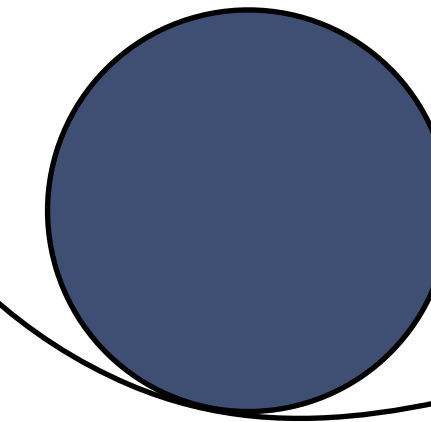
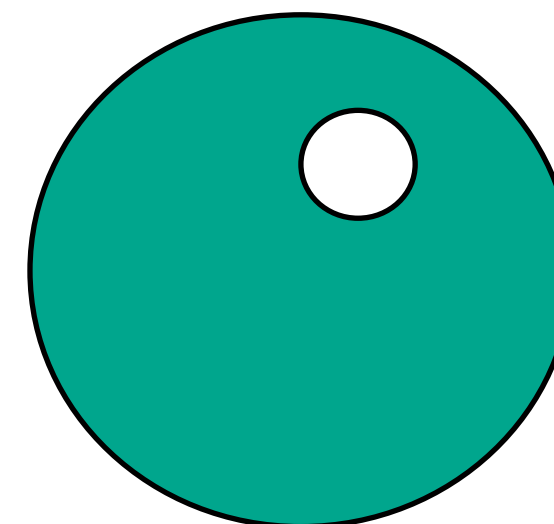


Social Divide and Mental Harms

- Existing social bias being translated into the tech products
- Under representation of diverse communities and voices
- Unequal access and relevance to the tech solutions for diverse populations
- Mental harm caused by the unrealistic representation of the society digitally

Insecure and unsafe data

- Consumers feeling vulnerable and unsafe with their data and information being monetised by the companies or used against them
- Designing for privacy being an afterthought for many companies
- Rising threats and insecurity due to the use of PII
- Increase in virality of information leading to societal hostility and harms

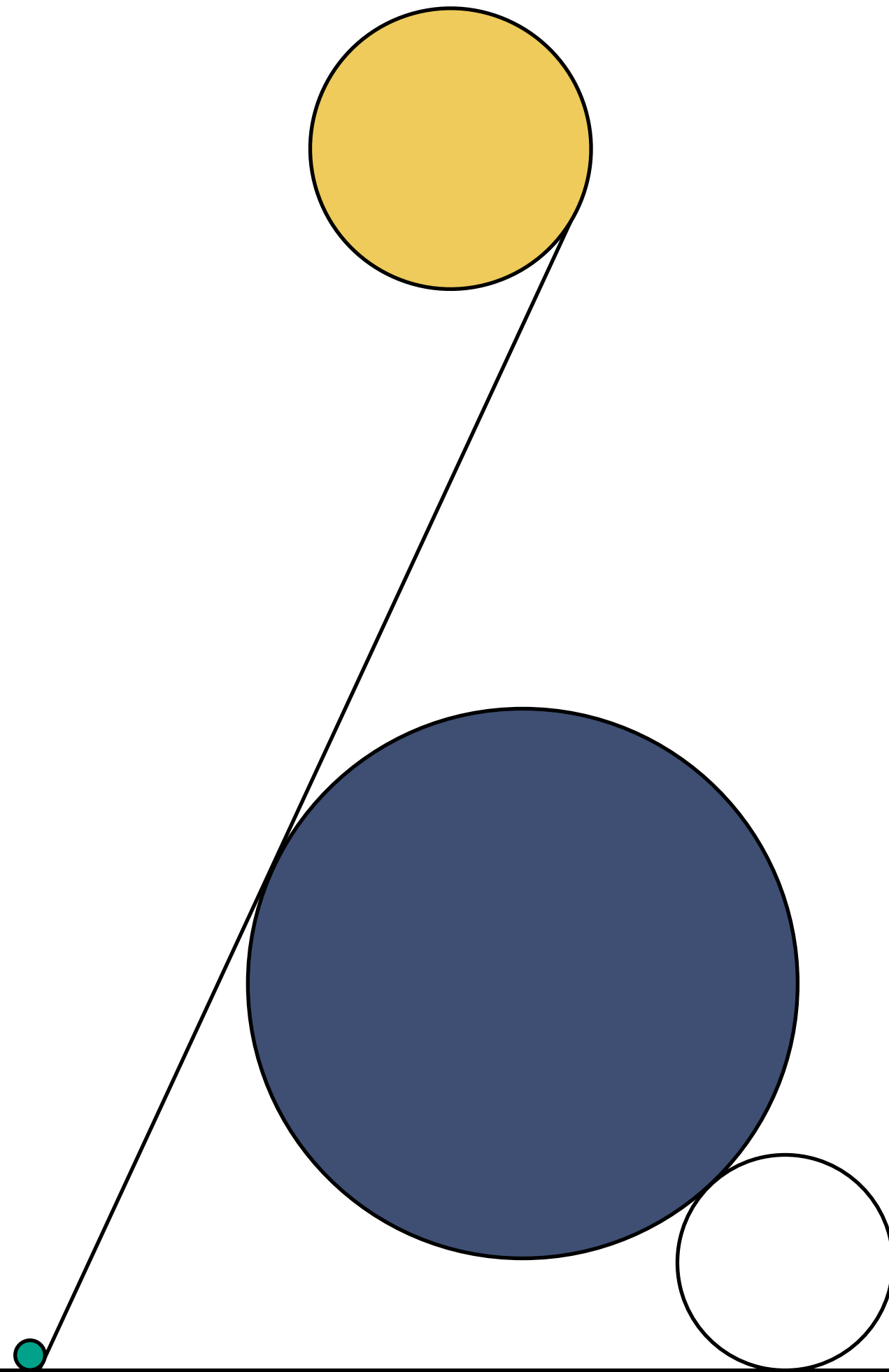


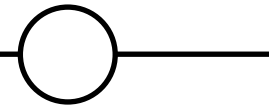
Lack of tech-agency and control

- Lower visibility of the use of PII making consumers feel vulnerable and insecure
- Consumers' having limited tools and knowledge to keep themselves safe
- Consumer trust in tech companies is declining due to their perceived lack of ethical behaviour, and consumers are experiencing a disconnect between what is promised and what is actually delivered
- Consumers not knowing who to hold accountable for any mishaps or how to overcome them
- Regular trade-off that consumers do between convenience vs. perceived value due to lack of choices

Consumers expect companies to do good and be better

Consumers have always been evolving their lives to adapt to technology, may it be the introduction of digital devices, smart devices, or web 3.0 most recently. A vast majority of our society globally struggles to keep up with the pace at which technology is being introduced into their lives with rising concerns, unaddressed limitations and the true impact of technology and AI more specifically. This is leading to increasing consumer expectations from the leaders (regulators and tech companies) to commit to creating a positive impact and minimum unintended consequences for society.





Shift towards CSR 2.0

According to consumers, it is no longer enough for companies to have their goals be about creating an improved user experience or creating a good product to have a positive impact on the consumer's life. The focus of the consumers is increasingly shifting towards evaluating the impact that the company or the product has on society and the planet. Today, consumers expect companies to use their influence to take a stance on issues related to the environment, human rights, and social injustice to show their commitment towards creating a positive impact within the society. For example **Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard donated the entire company worth \$3 billion to a collective to fight climate change.**

71% of people think it's important for businesses to support social movements. Source: Research done by Clutch with 420 people in the US, 2019

Which Social Issues Do People Think Businesses Should Support?

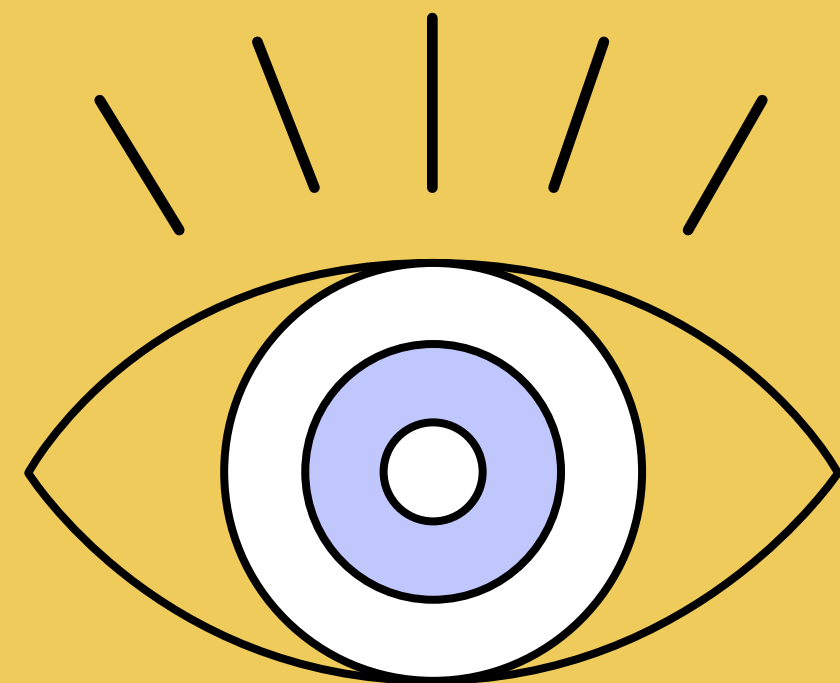


Not all answer choices shown.
Percent of total responders N=420 people
who made purchase in past 6 months

Source: Clutch 2019 PRI and Corporate Social
Responsibility Survey

REALITY CHECK

Story of Meta, X and TikTok facing more pressure from Europe than the U.S. on Israel-Hamas war disinformation



The European Union has issued strong warnings for social media platforms like Meta, Tiktok and X (previously Twitter) to adhere to the guidelines outlined under the Digital Services Act in the face of the Israel-Gaza conflict to prevent misinformation and illegal content. The DSA is a

landmark piece of regulation to hold tech giants accountable and protect people's interests by regulating violent content, misinformation and hate speech.

While **Meta and Tiktok have shared an initial response on the actions** in the form of increased scrutiny on the platform to prevent disinformation, they continue to remain under scrutiny. **The European Union has also launched an investigation into X** to ensure that the platform complies with the rules set under DSA.

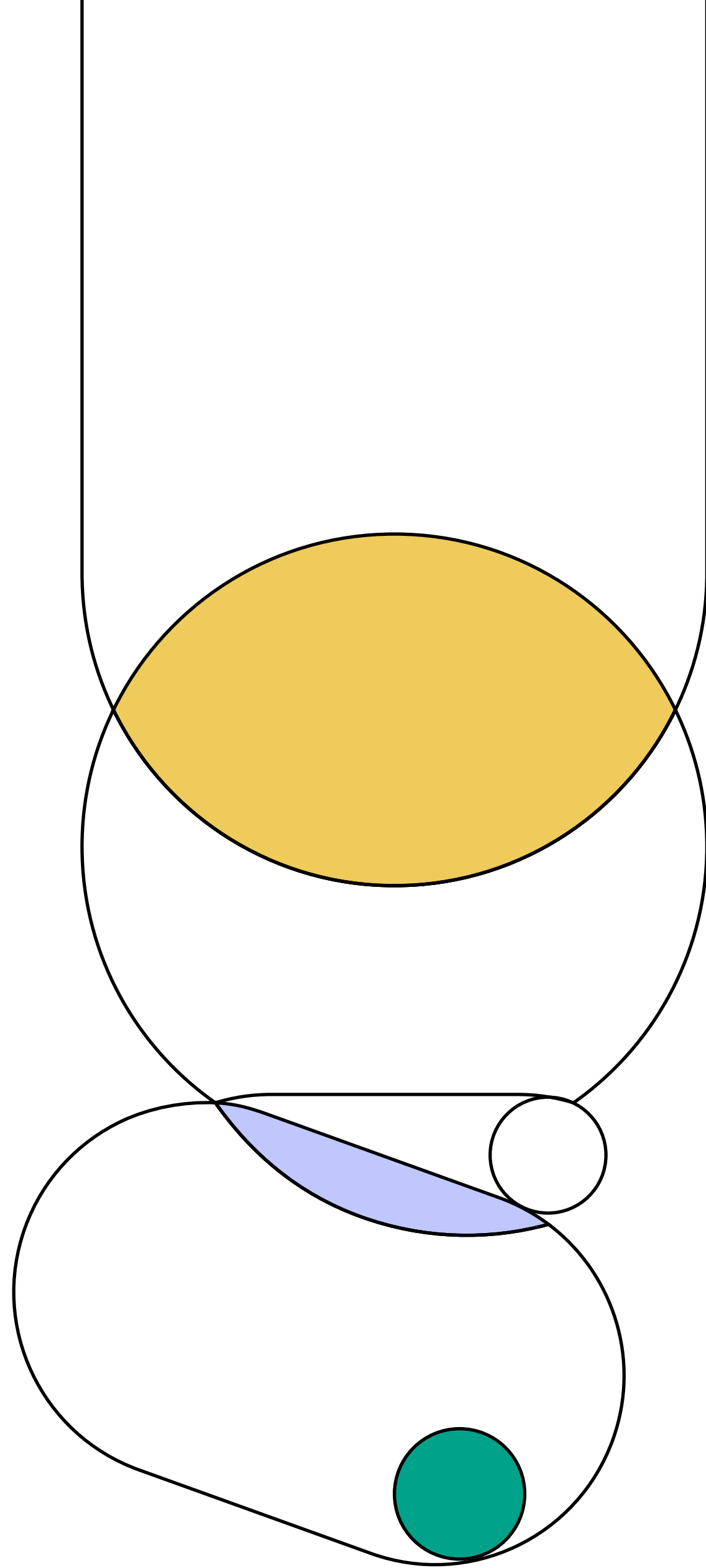
This may not translate into the context in the US where the **First Amendment may protect the right of certain speeches** and includes very narrow exemptions or definitions of hate speech and misinformation. The US government's efforts to combat misinformation during the

elections and COVID are also challenged by the Republican state attorney generals as coercive which led to the **Supreme Court temporarily blocking Joe Biden's administration** from asking social media companies to remove content deemed as misinformation.

The Verge reports that according to **NewsGuard**, a for-profit organisation that rates news sites, 74% of the 250 most-engaged posts on X that pushed incorrect or unverified information related to the war were through verified profiles on X. It is safe to say that the concerns of the European Union are therefore not misplaced when it comes to the role social media platforms can play in spreading misinformation or disinformation in times of crisis.



Barriers and dilemmas faced by companies



① Most organisations lack a systemic approach towards adopting responsible practises

The reality of companies choosing social responsibility as a priority comes with its own challenges and limitations. Companies themselves may see the benefit of reducing unintended consequences but are not yet equipped with the knowledge on how to practice responsibility beyond compliance with regulations. This requires a systemic approach and alignment across all levels of a company with incentives tied to it.



AARON COHEN

Sr. Corporate Communications and Brand Consultant

There should be AI oversight at the government's level as well, because this is such a society shifting moment for humanity that it's got to start from the top. But I think grassroots and companies can do a lot as well.



Struggles with internal structures and resistance to change

Research done by **MIT Technology Review Insights** and ThoughtWorks 2022 indicates that both small and large companies face challenges in adopting responsible technology practices. Large companies grapple with internal resistance to change, driven by employee awareness issues. In contrast, small companies face leadership and senior management awareness and education gaps, leading to concerns about operational risks. Many companies resort to band-aid solutions for addressing the harm caused by their technological applications, rather than adopting a systemic approach to prioritise social responsibility.

Limited understanding of the responsibility that ends at legal compliance

Many global companies see responsible technology solely as regulatory compliance, limiting their exploration of innovative and responsible solutions. Research from **MIT Technology Review Insights** and ThoughtWorks 2022 also reveals that 52% of respondents in India are motivated by regulations, compared to only 8% in China and 29% in the USA. While regulations drive compliance, the question arises: What actions do companies take beyond compliance to truly embody responsibility?



ANUSH MOHANDASS

Chief Product Officer and Co-founder, asato.ai

10-15 years ago, we used to compare data to oil, saying that it was a valuable resource. As a result, everyone started utilising data, recognising its power. However, it soon became apparent that proper governance was necessary to handle data effectively. In most large enterprises today, you will find a Chief Data Officer overseeing data management. Moreover, many organisations have established data governance councils or bodies to ensure responsible data practices. With the increasing adoption of AI within enterprises, it is likely that an AI governance council will also become a part of their structure.

② Companies find it challenging to align business goals with social responsibility

Monetary benefits, one of the key motivator to practice responsible tech

One of the most important drivers for companies to practice responsible technology is to see monetary benefits, for example - improve brand perception, attract investors and for employee retention. The focus is more on getting tangible business benefits rather than doing good for ethical reasons. Unless the financial goals are tied to the value generated for the consumer, society or environment, it is safe to assume that the financial targets will continue to be prioritised over the consumer's interests.

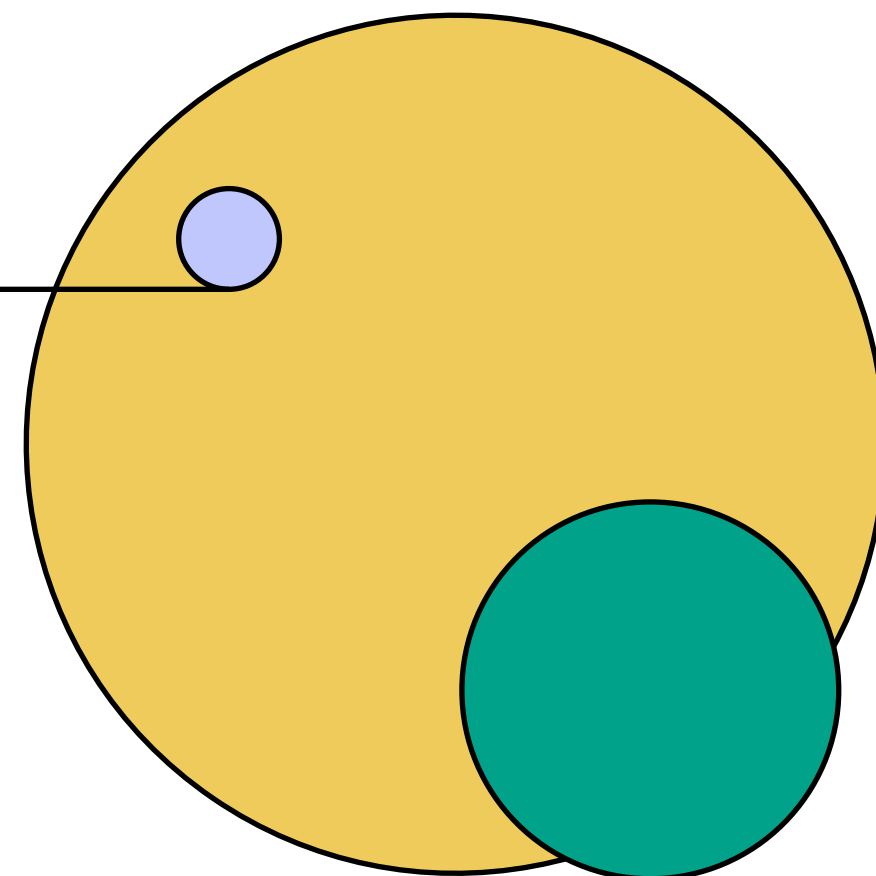
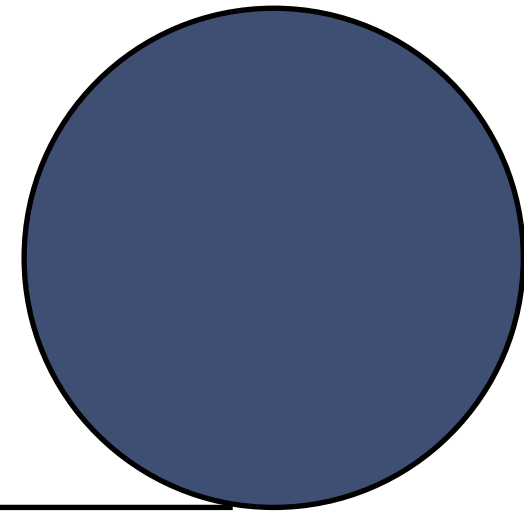
~50% (Global) of companies focus on responsible technology to increase attractiveness to investors and partners. Source: MIT Technology Review Insights & ThoughtWorks 2022



In any framework we employ, we need to make sure that there are economic incentives and disincentives that encourage positive outcomes and disincentives that deter negative ones.

ANUSH MOHANDASS

Chief Product Officer and Co-founder, asato.ai



③ Unclear and incomprehensive regulations lead to limited standardisation and innovation

GDPR is considered to be leading the way for data privacy regulations. Governments outside Europe have also begun to act on the regulations and guidelines to create responsible tech solutions. They have started penalising companies for non-compliance which has created an urgency for them to build strategies for compliance. Despite these measures, the regulations seem unclear, limited, and not standardised across markets and are perceived to be restricting the innovation possibilities for companies.

Unclear and not standardised regulations

With different regulations being implemented or in the process of implementation across different markets such as **Lei Geral de Proteção de Dados (LGPD) in Brazil, California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the state of California, Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (DPDP) in India**, the biggest challenge that companies are facing is the non-standardisation and patchwork nature of regulations. To address regulatory requirements and anticipate future regulations, many companies have begun to set up an infrastructure by hiring experts internally.

Fortune Global 500 companies had spent \$7.8 billion by 2018 preparing for GDPR.

Source: International Association of Privacy Professionals

Since the nature of compliance varies across different jurisdictions, companies have started to use the most restrictive regulations as a standard to prepare for the future. For example, rather than meeting CCPA requirements only in California, **Microsoft is applying them to all US citizens**, though other states do not yet have policies as restrictive as the CCPA.

Some of the most commonly faced challenges by companies, especially financial institutions as **cited by PwC** are -

1. Frequent additions to financial regulation by governments
2. High overhead costs on production and deployment of solution to comply with the regulation and high levitation of penalty on non-compliance with the regulations
3. Non-standardised approach, incompatible systems, insufficient integration of systems
4. Constraints of legacy systems and insufficient automation and digitisation to meet the pace of regulatory changes



ANDREW NG
Founding Lead of Google Brain

We need good regulations on AI and clarity on how we should or should not integrate AI into areas such as healthcare, etc. It's a good idea to take a tiered approach to AI risk, such as using AI for screening people for jobs, which is high-risk, so let's make sure to mitigate that risk. Unfortunately, I'm seeing far more bad regulation around the world rather than good regulation.

Regulations focused on the online safety and data privacy alone

Today, tech activities especially AI activities are governed under regulations such as data protection, consumer protection, financial regulations etc. However, no regulation is yet explicitly mitigating the risks such as unfairness, discrimination, mental harm or societal harm that tech solutions especially AI solutions may cause. The regulations are mostly trying to focus on the online safety and data privacy of consumers and the intangible or indirect harms and consequences are yet to be addressed formally.

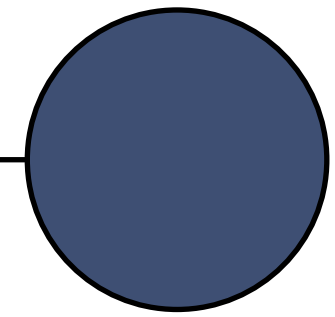


SUNITA VENKATARAMAN
Co-Founder, Face the Future Today

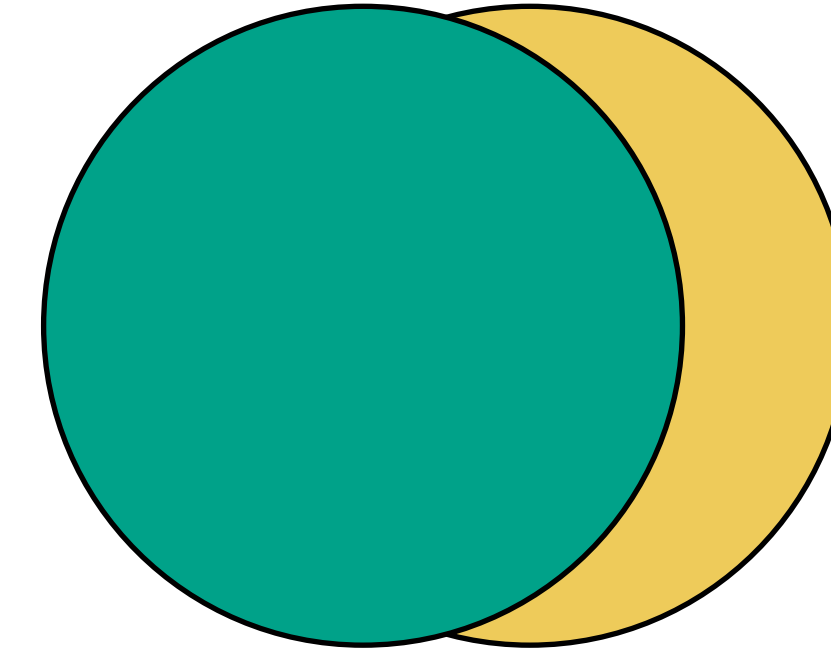
Beyond the concerns about AI itself, my primary apprehension lies in the capabilities of AI regulators to establish and execute responsible frameworks. It is crucial for them to prioritize the cultivation of their human skills, particularly in areas such as empathy, ethical discernment, cultural awareness, and global sensitivity. This emphasis ensures that those utilizing their frameworks are not led astray.

Regulations unable to keep up with the speed of innovation and perceived to be slowing down the companies

It is perceived by some companies that regulations could slow down the adoption of new technology as the regulations and compliances are not able to evolve at the same speed as technology, especially in context to AI. According to the survey done by **MIT Technology Review Insights**, around 30% of large companies and 39% of small companies feel the barriers to adopting responsible technology practices more firmly in their operations due to regulation-driven roadmaps.

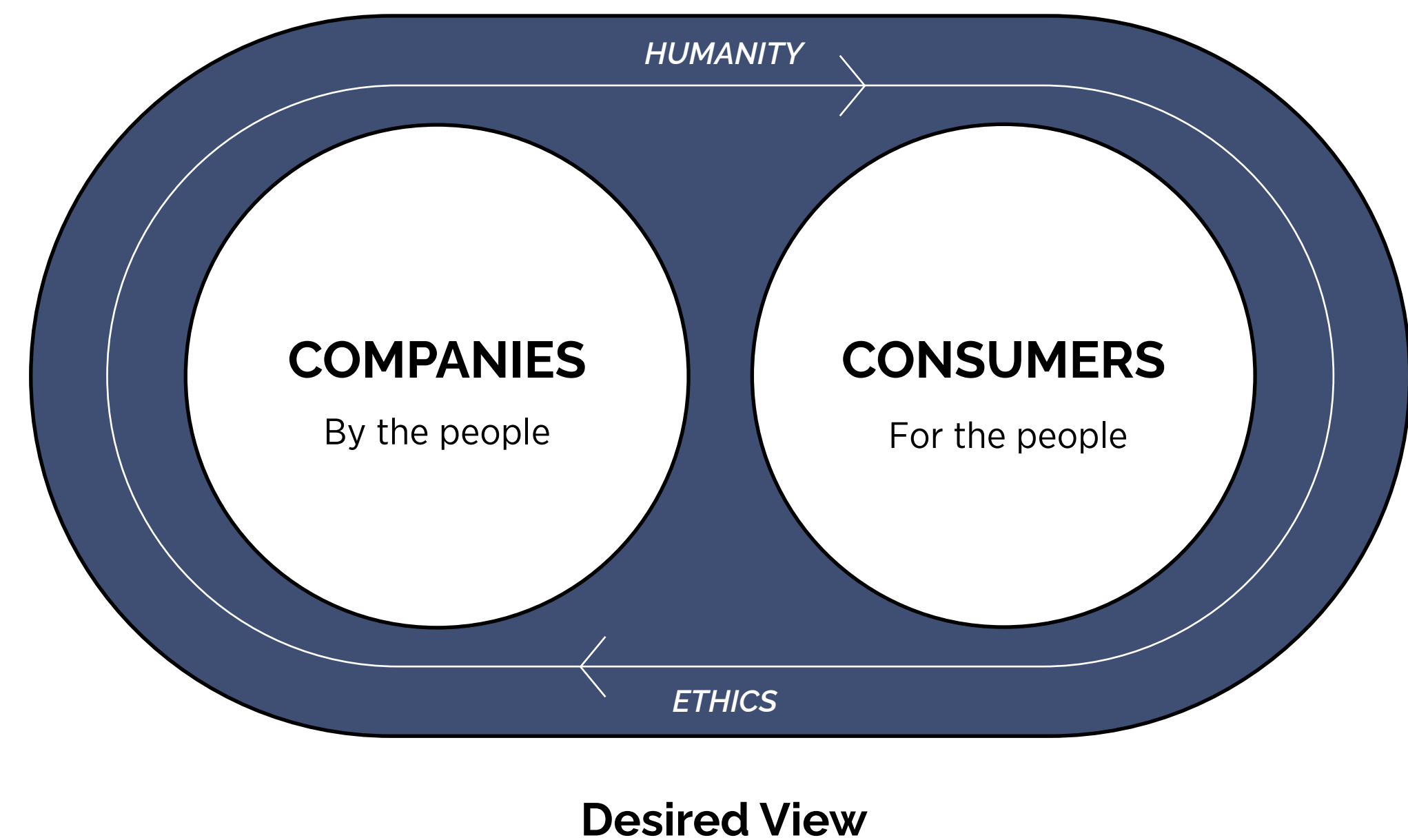
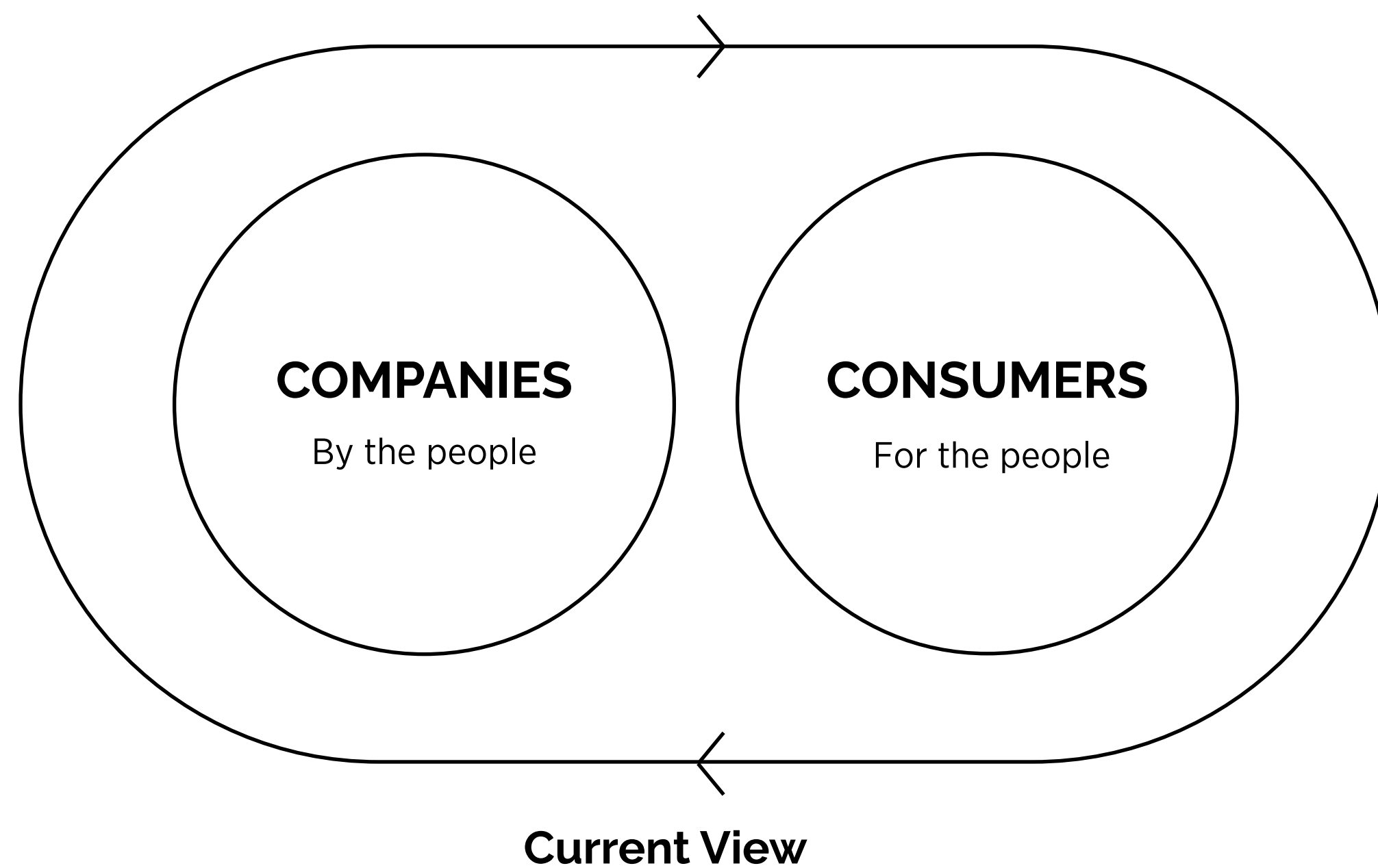


A blueprint on achieving Social Sustainability in Tech (SST) quotient



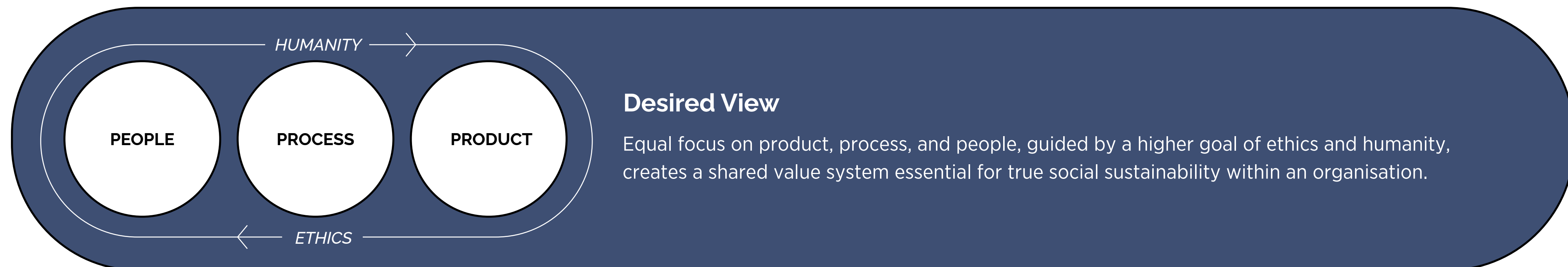
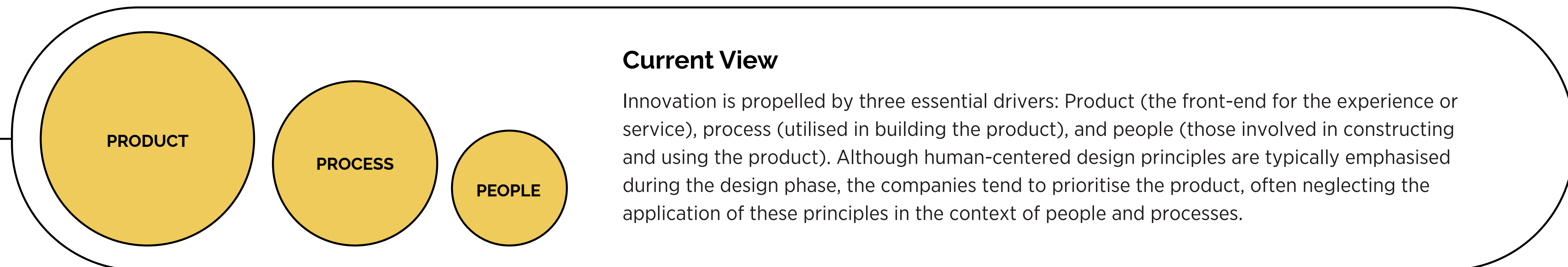
Foundation of Social Sustainability

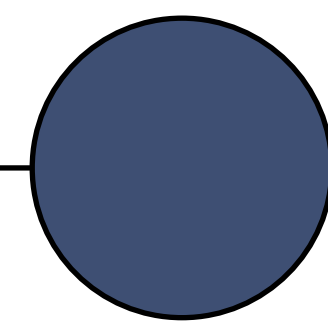
In light of technology's profound influence and the resulting concerns about social consent, a pressing need arises for a solution that benefits companies and consumers alike. To achieve this, re-evaluating the growth cycle is imperative. Prioritising humanity and ethics, guided by a diverse set of people, becomes crucial in navigating this ever-changing and uncertain landscape.



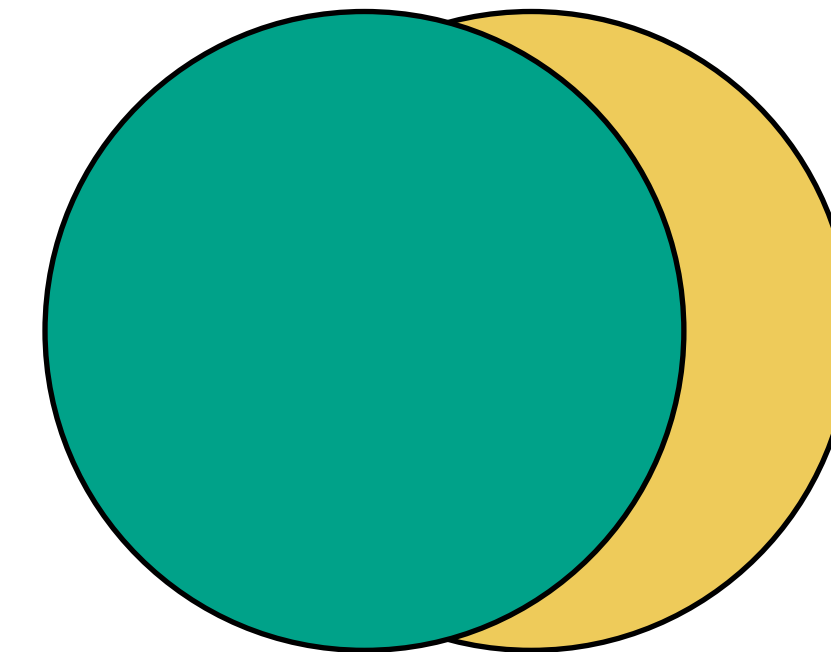
A high level view of current considerations and future state recommendations

From the perspective of companies, the decision-makers, it is essential to evaluate the present situation, pinpoint the shortcomings and establish a revised approach that truly embodies responsibility and ethics.

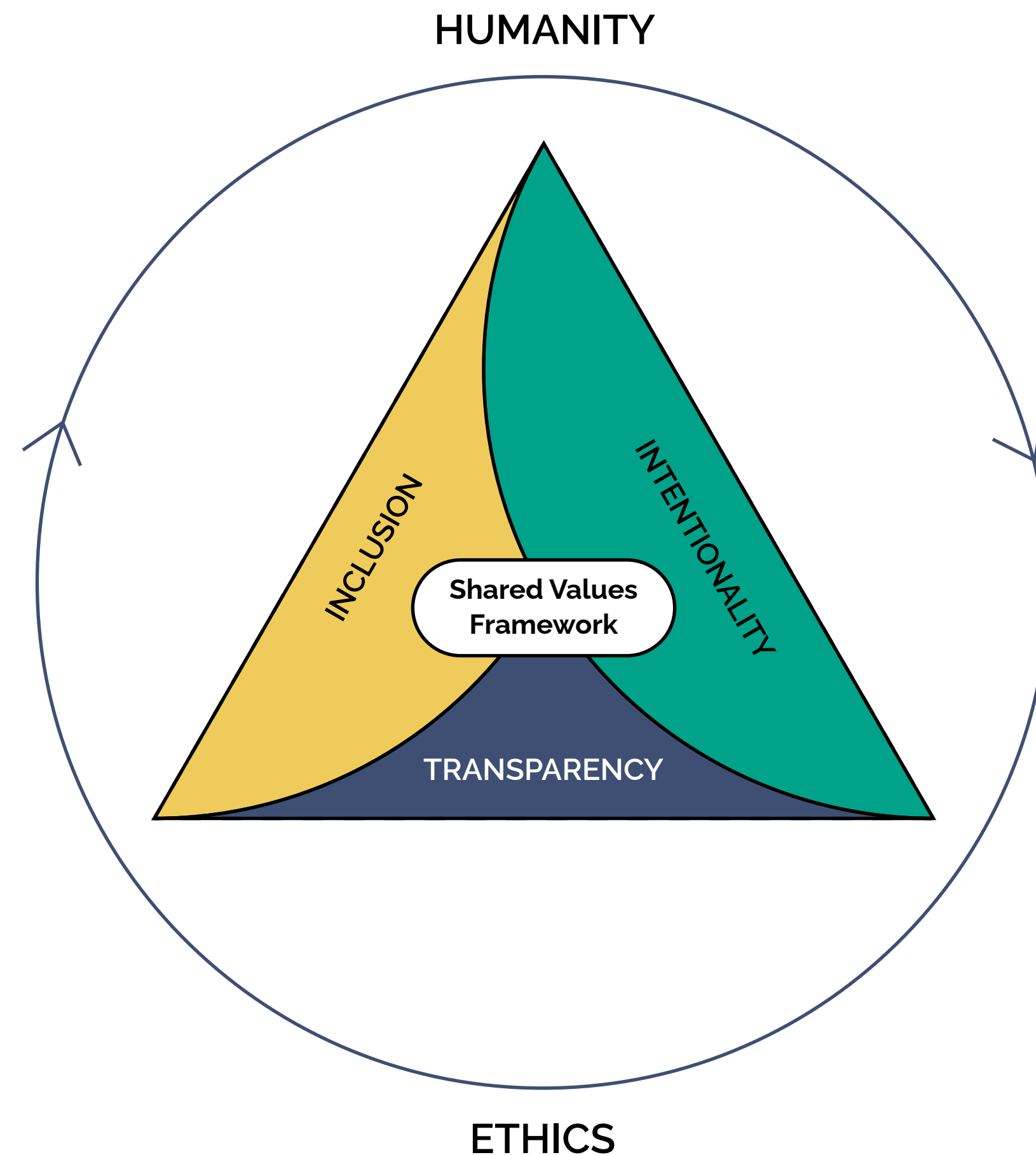




Solution framework

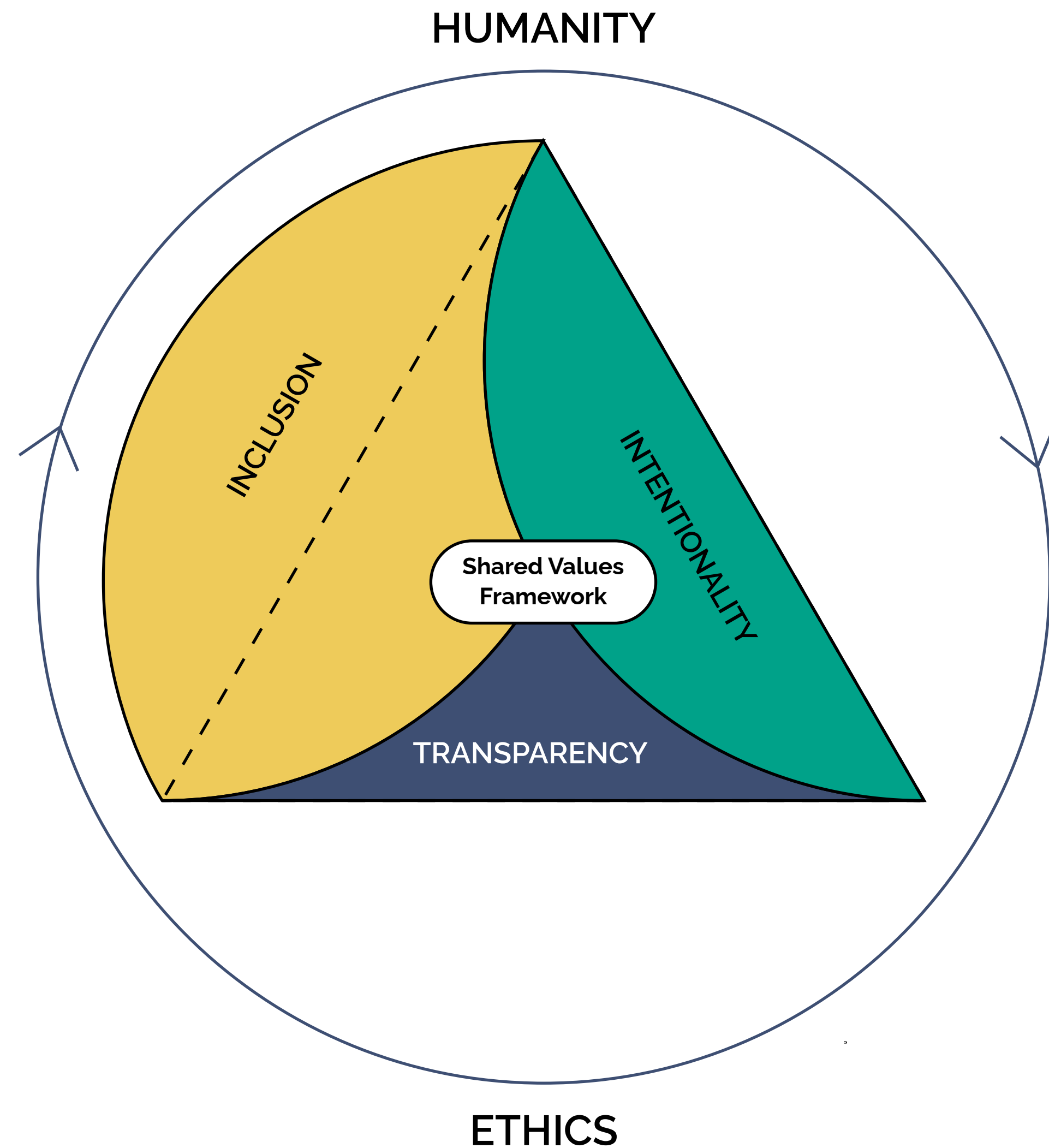


Introducing 'Shared Values Framework' (SVF) for building socially sustainable practices



Implementing a 'Shared Values Framework' is to build a responsible and ethical digital landscape, reflecting the shared collective responsibility in navigating technological complexities and prioritising the interests of individuals and broader welfare.

Aligning actions with these shared values facilitates the promotion of inclusivity, the reduction of biases, and the resolution of concerns raised by survey respondents.



● Inclusion

Inclusion to facilitate democratisation: Ensuring representation from a variety of demographics and communities at boardroom and decision-making levels is essential for developing inclusive processes and policies.

Discussing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is common, but the challenge is translating theory into practical implementation within companies. True inclusion involves authentically representing diversity, addressing biases, avoiding assumptions, and actively including marginalised communities in processes.

● Transparency

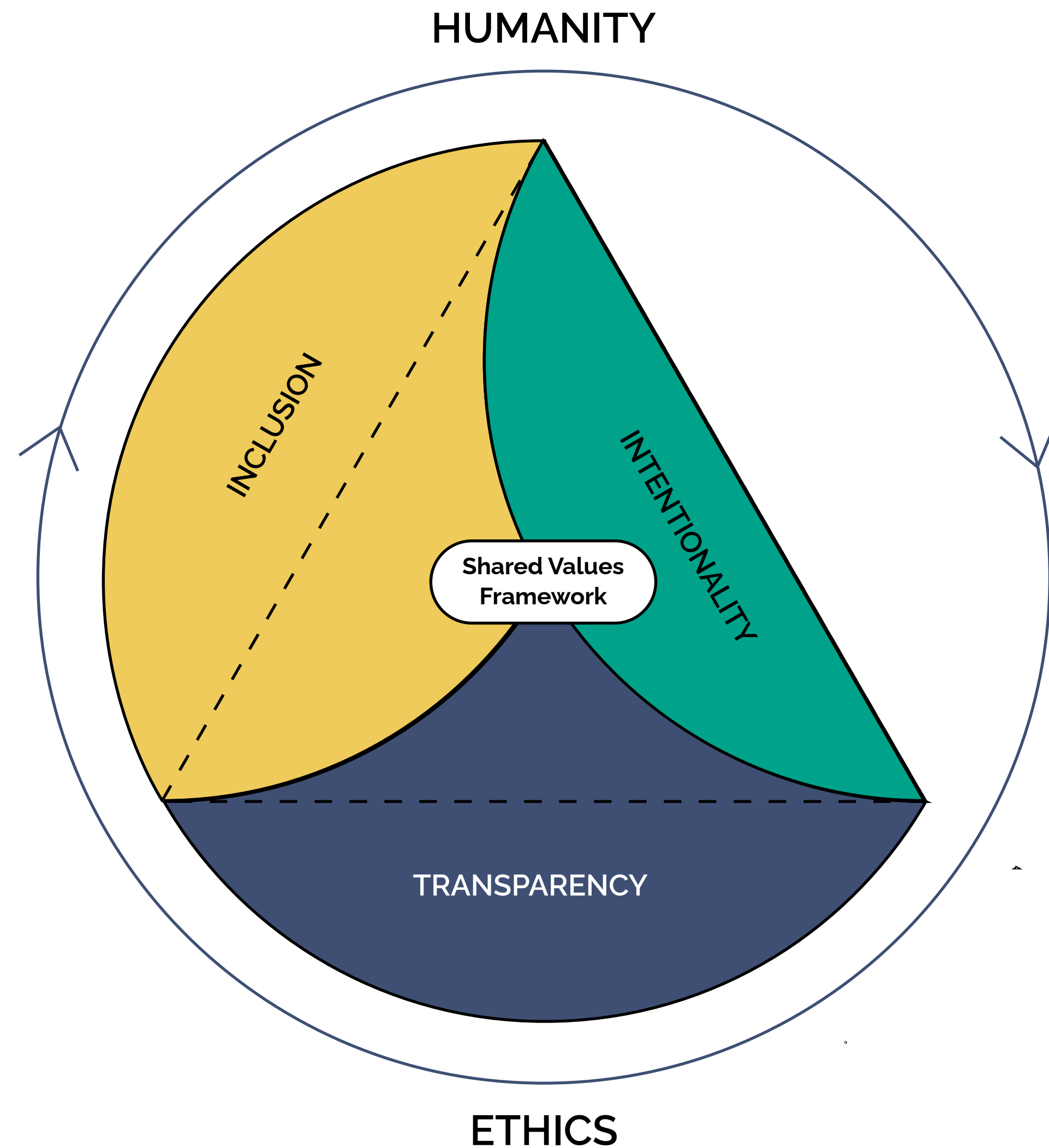
Transparency for accountability: Transparent and clear accountability and traceability should be integrated across various levels to ensure accurate data and appropriate access to information for relevant teams.

AI explainability highlights transparency's crucial role in accountability and trust. Consumers are now more attentive to the opacity of company processes and policies. Future success requires transparency as companies openly share the reasons, methods, and details of their processes to build accountability and earn consumer trust.

● Intentionality

Intentional decisions for value creation: Access to clean and structured data facilitates informed decision-making, ultimately contributing to the development of suitable solutions.

Integrity and fairness in a company arise from strong intentions, while traditional incentives may clash with consumer interests. To stay competitive, companies must prioritise safety, privacy, sustainability, and well-being, aligning choices with business goals to ensure profit and well-being are not mutually exclusive.



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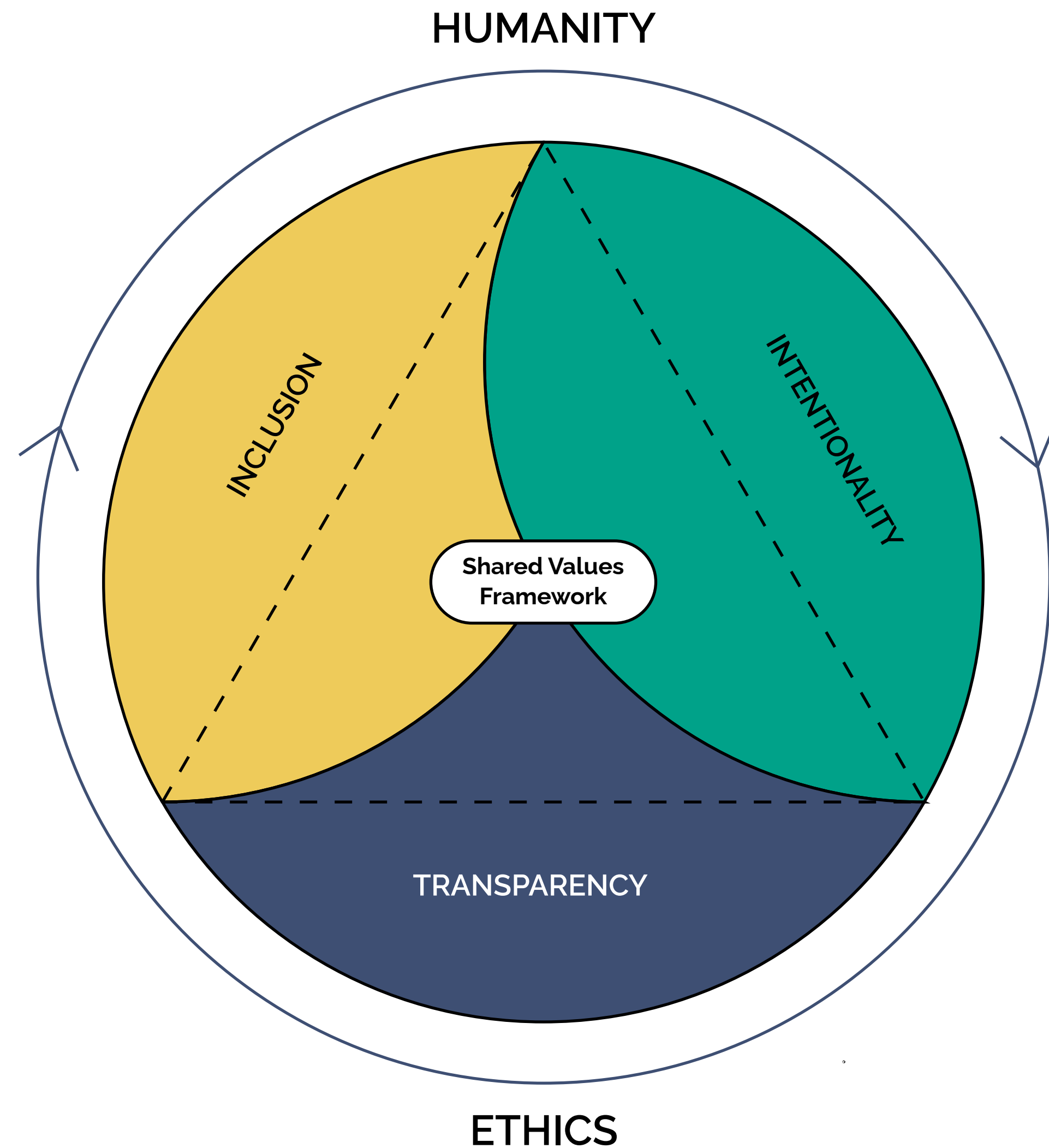
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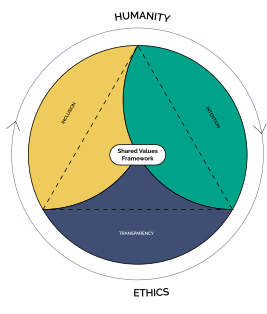
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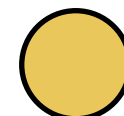
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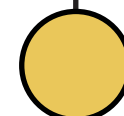
Illustrating the significance and context of the 3 principles for both companies and consumers

INCLUSION



Context for companies:

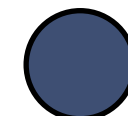
Companies designing digital solutions must prioritise inclusive accessibility, authentic representation of society, and bias elimination. This can lead to new consumer segments for companies. Comprehensive diversity integration, including diverse leadership, is vital according to **this survey**, correlating with a 19% revenue increase, emphasising the business value of diversity.



Context for consumers:

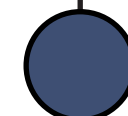
Inclusive products offer equitable access, ensuring usability and relevance regardless of privileges like education or internet access. Eliminating biases in the digital realm fosters consumer empowerment, belonging, trust, loyalty and democratizes access for consumers.

TRANSPARENCY



Context for companies:

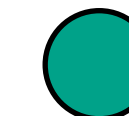
Companies must now prioritise transparency by openly sharing information about practices, processes, and commitment to consumer protection, fostering trust and gaining a competitive edge. This shift is crucial to avoid perpetuating an opaque model that breeds mistrust and scepticism.



Context for consumers:

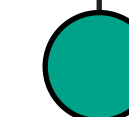
Consumers currently lack visibility in their data usage, making them vulnerable and uninformed. Companies must take responsibility by incorporating transparency into design, processes, and systems, offering clear and accessible information. This empowers consumers to understand and make informed choices.

INTENTIONALITY



Context for companies:

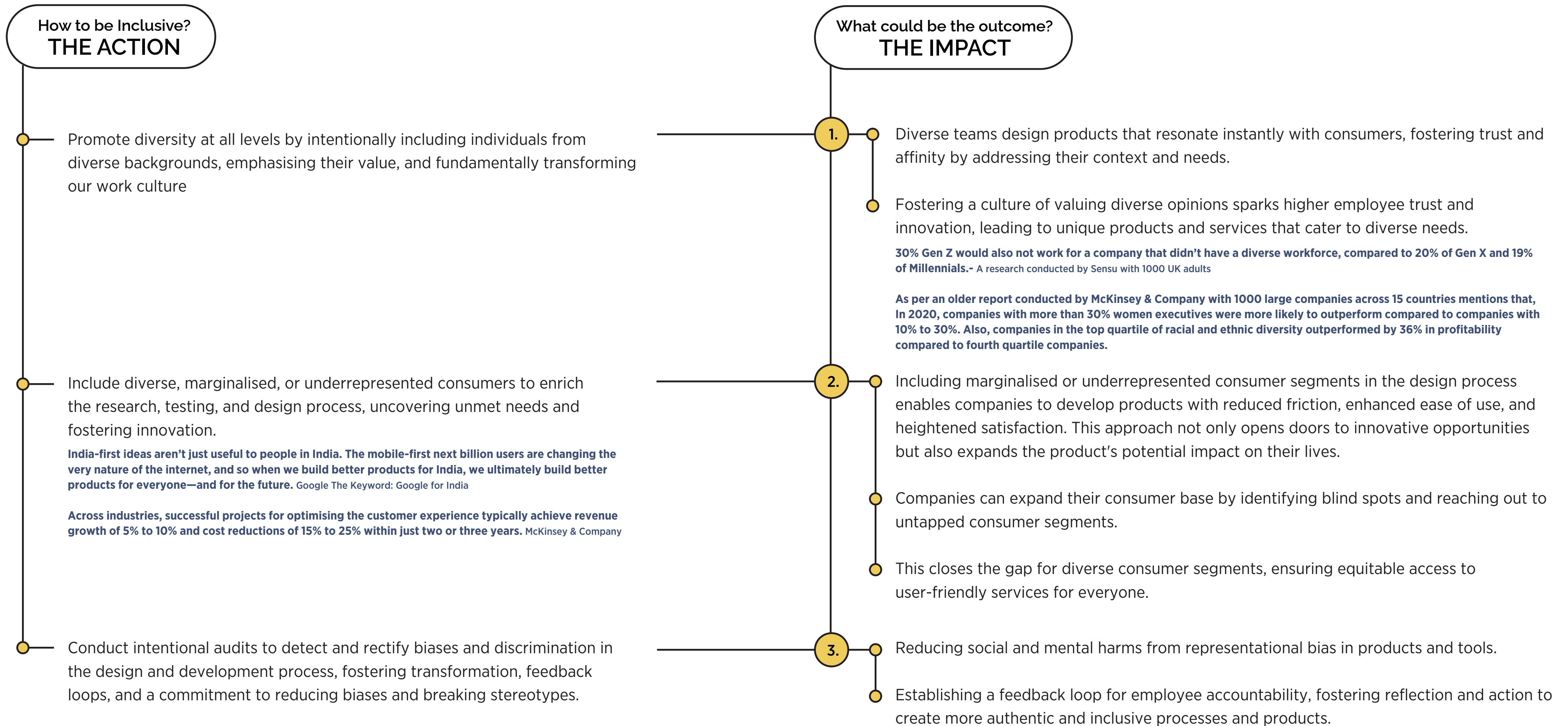
User value now extends beyond being human-centric to include societal and environmental impact. Consumers demand companies actively create positive value and embrace regenerative models, incorporating responsibility into the innovation process.



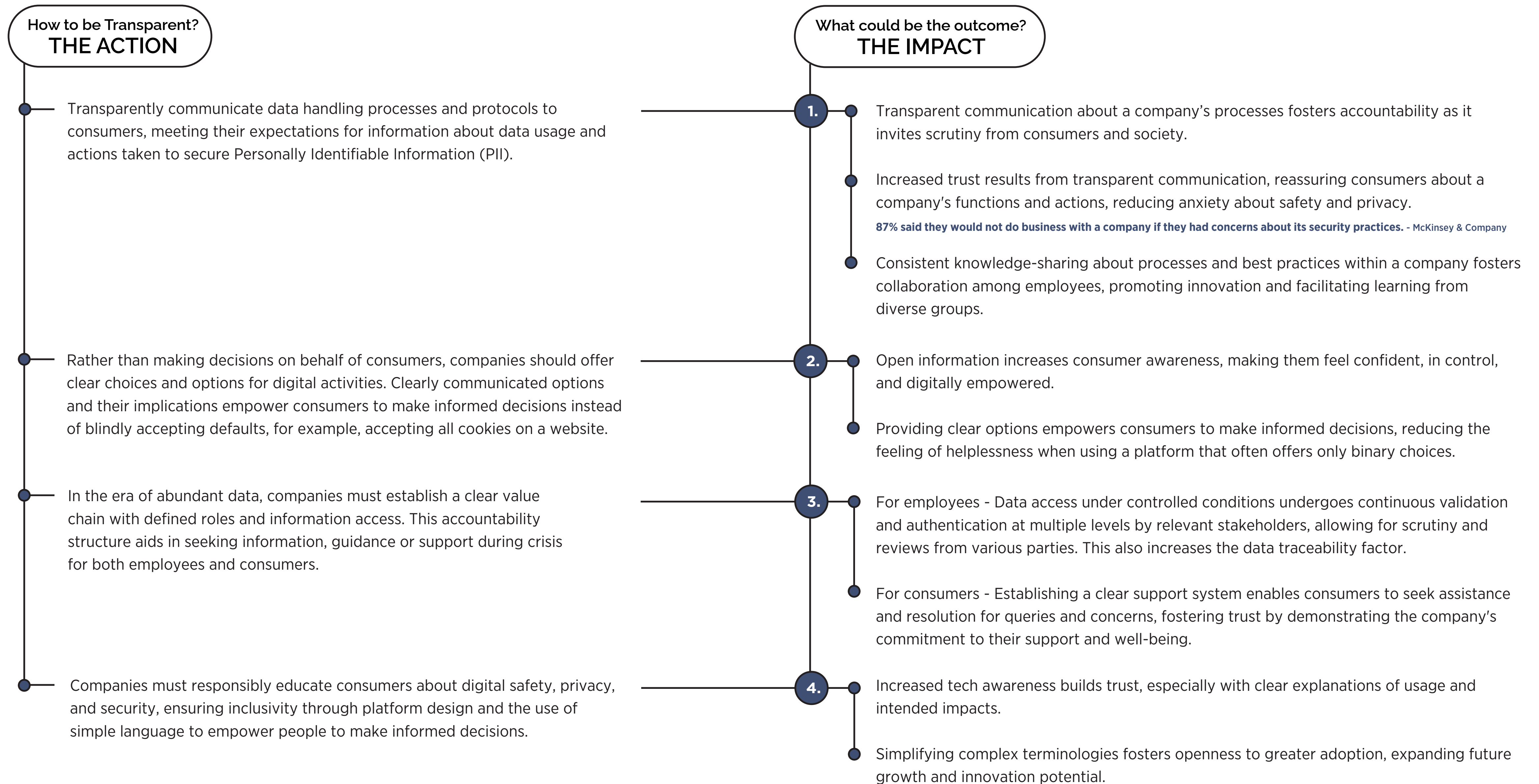
Context for consumers:

Today, consumers expect companies to prioritise both direct and indirect value, focusing on people and the planet. Leaders must enhance users' lives without exploiting vulnerability to data-rich firms. Integrity means proactively protecting users, ensuring fair data-for-value exchange, and instilling confidence in a company that prioritises both users and the planet.

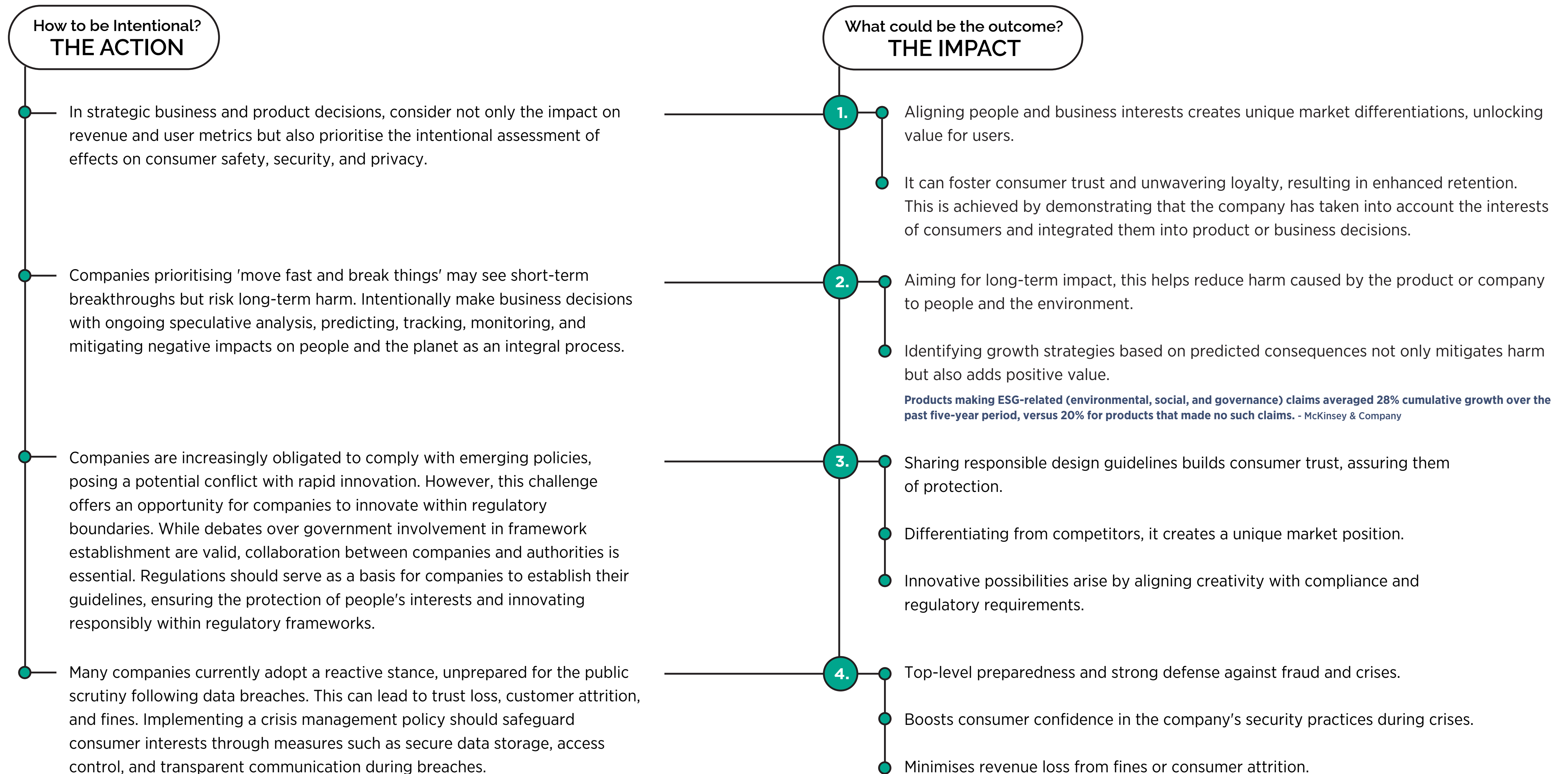
BUILDING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES



BUILDING TRANSPARENT PRACTICES

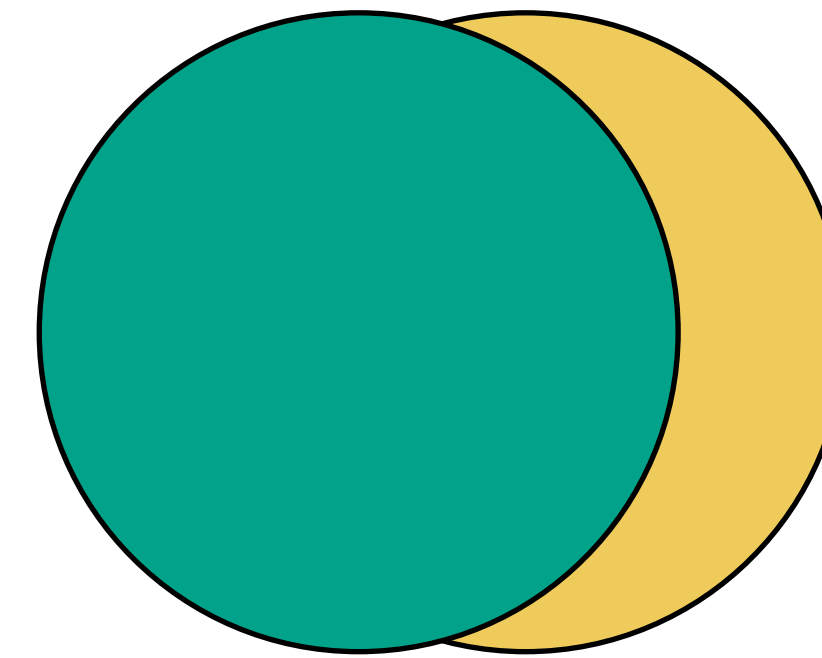


BUILDING INTENTIONAL PRACTICES





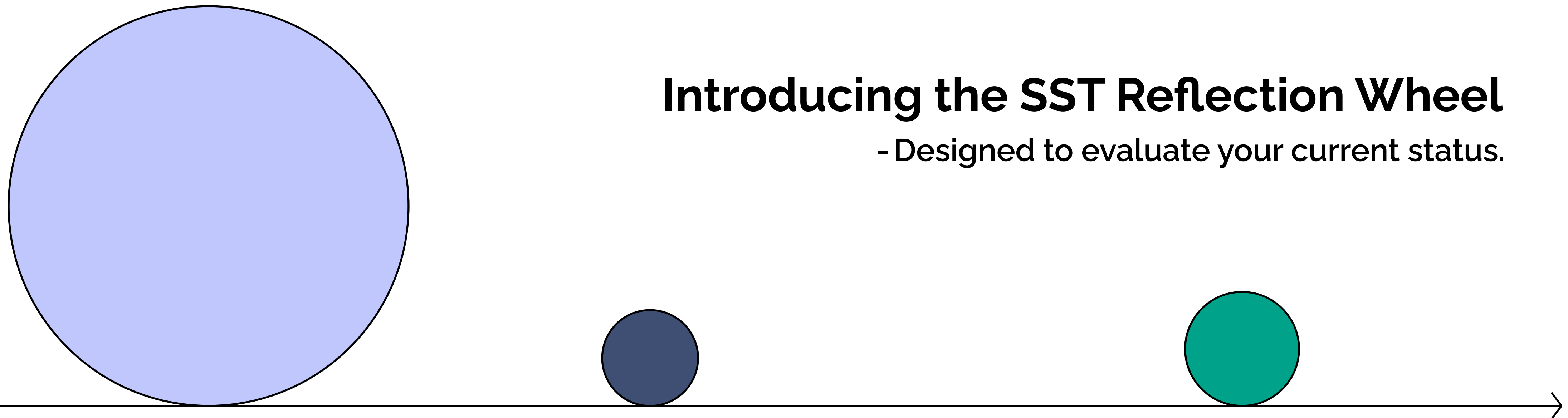
SST toolkit



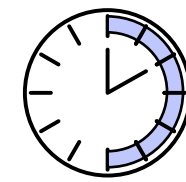
Embarking on the journey of attaining social sustainability requires well-intentioned companies and leaders to embrace Inclusion, Transparency and Intentionality. While these values may appear aspirational, the crucial first step involves grounding oneself in reality—understanding the current position and available resources to chart a path forward. In this section, we introduce a toolkit for running a reflection exercise designed as the initial step to assess your SST quotient.

Introducing the SST Reflection Wheel

- Designed to evaluate your current status.



SST Reflection Wheel



Duration: 30 to 45 mins for each principle

Objective

This exercise advocates for leveraging intuition and existing knowledge to perform an initial assessment, offering valuable insights to guide subsequent actions. It aids in visualising the present state of the company concerning the three principles of the Shared Values Framework (SVF), namely:

Inclusion: Ensuring representation from a variety of demographics and communities at boardroom and decision-making levels is essential for developing inclusive processes and policies.

Transparent: Transparent and clear accountability and traceability should be integrated across various levels to ensure accurate data and appropriate access to information for relevant teams.


Intentionality: Access to clean and structured data facilitates informed decision-making, ultimately contributing to the development of suitable solutions.


Key Pointers

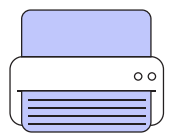
1. This exercise is designed for executives, decision-makers, or managers seeking to appraise the present state of company operations and products.
2. Respond to the questions to the best of your understanding. This exercise provides an opportunity for you and your team to engage in reflective and simulated contemplation on these aspects.
3. As you discuss each of the prompts internally, think of the current state your organization is in, challenges and barriers that you face to make the change and possible enablers to make the change happen. You could use Awareness, Aptitude, Action and Advocacy as buckets to instigate the discussions.

Next Steps

1. Leaders can engage in discussions regarding the depicted current state of the company, its underlying reasons and strategies for prioritising elements to enhance progression towards social sustainability.
2. Subsequently, proceed to the SST Quotient Maturity Canvas for a qualitative assessment.

 This evaluative exercise serves as an initial step in gaining an understanding of the company's current standing within the SVF framework, thereby facilitating informed decision-making and strategic planning moving forward.

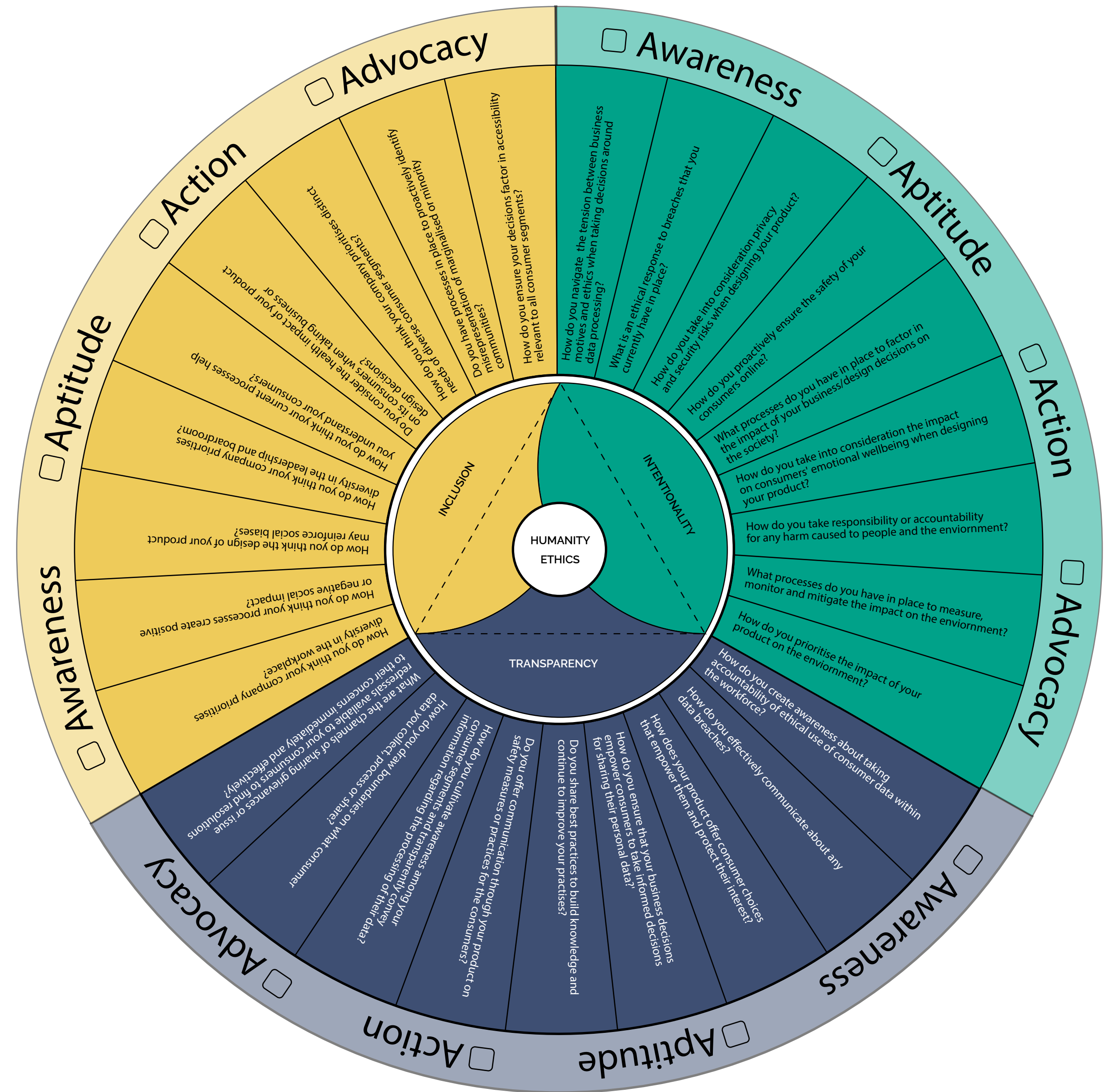
 Within the subsequent pages, you will find ideal answers that can serve as a benchmark for comparing your answers to. Additionally, you have the option to **download this exercise** and obtain a printed version of the visual representation, enabling you to conduct it offline with your team.



SST Reflection Wheel

Use the wheel to reflect and answer each of the questions corresponding to the Shared Value Framework (SVF).

Think across the 4As (Awareness, Aptitude, Action, Advocacy) as applicable for each of the principles to understand where does your organisation stand today in the SST adoption curve.



Next steps for facilitating the adoption of a successful social sustainability strategy.

- 
- A focused outreach and adoption strategy can expedite the acceptance and implementation of social sustainability strategy, unlocking a future reach with possibilities.
 - To promote urgency and necessity, employ open communication and strategic touchpoints.
 - Initiate a policy-driven change management and adoption strategy from the outset.
 - Create dedicated stakeholder groups, including enablers, evangelists, influencers, and academia, to champion the need for its adoption.
 - Design experience centers with consideration for all stakeholders in the ecosystem.
 - Establish discussion forums for channeling feedback, fostering continuous improvement.
 - Explore collaborative opportunities on a global scale by reaching out to multilateral agencies or like-minded companies.
 - Set up channels for information dissemination through seminars and workshops.

Exemplary Initiatives: Diverse Entities Working Towards Establishing a Secure Digital Space

Independent organisations for public awareness and education

For instance, **IEEE** contributes to building an inclusive and unbiased technological environment.

Companies creating open source frameworks

For instance, the Dubai International Financial Center addresses **policy development** and legislation on open data, digital identity and company law frameworks in the metaverse.

Companies setting up internal processes

For instance, **Microsoft, PwC, Salesforce**, among others are defining 'Responsible Tech' and 'Ethical AI' and also sharing principles to work with for developing new applications, handling data, etc.

Government regulations and assessment tools

For instance, Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC), a special economic zone in UAE, **announced** a new 'metaverse platform' for developers to test technology.

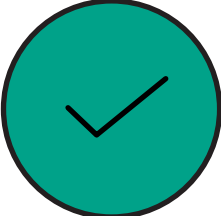
Government fostering collaboration for innovation practices


For instance, the European Commission (EC) **rewards the most innovative** sandbox regulator, while regulators in Singapore and India are launching sandboxes via "cooperation agreements" to boost fintech.


Journey to the North Star

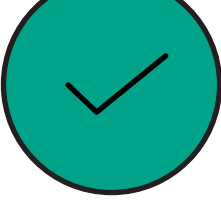
In a world where social sustainability is the driving force in reshaping the approach to innovation, the tangible outcome should be a transformed organisational culture and operational Shared Value Framework (SVF) leading to a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable ecosystem.

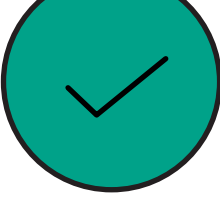
Charting the Course: Milestone Planning for Success

- 

Representation and involvement of diverse perspectives, demographics, and stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- 

Broader participation in decision-making, reducing centralisation in the relevant areas and enabling a more democratic distribution of influence.
- 

Clear, open communication channels and processes that provide stakeholders with a comprehensive understanding of decision-making, fostering trust and accountability.
- 

Implementation and clear definition of mechanisms that hold individuals and entities responsible for their actions, ensuring adherence to ethical and legal standards.
- 

Cultivate a culture of purposeful and conscious decision-making, aligning choices with values and long-term goals to create meaningful and sustainable value.

“

In the end, it's not the technology that should concern us.
It's the individuals who hold the power to shape the use of
technology and access to data.

A thoughtful synergistic creation by

ddc

🌐 www.darjeelingdesignco.com
✉ hello@darjeelingdesignco.com

xeno

🌐 www.xenocolab.com
✉ hello@xenocolab.com

Authors

Payal Chakraborty

Founder and CEO
Darjeeling Design Co.

payal@darjeelingdesignco.com

Swar Raisinghani

Co-Founder
Xeno Co-lab

swar@xenocolab.com

Nikhita Ghugari

Co-Founder
Xeno Co-lab

nikhita@xenocolab.com

Researchers:

Avani Tavargeri
Palak Garg

Designers:

Sunaina Agarwal
Pranava Kaveri
Parul Sharma

Editor:

Naina Khedekar