

Cover Page

This is a sample project developed as if written by a leaving cert student based on the sample brief released in September 2025, for illustrative purposes only.

It is not intended as a model answer to be mirrored by students. It is intended to be used as a resource to have classroom conversations around things done well / could be improved by the 'student'.

The project was written with the aim of achieving higher marks in the descriptors of quality, but is not intended to be 200/200 as a project, and should be open to interpretation by users based on the brief and specification.

1. Introduction (Approx 200 words)

The health and fitness industry is often criticised for using less ethical marketing tactics, including guilt-based advertising, exaggerated promises, and complicated methods that make people feel they must buy a specific plan or product to achieve results. Many businesses rely on clickbait-style promotions such as "Lose 30 pounds in 30 days" or heavily edited transformation photos to attract attention and drive sales. This led me to question whether a fitness business can still succeed using honest and transparent marketing instead.

Curiosity
rationale
interest
??

I began researching Irish examples of businesses that promote themselves differently. This led me to Sean Casey Fitness, known for its no-nonsense, evidence-based approach to weight loss and online coaching. His strong client reputation made him an ideal example for examining how ethical marketing builds trust and supports long-term success.

As part of my project plan, I first intended to including data around advertising regulation, but after interviewing Sean Casey I adjusted my plan to explore how ethical marketing supports sustainable business growth. This change was inspired by Sean's interview and allowed me to strengthen the link between my question and real-world business practice.

Project Plan
reflection

Research Question:

change + reflection
Justifying

How do ethical marketing practices such as honesty, fairness and transparency influence the success of Sean Casey Fitness in Ireland?

Aims:

1. To investigate how Sean Casey Fitness applies ethical principles across its marketing and communication.
2. To analyse consumer perceptions and reactions to ethical and unethical marketing practices in the fitness industry.

[242 words]

multiple viewpoints

Coherence

→ clear
→ logical
→ Sourced
Conclusion

10%

Hardest / longest

SHOW WHAT YOU FOUND

Signpost

2. Investigation and Findings (Approx 400 words)

me

Purpose and relevance of sources chosen

To gain direct insight into how ethical principles are applied in practice, I carried out an interview with Sean Casey. I also conducted a short consumer survey to provide first-hand, unbiased evidence on how people perceive ethical and unethical marketing practices.

Secondary sources such as online reviews, news articles and industry commentaries added wider perspectives.

This approach allowed the research question to be explored from both business and consumer viewpoints, avoiding reliance on Sean Casey's own content alone.



perspectives

← Inclusions of sources/data

Source 1: - Interview with Sean Casey (20 Oct 2025)

Sean explained that "the tides are turning" on unethical marketing, which once worked when "people weren't as educated and didn't have access to good information" (Casey, Interview, 2025).

Casey added that being "upfront and honest, with other people's interests at heart" is the best way to run a business, believing that "ethics in marketing is the future of being successful" as consumers now "see through" misleading claims, showing how ethics shape his long-term personal brand strategy.

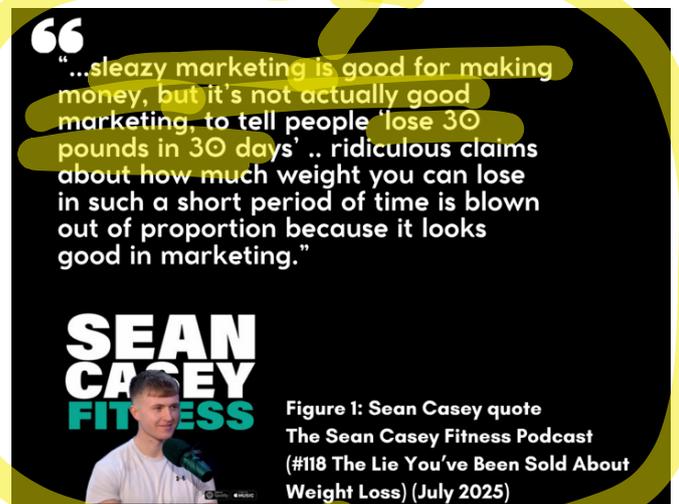
Source 2: Podcast #118 – The Lie You've Been Sold About Weight Loss

This podcast was reviewed to understand how Sean Casey communicates his values publicly. He rejected what he called "sleazy marketing" and criticised exaggerated claims such as "Lose 30 pounds in 30 days," describing them as "good for making money, but not actually good marketing" (Casey, Podcast #118, 2025).

Casey explained that these gimmicks work in the short-term because people want instant results.

However, he argued that it damages credibility and long-term trust. Instead, he emphasised that transparent, realistic messaging may bring slower growth but creates loyal, informed customers a foundation for lasting success for any personal brand like his own (Figure 1). [256

words]



Sources 3-6: Social Media Marketing Content Other Sources

Figure 2: Before and after pictures shown, but without claims/guarantees of similar success for others



@scaseyfitness, Instagram 2025

Encourage students at the start to take a viewpoint/postman on topic

SHOW H1

Change in viewpoint (conclusion)

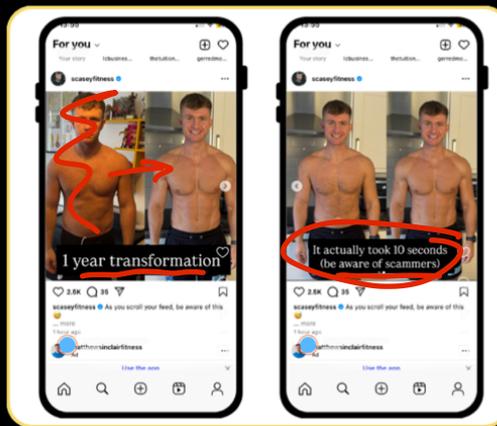
Justifying it

Laying the foundations

Use of before-and-after images

Instagram posts showed before-and-after images celebrating progress without promising similar results (@scaseyfitness, 2025; Figure 2). [I was surprised he used such photos given his stance, yet they appeared genuine rather than misleading.]

Figure 3: Posts information showing people unethical practices to help them avoid them



@scaseyfitness, Instagram 2025

Another post exposed how lighting and posing can fake "transformations," warning followers about scams (@scaseyfitness, 2025; Figure 3).

Marketing

Other data: An Irish News article praised his clear, simple style (Irishnews.com, 2023), while Facebook reviews described him as "honest." (Facebook, 2024) One Reddit user questioned his £25 app's value (Reddit, 2025), raising fairness concerns.

[77 words]

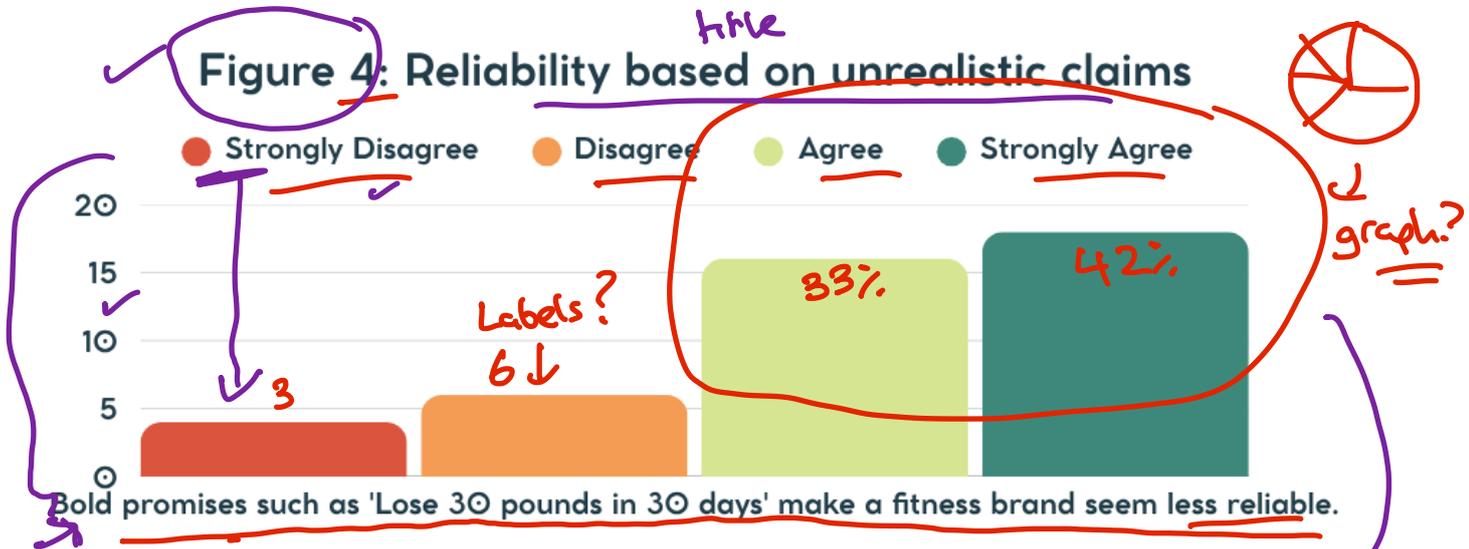
viewpoints

external sources

Source 7: Consumer Survey

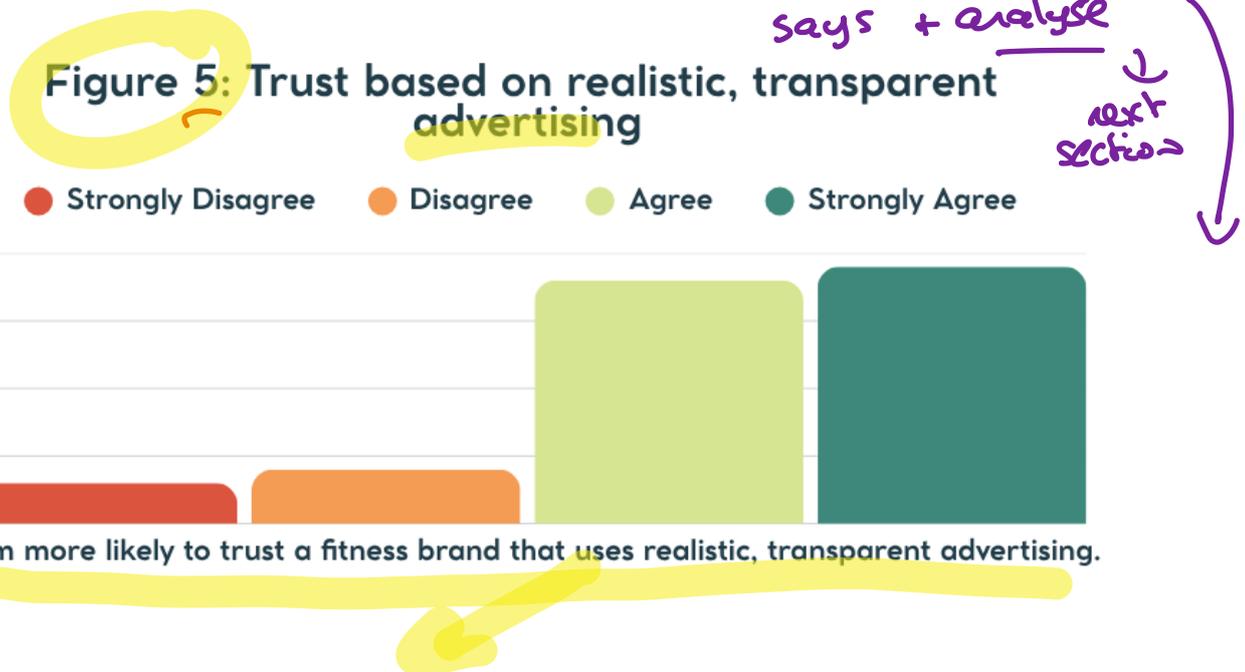
Figure 4-7: Consumer Survey Table and Graphs N=44 (Duffy, October 2025)

My survey of 44 respondents used four Likert-scale statements to measure trust and perceptions of marketing in the fitness industry.



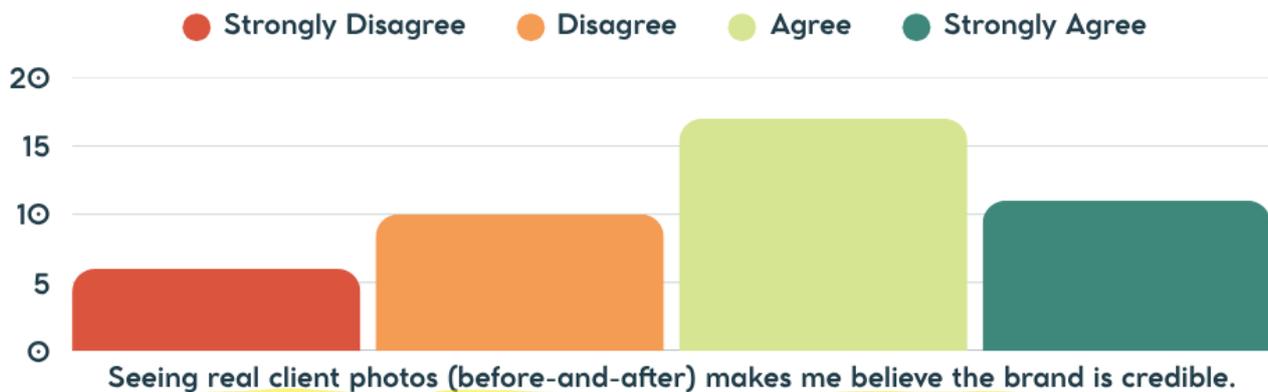
Exaggerated claims: 77% agreed or strongly agreed that bold promises such as “Lose 30 pounds in 30 days” make a brand seem less reliable. (figure 4)

Tell reader what a graph says + analyse



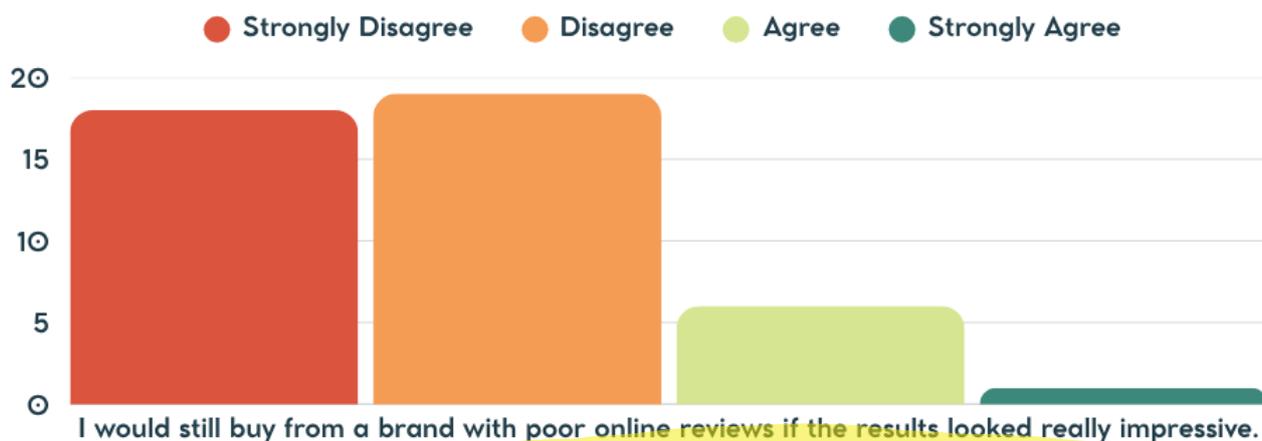
Honesty and transparency: 84% agreed or strongly agreed that they are more likely to trust a fitness brand that uses realistic and transparent advertising. (figure 5)

Figure 6: Impact on credibility from before-and-after photo usage)



Progress photos: 64% agreed or strongly agreed (figure 6) that real before-and-after photos help a brand appear credible, although 36 % disagreed, indicating mixed feelings about their use.

Figure 7: Impact of Online Reviews on Future Sales



Online reputation: 84% disagreed or strongly disagreed (figure 7) that they would still buy from a brand with poor online reviews.

[107 words]

Source 8-9: Public Ratings

Online data supported these findings. Sean Casey Fitness held an average rating of 4.9★ on Trustpilot compared with 2.7★ for V Shred (figure 5), an international competitor that faces widespread criticism of its marketing online (Trustpilot, 2025). This contrast highlights the new role of online ratings, although it was noted V Shred did have “over 4 million customers” (Trust Pilot, 2025).

Figure 8: V Shred and Sean Casey’s online review ratings (Trust Pilot, 2025) (Google Store, 2025)



[38 words]

[480 words approx for section]

(5) Visuals

←

Synthesising data



3. Analysis and Evaluation (Approx 600 words)

>1 at same time

Show UNDERSTANDING OF THE DATA

1. Ethical Marketing Builds Trust and Supports Sustainable Success

Findings from both aims indicate that honest transparent communication strengthens consumer trust and long-term success.

Casey's interview statement that "ethics in marketing is the future of being successful" aligns directly with the survey result where 84% of respondents said they are more likely to trust brands using realistic advertising. This reinforces that ethics is not simply a moral extra but can be a **strategic business advantage**.

Qualitative data from the interview and podcast showed how Casey's principles guide his marketing tone and messaging, while quantitative data from the survey and public reviews (4.9★ Trustpilot, 5.0★ app rating) confirmed that consumers actively reward this approach.

Together these findings show that ethical marketing converts **credibility into loyalty**, enhancing both reputation and revenue. They also suggest that modern consumers are now valuing honesty and consistency over hype, particularly in industries built on personal trust.

2. Balancing Realism and Persuasion Is Essential for Credibility

While honesty builds credibility, the findings show that effective marketing must still persuade consumers to buy. Casey's use of before-and-after photos initially surprised me given his criticism of exaggerated "quick-fix" advertising, yet his images appeared genuine and avoided unrealistic claims. This distinguishes him from some online competitors who use dramatic transformations as sales tools.

Survey data reflected this nuance: 64 % agreed that transformation photos build credibility, while 36 % disagreed, showing that even honest imagery can be misinterpreted as manipulation.

This highlights that ethical communication requires **balance**, celebrating progress without exaggerating outcomes and promising similar results.

Casey's social post exposing "lighting transformations" demonstrated this balance in practice, as he actively used his platform to highlight misleading techniques and help consumers recognise unethical marketing when they see it. This educational approach shows how he applies ethical principles beyond his own business - aiming to raise awareness and encourage higher standards across the wider industry.

show/include contradiction

Have to raise arguments / question marks

Tell examiner reader the answer in heading signpost

*

Justifying

Synth





3. Unethical Tactics Gain Attention but Damage Reputation

Sean Casey Fitness holds 4.9★ on Trustpilot compared with 2.7★ for V Shred, a brand with large sales but now with low public ratings. Its low ratings show that apparent less ethical marketing tactics can generate profits but end up lowering customer satisfaction and trust.

This supports Casey's point that short-term tactics work as people want results, but will ultimately fail once consumers see through them, happening more nowadays due to the power of digital transparency, where dishonest marketing is exposed through public reviews and online discussion.

Cross Cutting Themes

4. Credibility and Reliability of the Evidence

EXPLICITLY



Strong evidence came from the overlap between the interview, podcast, survey, and review data, which revealed consistent themes about trust and honesty in marketing. Independent review platforms such as Trustpilot added objectivity, providing publicly verifiable feedback that supported the findings.



Weaker evidence included self-published material from Sean Casey's own platforms, which may present a more favourable brand image, and a small survey sample size (N = 44), which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised.

Justify why + use

Overall, the evidence can be considered reliable because similar patterns and messages appeared across unrelated sources. Ethical themes identified in Sean Casey's content were reinforced by consumer survey data and external reviews, indicating a high level of consistency. This strengthens confidence that the findings accurately reflect how honest, transparent communication enhances credibility and business reputation.

[548 words]

[600]

40%

4. Conclusions (Approx 300 words)

Being ethical doesn't have to be a trade-off for being successful in business – it can be the route to success.

→ 1. ^{is} **Ethics as a Modern Competitive Advantage**

Drawing together all of the evidence, this investigation concludes that ethical marketing is a key driver of success in personal-brand-based industries.

Digital transparency and the growth of social media make unethical tactics easy to expose, while authenticity and fairness have become valued differentiators. Consumers increasingly associate credibility with quality and are more likely to promote brands they trust.

Casey's reflection that being honest makes business "more enjoyable" adds a human dimension to success: ethics supports not only business performance but also the wellbeing of entrepreneurs. This insight extends beyond fitness to areas such as coaching, education, and creative services, where credibility is central to reputation and growth.

Choosing honest marketing over clickbait-style or exaggerated claims may not deliver the fastest growth for an entrepreneur, but it will help build a more sustainable brand.

2. **Effective Planning Strengthened the Investigation**

Having a plan in place early made making adjustments easier as I could see what parts I was changing more clearly. The early interview reshaped the focus from regulation to ethical practice. Combining qualitative methods (interview, podcast) with quantitative data (survey and reviews) provided balance and reliability. Each method linked directly to the research question, producing consistent, verifiable evidence.

3. **My Perspective and Relevance of my findings**

At first, I viewed ethics in marketing as a black-and-white issue. However, seeing how Sean Casey used before-and-after photos changed my view that all transformation type imagery was misleading and exaggerated. I learned that marketing can remain persuasive, and needs to be, while still being transparent about expected results.

This experience reshaped how I understand business communication: ethics and effectiveness do not have to conflict. In today's business environment, transparency and authenticity determine success, making ethical marketing both a moral responsibility and a competitive necessity for long-term brand building.

[294 words]

5. References

In order + consistent
style

Casey, S. (2025) *Interview with author*, 20 October.

Casey, S. (2025) *The Lie You've Been Sold About Weight Loss*, The Sean Casey Fitness Podcast, Episode 118, 14 October. Available at: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5mKz2TtnyvhzTVrRont10w?si=a5053fe853474dce> (Accessed: 20 October 2025).

Casey, S. (@scaseyfitness) (2025) *Before-and-after misinformation post*, Instagram, 14 October. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DP6Ky58DEpB/> (Accessed: 20 October 2025).
↑ URL in to generator

Casey, S. (@scaseyfitness) (2025) *Client before-and-after transformation post*, Instagram, [date of post if known — e.g., 14 October]. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPyPYE6jE11/> (Accessed: [date you accessed it — e.g., 21 October 2025]).

Facebook Reviews – Sean Casey Fitness (2024) *Business page reviews*, Facebook. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/scaseyfitness/reviews> (Accessed: 21 October 2025).

Irish News (2023) 'TikTok Talks: Sean Casey on fitness, social media success and 30 days of sandwiches', *Irish News*, 8 December. Available at: https://www.irishnews.com/arts/2023/12/08/news/tiktok_talks_sean_casey-3792269/ (Accessed: 21 October 2025).

Duffy, G. (2025) *Consumer perceptions of ethical marketing survey*, conducted by the author, October. (table of findings included below)



Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am more likely to trust a fitness brand that uses realistic, transparent advertising.	3	4	18	19
Bold promises such as 'Lose 30 pounds in 30 days' make a fitness brand seem less reliable.	4	6	16	18
Seeing real client progress stories (before-and-after photos) makes me believe the brand is credible.	6	10	17	11
I would still buy from a brand with poor online reviews if the results looked really impressive.	18	19	6	1

Trustpilot (2025) *Sean Casey Fitness reviews*. Available

at: <https://www.trustpilot.com/review/seancaseyfitness.com>(Accessed: 14 October 2025).

Trustpilot (2025) *V Shred reviews*. Available

at: <https://www.trustpilot.com/review/vshred.com> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).

Google Play Store (2025) *Glean Fitness App Reviews*. Available

at: <https://play.google.com> (Accessed: 14 October 2025).