

THE IMPACT OF AI-ENHANCED BRAND IMAGE ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Branding has shifted its focus towards using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in how businesses communicate with consumers and how the latter are persuaded. The following paper examines how the enhanced adoption of the brand image through artificial intelligence affects customers' behavior, integrated with AI clarification and optimization of marketing strategies and engagements. AI's ability to deliver personalized communication and product suggestions increases customers' satisfaction and brand loyalty, while chatbots and customer-oriented AI solutions improve performance and strengthen a positive perception of a company's brand. Further, AI's strengths in realizing sentiment analysis and trend foreseeing help it act rapidly on reputation issues and strengthen brand credibility. Coca-Cola, H&M, Netflix, and Tesla are examples of industry leaders who have already experienced the advantages of the AI application for brand improvement. These firms employ AI methods to deliver customized content, real-time assistance and service, and product customization to enhance. However, using artificial intelligence in branding has pros and cons in the following ways. AI technologies, including data privacy, ethical considerations, and inherent biases, must be handled to build consumer confidence. Limited resources may pose challenges for smaller enterprises, but AI-branding strategies are becoming more accessible. AI is crucial for promoting brand image and influencing consumer decisions, making it an opportunity for creating unique, compelling, and customer-oriented brand experiences. As AI technology develops, it will play a crucial role in the future relationship between branding strategies and consumers in the emerging digital environment. Therefore, it is essential to address these concerns to ensure consumers have confidence in AI systems.

INTRODUCTION

Academics and industry professionals generally agree that brands are more than just products (Ries, 2014). Companies like Coca-Cola build brand value by prioritizing social and emotive advertising (emotional benefits) over product innovation and research and development (functional benefits). Amazon, Google, and Facebook have recently surpassed Coca-Cola as the most valuable brands in the world (Interbrand, 2016). These companies are focused on products and are either heavily investing in or focusing their strategy on artificial intelligence (AI)—"We're moving from a mobile-first to an AI-first company," said Google's CEO (Zerega, 2017). This article delves further into this AI-focused brand-building model to better understand how marketing professionals may utilize AI to develop brand value, identifying the specific AI technologies that affect branding.

Once artificial intelligence (AI) was introduced, the world changed drastically. By imitating human intellect, robots outfitted with AI can carry out complicated activities, including learning, planning, and problem-solving (Overgoor et al., 2019). AI has transformed conventional corporate performance tools into sophisticated, intelligent machines capable of autonomous learning, self-programming, and automated mental effort (Wen et al., 2022; Crittenden et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019).

Gaining traction on a global scale, advancements in AI have transformed several facets of business, including marketing, customer service, and consumer contact. Machine learning is one-way artificial intelligence (AI) helps solve issues creatively and rationally. Artificial intelligence (AI) is all the rage in the marketing and

consumer industries, and for good reason. Using AI to do everyday chores has benefited many clients, according to Kim and Kim (2017). This is because it has saved them both time and money. Thanks to AI, previously unthinkable things are now within reach (Weber and Schütte, 2019). The advent of AI has paved the way for more consumer-centric and user-friendly approaches to business processes. Modern customers have high standards for ease and convenience, and AI more than lives up to them. Using AI to locate, select, purchase, and discard products is a breeze for consumers. AI allows customers to place orders and read reviews from any location easily.

OBJECTIVE

To examine the influence of AI-enhanced brand image on consumer purchase intentions by analyzing how AI technologies such as personalized communication, sentiment analysis, and predictive analytics impact consumer behavior and brand loyalty. This study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of AI in improving brand perception and driving purchase decisions, using industry leaders like Coca-Cola, H&M, Netflix, and Tesla as case studies.

LIMITATIONS

1. The study addresses the potential biases and ethical issues inherent in AI technologies, which can affect consumer trust and confidence.
2. Smaller enterprises may face challenges in adopting AI due to limited resources and technological capabilities.
3. The findings may not be universally applicable across all industries or geographic regions due to variations in AI adoption and consumer behavior.
4. The accuracy and reliability of the study depend on the availability and quality of data from companies and consumers.
5. AI technologies evolve quickly, and the study's conclusions may become outdated as new advancements emerge.

FUTURE SCOPE

1. Future research can expand to include a wider range of industries and sectors to understand the diverse impacts of AI on brand image and consumer behavior.
2. Conducting longitudinal studies to observe the long-term effects of AI on consumer purchase intentions and brand loyalty.
3. Investigating the impact of emerging AI technologies, such as deep learning and advanced natural language processing, on branding strategies.
4. Analyzing how AI-enhanced branding affects different consumer segments, such as age groups, income levels, and cultural backgrounds.
5. Exploring the implications of data governance and regulatory frameworks on the use of AI in branding and marketing, with a focus on consumer protection and ethical AI practices.

6. Examining how AI-enhanced branding strategies perform in different cultural contexts to identify global best practices and localized approaches.

HOW COMPANIES USE AI

AI exploration continues to reveal the power of applying it in organizations across industries, helping in decision-making, increasing organizational efficiency, and improving relations with stakeholders. Referring to Elliott (2018) and Lu et al. (2016), AI allows customers to make better decisions; as for Butt et al. (2021), it helps in building continual engagement and interaction with stakeholders. Following the abovementioned work, Sarkar et al. (2020) highlight that AI helps increase the quality of the customer experience and commodities. Thus, with the help of AI, companies can make better strategic decisions and successfully operate in uncertain and competitive environments, as well as find new and long-term ways to improve the buying experience for customers.

The economic analysis reveals the significant potential of AI to enhance the global economy, which is projected to grow from \$20 trillion to \$30 trillion by 2030. Of these, \$82 billion in 2020 will amount to a whopping \$15 trillion within the year 2030, according to Lee et al., 2022. Web 2.0, along with the incorporation of AI, can enhance a business's credibility with loyal consumers and expedite meeting client demands (Lee et al., 2022; Potdar et al., 2018). Chatbots, user feature recognition systems, and content recommendation systems with "smart" suggestions are some of the most popular AI tools used to improve business value in social media marketing communication (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2021; Borges et al., 2021).

AI improves consumer happiness in online transactions (Song et al., 2020). By leveraging AI solutions and social media apps, firms develop, enhance, and sustain client connections, according to Overgoor et al. (2019). Artificial intelligence and social media are used in e-commerce to build customer interactions (Dwivedi et al., 2019). This technology provides product descriptions to help customers decide (Grewal et al., 2017; Thakur, 2018). When AI is properly deployed in organisations, it provides value propositions that assist the firm become the most desired brand to consumers (Pantano et al., 2019).

Customers' favourable reviews of items and services may be on the company's social media channels. User-generated content lets organisations connect with prospective customers, get consumer insights, boost brand awareness, and gather valuable ideas. In particular, Yang and DeHart (2016) discovered that SM improves product/service quality, sales volumes, and revenues. However, organisations should consider the drawbacks, such as disgruntled clients who may hurt their growth, reputation, and outcomes (Gan, 2017).

A FRAMEWORK FOR AI-INTEGRATED SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS

In light of the competing business situations mentioned earlier, researchers have recently investigated what influences customer buying behavior and intent. Customers spend four to seven hours daily on social media, so businesses may use AI to track their actions and learn about their buying habits. More and more companies are using social media platforms with AI integration to boost engagement and competitiveness. According to Chaouali et al. (2016), a small amount of empirical research has shown that social media platforms, including AI, may increase user involvement and buy inclinations. This research adds to what is already known about AI in social media by looking at a model that considers a number of variables that affect consumers' propensity to buy. According to studies, consumers' involvement with social media has an ever-present impact on their purchasing choices. AI is an increasingly important part of digital transformation, influencing customer purchasing choices and altering consumer behavior. AI also searches for items across

different websites to make purchases. Nevertheless, sufficient data about the impact of AI on social media participation among consumers is lacking.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Artificial intelligence

It would be pertinent to mention here that AI has multidimensional utility in today's corporate world as it can efficiently manage the information and make proper decisions. China is one of the active players in the AI complex which has numerous legislative acts and the state plans regarding priorities of AI technology. However, these regulations are usually the declarative ones and are, as a result, not interpreted properly, thus not covering different cases. China's approach is more strategic in which it views Artificial Intelligence as an agent of economic growth and development thus raising the value of such studies. Some of them include; setting goals and objectives, huge spending, government support, nurturing local corporations, and academia. Promoting factors of the modernization process of AI technology in China include government support, emergence of Chinese local enterprise, and academic supports. It's been a frame for china to progress almost in all fields associated with AI such as automobiles, creative environment, health and even in the financial domain.

The use of AI in business processes means that certain tasks in an organization are done more efficiently, and decisions are made more effectively. Due to its advanced algorithms that allow AI to analyze big amounts of information it is useful in business spheres that require unprocessed data analysis for real-time results such as finance, marketing, and supply chain. Chatbots based on artificial intelligence have appreciably shifted the tendencies of customer communication by answering multiple questions and sparing time compared to human staff. They can also decide to spew off intricate and time demanding questions to the human staff which helps in boosting the standards of service.

AI systems play a significant role in supply chain management, to support the organization's logistics and stock forecasting and management services. The use of AI and predictive analytics helps business organizations to plan adequately in the ever complex and volatile managerial market. Nevertheless, applying the concept of AI has its negative impacts that are apparent below. Another problem is the ethicality of created AI solutions. An AI system is an intelligent system that does not possess any prejudice; however, it can be prejudiced. Here, the suitability, safety-critical, and explainability aspects are crucial since the absence of these aspects may result in legal violations and the erosion of an organization's reputation. Another exceedingly useful problem in the AI and big data realm is privacy. Organizations have to comprehend the characteristics of contemporary legislation concerning data protection in order to create value with artificial intelligence without breaking legal rules. There is a need to have strong policies that govern the data, and AI benefits must not be tainted by the breaching of people's rights to privacy.

Consumer Purchase Intention

A person's "consumer purchase intention" is their future tendency to buy a certain product or service. This concept encapsulates the customer's emotional state and propensity to buy, which may be affected by product features, brand perception, personal needs, and environmental influences. For more effective marketing strategies and happier customers, businesses need to know what people want to purchase. A customer's purchasing intention may be the likelihood of buying a certain brand. If you want to do something more, you're more likely to do it if you raise your intention level, says the TPB. The likelihood that a consumer would purchase within the framework of influencer marketing is directly related to the customer's perception

of the brand. Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is more effective when it comes from famous people, dramatically impacting online shoppers' intent to buy (Erkan and Evans, 2018). Several measures in previous studies, such as brand attitude, brand image, quality, brand knowledge, attributes, and brand loyalty, have a considerable impact on purchase intention (Tariq et al., 2013). According to Kudeshia and Kumar (2017), the E-WOM amount might affect a customer's inclination to purchase. Lee et al. (2011) found that consumers are more likely to buy, giving internet reviews a higher level of credibility. For the above reasons, marketers often attribute purchase choices to consumers' intentions.

AI AND CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

A company or a brand's consumer experience is the total of the customer's impressions and responses to that organization or brand. According to Potdar et al. (2018), many aspects of a consumer's experience include their thoughts, feelings, senses, and bodies. The cognitive component includes more complex mental operations, including reasoning, seeing, communicating, remembering, and solving problems. Functionality, speed, and accessibility are the cognitive aspects of consumer experience, according to Hsiao and Chen (2016). The multi-faceted emotional components of customer service are brought to light by Potdar et al. (2018). A wide range of emotions, from joy to sadness, annoyance to fury, and even awe, could accompany these thoughts (Hsiao and Chen, 2016). There is a difference between the online and offline experiences from a customer's physical and sensory perspective. Online experiences prioritize user-friendly interfaces and transparent designs, in contrast to offline experiences that take artifacts, lighting, signage, and layout into account. Lastly, social factors, including friends and family, pertain to the impact of other individuals on the customer experience (Kao et al., 2016). Customers' preferences and past experiences must be well known for these technologies to improve their experience. By analyzing data and consumer profiles, AI systems can speed up this process and decide the most effective approach to engage with customers.

MACHINE LEARNING AND BRAND PERSONALISATION

"Predicting something about an entity that it has not been exposed to before" is what machine learning is all about. In his discussion of machine learning's real-world applications, Ferag (2017) cited "Recommendation systems that show you what to buy (Amazon) or what to watch (Netflix)" as the most prevalent. According to studies looking at the systems' efficacy after the fact, the firms that have invested in machine learning have reaped enormous benefits from the high degree of personalization it allows. According to recent estimates, recommendation engines account for 35% of Amazon sales and 80% of Netflix videos (Gomez-Uribe and Hunt, 2016). For what it's worth, "we develop and use our recommender system because we believe it is core to our business" (Gomez-Uribe and Hunt, 2016); Netflix continues to stress the significance of customization to their business.

With machine learning, marketers can now reach a higher degree of customization. The brand's overall success is likely to be positively affected by this. Brands with personalities tend to do better in the marketplace, according to a substantial and long-standing corpus of research. "a successful brand can be characterized as having a strong relationship between a customer and a company." This line of thinking is similar to that of McKenna (1991), who argues that individualized communications and product offers are the best ways to foster this relationship. It is reasonable to assume that machine learning contributes to a brand's success by the customization it permits, considering that academics emphasize the significance of "brand as a relationship." It is suggested that more studies investigate this effect since it is presently difficult to quantify.

In a 2017 article, branding specialist Garnett noted that "people want greater and greater levels of personalization," a reference to the increasing need for customization. Secondary data suggested that companies are beginning to understand the significance of satisfying this need; in fact, 79.3% of marketers rated it as "important" or "very important" for their company (Saville, 2016). There is a discrepancy between the percentage of businesses that see the significance of customization (79.3%) and the percentage of brands that actively use personalization strategies (42%), even though demand is on the rise and personalization has a beneficial effect on brands (Saville, 2016).

Investigating the causes of this discrepancy is where this study comes into its own. The three main obstacles to implementing more advanced customization tactics, according to secondary research, are: "lack of internal resource (45%), lack of technology (34%) and inaccurate data (32%)." "Saville (2016)" states. Machine learning is becoming a commodity and available to all companies, according to Ferag (2017), who called it the "next wave of standardization" because of the personalization it provides.

BRAND TRUST AND PURCHASING DECISIONS

Brand trust can thus be defined as the belief that a consumer has in a brand's genuineness and ethical behavior. This trust is an elaborate understanding that the brand has the consumers' interest at heart, even when consumers may have little say or cannot be sure of the outcome. To sum it up, consumers use the 'brand as a signpost model' because it implies that the brand will always act in a beneficial way. Brand trust can be defined as managing relationships with the target market since it focuses on building and sustaining common trust with consumers. Lowering perceived risks related to buying decisions helps improve consumer loyalty. In many ways, it is pretty apparent that happy and satisfied consumers are repeat buyers and refer other customers to the brand. Also, the consumer is willing to incur a higher price for a product from a trusted brand because the brand is considered to possess a higher attribute, safety, and quality. A significant area of interest in the previous marketing research studies has been the connection between trust in the brand and the consumers' buying behavior, particularly in cyberspace markets. Consumers' brand opinions have been proven to impact their intentions to purchase; thus, brand trust is a vital component. For instance, one research noted how the extent of brand trust helps explain the connection between the perceived quality of a website and the purchase intention. This implies that if consumers trust a certain brand, they will purchase it regardless of the website's standard.

In addition, brand trust also has a role in screening the damaging information and preventing it from affecting a brand. In particular, when negative information about the company or specific product or harm is done to its reputation by negative comments from different media sources, it is very important to have a loyal audience who will be more tolerant towards it. As for negative information, people in this category are less likely to have a negative view of the brand, and thus, they read down-beat information less negatively. This resilience is essential for the brand since it helps develop approaches to handling crises while also helping enhance the brand's reputation. The importance of brand trust is even higher in the younger generation, namely, Generation Z. This generation is characterized by rather strict and fastidious people and a generation that actively uses digital information. As a result of the study, it is ascertained that Gen Z firmly depends on the brand's trust, which the company establishes. These customers value genuineness and honesty in brands' messaging and communications, which factors are prominent in their purchase decisions. When Gen Z consumers develop trust in a brand, it decreases perceived risks, enables them to become loyal consumers, and makes them continue to use that particular brand.

These are some of the basic concepts and strategies required to construct and maintain brand trust. Transparency is critical; companies cannot hide behind their public relations departments while deliberating actions and communication. This requires the communication of such aspects involving the product being marketed, that is, details about that product and associated cost, as well as anything that might be a downside to the deal. Customers like it when the brands do not shy away from various challenges or problems but express and try to resolve them.

Another essential aspect is that being as consistent as possible is important. Consumers hold expectations of the brands that include promise deliverance, which may encompass quality, responsiveness, and ethical goodness. Thus, consumers' trust in the brand strengthens when they notice that a particular brand repeatedly provides appropriate service and quality materials. It is a continuity that applies across the board to marketing communications and the physical and service encounter.

Other factors that are relevant to customer engagement include building trust, which is also crucial when it comes to customer engagement. Companies that are involved in the conversation and care about their consumers' opinion and feedback show that they respect their consumers. It can also be in form of social media conversations; customers feeds back and even direct communications. Thus, engaging into a two way communication helps in the development of better relationships and trust between brands and their audiences.

Further, the CSR activities carried out by an organisation can influence brand trust greatly. The contemporary consumer has become quite sensitive to the ethical and environmental conduct of the companies he or she buys from. Consequently, there is an added advantage of extending the idea that a brand is credible and reliable alongside supporting social and environmental courses. This commitment should also be shown in practical terms and not just in the advertisements.

Another way of earning the trust of the customer is through positive interaction with the organization. Consumers today should have no occasion to have any contact with brands that does not leave a positive disposition towards the brand. These are product or service quality, convenience in the buying process and the company or seller's ability to address the customers' needs. The positive experiences help the consumers to gain confidence in the purchased or the consumed products and this makes them to come again.

AI-ENHANCED BRAND IMAGE: TRANSFORMING CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Digitalization is a trend in today's sophisticated markets and companies, and marketing is no exception. AI plays a huge role in marketing strategies and branding. Machine learning technology, NLP, and computer vision help brands improve their image and meet consumers' demands at a deeper level. The current increase in brand image achieves this by strengthening consumers' emotional bond and level of trust in purchasing a particular product. Brand image is one of the main areas in which AI brings value, with the main element being personalization. AI methods are able to extract and analyze consumer data, revealing specific inclinations, actions, and buying capacity. This helps brands adapt their advertising and marketing communication messages to appeal to specific target consumers, making the consumer experience more unique. For example, Netflix's AI technology for viewership tracking and program recommendations improves customer satisfaction by suggesting favorable shows. Similarly, AI integration uses customer purchasing experience records to make recommendations and present similar products, ensuring repeat purchases from a store.

AI impacts a company's brand image by enhancing customer relations. Organizations create AI chatbots on-site and applications to assist customers in finding products, order status, or returns, enhancing customer satisfaction and brand image. AI also brings efficiency in the generation and sharing of content between brands and consumers, with companies like Coca-Cola using advanced AI technology to produce individual video advertisements for consumers. AI helps brands manage their image by tracking social media comments and sentiment analysis. Starbucks effectively uses AI to address customer concerns through regulation of social media pages, resulting in quick responses and a positive brand image. Insights derived from AI assist brands in marketing and promotions of their products. (Wen, Cheng, and Shih 2022)

With the help of AI, it becomes easier to know consumers and learn the effectiveness of marketing activities compared to their actions and readiness to buy products. The appropriate analysis of gathered marketing data allows for efficient use of marketing budgets and growth of ROI.

For example, Unilever employs AI methods and techniques in ad monitoring, which helps the company optimize its advertising campaigns and increase the efficiency of the steps taken. Large-scale organisations are not the only ones experiencing a change in brand image due to AI implementation; small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can also benefit from these technologies. New AI solutions are gradually available to SMEs, which, on the one hand, helps them level the playing field with significantly larger brands in terms of providing tailor-made experiences or compelling content. This democratisation of AI technology is making it easier to open the field up for more brands to update their image and, in a way, influence consumers' buying decisions. We also use real-life examples to illustrate the impact of AI-enhanced brand image on customers' purchase intentions, supporting this conclusion. Sephora, a global beauty retailer, also uses AI to provide beauty recommendations via a virtual artist. Through the use of AI, the application allows customers to apply makeup and take a selfie to demonstrate how the set looks. As a result, through active involvement and personalisation, Sephora builds on the firm's brand image and improves its customers' purchase intentions. Another example is Levi's fashion brand, which uses AI to create a virtual stylist chatbot to improve dressing output. As a result, this AI engages customers in answering questions about their style and recommends attire based on the responses. In other words, consumers are likely to be influenced by the purchase intentions of Levi's brand image, especially with the personalised and convenient shopping experiences available. (Rodolfo et al. 2024)

Also, AI is evolving how brands engage in influencer marketing since it has active participation in the market. AI systems can find other trustworthy influencers that fit the specific vision of a brand and incorporate the mentioned image into target audiences. For instance, L'Oréal employs an AI that helps to recognise micro-influencers who target its perspective consumers; thus, highly credible campaigns are yielded. In this way, this strategic application of AI improves the brand personality of L'Oréal and the consumer's perceived quality and decision to buy its products. The case of the automotive industry also explains how AI affects brand image and consumers' purchasing decisions. Nowadays, automotive giants like Tesla use AI for additional functions in their cars, like autopilot, which substantially increases the car's performance and makes driving safer with the semi-automated control systems. Additionally, the incorporation of state-of-the-art AI into the vehicles enhances the company's image and brand perception as a technologically advanced carmaker, appealing to tech-conscious consumers and, in the process, stimulating an intention to purchase. Therefore, AI goes further to help brands perform better by redefining brand image and changing consumers' purchasing behaviours in the travel sector. Cognitive applications that Delta Airlines utilise include predictive analytics for flight delays, where a customer can have prompt solutions, including rebooking and reimbursement. AI-related initiatives also increase the level of satisfaction among the customers, hence enhancing the brand image of travel companies. (Misra, Kapoor, and Sanjeev 2024)

CONCLUSION

AI technology has brought a lot of changes in the branding of various industries through the implementation of branding strategies. This paper has discussed the effect of AI on brand image with respect to consumers' buying decisions while showing how the capability of AI to deliver customized experience, enhance customer relations and fine-tune the marketing approaches can go a long way in influencing consumers' behavior.

AI plays a very versatile role in brand building. It helps organisations to deliver socially relevant personalised communication and relevant product recommendations to the consumers; thus improving consumers' satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the improvement of customer interaction through the methods of AI-driven chatbots and customer service solutions not only enhances the strength of business interactions from a functional standpoint but also from an identity one. Additionally, since AI has the ability to identify opinions and the tendency to shift public opinion, it helps brands to retain consumers' trust and respond to negative feedbacks, thus enhancing the brand image.

The different but simple examples of Coca-Cola and H&M, Netflix, and Tesla can be seen to outline how effective practical use of AI is in increasing brand image. These companies top up AI to make the content more personal, support customers in real time, and hence, add novelty in the products they provide, which in turn involve the consumers emotionally and hence make them loyal consumers.

However, using AI in branding come with some challenges even with all these benefits being accorded to the technology. Business entities need to take into account the principles of ethics in using AI, protect consumers' data, and eliminate any prejudices in artificial systems to protect consumers' trust. Finally, there may be a problem of availability of resources for the implementation of the complex AI solutions for an SME. However, with the recent increased adoption of AI solutions, people from all forms of businesses, from small to big, can carry out branding with the help of AI solutions.

Therefore, AI is a way through which brand image can be changed and consumer's buying behavior can be impacted. Through the leveraging of AI, there is a chance to provide their clients with more individual, effective, and fast brands' experiences in line with the demands of the modern consumer. With these advancements, the incorporation or application of AI into branding techniques will play an even bigger role in determining the future of branding and consumer brand connections since it is instrumental in achieving the goal of the business in the digital era.

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