

AI Conceptualisation And Nostalgic Marketing: Toward A Future Research Agenda On Meaning-Making And Consumer Engagement

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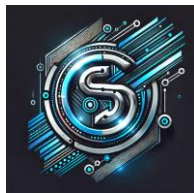
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Abstract: Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative force in contemporary marketing, enabling firms to personalize communication, automate decision-making, and generate consumer-oriented content at unprecedented levels. Despite these advancements, existing research predominantly treats AI as an implementation tool focused on prediction, recommendation, and content generation, while insufficient attention has been devoted to understanding how AI conceptualises and represents meaning. This limitation becomes particularly significant in nostalgic marketing, where consumer responses are shaped by memory, identity, authenticity, and emotional attachment. This study aims to develop a future research agenda that integrates AI conceptualisation approaches with nostalgic marketing mechanisms. Using an integrative conceptual analysis methodology, the study synthesizes literature from artificial intelligence, consumer behavior, nostalgia theory, identity theory, and marketing management to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework. The proposed framework positions AI conceptualisation as a meaning-making mechanism that influences consumer interpretation, authenticity perception, identity continuity, nostalgia intensity, and subsequent behavioral outcomes. Four conceptualisation strategies are identified, including embedding-based, knowledge-based, narrative-controlled, and hybrid representations, each expected to produce different effects on nostalgic consumer experiences. The framework further highlights authenticity and identity continuity as critical mediating mechanisms linking AI-generated content to emotional and behavioral responses. The study contributes to the literature by extending AI marketing research beyond predictive functionality and introducing conceptualisation as a critical explanatory construct. It also advances nostalgic marketing theory by incorporating AI-mediated meaning construction processes. Finally, the study provides a structured agenda for future empirical research and emphasizes the importance of transparency, authenticity, and ethical governance in AI-driven nostalgic marketing practices.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI Conceptualisation, Nostalgic Marketing, Consumer Identity, Meaning Making.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly transformed the contemporary marketing landscape by enabling organizations to analyze consumer behavior, personalize communication, automate decision-making processes, and generate marketing content at unprecedented scales. Recent advances in machine learning, natural language processing, and generative AI have shifted AI from a purely analytical tool toward a strategic mechanism that shapes consumer experiences and brand interactions. Consequently, AI is increasingly viewed not merely as a technological innovation but

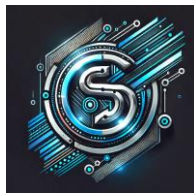


as a socio-technical system capable of influencing how consumers perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to marketing messages (Huang & Rust, 2021; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

Despite these advancements, existing marketing research predominantly examines AI from a functional perspective, emphasizing predictive accuracy, recommendation performance, customer segmentation, and content generation efficiency. While these approaches have generated valuable insights, they often overlook a more fundamental question concerning how AI systems conceptualize and represent marketing-related meanings. In practice, AI systems do not simply process data; they organize, structure, and operationalize concepts that subsequently influence the content consumers receive. Therefore, understanding AI conceptualisation—the manner in which AI systems represent and operationalize concepts—has become increasingly important for explaining how AI affects consumer cognition, emotion, and behavior (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2024).

The importance of conceptualisation becomes particularly evident in marketing contexts involving emotional and identity-based consumer responses. Among these contexts, nostalgic marketing has emerged as one of the most effective strategies for creating emotional connections between consumers and brands. Nostalgic marketing refers to the use of past-oriented cues, memories, symbols, and narratives designed to evoke positive emotional experiences associated with previous life periods or collective cultural histories (Stern, 1992). Research has consistently demonstrated that nostalgia can strengthen brand attachment, increase purchase intentions, enhance consumer trust, and foster long-term loyalty by reinforcing feelings of continuity, belonging, and personal identity (Batcho, 2013; Holbrook & Schindler, 1989).

The psychological foundations of nostalgia extend beyond simple recollections of the past. Contemporary studies conceptualize nostalgia as a multidimensional emotional state involving autobiographical memory, self-continuity, social connectedness, and emotional regulation. Nostalgic experiences enable individuals to construct coherent narratives about themselves across time, thereby reducing uncertainty and strengthening identity stability (Batcho, 2013; Vignoles et al., 2011). Consequently, successful nostalgic marketing requires more than the presentation of vintage aesthetics or historical references; it requires meaningful alignment between marketing stimuli and consumers' personal or collective identities.



This requirement presents a significant challenge for AI-driven marketing systems. Current AI models frequently conceptualize nostalgia through statistical associations, semantic similarity, or pattern recognition mechanisms. Although these approaches are effective for identifying nostalgic cues, they may fail to capture the deeper psychological mechanisms underlying nostalgic experiences. For example, an AI system may associate nostalgia with retro imagery, classic music, or historical products, yet overlook critical elements such as autobiographical relevance, temporal self-continuity, cultural identity, and perceived authenticity. As a result, AI-generated nostalgic content may appear superficially nostalgic while failing to evoke genuine emotional responses among consumers (Bruner, 1990; Stern, 1992).

Another critical issue concerns authenticity. Previous research has consistently shown that consumers distinguish between authentic nostalgic experiences and strategically manufactured emotional appeals. When nostalgic messages are perceived as sincere, coherent, and relevant to personal experiences, they tend to generate positive emotional outcomes. Conversely, when consumers perceive nostalgic appeals as manipulative or artificial, skepticism and resistance may emerge, ultimately reducing trust in both the brand and the communication itself (Batcho, 2013; Stern, 1992). In AI-mediated marketing environments, authenticity becomes increasingly important because consumers may question whether machine-generated narratives genuinely reflect meaningful experiences or merely replicate emotional patterns derived from large datasets.

Although the literature on AI-driven personalization and nostalgic marketing has expanded substantially in recent years, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding how AI conceptualisation strategies influence nostalgia formation and consumer interpretation processes. Most existing studies focus on AI as an implementation tool for personalization, recommendation, and content generation rather than examining the representational structures that enable AI systems to construct marketing-relevant meanings. Consequently, there remains insufficient theoretical understanding of how different AI conceptualisation approaches shape authenticity perceptions, identity continuity, nostalgia intensity, and consumer behavioral outcomes (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Huang & Rust, 2021).

To address this gap, the present study proposes a future research agenda that integrates AI conceptualisation approaches with nostalgic marketing mechanisms. Specifically, the study positions AI conceptualisation as a mediating mechanism connecting marketing stimuli, consumer



interpretation processes, authenticity evaluations, and nostalgia formation. By synthesizing theories from artificial intelligence, consumer psychology, nostalgia research, identity theory, and marketing management, this study develops a conceptual framework that explains how different AI conceptualisation strategies may influence emotional and behavioral consumer responses.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it extends AI marketing literature by introducing conceptualisation as a critical explanatory construct rather than treating AI solely as a predictive or content-generation tool. Second, it advances nostalgic marketing theory by incorporating AI-mediated meaning construction processes into existing models of nostalgia formation. Third, it provides a structured future research agenda outlining theoretical propositions, methodological approaches, and ethical considerations for investigating AI-generated nostalgic experiences. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how AI can facilitate meaningful, authentic, and responsible consumer-brand relationships within increasingly digital marketing environments.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a **conceptual research design** using an integrative conceptual analysis approach to investigate the relationship between Artificial Intelligence (AI) conceptualisation and nostalgic marketing. Conceptual research is appropriate when the objective is to synthesize existing theoretical knowledge, identify research gaps, construct new conceptual relationships, and propose future research agendas rather than empirically test hypotheses (Jaakkola, 2020). Given the emerging nature of AI conceptualisation within marketing scholarship, particularly in nostalgia-driven consumer contexts, a conceptual approach provides a suitable foundation for theory development and future empirical inquiry.

The study integrates multidisciplinary perspectives from artificial intelligence, consumer psychology, nostalgia theory, identity theory, authenticity research, and marketing management. Through this synthesis, the study develops a theoretical framework explaining how different AI conceptualisation strategies may influence consumer interpretation processes, authenticity perceptions, identity continuity, nostalgia intensity, and behavioral outcomes.

Conceptual Analysis Procedure



Following the framework proposed by Jaakkola (2020), the conceptual analysis was conducted through three interconnected stages: construct identification and synthesis, framework development, and proposition generation.

Stage 1: Construct Identification and Literature Synthesis

The first stage involved identifying and synthesizing core constructs from the literature on AI conceptualisation and nostalgic marketing. Relevant studies were examined to identify recurring themes, conceptual definitions, theoretical mechanisms, and research gaps. The principal constructs identified include:

1. AI Conceptualisation Strategy;
2. Consumer Interpretation;
3. Authenticity Perception;
4. Identity Continuity;
5. Nostalgia Intensity;
6. Consumer Engagement;
7. Behavioral Intention.

The literature review focused on understanding how AI systems represent and operationalize concepts and how nostalgic marketing influences consumer cognition, emotion, memory, and identity formation.

Stage 2: Conceptual Framework Development

The second stage involved integrating theoretical perspectives from multiple disciplines to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework. The framework draws upon several established theories:

1. Meaning-Making Theory (Bruner, 1990);
2. Nostalgia Theory (Stern, 1992; Batcho, 2013);
3. Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987);
4. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979);
5. Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence and AI Augmentation Theory (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

Through theoretical integration, AI conceptualisation is positioned as a meaning-making mechanism that influences consumer responses through a sequence of cognitive and emotional



processes. Specifically, different conceptualisation strategies shape how consumers interpret AI-generated marketing stimuli, which subsequently affect authenticity evaluations, identity continuity perceptions, nostalgic experiences, and behavioral outcomes.

Stage 3: Proposition Development and Future Research Agenda

The final stage focused on deriving theoretical propositions and developing a future research agenda. Propositions were generated deductively from the relationships identified in the conceptual framework and supported by prior theoretical literature. The propositions aim to guide future empirical studies examining how alternative AI conceptualisation strategies influence nostalgia formation, authenticity perception, consumer trust, and engagement outcomes. Additionally, the future research agenda identifies methodological opportunities, ethical considerations, and emerging research directions related to AI-mediated meaning construction and nostalgic marketing.

Analytical Framework

This study conceptualizes AI conceptualisation as a multidimensional construct consisting of four primary representational approaches:

1. **Embedding-Based Representation:** Conceptualization through semantic similarity and learned vector representations.
2. **Knowledge-Based Representation:** Conceptualization through ontologies, taxonomies, and structured knowledge systems.
3. **Narrative Frame-Controlled Representation:** Conceptualization through predefined narrative structures and storytelling mechanisms.
4. **Hybrid Representation:** Integration of symbolic knowledge structures with machine-learning-based representations.

The framework proposes that these conceptualisation approaches influence consumer responses indirectly through interpretation mechanisms, authenticity evaluations, identity continuity perceptions, and nostalgia formation processes. Accordingly, nostalgia is conceptualized not as a direct consequence of nostalgic cues but as the outcome of a broader cognitive-emotional appraisal process influenced by AI-generated meaning structures.

Proposed Conceptual Framework



The proposed framework positions AI conceptualisation as the primary antecedent influencing nostalgic marketing effectiveness. Different conceptualisation strategies determine how consumers interpret marketing content, which subsequently influences authenticity perceptions, identity continuity, nostalgia formation, and behavioral outcomes.

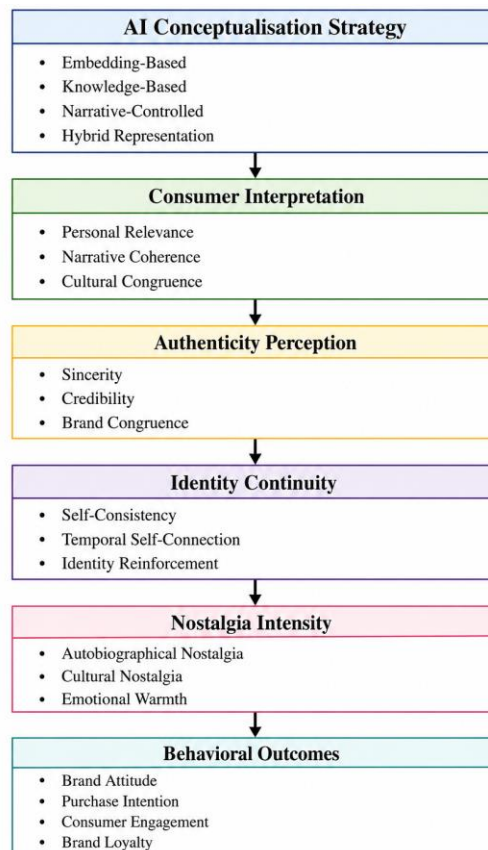


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework of AI Conceptualisation and Nostalgic Marketing.

The framework proposes that AI conceptualisation strategies influence consumer interpretation processes, which subsequently affect authenticity perceptions and identity continuity. These psychological mechanisms strengthen nostalgia intensity and ultimately shape behavioral outcomes such as brand attitude, purchase intention, engagement, and loyalty.

Theoretical Rigor and Trustworthiness

To ensure theoretical rigor, the study follows the conceptual research quality criteria proposed by Jaakkola (2020), including:

1. Conceptual clarity;
2. Logical consistency;



3. Theoretical integration;
4. Explanatory power;
5. Practical relevance;
6. Future research utility.

The framework integrates perspectives from marketing, psychology, identity studies, and artificial intelligence to enhance conceptual validity and multidisciplinary relevance. This approach strengthens the study's contribution to both AI marketing scholarship and nostalgic marketing literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

AI Conceptualisation as a Meaning-Making Mechanism

The conceptual framework proposed in Figure 1 positions AI conceptualisation as the primary mechanism through which marketing stimuli are transformed into meaningful consumer experiences. Existing studies on artificial intelligence in marketing predominantly emphasize predictive capabilities, recommendation systems, customer segmentation, and content generation effectiveness (Huang & Rust, 2021). Although these technological functions have significantly improved marketing efficiency, they often overlook a more fundamental process concerning how AI systems conceptualize and represent meaning. Consequently, AI is frequently treated as a computational tool rather than a cognitive and interpretative mechanism capable of influencing consumer understanding, emotional responses, and identity construction.

From a conceptual perspective, AI conceptualisation determines how marketing-related constructs such as nostalgia, authenticity, heritage, identity, and emotional attachment are represented and operationalized within AI systems. Different representational approaches—including embedding-based, knowledge-based, narrative-controlled, and hybrid representations—shape the semantic structure of generated content and influence how consumers interpret marketing messages. For example, embedding-based systems typically identify nostalgic cues through semantic similarity and pattern recognition, whereas knowledge-based systems rely on structured representations of historical events, cultural symbols, and brand heritage. Narrative-controlled systems further extend this capability by organizing information into coherent storytelling structures that facilitate emotional engagement and meaning construction. As a result,



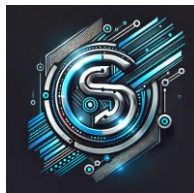
AI conceptualisation directly influences not only the content consumers receive but also the interpretative processes through which consumers assign significance to that content.

This argument extends Bruner's (1990) theory of meaning-making, which proposes that individuals construct meaning through narratives rather than through the passive reception of information. According to Bruner, human understanding is inherently interpretative, relying on stories, symbols, and cultural frameworks that provide coherence to personal experiences. In nostalgic marketing contexts, consumers do not merely receive nostalgic cues; they actively interpret those cues through autobiographical memories, cultural experiences, and identity structures. Therefore, the effectiveness of nostalgic marketing depends not only on the presence of nostalgic stimuli but also on the ability of those stimuli to resonate with consumers' existing meaning systems.

The role of AI conceptualisation becomes particularly important because nostalgia is a complex psychological phenomenon involving emotional warmth, temporal self-continuity, and social connectedness (Batcho, 2013). Traditional marketing approaches often assume that nostalgia can be activated through simple visual or textual references to the past. However, contemporary nostalgia research suggests that authentic nostalgic experiences emerge when consumers perceive meaningful connections between marketing stimuli and their personal or collective identities (Stern, 1992). Consequently, AI systems that conceptualize nostalgia solely through superficial markers such as vintage aesthetics or historical references may fail to generate genuine nostalgic responses.

Furthermore, AI conceptualisation influences the degree to which consumers perceive marketing messages as authentic. Authenticity is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of consumer trust and engagement in digital environments. When AI-generated nostalgic content aligns with consumers' personal narratives and cultural experiences, authenticity perceptions are strengthened, thereby increasing the likelihood of emotional engagement and positive behavioral responses. Conversely, when conceptual representations are poorly aligned with consumer identity structures, nostalgic messages may appear artificial, manipulative, or commercially exploitative, resulting in skepticism and reduced trust.

From a managerial perspective, this conceptualization highlights the importance of designing AI systems that prioritize meaning construction rather than solely optimizing predictive



performance. Marketers should therefore evaluate AI applications not only according to their ability to generate personalized content but also according to their capacity to create coherent, authentic, and emotionally meaningful consumer experiences. By positioning AI conceptualisation as a meaning-making mechanism, this study extends existing AI marketing literature and provides a foundation for future research examining how representational strategies influence nostalgia formation, authenticity perceptions, and long-term consumer-brand relationships.

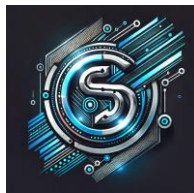
Consumer Interpretation as the First Mediating Mechanism

The proposed framework suggests that consumer interpretation serves as the first and most immediate mediating mechanism linking AI conceptualisation strategies to nostalgic marketing outcomes. Consumer interpretation refers to the cognitive process through which individuals assign meaning to marketing stimuli based on their personal experiences, memories, cultural backgrounds, and existing knowledge structures. In the context of AI-generated nostalgic marketing, interpretation determines whether consumers perceive nostalgic content as meaningful, relevant, and emotionally engaging.

Three dimensions are particularly important within this interpretative process: personal relevance, narrative coherence, and cultural congruence. Personal relevance reflects the extent to which AI-generated content aligns with consumers' autobiographical memories and lived experiences. Narrative coherence refers to the logical consistency and storytelling quality embedded within marketing messages, while cultural congruence concerns the compatibility between generated content and shared cultural values, traditions, and collective memories. Together, these dimensions influence how consumers evaluate and internalize nostalgic cues.

The conceptual analysis indicates that AI systems capable of simultaneously incorporating personal, narrative, and cultural dimensions are more likely to generate meaningful nostalgic experiences. By contrast, AI systems that rely solely on semantic similarity or pattern recognition may produce content that appears superficially nostalgic but lacks emotional depth and personal significance. Such content may trigger recognition without generating genuine nostalgic attachment.

These findings are consistent with Bruner's (1990) theory of meaning-making, which emphasizes that individuals interpret experiences through narrative structures rather than isolated informational cues. Similarly, nostalgia research suggests that nostalgic emotions emerge when



individuals perceive meaningful connections between past experiences and present identities (Batcho, 2013; Stern, 1992). Consequently, successful AI-driven nostalgic marketing requires more than identifying historical symbols or retro aesthetics; it requires constructing narratives that resonate with consumers' self-concepts, social identities, and personal histories.

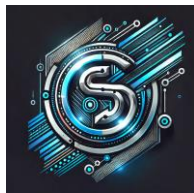
Social Identity Theory suggests that consumers often interpret marketing messages through the lens of group membership and collective memory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Therefore, AI-generated nostalgic content that incorporates culturally meaningful symbols and narratives may strengthen emotional engagement by reinforcing consumers' sense of belonging and identity continuity. This perspective highlights the importance of consumer interpretation as the first critical mechanism through which AI conceptualisation influences nostalgic marketing effectiveness.

Authenticity Perception as the Central Psychological Mechanism

One of the most significant findings emerging from the proposed conceptual framework is the central role of authenticity perception. The model proposes that authenticity functions as the primary psychological mechanism through which consumer interpretation translates into nostalgic responses and subsequent behavioral outcomes. In other words, even when AI-generated nostalgic content is personally relevant and culturally congruent, its effectiveness ultimately depends on whether consumers perceive it as authentic.

Consumers evaluate AI-generated nostalgic content based on several criteria, including perceived sincerity, credibility, and congruence with brand identity. When nostalgic narratives are perceived as genuine and meaningful, consumers are more likely to accept the emotional message, develop stronger nostalgic feelings, and form favorable attitudes toward the brand. Conversely, when consumers perceive AI-generated content as artificial, manipulative, or commercially exploitative, nostalgic effects may be weakened or entirely eliminated.

This finding is consistent with authenticity theory and previous research emphasizing the importance of authenticity in consumer-brand relationships (Stern, 1992). Authenticity has long been recognized as a key determinant of trust, emotional attachment, and consumer engagement. In nostalgic marketing, authenticity becomes particularly important because nostalgic experiences are closely linked to personal memories and identity construction. As a result, consumers tend to



be highly sensitive to perceived inconsistencies between nostalgic narratives and their own experiences.

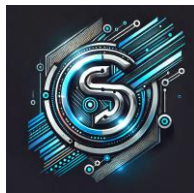
The importance of authenticity becomes even more pronounced in AI-mediated environments. Unlike human marketers, AI systems generate content through algorithmic processes, which may raise concerns regarding originality, sincerity, and emotional legitimacy. Consumers may question whether machine-generated narratives genuinely reflect meaningful experiences or merely replicate patterns extracted from large datasets. Consequently, authenticity serves as a critical filter through which consumers evaluate the credibility of AI-generated nostalgic messages.

Human-Centered AI perspectives suggest that technology should enhance rather than replace meaningful human experiences (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Therefore, AI systems designed for nostalgic marketing should prioritize authenticity, transparency, and emotional coherence. From this perspective, authenticity should not be viewed merely as a desirable outcome but as a necessary condition for successful AI-generated nostalgia. Without authenticity, nostalgic cues may fail to generate emotional resonance, ultimately limiting the effectiveness of AI-driven marketing strategies.

Identity Continuity and Nostalgia Formation

The proposed framework suggests that authenticity perceptions contribute significantly to identity continuity, which subsequently strengthens nostalgia intensity. Identity continuity refers to an individual's perception that their present self remains meaningfully connected to past experiences, memories, values, and social identities. Within nostalgic marketing contexts, this continuity serves as a psychological bridge linking consumers' historical experiences with contemporary brand interactions. Consequently, nostalgia becomes more than a recollection of the past; it functions as a mechanism through which individuals maintain a coherent sense of self across time.

According to Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987), individuals continuously strive to maintain consistency among their actual selves, ideal selves, and remembered selves. When discrepancies emerge between these self-representations, individuals experience psychological discomfort and seek mechanisms that restore self-consistency. Nostalgic experiences often fulfill this function by reconnecting individuals with meaningful memories and identity-defining



moments from the past. Therefore, nostalgic marketing becomes effective when consumers perceive that brand narratives reinforce rather than disrupt these identity connections.

The conceptual analysis suggests that AI conceptualisation strategies play a critical role in facilitating identity continuity. AI systems capable of generating coherent identity-related narratives are more likely to strengthen nostalgic responses because they help consumers construct meaningful links between past and present experiences. Narrative-controlled representations, for example, explicitly organize content into temporally coherent stories that mirror the way individuals naturally construct autobiographical memories. Similarly, knowledge-based representations can connect historical events, cultural symbols, and personal experiences through structured relational frameworks, thereby reinforcing identity continuity.

These findings are also consistent with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which argues that individuals derive meaning, belonging, and self-definition from membership in social groups and shared cultural histories. From this perspective, nostalgia extends beyond personal memories and encompasses collective experiences associated with communities, generations, and cultural traditions. Consequently, AI-generated nostalgic content may simultaneously activate autobiographical nostalgia and cultural nostalgia, creating a stronger emotional response than either form alone.

Recent research suggests that nostalgia serves as a psychological resource that enhances self-esteem, social connectedness, and emotional well-being during periods of uncertainty (Batcho, 2013). As digital environments become increasingly automated and technologically mediated, consumers may rely more heavily on nostalgic experiences to maintain continuity between their personal identities and rapidly changing social contexts. Therefore, AI systems capable of supporting identity continuity may become particularly valuable for brands seeking to establish long-term emotional relationships with consumers. The findings indicate that identity continuity represents a crucial mechanism linking authenticity perceptions and nostalgia formation. AI conceptualisation approaches that effectively encode identity-related narratives, temporal coherence, and cultural meaning structures are likely to generate stronger nostalgic experiences and more enduring consumer-brand relationships.



Differential Effects of AI Conceptualisation Strategies

The proposed framework identifies four distinct AI conceptualisation strategies, each expected to produce different nostalgic marketing outcomes. These differences arise because alternative representational approaches vary in their ability to capture meaning, authenticity, identity continuity, and emotional significance.

Embedding-Based Representation

Embedding-based representations rely primarily on semantic similarity and machine-learned vector spaces to identify relationships among concepts. These systems are highly effective at recognizing nostalgic themes, historical references, and linguistic patterns because they process large amounts of textual and visual data. However, their primary limitation lies in the absence of explicit symbolic structures capable of representing deeper identity relationships and contextual meaning. As a result, embedding-based systems may successfully evoke nostalgic familiarity while generating relatively weaker authenticity perceptions and emotional resonance.

Knowledge-Based Representation

Knowledge-based representations utilize ontologies, taxonomies, and structured knowledge networks to organize information. Because these systems explicitly encode relationships among historical events, cultural symbols, social identities, and brand heritage elements, they are particularly effective at generating coherent and contextually meaningful nostalgic narratives. Consumers are therefore more likely to perceive content generated through knowledge-based systems as authentic and trustworthy. The explicit structure of these systems also enhances transparency and interpretability, which are increasingly important considerations in AI-mediated consumer experiences.

Narrative-Controlled Representation

Narrative-controlled representations guide content generation through predefined storytelling frameworks. These systems emphasize temporal coherence, causal relationships, and character development, making them particularly effective for reinforcing identity continuity. Since autobiographical memories are naturally organized in narrative form, narrative-controlled systems align closely with the psychological processes underlying nostalgia formation. Consequently, these systems are expected to generate stronger emotional engagement and deeper consumer-brand connections than approaches based solely on semantic similarity.



Hybrid Representation

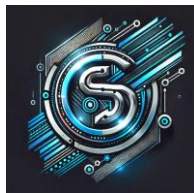
Among the four approaches, hybrid representation appears to offer the greatest theoretical potential. Hybrid systems combine the semantic flexibility and adaptive learning capabilities of machine learning models with the interpretability and contextual precision of symbolic knowledge structures. This integration enables AI systems to simultaneously achieve personalization, authenticity, narrative coherence, and cultural relevance. By leveraging the strengths of both statistical and symbolic approaches, hybrid systems may overcome the limitations associated with individual representational strategies.

Proposition 7 predicts that hybrid conceptualisation strategies will generate the strongest nostalgic responses and behavioral outcomes. Such systems are expected to enhance authenticity perceptions, reinforce identity continuity, increase nostalgia intensity, and ultimately improve key marketing outcomes including brand attitude, consumer engagement, purchase intention, and long-term loyalty. As generative AI technologies continue to evolve, hybrid conceptualisation approaches may become the dominant framework for designing emotionally intelligent and meaning-oriented marketing systems.

Behavioral Outcomes of AI-Generated Nostalgia

The final stage of the proposed framework concerns the behavioral outcomes resulting from AI-generated nostalgic experiences. The conceptual analysis suggests that nostalgia intensity exerts a significant influence on several important marketing outcomes, including brand attitude, purchase intention, consumer engagement, and long-term brand loyalty. While previous studies have consistently demonstrated the positive effects of nostalgia on consumer behavior, the present framework extends this literature by explaining how AI conceptualisation indirectly shapes these outcomes through a sequence of psychological mechanisms involving consumer interpretation, authenticity perception, identity continuity, and nostalgia formation.

Nostalgia has long been recognized as a powerful emotional resource capable of strengthening consumer-brand relationships. When consumers experience nostalgia, they often associate brands with meaningful life events, personal memories, and emotionally significant social experiences. These associations generate positive affective responses that subsequently influence attitudes toward brands and products (Batcho, 2013). In nostalgic marketing contexts, consumers are not merely evaluating functional product attributes; they are responding to symbolic



meanings connected to identity, belonging, and self-continuity. Consequently, nostalgic emotions frequently result in stronger brand preferences and increased willingness to engage with marketing communications.

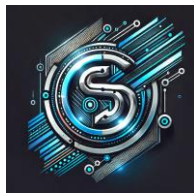
The proposed framework suggests that AI-generated nostalgia may produce similar outcomes when conceptual representations successfully align with consumers' autobiographical memories and cultural identities. Through accurate conceptualisation strategies, AI systems can create highly personalized nostalgic narratives that reinforce emotional connections between consumers and brands. Such emotional connections may enhance consumer engagement by increasing attention, interaction, and participation in brand-related activities. Furthermore, emotionally meaningful experiences often contribute to stronger purchase intentions because consumers perceive nostalgic products and services as extensions of their personal histories and identities.

Another important outcome concerns brand loyalty. Previous research indicates that nostalgia can foster enduring consumer-brand relationships by creating emotional bonds that are difficult for competitors to replicate (Stern, 1992). Unlike traditional marketing strategies that focus primarily on product features or economic value, nostalgic marketing operates through emotional attachment and symbolic meaning. Therefore, AI systems capable of generating authentic nostalgic experiences may contribute to long-term loyalty by continuously reinforcing identity-related connections between consumers and brands.

The framework also suggests that these behavioral outcomes are contingent upon the quality of AI conceptualisation. Technological sophistication alone is insufficient to generate meaningful consumer responses. Even highly advanced AI systems may fail to produce positive behavioral outcomes if conceptual representations lack authenticity, narrative coherence, or cultural relevance. Consequently, the effectiveness of AI-driven nostalgic marketing depends not only on algorithmic performance but also on the ability of AI systems to construct emotionally meaningful experiences that resonate with consumers' identities and memories.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

The proposed framework offers several important theoretical contributions to the literature on artificial intelligence, consumer behavior, and nostalgic marketing. First, the framework introduces AI conceptualisation as a previously underexplored explanatory construct within

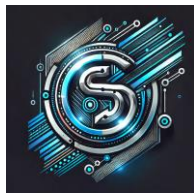


marketing research. Existing studies generally conceptualize AI as a technological tool for automation, prediction, personalization, and content generation (Huang & Rust, 2021). While these perspectives have advanced understanding of AI applications, they provide limited insight into how AI systems influence consumer meaning-making processes. By positioning AI conceptualisation as a mechanism for constructing and representing meaning, the present study expands the theoretical boundaries of AI marketing research.

Second, the framework contributes to nostalgia theory by integrating AI-mediated meaning construction into existing models of nostalgia formation. Traditional nostalgia research primarily focuses on memory activation, autobiographical reflection, and emotional responses (Batcho, 2013; Stern, 1992). The current framework extends these perspectives by proposing that AI systems actively participate in shaping nostalgic experiences through the conceptual structures embedded within generated content. This perspective highlights the importance of representational strategies in determining the effectiveness of AI-generated emotional appeals. Third, the framework contributes to identity-based marketing literature by emphasizing the role of identity continuity as a central mechanism linking authenticity and nostalgia. By integrating Self-Discrepancy Theory and Social Identity Theory, the study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how consumers interpret and internalize AI-generated nostalgic narratives.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that marketers should prioritize conceptual alignment, authenticity, and narrative coherence when deploying AI-generated nostalgic content. Rather than focusing exclusively on predictive accuracy and personalization metrics, organizations should evaluate whether AI-generated messages genuinely reflect consumers' memories, cultural experiences, and identity structures. Marketing campaigns that successfully achieve this alignment are more likely to generate emotional engagement, trust, and long-term loyalty.

AI developers should incorporate transparency, explainability, and ethical safeguards into nostalgic marketing applications. Consumers increasingly expect AI systems to provide understandable and trustworthy outputs. Therefore, ensuring that nostalgic personalization remains authentic rather than manipulative is critical for maintaining consumer trust. Ethical considerations become particularly important when AI systems generate emotionally sensitive content that draws upon personal memories and identity-related information. The findings suggest that future AI



marketing systems should be evaluated not only according to predictive performance and operational efficiency but also according to their capacity to facilitate meaningful consumer-brand relationships. As AI technologies continue to evolve, successful marketing strategies will increasingly depend on the ability to combine technological sophistication with authentic and emotionally resonant meaning construction

CONCLUSION

This study develops a conceptual framework that positions AI conceptualisation as a central mechanism connecting artificial intelligence technologies with nostalgic marketing outcomes. Unlike conventional perspectives that primarily view AI as a predictive or generative tool, this research argues that AI also functions as a meaning-making system that shapes how consumers interpret, evaluate, and emotionally respond to marketing content. Through an integrative conceptual analysis, the study demonstrates that consumer interpretation, authenticity perception, and identity continuity constitute critical mediating mechanisms through which AI-generated nostalgic experiences influence behavioral outcomes. The framework further identifies four distinct conceptualisation approaches—embedding-based, knowledge-based, narrative-controlled, and hybrid representations—and proposes that their differing capacities to represent meaning, cultural context, and identity structures lead to varying levels of nostalgic intensity and marketing effectiveness. By integrating Meaning-Making Theory, Nostalgia Theory, Self-Discrepancy Theory, and Social Identity Theory, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how AI can influence emotional and identity-based consumer behavior in contemporary marketing environments.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should move beyond purely technical performance metrics and evaluate AI systems according to their ability to generate authentic, coherent, and culturally meaningful consumer experiences. Successful nostalgic marketing depends not only on the identification of nostalgic cues but also on the construction of narratives that resonate with consumers' autobiographical memories, collective identities, and perceptions of authenticity. Consequently, marketers and AI developers should prioritize transparency, explainability, and ethical safeguards when implementing AI-driven nostalgic marketing strategies. Future research should empirically examine the proposed relationships using



experimental, longitudinal, and cross-cultural designs to validate the framework and investigate causal mechanisms underlying AI-mediated nostalgia formation. Ultimately, this research agenda seeks to advance a more theoretically grounded, ethically responsible, and consumer-centered approach to AI-enabled marketing innovation in an increasingly digital marketplace.

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