

Department of Business and Management

Graduate Degree in Marketing – Market Relationship & Customer Engagement

Course Of Language in Advertising

Artificial Intelligence and Consumer-Generated Content: Exploring the Role of AI in Shaping Brand Values and Perceived Authenticity

Paolo Peverini

SUPERVISOR

Stella Romagnoli

CO-SUPERVISOR

Dalila Puddu 764961

CANDIDATE

Academic Year 2023/2024

Table of Contents

Abstract	5
Introduction	6
Chapter 1. User Generated Content: a comprehensive overview	8
<i>1.1 What is User Generated Content</i>	8
<i>1.2 The evolution of UGC over time</i>	9
1.2.1 What came before: media production and consumption	9
1.2.2 Formality vs informality	10
1.2.3 Who are the <i>users</i> ? Their involvement for co-creation of value	11
1.2.4 Amateur production	14
1.2.5 Democratizing content.....	16
<i>1.3 UGC and marketing</i>	19
1.3.1 User Generated Content vs Brand Generated Content	23
1.3.2 WOM and Engagement	27
1.3.3 Short Summary of Possible Legal Implication.....	28
<i>1.4 UGC through the lens of semiotic</i>	29
1.4.1 Background and Context	30
1.4.2 Semiotics applied to media content.....	33
<i>1.5 Current and future landscape for UGC</i>	36
Chapter 2. Generative AI: the impact on UGC.....	39
<i>2.1. Artificial Intelligence: definition and overview</i>	39
2.1.1 ML, NLP, and LLM: what are those?	40
2.1.2 Brief history of AI and key concepts	42
<i>2.2 Application of AI in marketing: why is it becoming so important?</i>	44
2.2.1 Challenges and Opportunities.....	46
2.2.2 Integrating AI and Human Creativity: Enhancing Artistic Expression in the Digital Age.....	49
<i>2.3 Understanding User Generated Content (UGC) and AI Generated Content (AIGC)</i>	51
2.3.1 UGC: content is king.....	52
2.3.2 Case studies	54
2.3.3 New Frontiers and Challenges with AIGC	58
2.3.4 Real Life Application of AIGC for Brands	58
<i>2.4 Research Question</i>	61
Chapter 3. Analysis and Methodology	63
<i>3.1 Overview of the Methodology</i>	63

<i>3.2 Selection of the Corpus</i>	68
<i>3.3 Diachronic Analysis – Nike Genealogy</i>	70
<i>3.4 Synchronic Analysis – Competitors</i>	83
<i>3.5 Analysis of the Brand-Generated Commercial</i>	85
3.5.1 Introduction of the commercial (I)	85
3.5.2 The segmentation of the advertising (I)	85
3.5.3 Commercial Analysis (I)	88
3.5.4 The Actantial Model (I)	93
3.5.5 The Canonical Narrative Scheme (I)	94
<i>3.6 Analysis of the AI User-Generated Commercial</i>	97
3.6.1 Introduction of the commercial (II)	97
3.6.2 The segmentation of the advertising (II)	97
3.6.3 Commercial Analysis (II)	99
3.6.4 The Actantial Model (II)	102
3.6.5 The Canonical Narrative Scheme (II)	103
<i>3.7 Semiotic Square</i>	104
<i>3.8 Media Comparison: superficial level</i>	107
<i>3.9 AI as a Semiotic Actor in the Enunciation Process</i>	110
<i>3.10 Data Collection: Interviews</i>	112
3.10.1 Thematic Analysis	114
3.10.2 Discussion	118
Chapter 4. Conclusions	131
4.1 Results	131
4.2 Managerial Implications	136
4.3 Limitation and Future Research	139
Appendix 1:	141
Appendix 2:	143
Bibliography	177
Sitography	186

Abstract

The idea for this thesis came to mind after reading Bill Gates' essay "*Content is king*". It was 1996, and since then the world has changed dramatically, but the flood of content creation has never stopped growing. In fact, with the advent and boom of the Internet from the 2000s onward, it has continued to expand exponentially, shaping and filling the daily lives of billions of people who interact with and generate new content every day.

Users have gradually decided to participate actively in the conversation, eager to contribute in any way to the dissemination and online presence of a brand. In the past, creating extraordinary content was necessary to be noticed by a company. Today, a simple click is enough to make our presence noticeable online and to instantly join the conversation in a democratic way. Recently, this has been further amplified by the advent of Artificial Intelligence, a powerful tool that is still not largely understood but that has the potential to bring the world to our fingertips. The emergence of this technology, as with all innovations, has both intrigued and intimidated users worldwide, yet it has not stopped them from leveraging it to create new content where AI plays a leading role.

Today, a natural question arises: if user-generated content has been able to positively impact brands by increasing engagement, fostering word-of-mouth, and being perceived as more authentic and reliable than firm-generated content, how will UGC evolve with the introduction of AI? What are the new implications for brands and how are their values perceived by consumers when this transformative force is integrated? How does AIUGC blend with brands' identities and overall discourses? This thesis tackles these questions and seeks to provide answers by exploring Nike's remarkable case, examining two unique commercials to probe into these queries.

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, AI-User-Generated Content (AIUGC) has emerged as a transformative force, changing the way brands and consumers interact. Rooted in the democratization of content production through Web 3.0, AIUGC represents a significant shift from traditional top-down media creation, empowering everyday users to contribute to the cultural and commercial conversations that define brands. This movement has not only transformed marketing strategies but redefined the role of consumers, who are no longer passive recipients of media but active co-creators of brand narratives.

Chapter 1 of this thesis presents a comprehensive overview of UGC, tracing its evolution from early forms of amateur content creation to its present-day in the digital media. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding how UGC operates within the marketing ecosystems, emphasizing its authenticity, its role in fostering consumer engagement, and its capacity to build brand loyalty. The chapter also introduces the theoretical frameworks, including semiotic tools, that will be used to dissect the impact of AIUGC on brand identity and consumer perceptions.

As the digital landscape continues to change, the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has introduced new dimensions for content creation. Chapter 2 explores the impact of AI particularly through the lens of Generative AI, which can autonomously produce text, images, and videos that mimic human creativity. This chapter explores the potential of AI to revolutionize content creation by enabling greater personalization, efficiency, and scalability and its limitations due to biases, lack of common sense and legal implications. The analysis then highlights how AI-generated content interacts with traditional user-generated content, challenging notions of originality, creativity, and authenticity. The chapter ends with the proposed research questions: *“What impact does AI generated content have on brand’s values and perceptions?”* and *“Is the integration of AI for User Generated content impacting consumers’ perceived authenticity?”*

Chapter 3 takes the analysis further by examining specific case studies, including a Nike-produced commercial and an AI-generated advertisement, investigating the subject matter through a semiotic analysis and in-depth structured interviews. These examples aim to demonstrate how AI is influencing the way brands communicate their values and perceptions, and what is the AIGC’s impact on authenticity. The chapter emphasizes the comparative strengths of brand generated advertising and AIGC, while also exploring possible limitations due to biases and the implications of AI’s growing role in content production.

Chapter 4 presents the concluding remarks of this research, linking the key findings back to the initial research questions, providing managerial implications and offering insights for practitioners on leveraging AI and UGC effectively in marketing. Additionally, this chapter will discuss the limitations of the study and will propose directions for future research.

Chapter 1. User Generated Content: a comprehensive overview

1.1 What is User Generated Content

User-Generated Content (UGC) is defined as content developed voluntarily by an individual and transmitted through online media (McNally, 2012), characterized by a certain amount of creativity and originated by non-professionals. Typically, conventional definitions of user generated content highlight the significance of online platforms and technologies that facilitate the creation of said content (Naeem & Okafor, 2019), especially Web 2.0. According to Kaplan, UGC can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Daubs defines it as (digital) “*media content generated by people outside of professional media institutions, often for no pay, which is made available to the public*” (Daubs, 2019) which can take on different forms, from texts, images, videos to graphics and consumers reviews, memes, podcasts, blogs etc.

The term, widely embraced in 2005, commonly refers to diverse forms of publicly accessible media content generated by end-users. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has defined User-Generated Content as material that must meet three general criteria: it is disseminated through a publicly accessible website or a social networking platform with restricted access; it necessitates a demonstrable level of creative input (the creator has to add value with the content) and it must stem from non-professional sources (OECD, 2007). Typically, the driving force behind User-Generated Content is social in nature, with individuals dedicating their time and energy in anticipation of forging connections, drawing attention, and possibly achieving fame or recognition. However, content produced with financial or professional motives doesn't fall under the category of UGC.

The above-mentioned definition thus excludes content shared via private channels like emails or instant messages, prohibits mere duplications of pre-existing material (like reposting an unaltered newspaper article on a personal blog without additional commentary), and precludes content crafted within a commercial framework. Although User-Generated Content pre-dates the rise of Web 2.0, its modern iteration is marked by a convergence of technological progressions, such as access to the highest internet services and expanded hardware capabilities, economic transformations leading to more accessible tools for UGC creation, and societal shifts symbolized by the emergence of “digital natives” and “screenagers”— younger demographics adept in

technology and inclined towards online interactions. These factors distinguish today's UGC from its early 1980s precursor (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

1.2 The evolution of UGC over time

To comprehend the origins of User-Generated Content it is crucial to take a step back and dive into the history of media production and consumption. This historical analysis provides context for the emergence and evolution of UGC over time and serves as a foundation for defining the current landscape, which will be further explored in this chapter. By examining the dynamics between media creation and consumption before the advent of UGC, the reader can gain a deeper understanding of the shifts that led to its rise in popularity. This retrospective view enables to trace the trajectory of media from its early forms to the digital age, highlighting key milestones and developments that paved the way for User-Generated Content as it is known today. Themes such as formality versus informality, professionalism versus unprofessionalism, the rise of amateur media, and the democratization of content will lay the groundwork for understanding how UGC emerged within its historical contexts.

1.2.1 What came before: media production and consumption

The emergence of User-Generated Content represents a modern phenomenon, although its roots can be traced back to earlier forms of communication.

Prior to the advent of print technology, media production and consumption were more intertwined. It was through the emergence of print capitalism (Anderson, 1983), where texts were attached to tangible *carriers*, that they became commodities, generating a whole new market for them. Tom Pettitt, a British-Danish literary scholar, introduced the concept of “The Gutenberg Parenthesis” to illustrate how print technology laid the basis for the media market and the separation of producers and consumers of textual content (Pettitt, 2007). The concept suggests that the era following Gutenberg's invention — spanning roughly from the 15th to the 20th century, characterized by the dominance of textual communication — was merely a temporary diversion in the broader history of human communication. Now, through the discursive structure of the web, ephemeral in nature, society is gradually reverting to a media culture shaped by orality — embracing conversations, gossip, and the transitory nature of communication¹. With the advent of the printing press, words became fixed, contrasting with earlier times when they were fluid and

¹ Source: <https://www.niemanlab.org/2010/04/the-gutenberg-parenthesis-thomas-pettitt-on-parallels-between-the-pre-print-era-and-our-own-internet-age/>

subject to change, such as in live performances or handwritten scripts prone to alterations. This fixation in object form facilitated their commodification. Pettitt argues that we are now nearing the conclusion of this era, as texts are once again becoming detached from specific carriers, allowing for greater fluidity and freedom.

From a historical viewpoint, the notion of User-Generated Content only becomes meaningful after the market has delineated production from consumption, thus dividing creators from consumers. Prior to this division, the concept lacks coherence. Additionally, it remained largely incomprehensible if this division persisted, with early media studies focusing on audiences, recipients, listeners, viewers, or readers rather than active content creators. The concept of the “user” emerged with the reassessment of audience engagement in the 1980s and 1990s, giving rise to “user-generated content”. However, it wasn’t until the culture and media industries developed business models to capitalize on this content that the concept gained widespread popularity. It was the advent of the interactive web that enabled the media and culture sectors to incorporate user activity into profit-driven production processes for the first time in history (Bolin, 2021).

1.2.2 Formality vs informality

Lobato and Hunter argue that UGC fluctuates between formal and informal styles over time, while various elements within specific UGC platforms and content showcase varying levels of formality at any given moment (Lobato, Julian, & Hunter, 2012).

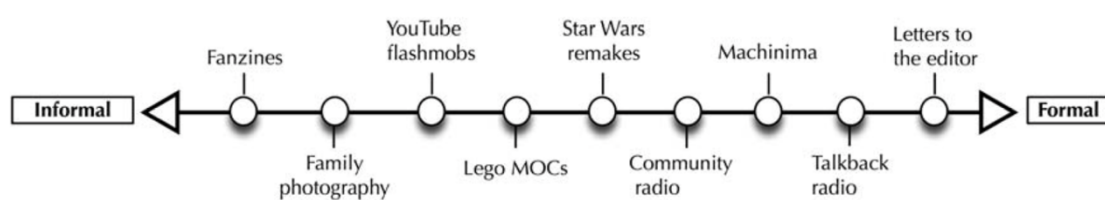


Figure 1: UGC Across the Spectrum of Formality

Figure 1 demonstrates the varying levels of formality and informality within different types of User-Generated Content. UGC exists across a spectrum of formality, not solely at the informal end. For instance, UGC is evident in traditional newspapers through letters to the editor, which undergo professional editing, adhere to strict guidelines, and are surrounded by formal advertisements. Similarly, popular magazines incorporate reader contributions, albeit within formal frameworks. However, UGC also extends to informal realms such as amateur family photography, blogs, and wikis, where content is created for pleasure and freely shared. It’s evident that a significant portion

of UGC creation and distribution takes place within informal channels. Even in these informal contexts, elements of formality exist, such as legal agreements on platforms like YouTube for amateur videos or commercial hosting services for blogs.

Understanding this formality-informality continuum aids in reevaluating traditional distinctions between professional/mainstream media and UGC. Both demonstrate attributes of formal and informal media production. The model proposed by Lobato and Hunter highlights that these distinctions are not fixed but evolve over time. UGC, acting as a boundary object, thus bridges the gap between formal and informal sectors, influencing media economies, legal frameworks, and policy analyses (Lobato, Julian, & Hunter, 2012).

In more recent times, the seemingly casual remarks that were once exchanged as workplace chatter or during social gatherings, have transitioned onto the internet, manifested as blog entries and brief messages. Entertaining family moments find their way onto platforms like YouTube, while traditional oral lullabies, once passed down through generations, are now recorded and marketed. This shift reflects a trend towards enhancing the visibility, regulation, commercialization, and institutionalization of small-scale cultural production. Despite scholarly acknowledgment of this trend, UGC continues to be predominantly defined in contrast to professionally crafted content supported by commercial media entities or public institutions, and the perceived passive consumption associated with traditional mass media formats (Jenkins, 2006).

The idea that User-Generated Content is not necessarily in direct conflict with professionally produced media, but rather intertwined with a wider social science, stems from insights drawn from anthropological and sociological discourses, where informal media setups are defined as those primarily existing outside the realms of state influence, regulation, taxation, and measurable metrics. Hence, the informal nature of media generation, circulation and consumption is frequently reconsidered, letting contemporary UGC emerging as a transformative and pioneering force, stemming organically from the inventive capabilities of individual users empowered by digital advancements.

1.2.3 Who are the *users*? Their involvement for co-creation of value

According to José van Dijck, media today is driven by participatory engagement, rather than passive consumption (Dijck, 2009). This shift has been particularly pronounced with the emergence of Web 2.0, where media has transitioned from reliance on specific channels to widespread accessibility. Here, the value is no longer solely derived from the technology itself but

rather from the users who engage with it, redistributing power from corporate entities to ordinary individuals².

However, an inquiry arises regarding how the significance of the users was recognized. Historically, the emphasis in management practices was on optimizing the production and manufacturing processes to enhance efficiency, rather than centering on the needs and preferences of the consumer. This approach, reflective of the prevailing classical theories of management, was a logical response to the technological landscape of the time, rather than a point of critique. It's important to recognize that the demands placed on organizational structures can vary significantly with the introduction of new technologies. Woodward's research in 1965 highlighted a tendency to overlook the role of users when examining the impact of technology within organizations. However, Zuboff illustrated how evolving technological capabilities could potentially alter the distribution of power within workplaces, enabling a more egalitarian relationship among employees by equipping them with shared information. The investigation highlighted the role of technology in shifting power dynamics and diminishing the control of management. According to Porter's 1980 work, the concept of "buyer power" plays a critical role in a firm's potential to secure a competitive edge. On the other hand, Makadok (2001) argues that the significance of customer value is just one of several factors influencing a company's success and it's not always essential. He debates that customer value only matters to the extent that it contributes to the firm's ability to retain its worth and does not hold intrinsic utility.

We need to wait for Leonard-Barton (1995) and Sinaha (1993), who reasoned that robust customer relationships often bridge the gap between the knowledge embedded in product use and the scientific and technical expertise required for product design and manufacture. This idea brings to light the mutual influence of design and usage, suggesting that once a technology is in place, its design can be further refined through user feedback. Despite recognizing the significant role users play in the design and implementation of technology, this viewpoint maintains that innovation is primarily an internal process, with users contributing, at most, a secondary role in the innovative effort.

Recent contributions by Christensen (1995) and his team on the concept of "disruptive" innovation suggest that organizations primarily attending to their main customer base risk

² Source: <https://wordpress.lehigh.edu/comm298-398/2021/09/23/users-like-you-theorizing-agency-in-user-generated-content-alana-bonfiglio-9-23/>

becoming overly dependent on these customers' demands³. This can lead to them falling behind competitors who are actively seeking new markets and customer segments. Additionally, a significant portion of research, especially noted for its focus on users, discusses the value of “*lead users*” and user communities, emphasizing the advantages companies can gain by integrating suggestions and ideas from users into their innovation strategies.

Von Hippel's extensive research vividly demonstrates the importance of manufacturers engaging directly with users to explore solutions that address and fulfil their requirements. In his seminal 1978 work, von Hippel introduced the concept of the “customer active paradigm” (CAP), contrasting it with the traditional “manufacturer-active paradigm” (MAP). This approach poses innovation as a collaborative effort between manufacturers and users, particularly “*leading*” users who encounter needs that will eventually become common among mainstream users and the broader market. By leveraging these lead users, manufacturers can create innovative products that not only perform better but also have a greater potential in the market. Such collaboration also facilitates the co-creation of value within their customer communities, as highlighted by Franke, von Hippel, and Schreier in 2006.

Recently, users have been labeled as “accidental entrepreneurs”, engaging in collective creative activities within the social settings of user communities. This participation frequently results in the generation of innovative ideas, with early adoption taking place before these concepts are comprehensively developed (Shah & Tripsas, 2007).

Nevertheless, strategies in strategic management, as noted by Porter in 1980 and Barney in 1991, often overlook the significance of consumers, showing a lack of focus on “consumer orientation”. In traditional sectors, the importance of users is recognized primarily because they are the purchasers of products. Although they are acknowledged as potential idea contributors (as discussed by Faulker & Runde in 2009 and Franke & Shah in 2003), the delineation between companies and consumers is typically well-defined and pronounced. However, the widespread adoption of the internet and advancements in technology, particularly with the introduction of Web 2.0, have enabled ordinary users to utilize the internet to become suppliers, co-creators, or innovators of products and services, by providing them with the necessary tools and connectivity (Rheingold, 2003). Additionally, Gulati and Kletter in 2005 observed that customer satisfaction generates value by participating in the co-development and innovation of solutions.

³ Source: <https://hbr.org/1995/01/disruptive-technologies-catching-the-wave>

Nowadays, customers are no longer viewed simply as passive recipients but are recognized as crucial contributors to the value network. Businesses are actively seeking methods to engage customer communities to secure a competitive advantage. The contribution of customers in the innovation process, which provide insights and fresh ideas, is considered vital for fostering innovation. This perspective is based on the understanding that customers possess unique knowledge from their personal experiences and have exclusive insights into the needs and potential solutions within a community. Additionally, the collective creativity of these communities can lead to more innovative and unexpected outcomes (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006).

Innovation and the progression of technology are deeply intertwined with societal factors, emphasizing the critical role of users in understanding the way human relationships and identities are increasingly formed through consumption rather than production. Specifically, Baudrillard (1988) challenged the notion that consumer needs are strictly shaped, influenced, and controlled by producers, arguing instead that consumption is an active, not passive, process. He argues that consumption and production are interdependent, with consumers playing a pivotal role in defining consumption patterns, social relationships, and identities. This perspective revives Karl Marx's concept that the production process is only finalized when users assign meanings and importance to technology, highlighting that design and utilization are inherently connected, as argued by Lie & Sorensen (1996).

In conclusion, management studies have traditionally overlooked the significance of user involvement. However, more recent research has begun to recognize the crucial role that understanding and integrating user preferences and concepts plays in design and innovation. Yet, this focus tends to be limited to leveraging user-generated insights or observing product utilization. It is suggested that the concept of user engagement should be broadened to encompass modern phenomena, such as the surge in user-created content following the advent of Web 2.0 (Ansari & Munir, 2010).

1.2.4 Amateur production

Bolin (2012) argues that what differentiates amateur production from professional drafted content is not quality but rather what drives inspiration. While professionally made content is motivated by financial compensation, amateur production originates from "labor of love" (Bolin, 2012), even when it does not meet other's expectations. Producers who engage in this behavior for financial compensation, that may be passionate about their work, must still meet goals and objectives set by others, contrary to what happens for independent production.

Parts of the productivity resulting in UGC stems from amateur production, this includes activities like diary writing, crafting poetry meant for personal storage, or engaging in amateur photography and filmmaking. Being an amateur creator typically implies a lack of formal organization compared to both commercial and professional media production found in settings like public service broadcasting. The realm of amateur creation includes a wide array of activities, from simple acts of writing down poetry or diary entries to the more involved organization of online streams showcasing amateur music festivals or theatrical performances. The distinction between amateur and professional media producers is particularly relevant within a capitalist economy, where there's a clear division between the production and consumption of cultural content and texts (Bolin, 2012).

One particular type of non-professional creation involves works produced by fans, who are intensely devoted followers of specific media content, stars, or artists. Numerous research efforts examining user-generated content have actually started by focusing on fans and their creative outputs. Usually, a small yet highly active segment of media users is responsible for producing UGC (Balbi and Magaudda, 2018). The terminology of “activity” and “passivity” is mirrored in the way ordinary media users describe their online behaviour, often characterizing their own actions in passive terms (Bolin and Velkova, 2020).

This critique targets the reality that individuals who generate data by engaging with social networking media — through uploading and sharing content — lay the groundwork for the profits of platform companies in the digital economy without receiving compensation for their “work”. The point made is that the efforts of these users are the source of income for these companies. This work is considered “free”, not only because it can be utilized by the platforms without cost, but also because it is voluntarily offered by the contributors.

This analysis draws heavily from the Marxist perspective, with scholars like Michael Hardt and Maurizio Lazzarato conceptualizing such activities as “immaterial labour” (Lazzarato, 1996). This form of labour is described as generating intangible outputs like ideas, images, communication methods, emotions, or social connections (Hardt, 2005), all contributing to social and cultural enrichment. The foundation of this area lies in a socio-cultural economy that prioritizes social and cultural gains over financial profits, creating value for the participants involved. However, the data produced by users and the UGC itself are co-opted into the professional realm of media and cultural production, entering an arena that is decidedly driven by profit within a commercial economic system, where economic value prevails.

1.2.5 Democratizing content

User-Generated Content gained popularity in the early 2000s as personal computers grow more common and search engines, video-sharing sites, and social networking platforms became more user-friendly. This period marked a significant shift as media consumers were provided with sophisticated tools for content creation. This shift was part of what came to be known as Web 2.0, a term popularized by O'Reilly in 2005, signifying an era where the web became interactive and participatory. Web 2.0 highlights the transformation of regular internet users into content creators who share their self-made digital content — ranging from blog posts to videos — across various online platforms. Specifically, the decade between 2001 and 2010, saw a remarkable surge in the launch of key social media platforms, each contributing to the UGC landscape, including Wikipedia in 2001, LinkedIn and MySpace in 2003, Facebook and Yelp in 2004, YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006, and much later, TikTok in 2016.

In the realm of the web, democracy extends then beyond just an electoral process; it's a governance framework, or as outlined by Merriam-Webster, a system where “*supreme power rests with the people, who exercise it directly or indirectly through a system of representatives*”⁴. Scholars also note that the simplicity with which digital information can be accessed, produced, and created has fostered an environment favourable to collaborative production based on shared resources (Benkler, 2006).

In the popular literature, the role of user-generated content is highly emphasized, with terms like “prosumers”, a concept introduced by Toffler in 2006, “crowdsourcing”, put forth by Hempel in the same year, and “web democratization”, described by Leadbetter in 2007, coming to the forefront to describe the growing engagement of users in creative efforts online.

The concept of media democracy is based on the idea that the media plays a crucial role in fostering democracy and upholding individual rights through ensuring transparency and accountability in public affairs. This perspective argues for the democratization of media itself (Exoo, 2010). Research by Oppenhuizen, Pagiotti, and Eshuis (2021) points out that user-generated content challenges the problem of media ownership concentration, which often fails to support democratic values and therefore demands careful examination. The widespread availability of mobile technology and social networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube has led to an explosion of UGC (Oyedele, 2015). Today, the promotion of democratic transformation, the

⁴ Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/content-king-ugc-democracy-long-life-both-victor-nine>

global exchange of information, and the advocacy for human rights protection rank among the most common themes in social media content.

However, the idea of user-generated content comes with its own set of obstacles. While UGC has delivered significant advantages to society, it also raises issues regarding the trustworthiness and authenticity of information generated by users who may use pseudonyms or remain anonymous. Challenges such as intellectual property violations, privacy concerns, hate speech, defamation, explicit content, undesirable materials, and issues of sovereignty represent some of the legal hurdles UGC encounters in today's era of sophisticated communication technologies (Olaniran & Williams, 2020). This does not stop an increasing number of businesses to incorporate a larger portion of user-generated content into their content marketing approaches, creating a mix of their own authentic, unbiased UGC. This strategy is based on the understanding that content, in addition to being relevant, informative, and/or entertaining, gains value when it is democratic and originating from a reliable source, free from bias, and seamlessly integrated into the company's website.

The rapid growth of blogs, podcasts, wikis, and social networks described by Leadbetter (2007) as innovation *by* the masses, not just *for* the masses, highlighted the notion that consumers seek not merely a wider array of options or “choice”— a premise long held by businesses in their conventional models and marketing efforts — but greater *influence*. Users contribute not only as creators of content and services but also play a crucial role in the production, distribution, selection, and filtering of relevant content and services. Essentially, users are central collaborators and co-creators in all facets of a service provided, whether it be content (blogs), preferences/emotions (Amazon), social connections (Instagram), relevance (Google's page ranking), or in the management of feedback and reputation (eBay). Such advancements present significant challenges for managers, who often show hesitance in dividing control and rewards with users.

The democratization of content stems from the advent of new digital technologies that have made media production tools, ranging from basic to semi-professional levels, widely available and economically feasible for the average user. Consequently, the entry barrier into the media landscape has significantly decreased⁵, enabling individual users and community organizations to produce

⁵ Source: <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/the-creator-economy-could-approach-half-a-trillion-dollars-by-2027.html>

their own content, thus facilitating a broad-based democratization of media production (Jensen J. F., 2007).

Secondly, this shift is due to a change in approach by media organizations; moving away from exclusively generating content themselves to providing the tools and frameworks that allow everyday, non-professional individuals to create content. This shift acknowledges that the future of media organizations lies in empowering regular users and citizens (Jensen J. F., 2007).

Thirdly, this change is part of a broader trend in the experience-driven society, where the desire for self-realization and differentiation, including through self-expression, plays an increasingly vital role in shaping one's identity. The democratization of media is enabled by various tools that have become accessible to users, allowing them to engage in content creation more freely (Jensen J. F., 2007).

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 represents a significant evolution in the digital world, driven by the widespread adoption of services and communities that rely on content created by their users. This era of the internet, known as Web 2.0, embodies a shift towards a more interactive and participatory web experience, allowing for enhanced communication, collaboration, and information sharing. Unlike its predecessor, Web 1.0, which consisted mainly of static web pages and a one-way flow of information, Web 2.0 is defined by its dynamic, interactive nature. It fosters social networking, user engagement, and content creation, embodying a digital landscape where the contribution and interaction of users are paramount. This shift not only aligns with Tim Berners-Lee's original vision of the web as a democratized and personal medium but also leverages the network effect, where the value of content and services increases with the number of users. Technologies such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, and social media platforms exemplify Web 2.0's ethos, with platforms like eBay, Flickr, and others showcasing the practical application of these principles. Moreover, Web 2.0's connection to the semantic web, where metadata enhances search and information organization, signifies a leap towards more intelligent and efficient web interactions (Jensen J. F., 2007).

"Folksonomy"

This concept is further extended in the realm of "folksonomy", a user-driven tagging system that democratizes content classification, contrasting with traditional, rigid taxonomies. Such systems

empower users to categorize content in intuitive and personally meaningful ways, facilitating content discovery and creating a more connected online community (Jensen J. F., 2007).

Citizen Journalism

Citizen Journalism has emerged as a powerful form of media, with everyday individuals taking on the roles of reporters and news distributors. This trend is supported by the widespread availability of digital cameras and smartphones, enabling citizens to capture and share news events first-hand. Through blogs, social media, and other online platforms, citizen journalists provide personal insights, local news, and alternative perspectives, enriching the media landscape with diverse content (Jensen J. F., 2007).

Blogs

Blogs serve as digital platforms where individuals can express thoughts, share insights, and engage with a wide range of topics. These personal online journals have evolved into influential media, covering everything from news and hobbies to local events and personal experiences. Blogs can feature various forms of media, including text, photos, and videos, and often serve as a bridge between private individuals and broader communities, reflecting the essence of user-generated content in the Web 2.0 era (Jensen J. F., 2007).

1.3 UGC and Marketing

For over twenty years, marketing research has been steered and molded by the principles of the *marketing concept*. The definition provided by Kotler and Armstrong is the following: “*the marketing management philosophy which holds that achieving organizational goals depends on determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired level of satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than competitors*” (Kotler & Armstrong, 1995).

Scholars generally concur that engaging in two-way interactions with consumers is vital for improving a firm’s new product development and marketing communication strategies. Nevertheless, the implementation of the marketing concept has been flawed, primarily due to reasons such as a lack of complete comprehension of the concept and technological limitations in its execution, despite receiving acclaim from marketing scholars and practitioners (O'Hern & Kahle, 2013). More significantly, the marketing concept conjures a vision of a structured realm where firms exert substantial control over their surroundings and bear primary responsibility for

pivotal tasks like educating customers, meeting user needs through effective marketing communications, and pioneering innovative products.

Recently, traditional paradigms have faced challenges from emerging business models and technologies, shifting considerable authority over crucial activities to consumers. This transition signifies a rapid move towards a new era of consumer empowerment, where individuals exercise increasing influence over marketing outcomes by actively contributing their own User-Generated Content. While the long-term consequences of this transformation remain uncertain, it signifies a fundamental shift in the power dynamic between marketing entities and consumers, potentially leading to significant implications for both marketing theory and practice (Boush & Kahle, 2002).

Recent studies in marketing have highlighted the pivotal contribution users can make in promoting a company's products through their online interactions. Specifically, O'Hern & Kahle identified four distinct forms of User-Generated Content based on two key dimensions.

		User Contribution Objective	
		Product Promotion	Product Innovation
Direction of UGC Knowledge Flows	C2C Knowledge Row	Informing	Pioneering
	C2B Knowledge Row	Co-Communicating	Co-Creating

Figure 2: Dimensions of User-Generated Content

The authors propose that users typically have two main objectives when engaging in User-Generated Content, as highlighted by *Figure 2*. Some participants create original content with the aim of promoting a specific product or brand, expressing their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, thereby facilitating word-of-mouth activity. This type of UGC primarily serves the purpose of product *promotion*, as the content emphasizes the strengths or weaknesses of the product or brand. Secondly, there are users who are more interested in product *innovation* rather than promotion. They may contribute to improving existing products or developing new ones. Another dimension in which UGC varies is the directionality of knowledge flows resulting from the process. Some forms of UGC, such as user-generated social media or online product reviews, aim to inform

fellow users, providing them with new ideas or insights. This is characterized by customer-to-customer (C2C) knowledge flows. In contrast, other forms of UGC originate from creative users but are intended to convey knowledge to specific firms rather than users. Therefore, this type of UGC involves customer-to-business (C2B) knowledge flows, as the primary target is the firm receiving the new knowledge.

In addition, web 2.0 continues to develop dynamically, and the quality of content is constantly improving. As the ecosystem expands, new platforms and social media algorithms are being introduced, playing a crucial role in determining the relevance of content to each user. Specifically, YouTube experiences an immense influx of content, with over 1,000 hours of video uploaded every second⁶. Consequently, the online information market is increasingly moving towards a user-centric model, diverging from the traditional publisher-centric approach, considering every day, billions of pieces of media content are produced. In 2022, the market size for global user-generated content platforms was estimated at approximately USD 4,455 million by a Global Industry Research and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 26.94%, reaching about USD 18,644 million by 2028⁷. Moreover, a 2023 report by Goldman Sachs highlighted that the potential market for content creation is expected to grow significantly, reaching an estimated \$480 billion by 2027⁸.

Furthermore, in contrast to content produced by influencers, UGC stems from individuals who are sincerely motivated to share their views on a product, service, or brand making UGC widely regarded as authentic, and collecting significant trust from audiences. Brands who wish to incorporate UGC into their marketing efforts must preserve the pivotal role played by trust and authenticity. Accordingly, to encourage the generation of UGC, brands should prioritize providing a straightforward process along with explicit guidelines regarding the desired outcome⁹. The following paragraph will dive deeper into how User-Generated Content serves as a foundation in contemporary marketing strategies for several compelling reasons.

Firstly, UGC embodies authenticity, emanating directly from genuine user experiences and opinions, thereby establishing a profound level of trust among audiences. Reportedly, a

⁶ Source: <https://socialmediaagency.one/user-generated-content-web-2-0-advantages-and-disadvantages/>

⁷ Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/user-generated-content-ugc-platforms-market-size-1f#:~:text=The%20global%20User%2Dgenerated%20content,USD%2018644.21%20million%20by%202028.>

⁸ Source: <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/the-creator-economy-could-approach-half-a-trillion-dollars-by-2027.html>

⁹ Source: <https://cloudinary.com/guides/user-generated-content/ugc-in-marketing-an-authentic-marketing-component-in-the-digital-age>

fundamental principle of modern marketing has become the pursuit of authenticity (Brown et al., 2003). Gilmore and Pine (2007) pointed out five main reasons consumers place a high value on authenticity: the development of commercialised experiences, an increase in digital interactions, a shift towards a socially constructed reality, the influence of the Baby Boomer generation, and a diminishing trust in institutions. Consumers tend to be particularly critical of companies and institutions that appear inauthentic, primarily if perceived as chasing profit or self-interest (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Interestingly, authenticity has now surpassed quality as the primary factor influencing consumer purchases (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

Research indicates that the perceived credibility and authenticity of a message source significantly influence its effectiveness in persuasion (Ertimur & Gilly, 2011). User-generated content images enhance traditional product presentations as they are seen as more credible and authentic since the creators often mirror the consumers and share relatable experiences (Ertimur & Gilly, 2011). Stern (1994) identified four authenticity factors in advertising messages: rhetorical purpose, fictive status, narrative structure, and the use of a persona.

In particular, the persona plays a crucial role in commercial messages, as explored in empirical cases. Stern (1994) defines the persona as the individual delivering the message. She discusses the accountability for the message: in advertisements, the company is typically responsible for this role. However, in the case of UGC, ordinary individuals create and are accountable for the content, positioning the message as more authentic if perceived by consumers as genuine peer-to-peer communication that simulates the realism of everyday life concerning consumer behaviour (Stern, 1994). Conversely, if consumers attribute the message's origin to a company, the authenticity is compromised. Additionally, Schlegel and Hicks (2011) highlighted that it's challenging to discern the true motivation behind a persona's message. While an individual can ascertain their authenticity, determining the authenticity of others is more complex, though people often attempt to judge it (Moulard, Garrity & Rice, 2015).

Additionally, a 2023 study involving more than 1,000 consumers from the United States, assessed attitudes towards brands that utilize traditional influencer marketing versus those that incorporate user-generated content. The findings indicated that 86% of participants trusted brands with UGC more, while only 12% were inclined to purchase products promoted by influencers, highlighting UGC's superior perception of authenticity (Kemp, 2023). Mathur et al. (2022) identified that the perceived value, trustworthiness, and credibility of user-generated content significantly influence consumer attitudes and their intentions to make online purchases. Brown et al. (2003) discovered

that authenticity enhances the effectiveness of messages by enabling recipients to relate to both the message and its originator. Furthermore, Fritz et al. (2017) demonstrated that brand authenticity positively affects consumer behaviour, as individuals tend to trust and interact more with content they consider authentic and genuine, rather than content that appears to be purely commercially driven, as noted by Smith et al. (2011). These results offer solid proof that UGC can serve as a powerful tool for brands to connect with their target demographics on a deeper, more personal level, fostering stronger brand-consumer relationships. Leveraging genuine testimonials and positive feedback from satisfied customers can effectively enhance a brand's trustworthiness and credibility, which, in turn, can contribute to increased customer loyalty (Gilliland, 2019).

Secondly, UGC has proven to be an effective means of driving engagement and brand awareness, as it exploits the expansive reach and influence of social networks and online communities. By tapping into the creativity and advocacy of their own customers, brands can amplify their marketing efforts organically, reaching broader audiences and generating invaluable word-of-mouth referrals. Online user reviews play a pivotal role in shaping consumer opinions prior to purchases, and the attention paid to these reviews constitutes a crucial element of digital WOM communication (Anindya et al, 2012). Consequently, digital word-of-mouth is a vital influencer of consumer perceptions and their subsequent buying choices and decision processes (Agarwal, 2020). Moreover, UGC empowers consumers, transforming them from passive spectators into active participants in the brand narrative, thus fostering a sense of ownership and loyalty. In essence, the integration of UGC into marketing strategies not only enhances brand credibility and visibility but also cultivates meaningful connections with consumers, ultimately driving long-term success and sustainability in the ever-evolving digital marketplace.

1.3.1 User Generated Content vs Brand Generated Content

Nowadays, marketers encounter a myriad of obstacles due to the significant transformations occurring among customers, brands, and media platforms. Consumers have drastically altered their media consumption, habits, and preferences after the proliferation of alternative media channels. This in turn impacted how they access information and what makes them choose one brand over another. In this day and age, multitasking has brought consumers to live in an everlasting state of fragmented concentration, never truly able to focus completely on the task at hand (Batra & Keller, 2016).

This indicates that brands face a considerable challenge in capturing the attention of the average user, given the evolving nature of how customers engage with information. Traditional top-down

communication models have given way to a more complex and decentralized landscape, diminishing the marketer's direct influence. Consequently, the question arises: what strategies can effectively engage the customer base, heighten awareness, and cultivate interest in a product? The answer predominantly lies upon two distinct yet crucial types of content: Firm-Generated Content (FGC), also known as Brand Generated Content, and User-Generated Content (UGC). While the latter has been extensively addressed, it is now imperative to elucidate the concept of FGC.

Tunçel and Yilmaz (2020) define Firm-Generated Content as “*all types of content created under the control of firms to be used in their own social media channels*”. Previous literature emphasizes the varying valances and impacts UGC and FGC have on purchase intention, contingent upon the specific stage within the marketing funnel. Research indicates that marketing communications can exert a dual effect on consumers: one is an informative impact and the other a persuasive influence (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; Riley, Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1954). The former one suggests that marketing communications, including both Firm-Generated Content and User-Generated Content, raise consumers' awareness of a brand's existence and its attributes. Likewise, the persuasive effect implies that content has the capacity to convince consumers of the benefits of brands and persuade them to purchase their products (Herr et al., 1991). On the other hand, source credibility refers to the degree to which a source is viewed as having pertinent expertise regarding the topic of communication and is trusted to offer an unbiased opinion on the matter (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). Hence, source credibility comprises two primary dimensions: source trustworthiness and source expertise. Persuasive effects play a crucial role in the stages of consideration and purchase intent. The authors hypothesize that the effectiveness of both FGC and UGC in these stages depends on the perceived source expertise and trustworthiness (Colicev, Kumar, & O'Connor, 2019).

The Awareness stage

In the marketing funnel, brand awareness lies at the very top of the pipe, making it the first and thus one of the most important marketing initiatives. Previously, it was proposed that Firm-Generated Content (FGC) and User-Generated Content (UGC) are linked to brand awareness through their informative impact. Specifically, the mere exposure effect theory suggests that the presence of content on users' newsfeeds contributes to building brand awareness (Gordon & Holyoak, 1983). Consequently, regardless of the content's sentiment or vividness, increased exposure should boost brand awareness. Due to the inherent dynamics of social networks, it is hypothesized that consumers encounter UGC more frequently than FGC. While FGC typically incorporates brand identifiers, reinforcing brand recall among existing audiences, social media

algorithms prioritize the visibility and dissemination of UGC on newsfeeds. Notably, users only receive FGC if they have previously subscribed or engaged with the brand, limiting its reach to audiences already familiar with the brand. In contrast, UGC has the potential to reach users who may be unfamiliar with the brand. This effect enables UGC to exert a greater informative influence during the awareness phase (Colicev, Kumar, & O'Connor, 2019).

Consideration and Purchase Intent

In the following stages, marketers focus on persuading prospect customers as opposed to solely providing information. It is at this stage that consumers commonly determine whether to include the brand in their consideration set to form purchase intentions (Bruyn & Lilien, A multi-stage model of word-of-mouth influence through viral marketing., 2008). Petty and Cacioppo (1986) propose that the persuasiveness of marketing communications is influenced by the credibility of the source, which is determined by both trustworthiness and expertise. It is suggested that messages originating from highly trustworthy or expert sources tend to induce more significant attitude changes compared to those from less credible sources (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Source trustworthiness and expertise vary widely among UGC and FGC. User-Generated Content is generally regarded as more trustworthy than FGC due to its nature: it originates from firsthand experiences and lacks profit motives (Ho-Dac, Carson, & Moore, 2013). Additionally, consistent surveys conducted by (Nielsen, 2013) indicate that consumers express greater trust in UGC (84%) compared to FGC (69%).

Therefore, if consumers prioritize source trustworthiness, it follows that UGC would show a higher positive association with consideration and purchase intent compared to FGC. In contrast, Brand Generated Content is associated with greater source expertise than User-Generated Content.

Prior studies indicate that source expertise tends to be more influential in persuasion compared to source trustworthiness (Kübler & Albers, 1985). During the consideration and purchase intent phases, consumers are exposed to higher perceived purchase risk, which can be alleviated by seeking expert guidance rather than relying solely on social media discussions (Nam & Kannan, 2014). UGC often contains a significant amount of noise and disturbances (Ruths & Pfeffer, 2014), which translates in a longer and thorough information processing.

While UGC may be perceived as more trustworthy, FGC is expected to be more persuasive due to its expertise in delivering product-related messages and content design. Consequently, when a brand serves as the message source, consumers tend to possess greater persuasion knowledge

(Mayrhofer, Matthes, & Einwiller, 2020). This suggests that User-Generated Content as the message source is associated with the lowest persuasion knowledge. Scholars suggest that in the consideration and purchase intent phases, source expertise is more impactful than source trustworthiness, leading consumers to place greater emphasis on FGC (Colicev, Kumar, & O'Connor, 2019).

Post Purchase Satisfaction

Considering that consumers typically need to experience the product firsthand before forming their own perceptions of the brand, the persuasive impact of brand generated content is expected to diminish significantly in the satisfaction stage. Nevertheless, FGC can still influence consumers through its informative aspect. On the other hand, UGC has the potential to bridge the gap between expectations and actual product experiences. Following a purchase, consumers often attempt to alleviate cognitive dissonance by seeking advice from others who have had similar experiences (Festinger, 1957). Indeed, customers whose expectations were met or unmet frequently turn to reviews to either validate or challenge their viewpoints (Shoham, 2017). Even dissatisfied customers may be influenced by UGC due to social pressures and herd behavior (Berger, 2014). Consequently, it is argued that UGC has the potential to also enhance customer satisfaction.

The power of user-generated content

The previous paragraph highlighted how UGC contribute to the broadening of brand awareness horizons and that it tends to collect higher levels of trust, while bridging the gap between preconceived expectations and actual product experiences in the consumer journey.

Media sources and scholarly research stress the importance of User-Generated branded material, advocating for companies to actively foster its production due to its cost-efficiency and effectiveness (Olenski, 2017). Users are motivated to create such content for reasons like personal expression, integration, and social engagement (Merckel, 2017). Tactics such as real-world tie-ins and contests frequently prompt users to generate content. Studies investigate into the attractiveness, credibility, and perceived quality of user-generated ads, revealing that when users perceive content as commercial, they tend to scrutinize it rather than being influenced (Hoffman, 2010). Additionally, research examines how disclosure affects user-generated content, yet there's a gap in understanding how different sources influence the activation of persuasion knowledge. Comparing user-generated and company-generated content suggests that users may not always

recognize user-generated content as persuasive, which could offer companies a potential advantage (Mayrhofer, Matthes, & Einwiller, 2020).

1.3.2 WOM and Engagement

Word-of-Mouth (WOM), as initially conceptualized by Arndt (1967), refers to the oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator, whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, a product, or a service. This traditional form of WOM highlights the importance of perceived unbiased, non-commercial communication in influencing consumer behavior. In the evolution to the digital realm, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) extends this concept to the online environment. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) define eWOM as *“any positive, negative, or neutral statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet”*. This definition stresses the transition of WOM into the digital space, emphasizing the wide reach and accessibility of consumer opinions and experiences through the internet.

In light of these foundational understandings, it is evident that Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and UGC are both significant phenomena in the digital age, deeply influencing consumer behavior and engagement strategies. Comparatively, while both eWOM and UGC are facilitated by web 2.0 technologies allowing for widespread dissemination and potential anonymity between the content creator and the receiver, they differ fundamentally in scope, intent, and content. eWOM serves as a potent conduit for disseminating consumer opinions and experiences, directly influencing purchasing decisions and brand perceptions through the lens of perceived authenticity and trustworthiness. On the other hand, UGC represents a broader canvas, where consumers not only discuss but also creatively contribute to the brand narrative, fostering a community-centric engagement that extends beyond mere product endorsements. UGC is not limited by the necessity to relate to commercial entities and emphasizes original or collaboratively created content, highlighting the creativity and personal contribution of the user. eWOM, conversely, is inherently linked to commercial products or services and does not necessarily require original content creation, focusing instead on the sharing of opinions and experiences. Both eWOM and UGC, while distinct in their essence, converge in their ability to amplify consumer engagement through authentic and personalized content. For marketers, recognizing and strategically integrating these phenomena can lead to the cultivation of deeper consumer relationships, enhanced brand loyalty, and ultimately, a more engaged and active audience.

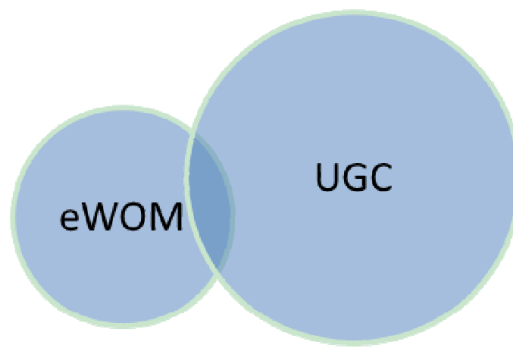


Figure 3: Graphical representation of the relation between eWOM and UGC

In the intersection of marketing and consumer engagement, these distinctions are crucial in allowing marketers to craft more effective strategies that employ the unique strengths of each phenomenon to foster deeper consumer relationships and engagement. The formal separation of eWOM and UGC by Nguyen and Tong (2020) underlines the strategic importance of recognizing eWOM as a powerful tool for leveraging consumer opinions to influence brand perception and purchase decisions, while UGC offers a broader platform for brand interaction, providing insight into consumer preferences and enhancing community engagement through creative content.

1.3.3 Short Summary of Possible Legal Implication

So far it has been highlighted that the advent of Web 2.0 played a vital role in the creation and dissemination of User-Generated Content, creating a democratic environment within digital spaces. This democratization, while empowering, has opened a plethora of legal challenges, spanning from intellectual property disputes to privacy invasions, defamation, and beyond. At the heart of these challenges lies the intricacy of applying traditional legal frameworks to the multifaceted, borderless nature of the internet (George & Scerri, 2007)

The legal quandary primarily revolves around copyright issues, with users frequently uploading content that infringes upon the intellectual property rights of others, thus igniting contention among copyright holders. The proliferation of UGC also raises substantial concerns regarding privacy, as the ease of content sharing can inadvertently lead to the unauthorized dissemination of private information, breaching the privacy of individuals. This becomes particularly pronounced in incidents involving sensitive or compromising material, which, once uploaded, becomes almost indelible due to its rapid propagation across various platforms (George & Scerri, 2007).

Another significant legal hurdle is the perpetuation of hate speech and defamation through UGC, highlighting the struggle to balance freedom of expression with the protection against harmful content. The anonymous or pseudonymous nature of the internet further complicates accountability, making it challenging to trace and address the origins of such content.

Moreover, the role of intermediaries, such as ISPs (Internet Service Providers) and content hosting platforms, introduces additional legal complexities. These entities find themselves at a crossroads, navigating between the imperatives of monitoring and removing illicit or infringing content and the obligation to protect the rights to freedom of expression and privacy. The legal protections and obligations of these intermediaries, shaped by statutes and case law, influence their capacity and willingness to police content, thus impacting the overall governance of UGC.

In essence, the state of the art in UGC presents a legal frontier that demands nuanced understanding and adaptation of existing legal principles. It calls for a collaborative effort among lawmakers, platforms, and users to foster an online environment that respects both the liberating potential of UGC and the legal rights implicated by its widespread use. This dynamic legal landscape highlights the need for ongoing dialogue, innovation in legal thinking, and possibly new legislative frameworks to address the unique challenges posed by UGC in the digital age (George & Scerri, 2007).

1.4 UGC through the lens of semiotic

This chapter helped establish a comprehensive framework for understanding User-Generated Content within the realm of marketing, clarifying its impact on consumer engagement, brand loyalty, and the democratization of brand narratives. This foundational exploration has set the stage for a deeper examination of UGC, transitioning from a marketing-centric view to a more sophisticated, semiotic analysis. The discussion will turn to user-generated content through the lens of semiotics, aiming to unveil the web of signs, symbols, and meanings that users and communities weave within the digital ecosystem. This semiotic perspective will not only enrich our comprehension of UGC's role in shaping consumer culture but also highlight its potential to influence, and be influenced by, the broader network of societal narratives and identities. Thus, this paragraph seeks to bridge the gap between marketing strategies and semiotic theory, providing a holistic understanding of UGC's impact on contemporary digital landscapes.

1.4.1 Background and Context

Semiotics, the study of symbols and signs and their use or interpretation, has a rich history tracing back to ancient times and transcending disciplines. It began with the insights of philosophers like Augustine, Aristotle and Plato, who first contemplated the nature and function of signs in communication (Eco, Lambertini, Marmo, and Tabarroni, 1986). This intellectual pursuit was later advanced by figures such as John Locke in 1690, who explored the relationship between signs, ideas, and the external world (Sebeok, 1976). Nevertheless, the development of semiotics into a standalone discipline only took shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, principally due to the contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguist, Charles Sanders Peirce, a philosopher, and Algirdas J. Greimas, a literary scientist, who introduced a systematic framework for semiotics, emphasizing its applicability beyond linguistics to include all forms of signification (Syafri Idris, 2020).

De Saussure introduced the concept of the “sign” as the combination of the “signifier” and the “signified”. In his structuralist framework, the signifier refers to the form that a sign takes; it could be a word, a sound, or an image, essentially the physical form or the medium through which the sign is communicated. The signified, on the other hand, is the concept or the meaning that the signifier represents or evokes in the mind of the receiver. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and based on convention within a linguistic community, which means that there is no inherent reason why a particular signifier should be associated with a specific signified, except for the fact that it is agreed upon within the language or sign system (Syafri Idris, 2020). Peirce further developed these concepts by introducing a triadic structure adding the notion of interpretant and highlighting the logics of interpretation.

Greimas’ work focused on the concept of narrativity, a core feature existing in all types of discourse. Central is his intuition about “*the narrative component which plays the role of a universal model in the content level of languages*” (Marsciani & Zinna, 1991). Narrative structures are investigated at the deepest level of text, through the semiotic square, a tool he developed in 1968, together with the French semiotician Rastier. The logical square can be employed to examine the relationships within a semantic category, through the concept of contrariety, contradiction, and complementarity. Contrariety is also called *qualitative opposition*, because the two terms involved in the relationship possess properties that are opposite to each other (Marrone, 2007), such as black/white. Contradiction, instead, refers to a situation where the opposition is privative, because it relates a term endowed with a property to another term in which such property is absent (white/not-white). In the relationship of contrariety, the opposition exists between positive terms, each possessing a

specific quality. Conversely, in the relationship of contradiction, the opposition is between a positive term, characterized by its unique features, and a negative term, which lacks inherent characteristics, except for not possessing the features of the term it is related to. The third type of relationship shown in the square, referred to as complementarity, emerges among elements that seem synonymous but actually result from the convergence of contrariety and contradiction, such as “non-white” and “black” (Marrone, 2007).

The square serves to delineate and visualize the logical and semantic connections that give rise to meaning, thereby elucidating the intricate semantic field upon which every text relies on. In order to understand this methodology, is necessary to remember that meaning manifests itself in the form of signification through a generative process from the simplest to the most complex, from the most abstract to the most concrete. The elementary structure of signification, located at the deep semio-narrative level, can be thus represented through the semiotic square. The Greimasian theoretical model allows then to analyse not only oral and literary narratives but also texts with non-linear signifiers, up to major social phenomena¹⁰.

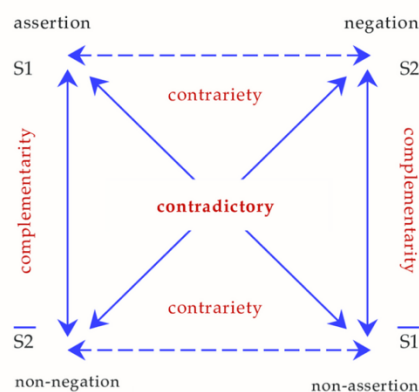


Figure 4: Greimas' Semiotic Square

The semiotic square can be viewed as a universal dynamic model, characterized by a sequence of logical transformations that occur one after another, on which the narrative syntax is based upon. From the deep axiological level, the semio-narrative one is reached, transitioning from logical operations to syntactic actions, and from a simple sentence to full narration. This shift is not about the content of a specific narrative yet, but rather about establishing a syntactic framework capable of producing any potential narrative, with the analysis moving towards “who does what”. In this

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.giacomobelloni.com/styled-57/page32/>

framework, the categories are termed actants, and the logical connections are treated as functions¹¹. An actant is broadly defined as a category of characters that, despite changing appearances within a narrative, fulfil consistent roles. This class can represent an abstract concept or a collective entity, and a single character can embody multiple actantial roles, either simultaneously or sequentially. Furthermore, an actant might not physically appear in the narrative or directly participate in the utterance. The model illustrating the typical structural functions in storytelling is called *actantial model*, and includes the roles of “hero”, “villain” (the protagonist’s adversary), “object” (the goal of the quest), “helper” (assisting the hero), and “sender” (who sets the quest in motion). These sets depict fundamental narrative patterns:

1. **Subject/Object:** represents the quest or desire, forming the axis of desire.
2. **Sender/Receiver:** symbolizes transmission or communication, forming the axes of knowledge.
3. **Helper/Opponent:** describes support or opposition to the subject’s efforts, forming the axis of power.

Each role plays a vital part in the narrative, without which the story might lack completeness. Hence, an “actant” represents more than just a character; it serves as a crucial structural element around which the narrative unfolds (Greimas, 1974).

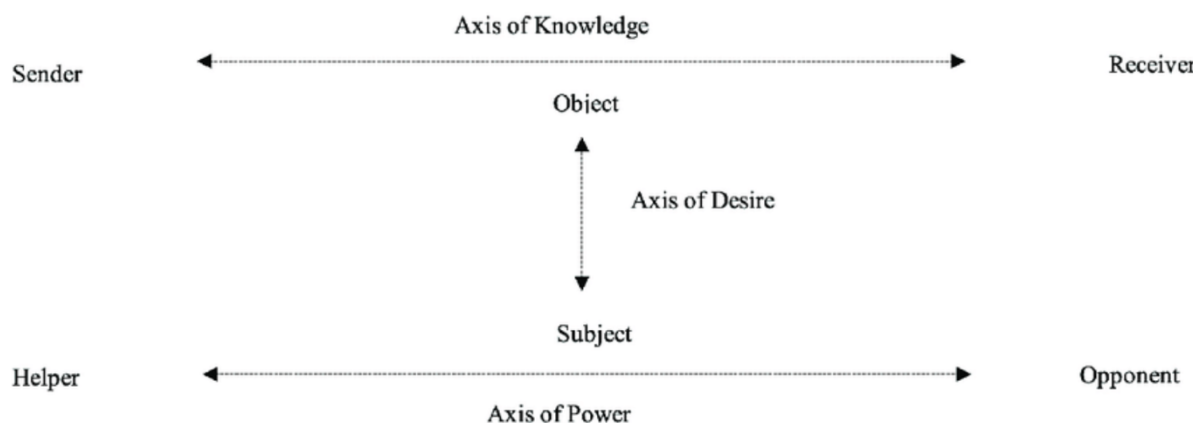


Figure 5: Greimas' Actantial Model (1966)¹²

¹¹ Source: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/aboutus/resources/stella/projects/glasgowreview/issue3-rulewicz/>

¹² Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Actantial-Model-of-A-J-Greimas-Source-Eldridge-2016-p-147-Gertsen-Soderberg_fig1_357268803

Considering how narrative units are grouped, Greimas and Courtés (2007) noted a frequent appearance of certain patterns in discourse, conceptualizing narrativity as a structured journey outlined in a canonical schema comprising four phases, wherein narrative roles, understood as abstract functions, are clearly distinguished from the characters that animate the surface of the text (Peverini, 2012). The *canonical model* provides a framework to arrange the elements of an action into different components. The action element comprehends competence, which emerges from the necessary factors to execute the action (desire to act, obligation to act, knowledge to act, and ability to act), and performance, which is the actual execution of the action, enabled by the development of competence. Manipulation specifically addresses the desire and obligation to act. Lastly, the sanction component involves assessing the actualization of the action and the subsequent consequences (either rewards or punishments) that the actor receives¹³.

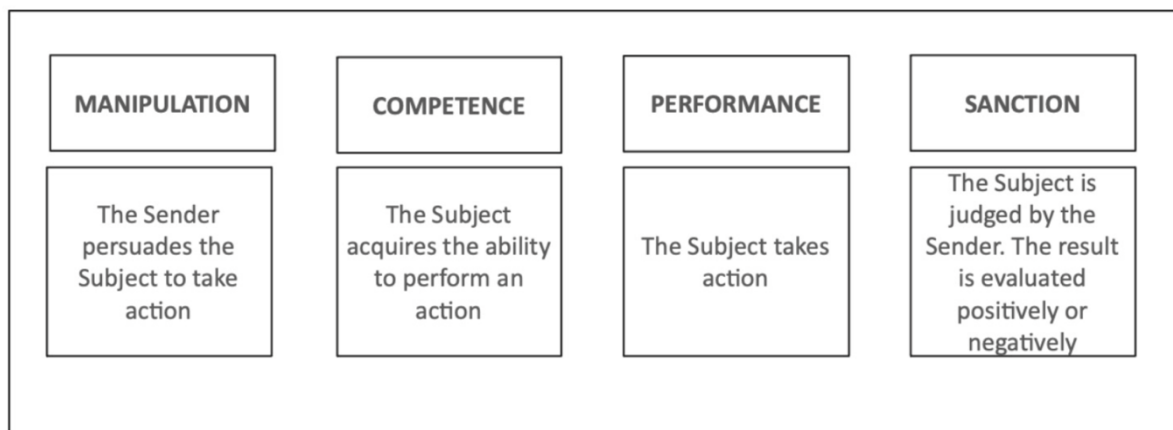


Figure 6: The Canonical Model

1.4.2 Semiotics applied to media content

Semiotics has evolved to explore the complex interplay between signs and meaning across various fields, including literature, art, and marketing. For example, the disciplines of management and marketing have increasingly incorporated semiotic principles. Semiotics has become a significant tool in advertising and consumer studies, as evidenced by the research of scholars like Hackley (2003), Levy (1959), Mick and Oswald (2006), Umiker-Sebeok (1987), Peverini (2012), and Marrone (2007). At the core of their theories lies the notion that consumers engage in a process of interpreting and finding meaning in marketing messages, essentially shaping and perpetuating cultural norms and shared understandings (Hackley, 2003).

¹³ Source: <http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/canonical-narrative-schema.asp>

According to Peverini, semiotics can be seen as a sort of “toolbox” useful for deconstructing and reconstructing the functioning of media contents. Under this perspective, reconstructing the meaning of a text means attempting to grasp the complexity of its structure (Peverini, 2012).

Through advertising brands can promote products and services while simultaneously narrating stories that resonate emotionally with viewers. Therefore, this outlet becomes not only a mere communication device with economic purposes, but a complex phenomenon with a strong linguistic and expressive character that profoundly influences cultural and social models (Codeluppi, 2020). Elements such as heroes or adversaries can be incorporated in the narrative, while the product being advertised embodies a metaphorical solution to the challenges presented by the characters involved. It becomes important to note how conflicts are introduced and resolved within the story as to captures the audience’s interest and fosters empathy. The resolution should ideally showcase the brand’s competence and values, illustrating how it can overcome obstacles or solve problems in ways that align with its core identity. Maintaining consistency between the characters and their actions is also vital to keep the narrative authentic and to ensure that the brand’s message remains credible and engaging.

The importance of a story thus lies in informing but also emotionally engaging the audience, allowing consumers to see themselves within the narrative or identify with the characters.

This emotional connection can significantly enhance the narrative’s effectiveness in building lasting relationships with customers (Peverini, 2012).

Furthermore, through the deliberate selection of images, languages, and scenarios, advertisers can challenge or reinforce societal stereotypes and ideals. Semiotic strategies also make advertisements persuasive and memorable, influencing consumer behaviour through techniques like repetition, the endorsements of celebrities, and positive associations with music and imagery. The concept of “*débrayage*”, or disjunction, further explains that an advertisement, once completed, becomes autonomous — capable of being interpreted in various ways that might extend beyond the original intentions of its creators. This autonomy allows a brand to be perceived differently, depending on how audiences interpret the ad’s signs and symbols. Additionally, advertisements often depict senders and receivers not as they are but as idealized versions of reality, using manipulation to craft a brand identity that embodies certain values or ideals, thus appealing more strongly to targeted consumer segments (Peverini, 2012).

Brands function not only as marketing tools but also as means to forge and communicate cultural identity reflecting and reinforcing social values and beliefs. Marrone (2007) defines a brand as a

semiotic phenomenon that transcends pure economics and touches on social and cultural spheres. According to him, the brand is ultimately “*the truth*” of semiotics, each utterance, by its mere existence and irrespective of its specific thematic content, possess a distinct *mark* and “*every discourse, therefore, is in some ways a branded discourse*” (Marrone, 2007). Brands create shared meanings and impact social and personal dynamics acting as a pure sign within a broader system of meanings and representations, influencing consumer perception and social behaviour. They also display social responsibility, as they represent a potential force able to influence and alter social structures and relationships. Every thematic content requires an expressive form for communication, meaning no pure content can exist independently from its means of expression, such as images, texts, or other marketing materials. The selection and design of these mediums are not neutral but deeply influence how the theme is perceived and interpreted by the public.

Marketing and branding professionals should be aware of how narrative and visual elements work together to shape brand perception, and as Marrone highlights, on ensuring that the brand theme is communicated effectively and aligns with communication goals.

Codeluppi (2020) further reflects upon the ever-changing nature of brands and the direction they are moving towards. Today, brands can create economic value through the contributions of consumers. This includes a surplus of innovations, ideas, and creativity produced by individuals’ daily behaviours, and experiences. This transformation is largely enabled by the intensive “mediatization” of social life and consumer culture, where companies increasingly act as communication mediums — relational tools and autonomous environments where producers and consumers connect (Codeluppi, 2020). As noted by Celia Lury (2004), a brand’s ability to create and manage social relationships directly generates its economic value. Companies build close relationships with their consumers, enabling them to gather detailed knowledge detecting not just actions and words but also emotions. This capability has evolved from the early 20th century focus on eliciting emotional responses from consumers to a point where such reactions can now be precisely measured, fostering closer consumer relationships, and exemplifying what Eva Illouz termed “emotional capitalism”, where emotions are integral to economic behaviour and the emotional lives of the middle classes are shaped by economic logic and exchange.

Consequently, global brands are shifting their strategies. Instead of creating defined worlds to draw consumers in, they now increasingly set up open spaces that seek contributions from individuals, inviting them to incorporate their values, aspirations, desires, and personal experiences into a collaborative process. Thus, the brand world is fundamentally born from a process in which

consumer-generated content plays a central role, enhancing the brand's communicative effectiveness as consumers tend to shape it in their own image.

In the confluence of semiotics, marketing, and user-generated content, lies a network of signs and symbols, each narrating the unique stories brands and consumers co-create in the digital marketplace (Mikhaeil and Baskerville, 2019). The intersection of semiotics and UGC also highlights the dynamic between the intentionality behind content creation and the interpretive freedom of the audience. Each piece of user-generated content serves as a signifier, carrying with it intended and unintended meanings that are deciphered within the cultural and social contexts of both the creator and the interpreter.

This semiotic perspective elevates the analysis of UGC beyond mere content review, inviting a deeper exploration of the symbols, metaphors, and narratives that permeate digital interactions. Such an approach reveals the representational complexity of UGC as a reflection of the multifaceted human experience, bridging the gap between the subjective intentions of content creators and the diverse interpretations of their audience. Through this lens, social media platforms emerge not just as repositories of content but as vibrant forums for semiotic exchange, where meanings are continually negotiated, contested, and redefined. Cultural semiotics also bridges these components through the interpretation of significant signs and symbols for a specific consumer demographic. Its objective extends beyond merely recognizing the cultural standards and ambitions that influence the group; it also seeks to synchronize the visual, textual, and auditory lexicon to this framework.

Through this synchronization, a brand can access the unconscious routes of decision-making present within the consumer, fostering a natural affinity between the consumer and the brand's essence¹⁴. This multidisciplinary approach can help marketers understand the deeper cultural and psychological aspects of consumer behavior, enabling them to craft messages that resonate with their audience's values and beliefs, thereby enhancing brand communication and engagement (Mikhaeil and Baskerville, 2019).

1.5 Current and future landscape for UGC

This chapter has examined so far, the emergence and evolution of User-Generated Content, tracing its origins and exploring its impact on marketers. A critical element, without which UGC

¹⁴ Source: <https://quantumcs.com/why-marketeers-need-to-investigate-culture-semiotics/>

could not exist, is Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is pivotal because it represents the transition from static web pages to dynamic and interactive online environments, enabling users not just to consume content but to create and share it as well. This tool guided a revolutionary phase of engagement and collective contribution online. Platforms such as Wikipedia, YouTube, and Facebook facilitated user-driven content creation and sharing across extensive networks, while entities like Amazon and Airbnb transformed conventional business landscapes through peer-to-peer trading platforms. The foundation for these ground-breaking changes was laid by enhancements in web development technologies, the expansion of cloud computing, and the proliferation of mobile technology¹⁵. Furthermore, this allowed for the democratization of content creation which fundamentally altered how consumers interact with brands, placing the power of brand narratives partially in the hands of the audience.

However, we are currently witnessing the transition from Web 2.0 to a more advanced Web 3.0. Read-write-own web, often referred to as the semantic web, aims to create more intelligent, connected, and open websites. It emphasizes the use of machine understanding of data to provide a more personalized and efficient internet experience, which promises to further revolutionize the relationship between consumers and brands by enhancing personalization, privacy, and decentralization.

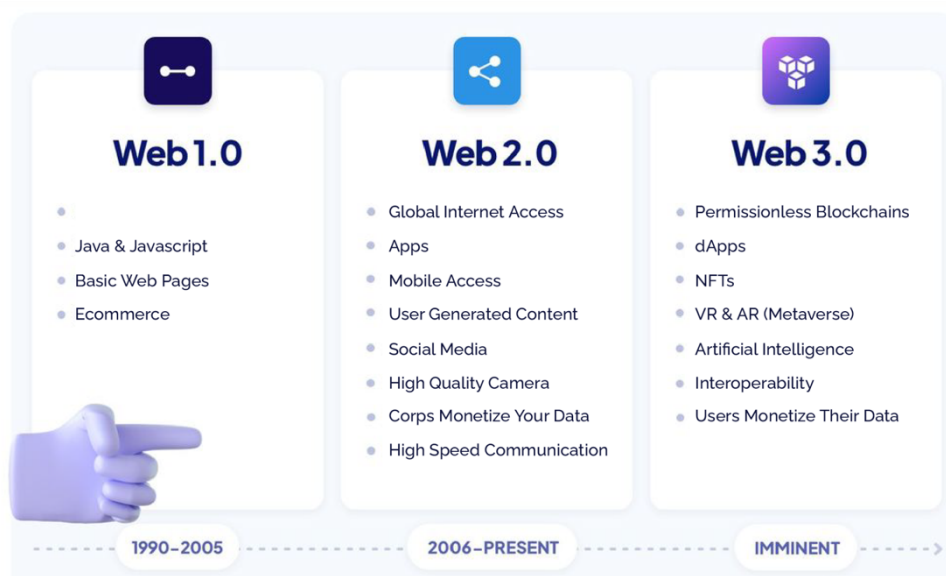


Figure 7: The shift from Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0¹⁶

¹⁵ Source: <https://holon.investments/how-did-we-get-here-the-shift-from-web-2-0-to-web-3-0-is-happening-now/>

¹⁶ Source: <https://www.creative-tim.com/blog/web-3-0/what-is-web-3-0-everything-explained/>

The transition to Web 3.0 will significantly reflect how consumers interact with brands and their new, augmented way of creating content. Emerging technologies also hold the power to revolutionize consumer behaviours, managerial practices, and corporate strategies (Evans, 2017). Among these, artificial intelligence (AI) stands out as a transformative force across various sectors, including healthcare and retail, playing a pivotal role in shaping interactions between customers and brands. Companies are leveraging AI and machine learning (ML) to enhance customer experiences by anticipating consumer needs, supporting staff in delivering superior service, and enabling bots to handle routine inquiries. AI is driving efficiencies at a scale never seen before, automating and linking business operations, which has broad implications for numerous organizational roles, notably marketing. This urges marketing leaders to revisit and potentially revamp internal skills, planning, and the nature of customer engagements. While some organizations are proactively incorporating AI into their strategic decisions (Baker, 2017; Karpińska-Nowak, 2017), others are finding it challenging to fully grasp its potential and integrate it effectively¹⁷. With the swift advancement of AI technology, it's crucial for marketers to understand how to exploit its capabilities fully, tapping into the vast set of opportunities it presents for content generation. This understanding is not merely about keeping pace with technological progress but about seizing the potential to revolutionize the way content is created, tailored, and delivered, with significant repercussions for customers and other stakeholders. Embracing AI allows for a more subtle and dynamic approach to content, one that can adapt in real-time to the evolving preferences and behaviours of consumers. This strategic integration of AI into content generation processes promises not only to enhance the relevance and engagement of marketing efforts but also to redefine the relationships between brands, their audiences, and the broader market ecosystem (Campbell, Sands, Ferraro, & Tsao, 2019).

¹⁷ Source: <https://www.creative-tim.com/blog/web-3-0/what-is-web-3-0-everything-explained/>

Chapter 2. Generative AI: the impact on UGC

2.1. Artificial Intelligence: definition and overview

“Artificial Intelligence” (AI) has become a buzzword in today’s world, echoing through discussions in countless forms. Despite its frequent use, arriving at a single, clear definition feels almost like a quest for a moving target, making it a concept that’s as intriguing as it is elusive. In order to carry out this monumental task, it may help to break it down and to provide some clarification prior to any further investigation. To begin, let’s clarify “intelligence”. Simmons and Chappell (1988) describe it as “*unconcealed ability to decipher problems and an inherent ability to learn escape procedures from problems*”, while Professor Christopher Manning describes it “*as the ability to learn and perform suitable techniques to solve problems and achieve goals, appropriate to the context in an uncertain, ever-varying world*” (Manning, 2020 and Geru, Micu, & Capatina, 2018). Merriam-Webster (2024) defines “artificial” as “*man-made, caused or produced by a human, lacking in natural or spontaneous quality*”. “Artificial”, hence, refers to something made by human skill and labor, rather than occurring naturally in the world. It describes objects, environments, or processes that are created or synthesized to imitate or replace natural counterparts, often involving technology or human intervention.

To put it simply, Artificial Intelligence is a branch of computer science which describes the ability of machines to exhibit abilities distinct from the natural intelligence displayed by humans and animals. Considering these points, AI can be understood as a technology designed to address and solve specific problems (Saleh, 2019). It possesses a wide range of capabilities, including the ability to predict and adapt by analysing patterns in vast datasets through its algorithms. It can autonomously make decisions, enhancing human intelligence, offering insights, and boosting productivity. Through continuous learning, AI develops analytical models that enable it to refine its task performance via extensive trial and error. As a forward-looking tool, AI revolutionizes data analysis and integration, facilitating improved decision-making processes. Additionally, AI exhibits potentials in motion and perception, further extending its utility and application across various domains (Kumar, 2018 & Saleh, 2019).

Within the domain of Artificial Intelligence research, two principal types of AI have emerged, each distinguished by its capacity and implementations. The first type, often referred to as *narrow* or *weak AI*, specializes in executing specific tasks, such as facial recognition or driving, without retaining sentience. The ultimate objective within this field is the development of *artificial general intelligence* (AGI), or *strong AI*, which exhibits the versatility to tackle any problem, related to human intelligence. This form of AI aims to surpass human cognitive abilities across a broad spectrum,

with the eventual creation of superintelligence (ASI), an entity exceeding the intellectual capabilities of humanity's most brilliant minds (Saracco, 2018).

Additionally, AI can be categorized based on its operational functionalities into four distinct types. Reactive machines, the most basic form, operate without the ability to draw from past experiences, exemplified by IBM's Deep Blue chess system. Limited Memory AI retains information temporarily to inform decisions, a technology utilized in modern self-driving vehicles. The third category, Theory of Mind, represents an aspirational class aiming to emulate human psychological processes, such as understanding emotions and mental states, though fully realized examples remain within the domain of fiction. Lastly, Self-Awareness in AI, the concept of machines possessing consciousness, stays as a speculative frontier, often explored in science fiction rather than present-day technology (Kumar, 2018).

This delineation highlights the diverse potential of AI, from specialized tools enhancing specific tasks to the theoretical frontier of machines with human-like consciousness and beyond. Each category reflects not only the current state of AI development but also its ambitious towards complexity and autonomy.

2.1.1 ML, NLP, and LLM: what are those?

Within the subject of Artificial Intelligence, terminologies such as ML (Machine Learning), NLP (Natural Language Processing), and LM (Language Models) are often encountered. The following paragraph aims to further explore these topics by providing a clear definition for each subset.

Machine Learning (ML), falls under the umbrella of AI and studies how computer agents can advance their perception, understanding, reasoning, or behaviour through exposure to data or experiences (Manning, 2020). Machine Learning is a set of algorithms able to empower software applications to strengthen the accuracy and specificity of responses without being directly programmed to do so. The core aim of machine learning is to craft algorithms that can process input data and employ statistical analysis to forecast outcomes, with the capability to refine these predictions as new data becomes available (Saleh, 2019). This approach involves defining a specific goal and allowing the machine to learn the necessary steps to achieve that goal on its own through training and accumulating experience (Kumar, 2018). To achieve this, ML integrates principles from fields such as computer science, statistics, psychology, neuroscience, economics, and control theory (Manning, 2020).

Within artificial intelligence and computer science lies another fundamental area of focus, Natural Language Processing (NLP). NLP covers research and approaches that facilitate meaningful interactions between humans and machines using Natural Language by merging elements from linguistics, and mathematics, aiming to convert human language into instructions that computers can understand and act upon (Kang, Cai, Tan, Huang, & Liu, 2020). NLP gains significance importance in the marketing domain through applications such as customer care, chatbots interactions, sentiment analysis and UGC¹⁸. Within the area of natural language processing, Large Language Models (LLM) are viewed as one of the most cutting-edge and hopeful areas of AI. The advancement of these models over time holds the promise of enhancing and automating a wide range of applications in numerous industries. They are developed by training on extensive volumes of text collected from a wide array of sources¹⁹.

In the field of artificial intelligence and, more specifically, within natural language processing, the systems are defined as being “rule-based” when operating according to a set of predefined linguistic rules. These rules are usually crafted by linguists and experts who encode grammar, syntax, semantics, and the logical structure of language into the system (Liu, 2014). Systems based on predefined rules are straightforward and economical, yet they fall short in flexibility and often struggle with uncertainty and predispositions²⁰. Machine-learning-based systems, instead, can learn from data, identify patterns, and make decisions with minimal human intervention. Rather than being explicitly programmed to perform a specific task, these systems are trained using large sets of data and algorithms that give them the ability to learn how to perform the required task.

¹⁸ Source: <https://medium.com/@balarampanda.ai/llm-large-language-model-what-is-that-fa51f472d886>

¹⁹ Source: <https://www.punto-informatico.it/cose-in-ai-il-llm-introduzione-al-large-language-model/>

²⁰ Source: <https://www.pecan.ai/blog/rule-based-vs-machine-learning-ai-which-produces-better-results/#:~:text=Rule%2Dbased%20systems%20rely%20on,can%20handle%20complex%20situations%20better.>

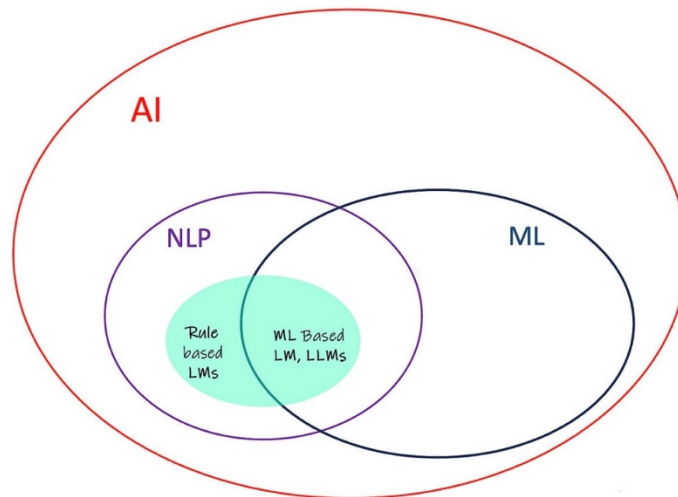


Figure 8: Venn Diagram of AI universe (2023)

Figure 5 categorizes different types of language models within the broader fields of AI, NLP, and ML, showing the relationships between these domains²¹.

To summarize, the exploration of AI terminologies such as Machine Learning (ML), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and Large Language Models (LLM) reveals the depth and breadth of Artificial Intelligence as a field. ML demonstrates the capacity for software to improve through exposure to data, emphasizing the importance of algorithms in predicting outcomes. NLP facilitates communication between humans and machines, highlighting the significance of understanding and processing human language. Lastly, the advancement of Large Language Models showcases the potential for automating and enhancing applications across various industries. Together, these subsets illustrate the evolving landscape of AI, where machine learning-based systems transcend rule-based approaches by adapting and learning from data, offering a peek into the future of technology-driven solutions.

2.1.2 Brief history of AI and key concepts

By the 1950s, a generation of scientists, mathematicians, and philosophers had culturally integrated the concept of artificial intelligence into their thinking, in part due to science fiction, which played a significant role in familiarizing the world with the idea of artificially intelligent robots²².

²¹ Source: <https://medium.com/@balarampanda.ai/llm-large-language-model-what-is-that-fa51f472d886>

²² Source: <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2017/history-artificial-intelligence/>

The English mathematician Alan Turing was one of the first to embark on a quest to dissect and reframe the question of whether machines could think. In his seminal paper “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (1950), he avoided the ambiguous task of defining “machine” and “think” by introducing a thought experiment known as the “Imitation Game” (later called the Turing Test). The Turing’s game involved three participants: a computer, a human, and an interrogator whose job was to discern which of the two was the machine. The computer’s success was measured by its ability to mimic human responses convincingly enough to make the interrogator’s task as difficult as possible. Turing’s motivation wasn’t to merely propose a game but to challenge the prevailing assumptions about intelligence, consciousness, and the capabilities of machines. By suggesting that a machine’s ability to exhibit behaviour indistinguishable from that of a human could be a measure of its thought, Turing was not claiming machines could think as humans do, instead, he suggested that if machines could convincingly imitate human intelligence, it would be worth considering them as having a form of intelligence. His paper laid foundational concepts for artificial intelligence, exploring the potential for machines to learn, adapt, and possibly even possess creativity, thus expanding the discourse on the limits of machine capabilities and the essence of thought itself (Turing, 1950).

However, prior to 1949, a crucial element necessary for intelligence was absent in computers: the ability to retain instructions rather than merely carrying them out. This meant that while computers were capable of following orders, they lacked the capacity to recall their actions. Furthermore, the financial burden of computing was substantial. During the early 1950s, renting a computer could cost as much as \$200,000 monthly, making them accessible only to elite academic institutions and major tech corporations. It was only between the late 50s and early 70s, that the field of Artificial Intelligence experienced significant growth. The capacity for information storage in computers and their speed increased. Thanks to cheaper manufacturing costs, they became widely available while the area of algorithms saw substantial enhancements (Anyoha, 2017).

A decade later, two researchers introduced the “deep learning” method which enabled computers to acquire knowledge through experience in a way similar to how the human brain makes complex decisions. Deep Neural Networks (DNN) was trained with large amounts of data to recognize and classify different phenomena, understand patterns and relationships, evaluate choices, and make predictions and decisions (IBM, 2024). One of the most significant milestones in Artificial Intelligence marking an inflection point occurred in 1997, when IBM’s Deep Blue, a computer program designed to play chess, triumphed over Gary Kasparov, who was the world chess champion at the time.

Following the landmark victory of IBM's Deep Blue over Gary Kasparov in 1997, the field of artificial intelligence saw accelerated growth and transformation. The subsequent decades steered in an era where AI systems began to dominate not just board games but daily human activities, revolutionizing industries from healthcare to finance. Innovations such as autonomous vehicles, intelligent personal assistants, and advanced predictive analytics became integral to modern life, showcasing AI's ability to extend beyond experimental applications to practical and impactful solutions.

Entering the 2020s, AI research and development have continued to evolve, driven by ever-increasing computational power and the proliferation of massive data sets. Current expectations for the future of AI are focusing on achieving greater general intelligence, where systems can perform any intellectual task that a human can do with equal or superior proficiency. Ethical considerations, such as privacy, security, and the socio-economic impacts of automation, have become sources of concerns as technological advancement progressed, solidifying the need for a safe and responsible integration of AI in modern society.

As AI systems become more sophisticated and ubiquitous, the anticipation is that they will not only enhance human capabilities but also facilitate unprecedented levels of collaboration between humans and machines. This synergy is expected to unlock new creative potentials and solve global challenges, such as climate change and sustainable development, proving that the journey from Turing's foundational concepts to future innovations doesn't stop at improving machines but extends to upgrading human life.

2.2 Application of AI in marketing: why is it becoming so important?

To fully appreciate the monumental impact AI is anticipated to have in the upcoming years, it is necessary to let the numbers illustrate its expected growth. Numerous are the reports anticipating the robust expansion that the artificial intelligence industry will face over the next ten years. Statista forecasts suggest that the AI sector's worth is set to climb from \$241.8 billion in 2023 to nearly \$740 billion by 2030 (Statista, 2023), with a yearly growth rate of 17.3%. Next Move Strategy Consulting's analysis aligns to these projections, predicting the sector's valuation will surge from \$208 billion in 2023 to approximately \$1.85 trillion by 2030. Spanning numerous fields such as healthcare, education, media and marketing, AI's integration and utilization are escalating globally, driven by advancements in chatbots, image generation technologies, and mobile solutions²³.

²³ Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/941835/artificial-intelligence-market-size-revenue-comparisons/#statisticContainer>

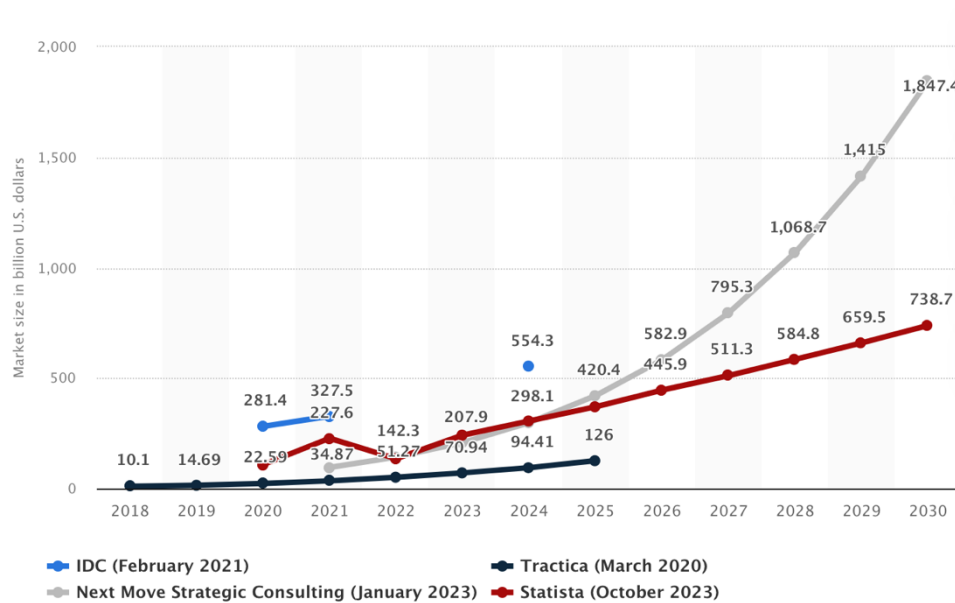


Figure 9: Market size and revenue comparison for artificial intelligence worldwide from 2018 to 2030 (in billion U.S. dollars)

Systems and applications that adapt and grow based on data have the potential to tackle previously unsolvable challenges, streamline complex intellectual tasks, and enhance the infusion of technology across all economic areas (Winton, 2024). Furthermore, the embrace of neural networks is anticipated to be a more significant breakthrough than the advent of the internet, generating tens of trillions of dollars in value by 2030 (LLC, 2024).

Notably, Davenport (2020) argues that the discipline of marketing stands to benefit greatly from AI advancements, making it one of the fields more likely to take advantage from it (Davenport et al., 2020). He suggests AI will transform marketing approaches and the way consumers act. Transitioning from a traditional business framework to one that incorporates AI is set to revolutionize retailers' marketing tactics, business frameworks, consumer actions and customer-brand interactions. Despite the significant potential of artificial intelligence as an influential instrument when used correctly and in appropriate circumstances, its adoption involves more than just setting up a system and pressing a few buttons. This challenge is particularly evident in fields that involve human interaction, such as marketing.

Nevertheless, research conducted by Salesforce indicates that AI is expected to be the most embraced technology by marketers in the near future (Columbus, 2019). In a comprehensive study examining over 400 AI applications across 19 sectors and 9 corporate functions, McKinsey & Company found that AI's most significant benefits are seen in the areas of marketing and sales

(Chui et al. 2018). This includes enhancing marketing efforts with strategies like offering customers the next-best product suggestions (Davenport et al. 2011), automating the purchase of digital advertisements (Parekh 2018), and improving the accuracy of forecasting potential leads (Harding 2017).

The influence of AI in marketing varies across different fields, with the most notable effects observed in sectors such as consumer goods, retail, banking, and tourism. These fields are characterized by their high level of direct interaction with a broad customer base and the generation of extensive data on customer transactions and characteristics. Additionally, incorporating external data from sources like social media or data brokerage reports can enrich this customer data. Consequently, AI's power to respond in a timely manner via customized suggestions (regarding the next purchase or the best pricing, for example) highlights its utility (Mehta et al. 2018).

2.2.1 Challenges and Opportunities

Today's AI systems possess the remarkable capability to identify patterns and relationships that traditional statistical methods may miss, doing so entirely on their own. Despite this, the implementation of such algorithms comes with its share of difficulties: absence of common sense (Choi, 2022), pursuing clear objective without incurring in ethical and legal concerns (Min, 2023), the necessity for a safe and realistic learning context, the risk of producing biased outcomes, ensuring AI's decisions are comprehensible and manageable and navigating the automation paradox (Bruyn, 2020).

The term “lack of common sense” doesn't critique the individuals programming or operating AI; it points to the AI's inability to grasp basic human intuition or emotional intelligence. For instance, AI might recognize and associate words like “queen” and “crown”, yet fail to comprehend the deeper significance behind them, requiring explicit programming to mimic such understanding (Bruyn, 2020). Another example in English demonstrates the limitations of a system that processes texts without comprehending their meaning. When posed the question — using the Saxon genitive — about the name of Laura's mother's only daughter, the response generated by AI was amusingly nonsensical (Floridi, 2023).

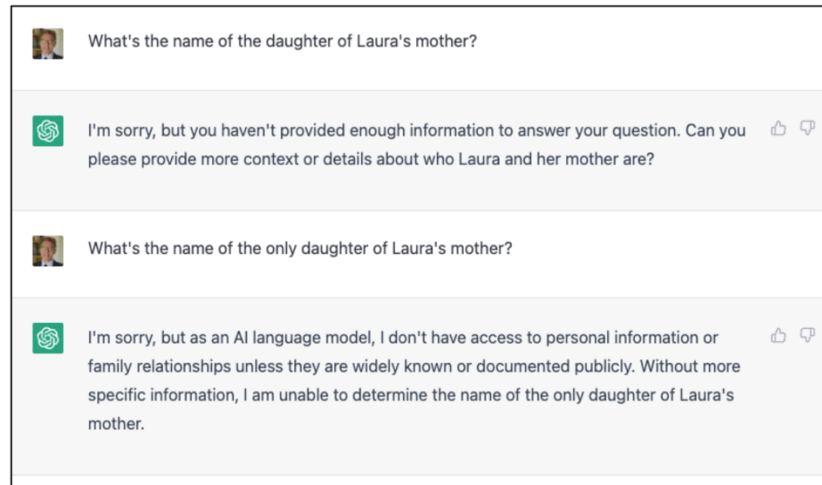


Figure 10: Example from Floridi's (2023) test on Jan, 30th

Floridi explores other capabilities present within the AI ecosystem, such as the incredible capacity of summarizing large amounts of data, and the ability to produce content that appears almost indistinguishable from human writing. Nonetheless, he raises interesting questions about whether these large language models are truly capable at capturing intelligence. According to him, intelligence, at least as we traditionally understand it, involves more than just the ability to process and generate text — it requires an understanding of meaning, the faculty of “*criticising or refining arguments, modifying or strengthening them*”, in essence, not the mere ability to generate coherent and refined texts, but the competence to know how to correct it. What seems to be happening is the idea that these models can regurgitate an infinite number of answers, without adding anything new.

This brings the discussion to the next theme, concerns about ethical and legal implications, especially around copyrights and the data sources on which the algorithms are trained. Providing a safe and accurate learning environment is crucial for AI to mitigate risks and adapt to real-world scenarios effectively. In real-world applications, especially marketing, customers do not adhere to a fixed set of rules, making it crucial to simulate a realistic environment for AI to learn without dangerous or costly real-life trials and errors. A profound understanding of customer behaviour remains essential to tailor AI applications accordingly (Bruyn, 2020).

Objective functions map the desired outcomes AI algorithms aim to achieve, such as profit maximization or enhancing customer loyalty. However, AI's detachment from human intuition complicates its ability to pursue these objectives without potentially overlooking ethical, legal, or moral considerations. For example, biased algorithms can unintentionally violate anti-discrimination laws or infringe on people's privacy. Additionally, the lack of transparency in how

AI makes decisions can make it difficult to ensure accountability and fairness. This becomes especially concerning when considering the potential harm to marginalized communities (Min, 2023).

Bias in AI is a significant concern, as algorithms, though not inherently prejudiced, may inadvertently perpetuate existing biases within the data, leading to discriminatory outcomes in marketing strategies. For instance, even if race is not included as a variable in a model, AI can reconstruct it indirectly through other proxies like geography or income. In marketing, this can lead to AI targeting vulnerable or disadvantaged consumers or replicating historical social biases (Bruyn, 2020). This stresses the importance of a thorough comprehension of AI mechanisms by its users to prevent and address such biases.

The concepts of understandable and controllable AI emphasize the need for transparency in how AI models operate and the ability to intervene when necessary. AI models, particularly deep learning systems, often operate as “black boxes”, making it difficult to understand their decision-making processes. This lack of transparency creates challenges in trust and controllability. As AI systems become more pervasive, it becomes vital to focus on creating explainable AI models where decisions can be traced, understood, and managed by human operators.

Finally, the automation paradox refers to the phenomenon where automating routine tasks may result in a loss of human expertise, potentially impacting the quality of service offered. This paradox becomes an issue when human experts are left with only the most complex tasks, which are harder to handle without the experience gained from performing simpler tasks. In marketing, if mundane tasks such as targeting decisions or customer service are automated, it might deplete the knowledge and skills that human workers need to handle more complicated cases (Bruyn, 2020).

In conclusion, the frontier for AI in marketing involves not just analysing data but generating new knowledge, which poses a significant challenge given AI's limitations around common sense and the subtle understanding required to navigate human behaviours and social norms. The ideal scenario is an AI that not only learns autonomously but can also impart new insights back to human experts, thereby enhancing our understanding and application of AI technology in complex domains such as marketing.

2.2.2 Integrating AI and Human Creativity: Enhancing Artistic Expression in the Digital Age

In this section it will be discussed how the convergence of Artificial Intelligence and ML technologies are reshaping the landscape of content creation. A question thus rises: what role does creativity play in this context and what do we mean by creativity?

Romey (2010) defines it as “*the ability to combine ideas, things, techniques, or approaches in a new way*” or “*as the process of using imagination and skill to invent a unique product or thought*” as specified by Scott in 1995. Traditionally, the evaluation of creativity has focused on the originality and practicality of ideas and products emerging from creative activities (Boden, 2004; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Yet, it is crucial to recognize the inherent value that the act of creation itself brings to individuals, regardless of the resulting products (Acar et al., 2021; Benedek et al., 2020; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Keenan-Lechel et al., 2023; Warr et al., 2018). A key element of the amusement stemming from the creative process is the phenomenon known as “flow experiences”, identified by a deep absorption in the activity, disregarding any possible end results (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Hence, creativity is seen as an experience-based process driven by intrinsic motivation, characterized by deliberate innovation or selection (De Pisapia & Rastelli, 2022; Hertzmann, 2022; Runco, 2023). The authentic involvement in the creative arts remains crucial for many artists (Kaila et al., 2023), raising questions about how the integration of AI tools in creative practices might affect artists’ control over these processes (Huang & Sturm, 2021). Additionally, the opaque nature of many generative technologies could undermine the experiential aspects of creativity that enable intentionality and personal expression (Dahlstedt, 2021).

Critiques of AI in the creative field often highlight a gap between the capabilities of these technologies and the experiential needs of humans (Allred & Aragon, 2023; Batista & Hagler, 2022; Vinchon et al., 2023). Yet, tools designed to enhance creativity through computation can be effective if they align with the cognitive processes of creative thought (Amitani & Hori, 2002). Understanding creativity as a process based on experience is crucial for developing AI tools that genuinely complement significant engagement in creative efforts (Runco & Bower, 2023).

Creativity, in this milieu, is not merely the capacity to generate novel and appropriate ideas but becomes a complex interaction between human intuition and algorithmic precision. It is the melding of human artistic expression and the computational power of AI to produce outcomes that are both innovative and resonant with personal user experience. When discussing creativity

within the realm of AI and ML, we refer to a dual process. On one hand, there is the creativity of developers and data scientists who design AI systems that can learn, adapt, and potentially generate new content. On the other, there is the creativity that AI itself facilitates or produces, which often involves the remixing or reimagining of existing works to create something perceived as new by the user (O'Toole & Horvát, 2024).

Furthermore, Youvan (2024) research serves as a crucial reference point for this discussion as it delves into the transformative potential of AI in bridging textual and visual narratives, as exemplified by technologies like DALL·E and Midjourney, which translate textual descriptions into compelling visual art and filmic content. This intersectionality not only challenges conventional semiotic theories but also prompts a revaluation of creativity, originality, and authorship in the digital age. Youvan's investigation reveals the multifaceted role of AI in expanding the realms of creative expression. By interpreting textual language as a dense patchwork of potential images, emotions, and narratives, AI technologies emphasize the semiotic richness of text, offering new vistas for artistic and cinematic exploration. This semiotic equivalence established by AI between textual language and other forms of artistic expression highlights the algorithmic navigation of signifier and signified, thus expanding the scope of meaning-making beyond traditional human-centric interpretations. The debate over human versus AI creativity engages with philosophical questions about the essence of creativity and the role of intentionality and emotional depth. The cultural reception of AI-generated art and films reflects a spectrum of responses, indicating an ongoing negotiation between technological innovation and the preservation of human artistic values (Youvan, 2024).

Montani (2023) instead, investigates the limitations and constraints in which AI seems to be confined when it comes to creativity. He starts his discussion distinguishing between human and artificial imagination: the latter is restricted to what has already been formalized in pre-existing repositories, simply pairing words and their frequency to images previously stored in datasets. What emerges from his analysis is that at the current state of the art, AI can recombine a finite set of elements to produce an infinite number of statements, based on previously extracted data (what is referred as Noam Chomsky's concept of "Rule-Governed Creativity"). The second level of creativity, defined as "Rule-Changing Creativity" involves introducing a new expressive paradigm — a capacity AI lacks. AI remains confined to the so-called "*latent space*", where creativity is merely an imitation of human processes, without the ability to perceive real-world novelties or emergent forms. AI can create "*genuinely new cultural artifacts*", as noted by Lev Manovich, by focusing on

specific, restricted datasets. However, these artifacts carry more epistemic than aesthetic value. Human imagination, on the other hand, works differently by integrating lived experiences and cultural nuances, capable of recognizing irregularities or deviations in the world that AI cannot process. While AI can generate culturally relevant artifacts, its absence of true imaginative sensitivity to the real world prevents it from achieving the same depth of creativity as humans, while being capable of versatility it lacks the plasticity, meaning the responsiveness to real-world conditions, that defines human creative imagination²⁴.

In conclusion, the collaborative potential between human and machine in the context of creativity suggests that the integration of AI into creative practices does not diminish the value of human creativity but rather enriches it by offering new perspectives and modalities for expression. It should be emphasized the need for thoughtful engagement with the ethical, philosophical, and practical implications of AI in content generation and automation, advocating for a future where technology enhances rather than replaces human creativity (O'Toole & Horvát, 2024).

2.3 Understanding User Generated Content (UGC) and AI Generated Content (AIGC)

At the forefront of digital innovation, the extensive research conducted by information systems and marketing experts has profoundly shaped our understanding of user-generated content in the social media ecosystem. Recent advancements in technology have significantly enhanced the capabilities of AI-generated content (AIGC), making it nearly indistinguishable from content created by humans in certain domains (Köbis & Mossink, 2021).

AIGC involves content created by artificial intelligence systems designed to interpret external data, learn from it, and apply this knowledge to perform specific tasks adaptively (Israel & Amer, 2023). This type of AI can generate text, visuals, and audio-visual content with striking realism. Within the business industry, AIGC applications include everything from developing virtual influencers with cloned human characteristics to crafting advertising content for social media platforms. The adoption of AIGC offers considerable advantages, especially in sectors that demand real-time reporting and direct audience interaction. The media sector, for instance, leverages generative AI to produce news and engage in reporting activities. Reporters using these AI tools can customize, recommend, verify, categorize, and translate a broad spectrum of user-generated and trending

²⁴ Source: <https://www.doppiozero.com/ia-e-limmaginazione-creativa>

content with far less human effort. For corporate brands and social media influencers, generative AI acts as a creative tool for generating marketing materials and social media content by identifying and leveraging trends in UGC.

Further in the chapter, the discussion will focus on organizations that have successfully harnessed UGC, as evidenced by key case studies and the significant managerial implications these instances held for brands. The analysis will then be enriched by a detailed examination of recent developments in AIGC and their implications for organization. Starting with UGC, the narrative will progress to AIGC, establishing a comprehensive framework that paves the way for articulating the primary focus of this thesis and ultimately defining the research question.

2.3.1 UGC: content is king

In 1996 Bill Gates authored an essay predicting the future of the internet, coining the phrase “*content is king*” and foreseeing its potential to generate significant revenue (Gates, 1996). Nearly three decades later, the question has shifted from simply valuing content to understanding the subtle mechanisms that determine the effectiveness of content as a communication tool and the types of content that resonate most effectively with customers (Müller & Christandl, 2019). This shift in analysis not only deepens our understanding of how content is perceived but also provides marketing professionals with valuable knowledge to customize their content strategies to meet specific objectives.

The evolution of platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok from repositories of user-generated content to hubs for professional media, reinforces the critical role of content in contemporary marketing strategies. These platforms demonstrate that, particularly in the context of social media, content has become a vital tool for companies to uphold their brand identity and values (Permana et al., 2021). Furthermore, the influence of social media on consumer behaviour, particularly regarding how advertisements shape purchasing intentions, is well documented, emphasizing the strategic importance of content in the digital marketing landscape (Popova et al., 2019).

Moreover, research on content marketing has identified a connection between user-generated content and consumer buying habits, showing that positive feedback from users can significantly boost sales, which presents clear managerial implications for marketing strategists (Tang, Fang, and Wang, 2014). A critical observation by Holliman and Rowley (2014) suggests that the effectiveness of content marketing depends on creating materials that avoid direct promotional

messages and instead cater to the specific interests of the audience. This approach sets content marketing apart from traditional advertising by making it a voluntary and attractive inbound marketing strategy (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). In a related study on firm content on social media, Kumar et al. (2016) discovered that customer engagement on these platforms correlates positively with increased spending and cross-purchasing activities.

Previous studies indicate that marketing media produced by service providers are often viewed more negatively compared to user-generated or editorial content (Dickinger, 2011), and content from a seller's website tends to have less impact than that on independent sites (Ha, Bae, & Son, 2015). These findings align with other studies on sponsored content, which consistently show that openly sponsored content is generally viewed less favorably (e.g., Boerman et al., 2012; 2014; van Reijmersdal et al., 2016). This contrasts with user-generated content, which has been shown to positively affect consumers' perceptions of a product and their purchasing decisions (e.g., Ye et al., 2011; Zhu & Zhang, 2010). Müller & Christandl's (2019) analysis supports these statements, indicating that user-generated content fosters more positive brand attitudes than sponsored content. Consequently, it's advisable for companies to encourage customers to create content centered on their brand, as it tends to be seen as more genuine and less like traditional advertising. However, the challenge lies in the fact that companies cannot directly oversee the creation or content of user-generated material, meaning they lack control over whether and what type of content will be produced by consumers (Müller & Christandl, 2019).

Furthermore, it is important to explore how different qualities and values of user-generated content contribute to its benefits. This includes understanding that the value of UGC includes functional, emotional, and social aspects (Kim & Shin, 2012). Studies have demonstrated the pivotal role of content quality in the success of UGC platforms (Dye, 2011). High-quality content is encouraged by companies, as content that is uninteresting or complex may fail to engage users. The effectiveness of UGC often depends on how well the content creation tools integrate and resonate with them (Huizingh 2000; Ma et al. 2009; Kim et al., 2010). The rise of video content on UGC platforms, for example, can be attributed to improvements in design quality (Lai & Turban, 2008; Ryu et al., 2009). With the increasing use of mobile devices to access UGC, designs must adapt to suit mobile viewing (Kim et al., 2010). Therefore, it has been stated that the enjoyment and positive experiences users derive from UGC are linked to its emotional value (Ryu et al., 2009; Karahasanovic et al., 2009).

Social value in UGC, instead, is derived from enhancing one's social image by aligning with societal norms or meeting others' expectations (Sheth et al., 1991; Lai & Turban 2008; Nov & Ye, 2009).

Human social nature drives the desire for connection, which explains why people engage with social networking sites — to gain social recognition through UGC (Nov, 2007; Lindic, 2009). The growth of UGC across various domains is thus attributed to its social benefits, beyond mere content consumption (Lai & Turban 2008; Jensen et al. 2009; Nov & Ye, 2009).

Use and Gratification Theory (UGT) offers insights into how media serves the needs of users, particularly with new communication technologies (Flanagin & Metzger 2001; Liang et al. 2007; Leung, 2009). This theory suggests that people are proactive and intentional in their media usage, seeking out media that meets specific communicative needs (Couraris et al., 2010; Chen, 2011). UGC participation demands active involvement not only in content creation and consumption but also in maintaining and shaping these platforms (Trammell, 2006). This engagement is often driven by the social connections formed with like-minded individuals, enhancing a sense of community, and allowing users to express their views publicly (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Participants who engage with UGC typically place a high value on its social and emotional aspects (Tossberg, 2000). Kim and Shin's (2012) research confirm that the quality of UGC is determined by its content, design, and technological aspects. These quality factors are integral to the functional, emotional, and social values associated with UGC.

2.3.2 Case studies

This section will offer a comprehensive view of how businesses actively tapped into the power of user generated content by motivating consumers to share their experiences, cultivating relationships with those who contributed and publicly acknowledging their work. The following cases serve to demonstrate that by utilizing UGC, brands can craft a marketing strategy that is not only engaging and genuine but also customer-centric, fostering stronger bonds that can help them cultivating dedicated communities.

Starbucks' "White Cup" Contest

In April 2014, the giant coffeehouse chain Starbucks noticed an emerging trend on social media where customers were doodling on white coffee cups and posting the images online. Tapping on this enthusiastic wave, the brand launched the White Cup Contest, an initiative where customers could display their creativity skills by sharing pieces of their artwork on Twitter and Instagram, using the hashtag #WhiteCupContest. In turn, Starbucks offered the winner's design recognition by producing a limited-edition cup with their art which was added to the Starbucks collection in the following fall.

In the span of three weeks, users uploaded more than 4,000 images, showcasing an incredible eagerness to engage with the brand and to express their artistic talent.

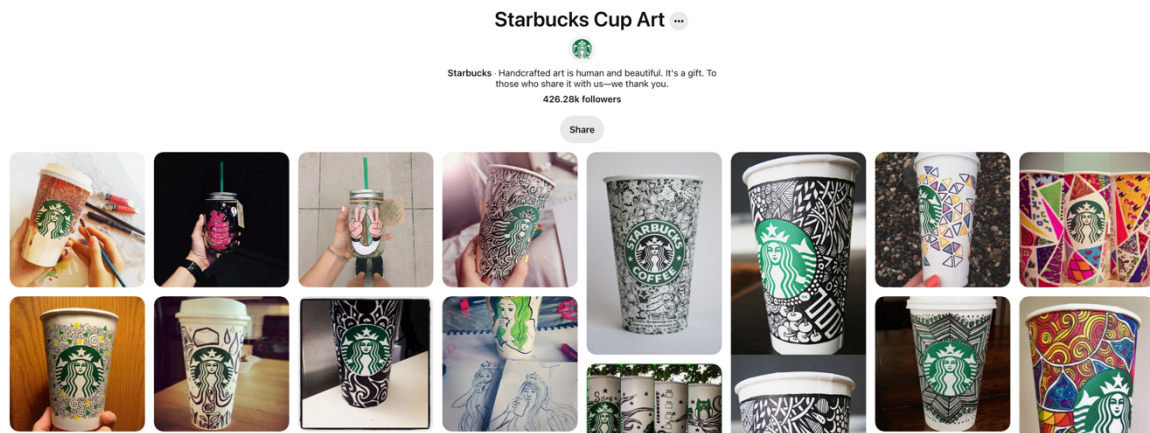


Figure 11: Collection of submitted images for the 'White Cup' contest on Starbucks Pinterest's board

The success of the contest can be attributed to the strong brand image the company had previously established. Known for cultivating a creative and inviting atmosphere, Starbucks's physical locations were often associated with warmth, connection, originality, fostering a sense of belonging among its customers. This existing brand identity resonated deeply with consumers, making the contest a natural extension of what they already valued about the brand²⁵.

Furthermore, the campaign demonstrated the influential role user-generated content can play in strengthening brand associations, while simultaneously highlighting Starbucks' commitment to self-expression and individuality. By tuning into their customers' activities on social media, the brand cleverly transformed organic online behaviours into a structured contest, enhancing engagement and deepening customer relationships without trying to steer or limit the original user actions. The White Cup Contest also brought Starbucks significant visibility as thousands of participants shared their unique cup designs on social media, giving the brand wide exposure far beyond the reach of traditional advertising and sparking widespread conversation. Moreover, the contest was able to emphasize Starbucks' dedication to sustainability by promoting its reusable cups, aligning this initiative with their broader environmental goals, and boosting their green image. The long-lasting impact of the contest was highlighted when Starbucks later sold the winning design in stores, pleasing customers and turning participants into vocal brand advocates. This

²⁵ Source: <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2022/reimagining-the-third-place-how-starbucks-is-evolving-its-store-experience/>

move not only celebrated the community's creativity but also cemented consumers' loyalty to the brand²⁶.

Coca Cola "Share a Coke" campaign

In 2011, Coca-Cola unveiled what would become one of the most iconic and successful marketing campaigns in recent memory: "Share a Coke". This initiative was aimed specifically at boosting sales and strengthening the connection between Coke and young adults in Australia. By evoking feelings of nostalgia and sentimentality, the campaign encouraged sharing a Coke with friends and family, thereby fostering a deeper emotional tie with the brand in a fun and interactive manner. The campaign's success was rooted in insights from Coca-Cola researchers who identified key drivers behind customer purchasing behaviour: a need for belonging, self-expression, personalization, and storytelling. Capitalizing on the power of user-generated content, Coca-Cola encouraged consumers to capture and share moments of them enjoying their drinks on social media using the hashtag #ShareACoke. The company would then amplify these personal stories by reposting them on its own channels.



Figure 12: Advertising banner for the #ShareACoke campaign

In its first year, the campaign helped Coca-Cola gain approximately 25 million new Facebook followers and share over 500,000 images. By inviting customers to share their experiences, they were given creative control, placing them in the role of content creators. This strategic move not only enhanced customer engagement but also played a significant role in influencing purchasing

²⁶ Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/lessons-from-starbucks-white-cup-contest-abbas-kapasi>

decisions. The campaign highlighted the power of emotional marketing, linking the enjoyment of a Coke with positive experiences like social gatherings, picnics, or going on dates²⁷.

Apple #ShotoniPhone

Launched in 2015, Apple's "Shot on iPhone" campaign was designed to showcase the advanced 12-megapixel camera of the iPhone 6s. The campaign was directed at a younger demographic, known for their enthusiasm in photography and frequent social media activity. Apple encouraged users to post their iPhone-captured images on Instagram and Twitter to enhance brand recognition, demonstrate the superior camera capabilities of the iPhone 6s, stimulate the creation of user-generated content, and boost the phone's sales. Apple also created a website for photo submissions, where participants used the #shotoniphone hashtag to compete for prizes including the chance to be featured in ads or win a free iPhone.



Figure 13: OOH advertising supporting Apple's #ShotoniPhone

Resulting in over 70 million interactions on Instagram and contributions of more than 100,000 photos and videos, the campaign significantly lifted iPhone 6s sales, as evidenced by Apple's record sales reported in Q4 of 2015, while also becoming one of the biggest UGC activities carried out by a brand. Through its focus on creativity and storytelling, the campaign not only distinguished Apple from its competitors but also fortified its reputation as an innovator and leader in the tech space, boosting customer loyalty and advocacy²⁸.

²⁷ Source: <https://it.linkedin.com/pulse/la-potenza-del-marketing-emotivo-il-caso-share-coke-lagravinese>

²⁸ Source: <https://thebrandhopper.com/2024/01/07/a-case-study-on-apples-shot-on-iphone-brand-campaign/>

2.3.3 New Frontiers and Challenges with AIGC

The impact of AI-generated content is changing how people interact on social media, transforming the way users connect and engage with these platforms. Research into user perceptions and attitudes toward AIGC helps assess its acceptance and how seamlessly it can be integrated into social media storytelling. An important aspect is AIGC's ability to shape discussions on social platforms, significantly affecting both brand image and the creation of user content (Hua & Niu, 2024). The development of AI-driven advertising is carving out new paths for enhancing consumer awareness and persuasion, ushering in a fresh paradigm for digital marketing tactics. Additionally, AIGC is capable of handling customer complaints, improving customer service and building brand loyalty by personalizing experiences to prevent negative feedback, leading to better relationships between users and brands (Hua & Niu, 2024), at reduced content production costs. Despite its potential to generate customized content, AIGC risks being viewed as inauthentic or emotionally detached, which might tarnish a brand's reputation and user engagement, diminishing the democratic processes characterizing user-generated content (Davenport & Mittal, 2022).

2.3.4 Real Life Application of AIGC for Brands

Thanks to the rapid diffusion of cutting-edge technologies in the field of image and video generation, users have been producing innovative content on a plethora of platforms, such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. Several AI tools have gained popularity for generating content across different media, as of today the most recognized ones are: OpenAI's *GPT-4*, regarded as one of the most advanced language models available to the public, this instrument is capable of generating text that can be adapted for articles, essays, code, poetry, and more. OpenAI's *DALL-E 3* excels at producing digital imagery from text descriptions, making it ideal for generating distinct visual content prompted by users. *Midjourney* is an autonomous research lab's AI, specialized in crafting images and art from textual inputs, often used in creative sectors for conceptual visualization. *Synthesia*, a global leader in AI video generation, is useful for the creation of videos using AI avatars based on text. *Runway*, an applied AI research firm, is at the forefront of innovating art, entertainment, and creative human activities. The devices above mentioned facilitate users to generate the content which will be discussed in the following section.

Coca cola's "Create Real Magic": empowering content creators

Following the success of "#Share a Coke", in 2023 Coca-Cola tapped into augmented marketing with a new campaign, "Create Real Magic", a first of its kind, developed in partnership with OpenAI and Bain & Company. The brand launched a platform that offers consumers a chance to

create AI-driven artwork. The winners get a chance to see their creations showcased on Coca-Cola's digital billboards in iconic locations such as New York's Times Square and London's Piccadilly Circus. The website is designed to be user-friendly, so anyone, regardless of their tech skills, can create professional-level artwork.

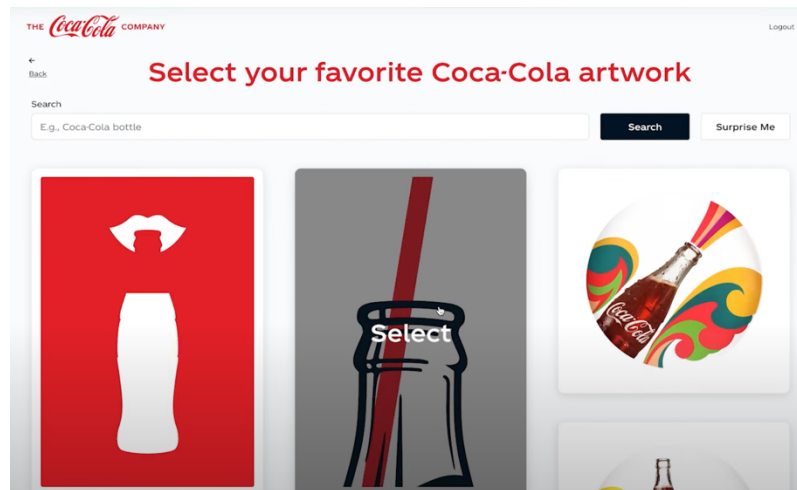


Figure 14: Example of the platform in support of the “Create Real Magic” campaign

The initiative not only facilitates more engagement but also makes marketing a more interactive experience, inviting users to compare AI-driven and human-centered marketing strategies, emphasizing that despite the advances in technology, the unique contributions of human creativity and expertise cannot be overlooked. Marketers bring creativity, empathy, and strategic thinking to the table, skills that are vital for addressing subtle consumer needs and cultural contexts. While Coca-Cola's initiative is heavily AI-focused, it smartly integrates human creativity, celebrating the synergy between human insight and technological innovation. This approach shows that embracing technology alone isn't enough, hinting at a future where AI helps deepen meaningful connections, blending new tech seamlessly with traditional branding²⁹.

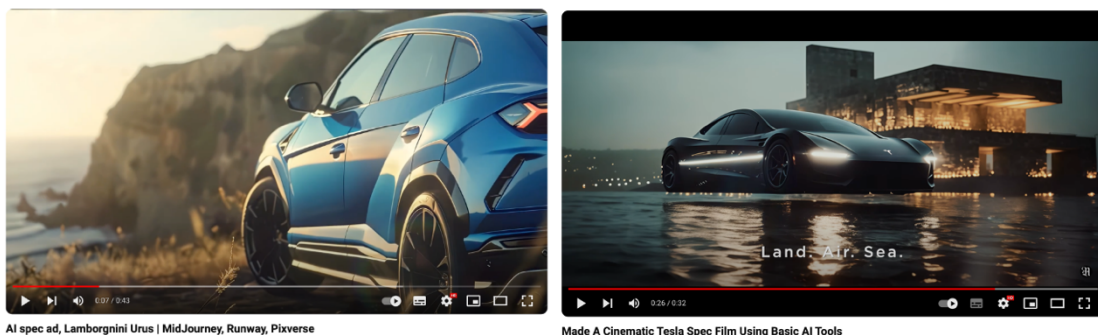
²⁹ Source: <https://createrealmagic.com/> and <https://marketingcasehub.com/case-study/creating-the-real-magic-with-human-and-ai-powered-marketing-the-coca-cola-case-study/>



Figure 15: AIGC submitted by a user

Youtube's "Specs Advertising": a new era for advertising

Another new trend popular on YouTube is represented by so called Spec Ads, or *speculative advertising*, which are non-commissioned commercials that can be created for fun by users or sold directly to the brands and used to reach potential new clients. Essentially, they work as user generated content where consumers can demonstrate their skills and express their identity and designs, while staying true to the value perpetuated by the brand. Spec work offers individual filmmakers an opportunity to showcase their creativity and present their unique, forward-thinking style. In the advertising world, spec ads serve as the foundation for limitless creativity, offering a canvas where innovative thinkers can illustrate ideas that defy conventional visions. With the advent of AI tools, the creation of this content has become even more democratized as users generate longer video in the span of minutes or during coffee breaks thanks to the employment of augmented instruments, allowing more users to join the conversation and bringing their creativity to the table. Examples include advertisement created in the automotive or in the fashion industries for numerous notorious brands.



AI spec ad, Lamborghini Urus | MidJourney, Runway, Pixverse

Made A Cinematic Tesla Spec Film Using Basic AI Tools

Figure 16: Examples of different Spec Ads available on YouTube

2.4 Research Question

The body of research presented thus far helped defining the theoretical framework for this study, offering a comprehensive view of existing studies and their shortcomings. The different discussions among practitioners and numerous case studies presented, demonstrate the power behind user-generated content in enhancing brand image by influencing consumer preferences and encouraging purchases through positive product perceptions.

Empirical evidence supports the notion that UGC promotes a more favourable brand sentiment compared to firm-generated content. Brands are thus encouraged to motivate customer to generate content, as it tends to be perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, diverging from conventional advertising. Furthermore, UGC promotes community engagement and individual creativity, rewarding users who interact with this media with personal gratification.

However, limitations are noted when dealing with AI-generated content, such as an inability to encapsulate personal experiences, the presence of potential biases, and a possible lack in authenticity and creativity.

These reflections lead to question whether the extendibility of UGC's benefits can be translated to AI generated content and what are the possible effects on this media on brand perception.

Consequently, the following research questions are proposed:

- *What impact does AI generated content have on brand's values and perceptions?*
- *Is the integration of AI for User Generated content impacting consumers' perceived authenticity?*

These questions aim at exploring whether AI generated content influences established values and brand's identities, potentially shifting existing brand associations in new directions, and to assess if AIGC can maintain a sense of authenticity and trust among consumers regarding the content produced.

Aspect	User-Generated Content (UGC)	AI-Generated Content (AIGC)
Authenticity	UGC is considered more authentic as it comes from real people who have personal experiences and opinions.	AIGC may lack the same level of authenticity as it is generated by a machine, which does not have personal experiences or opinions.
Creativity	UGC relies on the creator's individual creativity and can result in highly unique content.	AIGC can generate creative content, but it is based on patterns and styles found in the training data, which may result in less uniqueness.
Scalability	UGC creation is limited by human capacity and can be time-consuming, which may slow down content production.	AIGC is highly scalable, as AI models can generate large amounts of content quickly and efficiently.
Reliability	UGC can vary greatly in quality and accuracy, depending on the creator's expertise and diligence.	AIGC can be more consistent in quality, but its accuracy depends on the quality of the training data and the AI model's understanding of the subject matter.
Bias	UGC can be influenced by the creator's personal biases and beliefs, which may affect the content's neutrality.	AIGC can also be biased, as AI models are trained on data that may contain inherent biases, which are then reflected in the generated content.
Cost	UGC can be more cost-effective, especially when leveraging volunteer contributions or crowdsourcing platforms.	AIGC can be more expensive due to the costs associated with developing, training, and maintaining AI models.
Customization	UGC can be tailored to specific needs, as creators can directly address individual requirements or preferences.	AIGC can be customized by fine-tuning the model, but it might not be as directly tailored to specific needs as UGC.

Figure 17: Table summarizing UGC and AIGC different characteristics³⁰

³⁰ Source: <https://embedsocial.com/blog/ugc-ai-generated-content/>

Chapter 3. Analysis and Methodology

3.1 Overview of the Methodology

Rationale for Adopting Qualitative Methodology

To address the research questions introduced in Chapter 2, a qualitative approach was selected, focusing specifically on the brand Nike. This approach is aimed at probing the impact of AI generated content on brand values and exploring how the integration of AI in user generated content influences consumer perceptions of authenticity. Given the exploratory nature of these questions, a qualitative methodology was deemed most suitable in this context. As Cleland (2017) articulates, qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of contextual and experiential phenomena of complex questions that seek to uncover underlying motivations and feelings, which are critical in evaluating both the intended and unintended consequences of AI integration in content generation.

The qualitative method facilitates an investigation into the subjective experiences and emotions of consumers, which are pivotal in assessing brand's values and perceived authenticity. This approach is particularly beneficial when dealing with complex research areas that are under-explored or where existing theories are inadequate or inapplicable (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). In this context, qualitative research enables a more refined and flexible exploration of Nike's brand identity and the implementation of AI in user generated content within its brand discourse, which are not readily quantifiable but essential for understanding the depth and complexity of the brand's relationships with consumers.

Moreover, the inherent flexibility of qualitative research is particularly advantageous for this study, as it allows the research to adapt when new insights emerge. This adaptability is a vital element for studying the rapidly evolving perceptions of AI in content creation. As Creswell (2018) highlights, qualitative research comes handy when the researcher aims to create a narrative in a literary and adaptable manner, detailing stories, without the constraints of formal academic writing structures.

Choosing Advertising as Media: A Semiotic Approach to Brand Communication

The study involved examining the brand through a semiotic analysis where the semiotic tools allowed for a deeper dive into the symbols present in Nike's advertising. When analyzing advertisements, it is essential to understand the dual nature of their communicative elements, categorized into verbal and nonverbal signs. As Barthes (1998) suggests, these components work

together to convey meaning within the cultural context. Verbal signs typically include written elements, such as slogans and body text, while non verbal signs incorporate visual elements like images and colors, which can vary in significance depending on the cultural background of the audience (Goddart, 2002 & Wierzbicka, 1996).

The study of semiotics offers a framework for dissecting these elements, as it allows for a deeper examination of how meaning is constructed within media texts. Semiotic analysis can be applied to various forms of media, including advertisements, films, and articles, enabling the researcher to uncover the systems governing the creation and interpretation of these texts³¹.

In this context, advertisements are a suitable form of media for this study as they function as complex texts, loaded with signs that operate within specific codes and rich in the expressive and narrative solutions employed to strengthen the brand discourse (Bianchi, 2005). As Peverini (2012) suggests “*audiovisual advertising plays a role in building a relationship based on trust that is established between a brand and the consumer audience, and consequently, in guiding various consumption practices*”. These signifying elements, whether textual (such as the use of camera angles) or social (such as body language), help construct the reality presented within the advertisement. By analyzing the paradigm sets within these codes and examining the structural relationships between different signifiers, it is possible to gain insights into the ideological functions of the advertisement. As Oswald puts it, advertising, and media in general, plays a dual role in both mirroring culture (reflecting current societal values and behaviors), and influencing it (shaping how people think and act), this means that advertising not only reflects consumers’ values but can also have an impact on how those values evolve (Oswald, 2015). Through this lens, the analysis of advertisements can contribute to broader discussions on media, culture and communication, offering valuable insights into the ways in which media texts influence and reflect societal values and beliefs.

Cultural Branding Model

In exploring the research questions, the analysis initially followed Douglas Holt’s *Cultural Branding Model*, which outlines the process through which brands gain the title of cultural icons by aligning with cultural identities and social narratives. According to this model, iconic brands emerge not through formal strategies like marketing plans, but rather through the intuition of creative agencies who plant identity myths into their branding. These myths resonate with consumers by tapping into cultural concerns and aspirations. Although the language of conventional branding

³¹ Source: <http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem12.html>

emphasizes rational and emotional benefits, iconic brands succeed by incorporating cultural content that subtly challenges and transcends these traditional frameworks (Holt, 2004). The study focuses on demonstrating how Nike attained its iconic status, not by emphasizing product features or emotional appeals alone, but by creating myths that resonate with societal values and concerns, in line with cultural branding principles.

In the cultural branding framework, one must take on the role of a genealogist to identify contradictions in society and determine how myth treatments address them. Thus, tracing the genealogy of a brand is crucial to understand how its myths have evolved in response to cultural shifts. This requires tracing the historical development of a brand's advertising, examining cultural texts (like films, TV, and literature), and mapping socio-economic changes. This genealogical approach allows to see brands as cultural artifacts moving through time (Holt, 2004). By studying the evolution of a brand's myth, managers can adapt the brand's narrative to current societal tensions, ensuring that it remains relevant. Moreover, the genealogy reveals both cultural and political authority that a brand accumulates over time, allowing it to re-enter the market with new myths when the previous ones become obsolete. According to Holt, iconic brands are transformed into symbols that people use to express their identities, able to restore customers' loyalty even after cultural turmoils and when they've drifted away from their original myths for extended periods. This defies the conventional approach to brand equity, which emphasizes that a brand's strength is built through consistently reinforcing its essence over time. However, when disruptions occur, iconic brands don't need to start from scratch. While their myths may lose relevance, the collective memory of what the brand once represented and achieved remains. In fact, successful iconic brands can exploit two key assets: cultural authority and political authority. Using Holt's words, cultural authority represents "*a brand asset based on the nation's collective expectations that the brand can and should author a particular kind of story*". Beyond cultural authority, the genealogy highlights the importance of political authority in crafting new myths that resonate with the audience's identities, especially when previous myths lose relevance (Holt, 2004).

The genealogy allows to explore myths, which in cultural branding are simple, metaphorical stories that address profound social contradictions. Brands author these myths to speak to the cultural and identity tensions of the time. When a brand's myth connects with collective anxieties or desires, it becomes relevant and valuable to its audience. Myths offer consumers a way to express or resolve their internal and societal conflicts through the use of the brand. Myths remain relevant because they deal with identity politics rather than surface-level trends like fashion, helping people navigate deeper tensions within society. Populist worlds are the settings in which these identity

myths are grounded. These are spaces separate from elite influence, where people are driven by intrinsic motivations and values. The people living in these populist worlds share a distinctive ethos that provides intrinsic motivation for their actions. They act not for status, power, or monetary reward but because they believe in the values and lifestyle of that world. Brands tap into these worlds to create an authentic narrative that resonates with consumers in which the populist world provides a raw, relatable space where the brand's myth can live and evolve. To succeed, brands must demonstrate literacy and fidelity to the populist world. Literacy is shown when brands understand and use the nuanced idioms and cultural codes of the populist world. This means the brand's story feels genuine and respects the complexities of the culture it draws from. Fidelity is earned when brands are willing to sacrifice broad-based popularity to remain true to the distinctive ethos of the populist world. This shows consumers that the brand stands for something deeper than mere commercial success, aligning with the values of the community it represents. To effectively convey their myths, iconic brands must have a charismatic aesthetic, a distinctive and compelling style that reflects the populist world they represent. Much like a powerful political leader or social activist, these brands engage their audience by creating a unique visual and narrative style that naturally aligns with the values of their chosen populist world³².

Generative Trajectory of Meaning

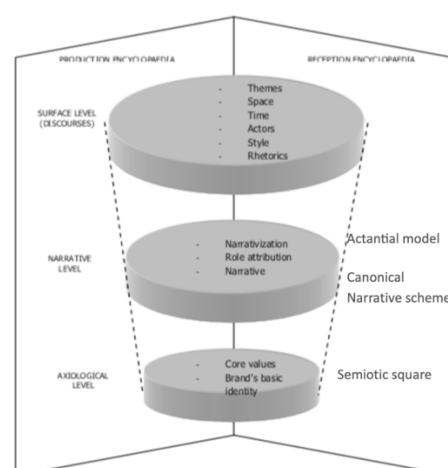
In addition, this study employs Greimas' *Generative Trajectory of Meaning* (1982), introduced in Chapter 1, to explore the depth and complexity of brand narratives and their adaptation when AI generated content is integrated. As explained by Gianfranco Marrone (2014: 51) "*the text appears, therefore, as the tip of the iceberg of the generative trajectory of meaning, the place where this trajectory acquires an expression-substance and thus makes an empirical concreteness, becomes communicable, cognizable and reachable. [...] The generative trajectory of meaning is in turn the simulation of the different levels of relevance in which meaning textualizes itself*". This process aligns with a fundamental premise of semiotic analysis, the notion that the meaning, produced by a specific occurrence, is connected in a generative way to an underlying system of signification. Each occurrence is considered as one potential outcome among many from its signifying system. Consequently, the meaning is portrayed as an outcome of choices and evolutions that stem from a deep semantic framework, which organizes basic units either through contrasting relationships or by arranging them hierarchically (see *Figure 18*), (Bastide, 1981).

³² Source: Peverini, P. (2023) *Composing the Cultural Brief* [Lecture slides]. Language In Advertising, Luiss Guido Carli

The analysis starts at the surface level with the decomposition of both traditional brand and AI generated advertisements. This initial phase focuses on systematically dissecting the visuals elements such as camera angles, lighting, frame width, and colors where the data is organized according to the number of sequences, duration, visual components, soundtrack, and other observations as detailed in Peverini's (2012) technical breakdown sheet.

Next, the examination dives into the second interlocked level, namely the semi-narrative one where the narratives of the two types of content are scrutinized. Drawing upon the work of V. Propp, who identified a consistent array of fundamental roles, Greimas develops the Actantial model and the Canonical Narrative Scheme, where the roles attributed within the narratives are reviewed. This part of the research deals with how narratives are structured to convey meaning beyond their superficial components, focusing on the dynamics between different narrative agents and how the presence of an AI as an enunciator impacts the traditional storytelling norms used by brands.

Subsequently, the research progresses to the axiological dimension, wherein Greimas' semiotic square is implemented to dissect and understand the deeper meanings embedded within these narratives. The semiotic square will help in mapping out the complex relationships among the core concepts, analyzing their contradictions, contrarities, and implications. This deep dive into the axiological aspects reveals how underlying values and ideologies are communicated through brand narratives. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how narratives operate across different layers of meaning, providing insights into the evolving landscape of brand storytelling.



Ultimately, the investigation is complemented by in-depth, structured interviews, analyzed through a thematic analysis that explored consumer perceptions of AIGC and brand content, to understand potential strategic interventions for brands. The interviews are designed with a uniform set of questions posed in the same sequence to each participant, enhancing consistency and ensuring comparability of data across the study. This method not only reduces the likelihood of interviewer bias, but also simplifies the process of data coding and analysis due to the standardized responses (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). Moreover, the efficiency of this approach is notable, as it optimizes both the preparation and execution of interviews. Despite the structured format, these interviews are crafted to probe profoundly into targeted topics, providing detailed insights that are vital for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

3.2 Selection of the Corpus

In selecting the corpus for this thesis, the transformative role of AI in marketing communications was a key consideration. AI has revolutionized this field by enhancing personalization, accelerating content creation through technologies like natural language generation and optimizing content curation by analyzing data to tailor communications to audience preferences (Senyapar, 2024). Additionally, the significant influence of user generated content in shaping brand identity and consumer perceptions on social media platforms, emphasizes its relevance (Dennhardt, 2012). As Dennhardt's research highlights, the authenticity driven by UGC can serve as a potential competitive advantage for brands. These factors informed the selection of two distinct corpora that collectively facilitate an in-depth exploration of the research questions focused on the effects of AI generated content on brand values and perceptions, as well as its influence on consumers' perceived authenticity.

The first corpus is a commercial produced by the Nike brand, which works as a benchmark for exploring how such content validates or shifts brand values. It serves as a pivotal example of how traditional media campaigns are crafted to align with and convey the brand's ideals. The ad, called "*Just Do It: Caster Semenya*", is part of Nike's larger campaign, created by the Wieden+Kennedy agency, who worked on multiple promotional content for the brand. This guarantees that the video is rooted in Nike's identity and capable of communicating the core values and messages that have become synonymous with the brand. Additionally, the ad's alignment with Nike's ongoing

³³ Source: Peverini, P. (2023) *Brand Language*. Mangano & Marrone [Lecture slides]. Language In Advertising, Luiss Guido Carli

narrative, makes it a valuable piece for semiotic analysis, providing a clear example of how a brand's ethos can be consistently communicated through professional advertising and how major brands are engaging with contemporary issues within their marketing strategies. This is especially pertinent considering the advertisement sparked considerable conversation about gender roles and inclusivity, which are deeply rooted in the cultural role of an iconic brand like Nike. Moreover, the response to this advertisement accentuates its impact and relevance as the ad received significant attention for its powerful portrayal of gender identity and the challenges faced by athletes like Semenya, highlighting issues of fairness and inclusion in sports, and aligning with Nike's marketing strategy that are able to address and shape social conversations. This media piece is vital for analyzing how audiences perceive brand authenticity and values as communicated through traditional media channels and to examine how traditional advertising, without the integration of AI, communicates and confirms brand's values, providing a foundation to assess shifts or consistencies in brand perception when compared to content created with AI and to understand the current and future dynamics of brand communication in the digital age.

The selection of the second corpus, a user generated AI advertising titled "*NIKE - Steps to Mars*", is grounded in its representation of a broader and evolving movement in speculative advertising. Originally, engaging with SpecAds required a certain level of expertise in video shooting and editing, positioning it as an elite activity for brand enthusiasts. However, this trend has shifted from requiring professional shooting and editing capabilities, to democratizing video creation, enabling anyone with internet access to contribute to a brand's narrative, with minimal resources required. Analyzing this ad is pertinent as it reflects a common activity among consumers today and demonstrates their desire to interact with and influence brand stories. Nowadays, the number of sports fans utilizing AI to craft visual concepts of products and posting their creations on various platforms is continually increasing. For example, on Instagram, posts tagged with *#AIconcepts* now exceed 1,000 units, while on YouTube, shorts are being published daily by hundreds of accounts, reaching millions of views³⁴. Furthermore, leading brands like Coca-Cola have already begun to tap into AI generated user content integrating it into their marketing strategies, as exemplified by campaigns like "*Create Real Magic*". The approach provided by Coca-Cola, not only fosters deeper engagement with the brand, but also leverages consumer creativity as a resource for fresh marketing content, which can lead to more authentic and relatable advertising. Understanding this movement is becoming critical for brand managers as it represents a significant change in how consumer interactions and contributions can enhance brand value and

³⁴ Source: (2024, September 16). Research on AI-generated visual concepts across Instagram and YouTube.

perception. By incorporating user generated content enhanced with AI, brands can expand their reach and resonance in ways that traditional advertising might not, offering new insights into consumer behavior and preferences. This particular video is notable not only for its content but also for its quality and visibility, as it appears to be readily accessible online, frequently ranking among the top search results on YouTube for “SpecAd created with AI”. Moreover, the “*Steps to Mars*” commercial, while unofficial, aligns with Nike’s narrative style and semiotic codes, making it a compelling case study for analyzing how AI generated content integrates with and expands existing brand narratives. By exploring whether and how such content is perceived as authentic, this research can uncover new insights into consumer attitudes towards AI generated content, offering a unique opportunity to examine if this unofficial yet highly resonant content can contribute positively to Nike’s brand values.

The choice of these two ads is deliberate, not only because they share similar lengths and thematic elements, but also because they function on different narrative levels, which makes them particularly interesting for a semiotic analysis. In addition, focusing on a single brand and specifically on videos that represent both professional and amateur production assisted with AI, allows for a concentrated study of the distinctions in how AI content is received versus traditional content. This focus is instrumental in dissecting the specific effects of AI generated content on brand authenticity and value perceptions, ensuring that the research is both manageable and sufficiently deep to explore meaningful observations into the ever-changing landscape of brand communications in the age of AI innovation. Analyzing these ads will hopefully contribute to a broader discussions about media culture and communication, foreshadowing how AI integrated texts may shape and reflect social values and beliefs among a brand’s discourse.

3.3 Diachronic Analysis – Nike Genealogy

The following discussion will examine how Nike’s storytelling, focused on themes like perseverance, innovation and empowerment, effectively uses semiotics, from its famous logo to the brand name, its mission, tagline and overall narrative. Nike has consistently told stories of athletes overcoming challenges, achieving greatness, and pushing limits, shaping a communication strategy that has turned the brand into the global icon it is today. This analysis will highlight key advertising campaigns and bold choices that have helped Nike stand out from its competitors, allowing the brand to gain both political and cultural authority. By tapping into national cultural tensions, Nike has managed to reinvent itself during significant societal changes, keeping its

momentum and refreshing the brand's core myths. This has been accomplished by navigating societal contradictions and presenting the right myth in an effective way.

To truly understand the origins of Nike's influence, we must trace its roots back to the beginning. Nike's story originated at the University of Oregon, where track coach Bill Bowerman collaborated with student Phil Knight to create a new type of athletic shoe, specifically designed for track and field events. In January 1964, they founded Blue Ribbon Sports, initially distributing Onitsuka Tiger footwear from Japan to the United States. The brand as it is known today was only established in 1971, when they adopted the name Nike, inspired by the Greek goddess of victory, Nikè. This name carried symbolic meaning, infusing the brand with a sense of triumph and competitive spirit³⁵.

During his time as a professor, Phil Knight met graphic designer Carolyn Davidson at Portland State University, who went on to design the now iconic logo in 1971, for mere 35 dollars. Knight requested a logo that would capture the essence of speed and fluidity of movement. The design was also believed to be loosely inspired by the wings of the goddess Nike, further tying the brand to its mythological roots. The sharp angles and long tail suggest movement and acceleration, while the agile form conveys a sense of speed. The logo's name, "Swoosh", is an onomatopoeia that evokes the sound of swift motion, reminding of a sprinter taking off toward victory. Although the Swoosh logo has undergone subtle modifications with different graphic treatments and fonts over the past 50 years, its essence has remained largely unchanged, continuing to symbolize the brand's ideology³⁶.

³⁵ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIVzq7ItBew>

³⁶ Source: <https://www.meritshot.com/nike-case-study/>

Early advertising – Printed Ads



Figure 19: Early form of Nike Printed Advertisement (1970s)³⁷

In 1977, John Brown and Partners, a Seattle based agency, was commissioned one of Nike's pioneering advertising campaigns, titled "*There is no finish line*". This campaign established a brand ethos that focused on the importance of authenticity in communication, as well as introducing emotional appeals for Nike's audience. As it was later noted by critics, the printed ad resonated deeply with the human nature, capturing the essence of running.

The first ad represented in *Figure 19* focuses on a solo athlete wearing a bright shirt, running down a what seems like an endless road, surrounded by trees on both sides of the street. The road stretches into the distance, creating a sense of infinity and continuity. The setting appears to be in a rural area, with utility poles running along one side of the track. In the content some visual signifiers are present, like the lone runner which stands for individuality, dedication, and the personal journey of self-improvement. The endless road symbolizes a long journey and the concept of continuous progress without a definitive endpoint. It is the journey itself, not the destination, what matters. The natural surroundings suggest a simple experience, aligning with the authentic and personal nature of running. Some textual signifiers are present, “*beating the competition is relatively easy. But beating yourself is a never-ending commitment*”, the copy also reads “*there is no finish line*”, focusing on the central message of the visual, which is the philosophy of the ongoing nature of personal growth and athletic dedication. Terms like “euphoria”, “mystical experience” and “elevated state of consciousness” shift the task of running from a physical activity to an almost spiritual experience. The text perfectly aligns the Nike brand with the runner’s journey, suggesting that the

³⁷ Source: <https://www.unionroom.com/the-evolution-of-nike-advertising/>

brand itself shares the same goals of continuous improvement like the person portrayed in the ad. This connection is made through the company's commitment to produce better running shoes, which is shown in other printed ads of the time like "*Run Around Naked. Kinda*", which offered a provocative and playful headline, capturing the attention of the consumer by suggesting an unconventional and liberating idea, that of trying to continuously reinvent oneself in a simple yet functional way.

Another ad of the time, "*Man vs Machine*" also features a lone runner on a bridge, still dressed in bright colors, contrasting the grey tones of the surroundings, to symbolize the energy and vitality coming from the activity of running. This act contrasts with the passive and sedentary nature of the drivers in their cars, which represent modern technology and convenience. The use of a solitary individual juxtaposed against a line of cars on a bridge, reinforces the idea that individuality and physicality are at risk in a world dominated by machines. Visible on the side of the bridge is water, representing freedom and the natural world. This image opposes to the rigid structure of the bridge and the artificial nature of the cars, symbolizing the division between nature (and the human body as part of it) and technology. The bold headline sets up a direct confrontation between human beings and technology, implying a conflict or competition and centering the runner as a challenger to the dominance of machines. The body text discusses the impact of machines on human life, suggesting that while they have made life easier, they have also made people physically weaker by reducing the need for physical effort. The overall message shared by these ads accentuate the idea that the real challenge lies not in competing with others but in surpassing one's own limits, aligning with the brand's broader character of pushing boundaries and striving for personal excellence. Nike's decision to use this narrative was strategic. The brand was not just selling athletic shoes, it was selling a lifestyle and an identity.

Understanding the context: Myth Treatment

The early 1970s in the United States were a period of significant social and cultural change. This time was marked by several key developments and tensions. The Vietnam War was still ongoing, and the anti-war sentiment was strong among the American public, particularly among the younger generation. This period saw widespread protests and a general disillusionment with government institutions. Although the Civil Rights Movement had achieved significant milestones in the 1960s, the struggle for racial equality and social justice continued. There were ongoing efforts to address systemic racism and promote civil rights for all citizens. The early 1970s also saw the beginning of the environmental movement, with growing concerns about pollution, conservation, and

sustainability. The countercultural movements of the 1960s, characterized by a rejection of traditional values and norms, continued to influence the cultural landscape. There was a strong emphasis on individuality and breaking away from conventional societal expectations. During this period, advertising was evolving from straightforward product centric messages, to more sophisticated, lifestyle-oriented campaigns. Creative agencies were beginning to understand the power of emotional and aspirational messaging. Ads began to focus on how products fit into and enhance consumers' lifestyles rather than just their functional benefits, tapping into emotions and values, creating narratives that resonated on a deeper level. Ads were increasingly reflecting and responding to contemporary social issues and cultural trends, aligning brands with the values and concerns of their target audience.

In all three ads the brand is presented as the enabler of this human-centric experience, making Nike shoes and apparel not just products but tools of empowerment in the struggle against the mechanical nature of modern life. Nike tapped into the cultural tension between conformity vs. individuality and technological convenience vs. human effort. By positioning itself as the brand for those who choose to resist the passive lifestyle enforced by technology, Nike leveraged the deep cultural longing for authenticity, vitality, and a return to people's values. The brand was able to promote running as a form of resistance against the establishment, suggesting that running is a way to reclaim one's life and health from the mundanity of life. This resonated deeply with the American cultural value of strong individualism and the belief that each person can achieve their own destiny through hard work and perseverance, independent of societal constraints. The ads offered a classic example of how Nike was able to consistently align its brand with broader cultural movements, making its products symbols of more than just athletic performance but symbols of a particular way of life.

1980's – Michael Jordan endorsement

Nike's shift from the abstract, emotionally driven advertising exemplified by the "*There Is No Finish Line*" campaign to the more specific and celebrity focused endorsements, such as those with Michael Jordan, reflects a strategic response to evolving cultural and market dynamics in the 1980s. During this period, American society saw a growing emphasis on individual achievement and the aspirational lifestyle of celebrities. The rise of professional athletes as cultural icons moved together with the cultural shift towards idolizing figures who represented talent and a superhuman work ethic. Michael Jordan, with his extraordinary talent and charisma, perfectly personified this new

cultural tension where society increasingly valued excellence, fame and the idea of becoming the best.

By aligning itself with Jordan, Nike tapped into this cultural moment, moving beyond abstract concepts of perseverance to tangible representations of success that consumers could aspire to emulate. The “Air Jordan” line, introduced in 1984, marked the beginning of this new strategy, where Nike not only promoted products but also sold a lifestyle and identity associated with greatness. This change was crucial for Nike to remain relevant in a market that was increasingly influenced by pop culture and sports celebrities. Furthermore, as noted by Muda et al. (2014) the use of credible celebrities in endorsements significantly enhanced consumer attitudes toward the brand. Celebrities are in fact often seen as more credible endorsers than non-celebrities because they are perceived to possess greater expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. In Nike’s case, it was paramount in establishing the Air Jordan line as not just a product, but as a cultural phenomenon.



Figure 20: Example of Michael Jordan endorsement in 1984³⁸

The introduction of the Jordan 1 was groundbreaking, it wasn’t just another sneaker but the first signature shoe crafted specifically for an athlete. The design, featuring the Chicago Bulls’ red, black and white colors, perfectly symbolized Michael Jordan’s character of the cool, strong athlete. The shoe also introduced Nike’s innovative air technology, which promised enhanced balance and performance for its customers. Shortly after the partnership began, the NBA banned the shoes from being worn in games, imposing fines of up to five thousand dollars per game on Jordan. Instead of seeing this as a setback, Nike cleverly turned it into a marketing advantage. In 1985,

³⁸ Source: <https://es.pinterest.com/pin/613615517969844021/> and <https://www.basketballnetwork.net/off-the-court/michael-jordans-rookie-season-air-1s-sold-for-six-figures>

they launched the “Air Jordan 1” commercial, encouraging consumers to buy the revolutionary shoes, emphasizing the idea that while the NBA might restrict them on the court, it couldn’t stop individuals from wearing them. Nike even covered Jordan’s fines, reinforcing the shoe’s rebellious and exclusive appeal. By the end of the first year of the Jordan 1, the shoe alone generated \$170 million in sales and as the hip-hop culture gained momentum in the U.S., Nike capitalized on this trend, positioning the Jordan brand not just for athletes but also for rappers and artists, broadening its appeal to a wider and culturally influential audience³⁹.

Populist World and Cultural Codes

As times were changing, Nike recognized the need to adapt its communication strategy to stay relevant and effectively tap into the right cultural myths and the prominent tensions of the era. Nike’s association with the African American ghetto, particularly through the figure of Michael Jordan and the Air Jordan line, is a key example of how the brand tapped into a powerful cultural narrative to solidify its identity and expand its market influence. The African American ghetto, in this context, served as Nike’s populist world, a cultural space often overlooked by mainstream brands, yet rich in authentic expression, resilience and a strong sense of identity. In the 1980s, the African American ghetto was not just a physical location but a cultural epicenter where street style and basketball were thriving, creating a unique cultural landscape. Nike recognized this and strategically positioned Michael Jordan and the Air Jordan line to resonate deeply within this community.

Michael Jordan represented the young, charismatic and talented African American athlete, capable of ideally picturing this new world. His rise from working class to global icon resonated with the aspirations of many in the African American community. Nike’s marketing portrayed Jordan as the personification of the “*rags to riches*” narrative, a story that was both relatable and inspiring. During this time, there was a significant cultural tension between mainstream America and the emerging power of African American culture, particularly as expressed through music, sports and fashion. The mainstream often viewed the African American ghetto through a lens of fear and marginalization, while within these communities, there was a growing sense of pride and self expression that was ignored by larger society. Nike exploited the tension by embracing the African

³⁹ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W-SOtxkIfM>

American ghetto's culture rather than distancing itself from it and by adopting its language, style and symbols.

By doing so, Nike was able to create an image of authenticity, a brand that didn't just sell to the community but understood it. This authenticity was crucial because it wasn't about appropriating a culture but about representing it in a way that felt true to the experiences and aspirations of the people within it.

The "Mars Blackmon" commercial series is one of the most prominent examples of Nike's advertising strategy during this period, blending together humor, celebrity endorsement and cultural elements. The 1988 series, directed by Spike Lee, featured Michael Jordan alongside Lee's character, Mars Blackmon, from the movie *"She's Gotta Have It"*. The famous catchphrase "*It's gotta be the shoes!*" became a cultural phenomenon. These ads were instrumental in blending the worlds of basketball, urban and sneaker culture, establishing the Air Jordan line as a symbol of coolness and street credibility.



Figure 21: "*It's Gotta be the Shoes*" Ad (1989)⁴⁰

In the ad, Mars Blackmon works as a symbol of the quirky and street smart persona, representing the urban culture of the era. This contrasts with the figure of Michael Jordan, a basketball icon who symbolizes excellence and success. The catchphrase "*It's Gotta Be the Shoes*" is a simple, repeated message that suggests the sneakers are the secret behind Jordan's success. On a deeper level, the ad conveys the power of the brand, the shoes are more than just footwear, they represent prestige and serve as a means of elevating one's status in both sports and culture. By featuring Spike Lee's character, the brand incorporated significant cultural codes and effectively aligned with

⁴⁰ Source: <https://tonireavis.com/2018/07/20/its-gotta-be-da-shoes/> and <https://medium.com/@bradcallas/its-gotta-be-the-shoes-99c9f89e67fb>

the burgeoning urban culture of the late 1980s. Spike Lee was known for his sharp commentary on race, identity and urban life, and represented a powerful cultural force in cinema. His work, especially in films like “*Do the Right Thing*” (1989), “*Malcolm X*” (1992), and more recently “*BlacKkKlansman*” (2018), challenged conventional narratives and gave voice to African American experiences in marginalized settings. Connecting the brand with his character, Nike tapped into the authenticity and energy of this cultural moment, making the shoes synonymous with style as well as creating social awareness among younger consumers.

1988 onwards – Just do it Campaign

The popular tagline “*Just do it*” wasn’t coined until later, in 1988 by executive Dan Wieden. He admitted of getting the idea from the last words of a death row inmate in Utah, who before being executed, said “*You know, let’s do it*”. Wieden was amazed by the courage in those words, but he changed them slightly because he didn’t want to give credit to a criminal. To this day, the slogan is considered one of the most iconic and recognizable motto in history⁴¹. The inaugural advertisement called “*Just Do It - Launch Ad*” (1988) featured a 80-year-old runner called Walt Stack, running across the Golden Gate, which in its way reminds of one of the first printed ad discussed above. The choice of using an older man instead of elite athletes was deliberate. Nike wanted to convey the message that sport is accessible to everyone, regardless of age or ability. The video, short and simple, is powerfully orchestrated, such that the tagline “Just Do It” works as a call to action by asking what’s stopping *you*? With just three words, Nike was able to create a visual and textual symbol of motivation and ambition, capable of resonating and being recognized worldwide.

⁴¹ Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_Do_It#:~:text=The%20%22Just%20Do%20It%22%20campaign,tough%2C%20take%20no%20prisoners%20ad



Figure 22: Screenshot from “Just Do It - Launch Ad” (1988)

The campaign’s success opened a new era for Nike, one where their belief that “*if you have a body, you are an athlete*” became more than just a mission statement, speaking to anyone with a dream or a goal, and motivating them to take that first step toward achieving it⁴². The slogan also allowed the brand to address other important issues. The brand was once again capable of tapping into a cultural tension of the time when society was experiencing a focus on health and fitness. In the early 2010s, social media platforms and fitness apps were booming, making it easier than ever for people to share their fitness journeys and motivate each other⁴³, so in 2012 the brand launched “*Find Your Greatness*” a monumental campaign which soon became a catalyst for change. The complete film campaign ran for 6.31 minutes, and its success was driven largely by the virality it achieved online. At the time Nike had just lost the sponsorship for the London Summer Olympics against Adidas, and it was looking for a campaign that would generate buzz on social media⁴⁴. This campaign was designed to celebrate the achievements of the human body and mind, highlighting both athletic victories and everyday acts of kindness and compassion. Instead of relying on a traditional slogan, they used the hashtag #findyourgreatness, which became an unofficial mantra for athletes around the world as they gave their all in various events, from swimming to running and weightlifting. The idea was to shift the focus from global celebrities to ordinary people fighting for personal victories, showcasing people of all ages, genders and backgrounds taking part in

⁴² Source: <https://brandingstrategyinsider.com/behind-nikes-campaign/>

⁴³ Source: <https://medium.com/@ychoi4857/the-beauty-of-nikes-find-your-greatness-campaign-79c99204e200>

⁴⁴ Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/success-behind-nikes-findyourgreatness-campaign-rushabh-shah/> and <https://www.timefordesigns.com/blog/2023/11/08/unravelling-the-brilliance-how-nikes-just-do-it-became-more-than-a-slogan/> <https://www.businessinsider.com/25-nike-ads-that-shaped-the-brands-history-2013-8#nikes-just-do-it-25th-anniversary-2013-25>

different sports, demonstrating how sports can unite, much like the spirit of the Olympics. The ad's message stressed that greatness is something personal and unique to each person and that it is the individual that should define success in their own terms. Like previous campaigns, the “*Find Your Greatness*” was about much more than just promoting Nike's products and more about aligning the brand with broader social ideals.



Figure 23: Screenshots from “Find Your Greatness” Ad (2012)

Controversies and Brand Activism

Today consumers are looking for businesses to take clear stances on critical matters such as environmental protection, civil rights, women's empowerment and animal welfare. It's not enough for companies to participate in corporate social responsibility initiatives or make minimal donations to causes. Instead, consumers want measurable actions that contribute to making the world a better place. In a modern evolution of the “*Just Do It*” mindset, Nike took yet again a risky position in 2018 by featuring former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick in their “*Believe in Something*” ad. The player had become a polarizing figure after kneeling during the national anthem to protest against racial injustice and police brutality in the US⁴⁵. Even in this case, Nike aligned the brand with the myth of the activist hero, willing to stand up for his beliefs even when it meant sacrificing everything. The ad had a polarizing effect, it was backlashed among those aged 65 and older, since they saw it as a disrespect towards the country, but it proved to be popular within Nike's customer base of younger consumers. This political stance generated outrage, as Nike shares dropped by 3.2% and hashtags with #NikeBoycott spread all over the internet, with people sharing videos showing them burning their Nike sneakers. Ultimately, Nike managed to turn that controversy into cash, and the endorsement of Colin ended up being positive for the company.

⁴⁵ Source: <https://www.mugagency.com/blog/brand-activism-il-caso-nike-e-kaepernick/>

The video draw record likes on Nike's Instagram account and in less than a week the brand exposure on Tv, radio, and social media amounted to more than \$163.5 million⁴⁶.



Figure 24: Nike ambassador Colin Kaepernick (2018)⁴⁷

On July 19th, 2024, Nike debuted with their latest campaign, “*Winning Isn’t for Everyone*”, a short film narrated by actor William Dafoe, featuring Nike’s endorsers for the Paris 2024 Olympic games. The ad was divisive in nature, working against the regular message Nike used to convey. It felt distant from what the “Just Do It” movement had achieved, and the reason is attributed to the specific target audience the brand intended to engage. For this specific campaign, Nike aimed to communicate with a niche market to grab athletes’ attention, repositioning its core business, while potentially alienating the general public and creating a stir online. The campaign rewrote the less socially acceptable aspects of winning, such as selfishness, obsession and lack of empathy. As fans questioned whether this was the appropriate message for the next generation, Nike faced harsh criticism online, yet gaining attention and sparking discussions on different platforms. By highlighting the personal struggles athletes face to be the best, Nike perhaps intended to present a more realistic or raw version of competition. Critics argue, however, that this approach may undermine the inspirational message that has long been a cornerstone of Nike’s branding. Despite this, the campaign’s ability to spark conversation could be seen as a strategic move to stay relevant in what seemed one of the worst quarter the company faced in years⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbnGIh1aad0>

⁴⁷ Source: <https://rga.com/futurevision/articles/Nike-Exemplifies-Just-do-It-Ethos-With-Colin-Kaepernick-Campaign>

⁴⁸ Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2024/08/16/nike-fails-in-the-winning-isnt-for-everyone-ad-campaign/>

The metaverse and the Future – No finish line

For the past fifty years, Nike has consistently positioned itself as a leader in innovation, exploiting cutting edge technology to enhance its product offerings and customer experiences.

The brand's dedication to blending technology with sportswear is clear in initiatives like "Nike Fit", an innovative tool that uses AI and advanced computer vision to scan users' feet and recommend the perfect shoe size, reducing returns and increasing comfort, while showcasing Nike's focus on personalized solutions.

Nike has also embraced the digital age with initiatives like Nike+, a partnership with Apple that has grown from a simple fitness tracker into a full health and wellness ecosystem, incorporating wearables, apps, and even virtual coaching. Additionally, Nike's entry into the metaverse represents a major step forward, where the brand now creates virtual sneakers and digital assets that allow users to showcase their style in virtual environments. These digital items are often connected to physical products, creating a smooth link between the virtual and real worlds. In addition to technology, Nike has successfully tapped into user generated content to deepen engagement and build a strong community. The "Just Do It" campaign is a great example, with millions of Instagram posts tagged #JustDoIt. This encourages users to share their own stories and photos, often featuring Nike products, which strengthens the brand's message and boosts its visibility on social media. Nike also ran the PHOTOiD campaign⁴⁹, where users could customize their own Nike shoes with uploaded images, creating personalized products that were widely shared on social media. This not only gave customers a personal connection to the brand but also provided Nike with tons of content showing their products in real life situations. Nike even features customer photos and reviews on its product pages, which helps build trust, influences buying decisions and promotes authenticity.

In recent years, the brand has launched futuristic flagship stores in major cities like Tokyo and Shanghai. These stores are not just retail spaces but also offer immersive digital experiences, using AR, VR and interactive displays to engage customers in new ways by combining physical and digital shopping thus leading the way in innovation⁵⁰.

The ongoing promise and commitment to growth brings everything full circle to Nike's original message exemplified by the "*There is No Finish Line*" campaign. That idea is still at the heart of

⁴⁹ Source: <https://www.dandad.org/awards/professional/2009/mobile-marketing/17698/nike-photoid/>

⁵⁰ Source: <https://ris8lifestyle.com/2023/01/23/no-finish-line-il-futuro-senza-limiti-di-nike/>

what Nike does today, continuously pushing to deliver top notch products and creating captivating campaigns that keep the philosophy of *innovation is a journey, not a destination* alive.



Figure 25: “After all, there is no Finish Line” book cover⁵¹

3.4 Synchronic Analysis – Competitors

In the highly competitive sports industry, Nike faces strong challenges from major brands like Adidas, Reebok and New Balance. Adidas is known for blending creativity with sustainability, making it a favorite for customers who love sports and fashion. Reebok connects with people who see fitness as a personal journey, focusing on authenticity while New Balance appeals to consumers who appreciate quality and tradition, offering products that stand the test of time.

Adidas

Adidas represents one of Nike’s main competitors in the world of sports apparel. Both brands are known for their ability to connect with customers through powerful storytelling and strategic marketing campaigns. However, while Nike exploits themes of individual perseverance and empowerment, Adidas focuses on creativity and collaboration in sports and lifestyle.

One of Adidas’s most famous campaigns was the “*Impossible Is Nothing*”. Launched in 2004, it positioned the brand as a partner in overcoming personal and athletic challenges while trying to portray inclusivity and authenticity⁵². Another successful campaign was “*Here to Create*”⁵³, which shifted the focus to the creative aspects of sports by celebrating the creativity of athletes and their ability to innovate on and off the field. The brand often collaborates with artists and designers to produce campaigns that blur the lines between sports and leisure activities, with ads that are more

⁵¹ Source: <https://www.typeroom.eu/zak-group-nike-no-finish-line>

⁵² Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/soniathompson/2021/04/21/why-adidas-new-impossible-is-nothing-campaign-is-a-blueprint-for-authentic-representation/>

⁵³ Source: <https://www.iris-worldwide.com/work/here-to-create/>

likely to feature diverse groups of people working together. Where Nike's messaging might revolve around the idea of pushing personal limits, Adidas is more inclined to highlight how sports can be a medium for expression and innovation.

Reebok

Reebok represents another significant player in the sports market, known for its unique approach to fitness and lifestyle branding, it positions itself differently from Adidas and Nike. While Adidas stresses creativity and Nike focuses on empowerment and innovation, Reebok has tailored its niche by embracing fitness culture and authenticity. Reebok's "*Be More Human*"⁵⁴ campaign resonated strongly with audiences by celebrating the physical and mental challenges of fitness, appealing to those who see exercise as a path to personal growth. The brand's core values center on pushing boundaries and encouraging people to become the best versions of themselves through fitness, which is evident in their marketing strategies that highlight real, everyday athletes rather than just elite sports figures. Unlike Nike's often aspirational messaging, Reebok's communication style tends to be more grounded and relatable, focusing on the inclusivity and accessibility of fitness. This approach allows Reebok to differentiate itself by appealing to a community that values fitness as a lifestyle rather than just a means to success, positioning itself as a brand for those who seek authenticity quality and durability.

New Balance

New Balance is a brand with a strong heritage that has distinguished itself through its commitment to quality craftsmanship and a focus on individuality, positioning itself as the brand for those who value tradition and a personalized approach to fitness.

One of New Balance's most successful campaigns is "*Fearlessly Independent Since 1906*"⁵⁵, which highlights the brand's long history of going against the heard and staying true to its values. This campaign resonated with audiences who appreciate the brand's dedication to maintaining its manufacturing plants in the United States and the UK, as well as its focus on creating high quality, durable products. Another notable campaign is "*Runs in the Family*", which celebrates the diverse community of New Balance wearers, from professional athletes to everyday individuals, reinforcing the idea that New Balance is for everyone, regardless of their fitness level or style.

⁵⁴ Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/darrenheitner/2015/01/28/reebok-reveals-massive-be-more-human-brand-campaign/>

⁵⁵ Source: <https://newbalance.newsmarket.com/latest-news/new-balance-debuts--fearlessly-independent-since-1906--global-brand-platform-that-reflects-its-herit/s/5f8dc750-3595-4f60-a57e-0617adb6c624>

Where Nike often promotes the idea of breaking boundaries, New Balance appeals to those who value consistency, a classic design, quality and a sense of tradition.

3.5 Analysis of the Brand-Generated Commercial

3.5.1 Introduction of the commercial (I)

The analysis begins at the most superficial level, decomposing the commercials into their visual elements according to Peverini's (2012) technical breakdown sheet. The process begins by breaking down the defining characteristics of the media product at the level of manifestation. For audiovisual content, this may involve segmenting the visuals based on shot succession, camera angles, lighting, and frame composition. Beyond visual description, the analysis explores how colors and spaces contribute to the overall composition. Furthermore, the commercials are broken down into sequences to analyze the narrative structure. This segmentation aims to reveal the architecture behind the story, its protagonists, and the progression of narrative events, which will be further examined through the Actantial Model and the Canonical Narrative Scheme to understand the distribution of roles and the characters' trajectories within the text (Peverini, 2012).

The first commercial titled *"Just Do It: Caster Semenya"* (2018), as previously mentioned, was realized by Wieden+Kennedy Amsterdam, a famous creative agency with a history of producing iconic campaigns for Nike, as well as Apple, Old Spice and Coca-Cola⁵⁶. Wieden+Kennedy stands out from other agencies thanks to its unconventional approach to advertising, based on a deep understanding of both the brand and its audience.


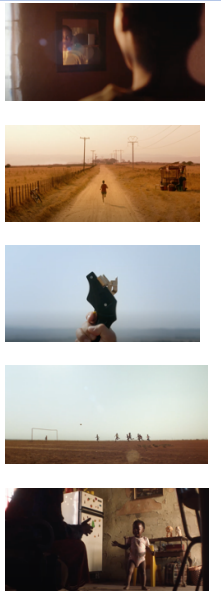
This ad, featuring South African Olympian Caster Semenya, runs for 1 minute and 13 seconds. The campaign extends beyond this video, including a film directed by AG Rojas, a double page print spread in *The Sunday Times* South Africa, and a typographical GIF designed for social media engagement⁵⁷. Each of these elements works in tandem to reinforce the campaign's message of empowerment and the celebration of athletes who break barriers and redefine norms. The campaign was later taken down by Nike and can be found on YouTube and on the official website of the agency, together with a small story on the main protagonist.


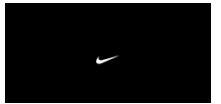
3.5.2 The segmentation of the advertising (I)

⁵⁶ Source: <https://www.screenvoice.cz/en/news/dan-wieden-the-creative-mind-behind-the-biggest-brands/>

⁵⁷ Source: <https://www.wk.com/work/nike-just-do-it-caster-semenya/>

# Sequence	Duration	Visual Column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0.00 – 0.02	<p>- Content description: the sequence begins with a young girl running with passion across an open field, likely in a rural area. The soft colors of the sky suggest it is either early morning or dusk. She is fully immersed in her run, emanating energy and happiness, clearly determined to give her best. Her outfit is simple yet practical, reflecting humble beginnings.</p> <p>- Frame width: mid-plane, capturing the young girl from the waist up as she runs.</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally, with a middle horizon line, showing a balance between the sky and the ground.</p> <p>- Lighting: the lighting is natural, likely during the golden hour (early morning or late afternoon), casting a soft glow over the scene. This enhances the warm, nostalgic tone of the image, highlighting the early stages of a morning run or the end of a day of training.</p> <p>- Color: the sequence features a soft color palette, with the sky transitioning from a light blue to a pale pink, indicative of either dawn or dusk. The ground is a deep brown, with earthy like tones, contrasting with the sky and adding warmth to the scene. The colors of the girl's outfit, particularly the white, red, and blue, stand out against the background, drawing attention to her as the focal point.</p> <p>- Transition: clear cut to the next scene.</p>	<p>- Speech: no speech is present in this sequence.</p> <p>There is a subtle presence of ambient noise, including early morning birds chirping, the heavy breathing from running, and the sound of shoes hitting the ground.</p>	
2	0.02 – 0.14	<p>- Content description: the scene transitions to an entirely different setting, where an athlete is competing in what appears to be an Olympic event. A sports commentator provides a voice-over, offering insights as the camera focuses entirely on the female runner, who rapidly overtakes her competitors and crosses the finish line. The Nike brand logo makes its first appearance, subtly displayed on her white top, and then more prominently featured on her black Nike shoe, which receives a dedicated close-up shot. Following this, the athlete's monologue begins.</p> <p>- Frame width: the scene opens with a mid-shot (0:04-0:06), then transitions to a full-body shot of Semenya running towards the finish line (0:06-0:08). It then culminates in a close-up of her shoe (0:08-0:11) before returning to a half-length shot capturing Caster's determined expression (0:11-0:14).</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p> <p>- Lighting: the lighting is bright and natural, likely coming from a sunny day, casting shadows on the track.</p> <p>- Color: the colors are vibrant, with the white of Semenya's top contrasting against the crowded background and the other athletes' outfit, who are all wearing black. In the close-up, the white Nike swoosh contrasts sharply against the reddish-brown track surface, with the golden sole adding shiny details.</p> <p>- Transition: clear cut to the next scene, after a slow-motion sequence is shown in reverse, moving backward through time.</p>	<p>The background music is a combination of cheering crowds and ringing cowbells, blended with the sports announcer's commentary.</p> <p>- Speech: <i>"And here Semenya, she is pushing on again, and she is breaking her way. She is going for something special."</i></p> <p>At 0.12 Semenya's monologue starts:</p> <p>- Speech: <i>"Would it be easier for you, if I wasn't so fast?"</i>.</p> <p>Cam Ballantyne's emotional piano piece, "Caster", begins playing as the athlete starts her monologue.</p>	 
3	0.15 – 0.31	<p>- Content description: an African American family is shown celebrating as they watch Semenya's victory on TV, with adults and children gathered around a table. For a moment, the South African flag is seen waving in the wind. The scene then shifts to nighttime, presumably after the victory, where we see Caster Semenya being crowned the winner as a woman places a gold medal around her neck. Following the celebration, Semenya is photographed indoors, signing autographs. She strikes a proud pose, flexing her arm muscles with a serious expression. In the voiceover, the audience hears the provocative words, <i>"Would you be more comfortable if I was less proud?"</i>.</p> <p>- Frame width: the sequence begins with a medium-wide shot, capturing multiple family members in a single frame (0:15-0:18), followed by a medium close-up that focuses on the flag, filling most of the frame (0:18-0:20). The shot then shifts to a mid-shot of the athlete receiving the medal, transitioning into a close-up (0:21-0:24) that isolates Semenya's facial expression. The following scenes</p>	<p>Semenya's monologue continues:</p> <p>- Speech: <i>"Would it be simpler if I stopped winning? Would you be more comfortable if I was less proud?"</i></p> <p>The emotional piano piece continues to play, accompanied by the sound of camera flashes and distant cheering.</p>	  

		<p>alternate between close-ups, extreme close-ups of the autograph, and mid-shots of the runner (0:25-0:30).</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p> <p>- Lighting: In the indoor scene, the illumination is soft and diffused, likely from a combination of natural light filtering in through windows and a warm indoor source. The room is gently illuminated, casting a warm glow on the family members, and creating a sense of comfort and togetherness. When the flag is displayed, the lighting appears natural and bright, with the sun positioned behind the flag, causing the fabric to glow. As time progresses, the lighting shifts deeply. Back indoors, as what seems nighttime, the light comes from behind, creating a halo effect around the figures. There are flashing scenes, alternating darken and lighter images. The bright camera flashes in the background add a sense of chaos and intrusion, emphasizing the pressure the runner is under. Lighting becomes almost dramatic, with strong, focused light illuminating one side of Semenya's face, creating a sharp contrast with the shadowed side. This chiaroscuro effect highlights the tension and seriousness of the moment. The last scenes have minimal sources of light, adding depth to them while leaving much of the image in darkness.</p> <p>- Color: the colors change from warm tones, including shades of brown, beige, and yellow (creating a cozy and nostalgic atmosphere) to the saturated colors of the South African flag (green, blue, black, white, yellow, and red), to a moody shade of deep blacks with occasional bursts of light from camera flashes, which give the image a somber and serious tone.</p> <p>- Transition: clear cut to the next scene, after a slow-motion sequence shown in reverse, moving backward through time.</p>	
4	0.31 – 0.58	<p>- Content description: the scene opens with a young Semenya looking at herself in the mirror. From this moment, the viewer is drawn back into the past. As she is shown running in slow motion and in reverse, the monologue continues with the words, “<i>Would you prefer I hadn't worked so hard?</i>”. The scene shifts to her running alone in a rural area, no one else in sight, just power lines, a bicycle, and a desolate shack. Sweat drips from her forehead as the following question is asked, “<i>Or just didn't run?</i>”. A pistol then signals the start of a game, and a group of young kids playing football becomes visible. The voiceover asks, “<i>Or chose a different sport?</i>”, while showing the same young girl from the beginning of the video, smiling, and running freely, enjoying herself among other children her age. For a brief moment, a serious-faced girl is seen among drying clothes. Finally, the hands of what appears to be a mother or caring grandmother reach out to those of a young baby learning to walk, as we hear, “<i>Or stopped at my first steps?</i>”.</p> <p>- Frame width: the sequence begins with a close-up shot focusing on the girl's reflection in the mirror (0:31-0:32). The scene then transitions from a mid-shot (0:33-0:35) to a full-figure shot (0:35-0:36), followed by a close-up (0:37-0:38) and an extreme close-up of sweat dripping down her face (0:39-0:42). The focus shifts to a close-up of the pistol (0:42-0:43), then alternates between a full-figure and mid-shot of the girls playing football (0:44-0:50). The sequence concludes with a close-up of the mother's hands (0:52-0:57) and a final full-figure shot of the entire room (0:58).</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally, with the horizon lines gradually changing from shot to shot (it is possible to observe the horizon line at the top and then at the bottom of the scene).</p> <p>- Lighting: The lighting starts off as soft and diffused, with a warm glow that suggests natural sunlight filtering in from a window, possibly at sunset or sunrise, adding a dreamy quality to the scene. As the scene progress, illumination is still perceived as soft, creating long shadows and a hazy atmosphere that adds to the feeling of warmth and fatigue. It suddenly changes when the frame focuses on the pistol, becoming natural and bright, likely from direct sunlight. The shot feels sharp and detailed. The light feels welcoming again when it focuses on the child, illuminating the center of the room and leaving the corners in softer, dimmer light. This contrast helps to draw attention to the child's movement and the outstretched</p>	<p>The emotional piano piece continues to play, accompanied by the sound of a beating heart, a pistol shot signaling the start of a run, the wind rustling through hanging laundry, and distant human voices. It is possible to hear the sound of dust being swept by the wind, followed by a final thud as a toddler falls to the ground.</p> <p>- Speech: <i>Would you prefer I hadn't worked so hard? Or just didn't run? Or chose a different sport? Or stopped at my first steps?</i></p> 

		<p>hands of the adult, suggesting a caring interaction and creating an inviting atmosphere, making the space feel cozy and safe.</p> <p>- Color: the color palette is warm and earthy, dominated by soft browns, yellows, and dusty oranges. The warm tones contribute to the intimate and personal mood of the scene, suggesting a quiet, reflective moment. The scene gives a nostalgic, almost timeless sentiment, while creating a sense of heat and dryness. It changes in the pistol shot, where the palette becomes minimalistic, dominated by the light blue sky that fills the background, to eventually go back to the beiges and clay of the kitchen.</p> <p>- Transition: clear cut to the next scene, with a black screen.</p>		
5	0.58 – 1.13	<p>- Content description: after a brief pause with a black screen, the final scene reveals young Semenya smiling, her face illuminated with light, as the commentator's voice plays in the background, almost foretelling her future. Her monologue concludes with the words, <i>"That's too bad. Because I was born to do this"</i>. The screen then fades to black, and the tagline appears: <i>"When you're born to do it. Just do it"</i>, followed by the Nike logo.</p> <p>- Frame width: the shot is a close-up, focusing tightly on the girl's face and capturing the details of her expression.</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p> <p>- Lighting: the lighting is natural and bright, likely from direct sunlight, creating a soft, warm glow on the Semenya's face and contributing to the positive and peaceful atmosphere of the scene.</p> <p>- Color: the image features natural skin tones set against a floral-patterned background, maintaining an overall warm palette. In the final frames, the screen turns completely black, with only the white tagline and logo standing out.</p> <p>- Transition: clear cut to the tagline and logo.</p>	<p>The background music brings together the commentator's voice, the cheering crowd, the final notes of the emotional piece, and the conclusion of Semenya's monologue.</p> <p>- Speech: <i>That's too bad. Because I was born to do this.</i></p>	 

3.5.3 Commercial Analysis (I)

The *"Just Do It: Caster Semenya"* advertisement can be divided into five distinct narrative sequences, which are crucial in narrating Semenya's story with emotional depth. The first sequence introduces her beginnings, using soft visuals and ambient sounds to evoke a sense of nostalgia. The second scene transitions to her victories as an athlete, and it is characterized by vibrant colors and dynamic audio that capture the intensity of competition. The third sequence highlights the duality of public celebration and personal struggle, via the use of dramatic lighting and of a touching dialogue. The fourth sequence dives into her past, with slow motion and reverse shots that explore her journey, guided by her provoking monologue. Finally, the ad climax in a powerful conclusion that ties her past to her present, reinforcing the narrative's emotional ethos and Nike's signature storytelling rhythm.

The commercial opens with a young girl, presumably a younger Caster Semenya, running across an open field in a rural area. This scene is characterized by soft and natural lighting which creates a sense of nostalgia. The choice of a simple, practical outfit for the girl emphasizes her humble beginnings, making the story more relatable. The colors in this sequence, light blues, pale pinks and earthy browns, add a sense of warmth and authenticity of the scene. The lack of dialogue and

the ambient sounds, like birds chirping and the rhythmic sound of the girl's running, allow the viewer to focus entirely on the visual storytelling. This quiet opening sequence sets the tone for the rest of the ad, drawing viewers into Semenya's world and her story.



Figure 26: Screenshot from Sequence 1

The narrative quickly shifts from the quiet countryside to the intensity of a competitive track event, where an adult Semenya is seen dominating the race. In this sequence, the natural lighting contrasts with the softer tones of the opening, symbolizing the shift from humble beginnings to the bright lights of the global stage. The focus on Semenya's shoe during a close-up shot gently integrates the brand into the narrative without overshadowing the story being told.



Figure 27: Screenshot from Sequence 2

This scene is characterized by the introduction of a sports commentator's voice, creating an atmosphere of competition and achievement. The dialogue *"And here Semenya, she is pushing on again and she is breaking her way. She is going for something special"* centers on her athletic abilities, as Semenya's monologue begins with the provocative question *"Would it be easier for you if I wasn't so fast?"* accompanied by Cam Ballantyne's emotional piano piece, that coupled with visuals in slow motion, adds a layer of pathos and introspection, inviting viewers to consider the personal struggles behind her victories.

The sequence then shifts to what appears to be an African American family celebrating Semenya's victory on television. The advertisement expands its focus to include national pride with a flying South African flag highlighting her role not just as an athlete but as a symbol of patriotism. The transition from the celebration to a more intimate moment, where Semenya receives her gold medal, reflects the dual nature of her experience, on one hand the public celebration, on the other, the personal burden of other's expectation.



Figure 28: Screenshot from Sequence 3

The bright camera flashes in the background add a chaotic and intrusive feel, highlighting the pressure Semenya is under. This effect intensifies the tension of the moment. The colors shift from warm and comforting tones during the family scene, to darker ones during the medal ceremony, emotions that are mirrored in her monologue when another provoking series of questions are being asked to the audience “*Would it be simpler if I stopped winning? Would you be more comfortable if I was less proud?*”, which are not just rhetorical, but challenge societal expectations and prejudices, making a powerful statement about identity and acceptance.

The advertisement then takes the viewer back in time, which is visually represented through a series of slow motion and reverse shots that portray her journey from childhood to her current status as a champion. The monologue during this sequence “*Would you prefer I hadn’t worked so hard? Or just didn’t run? Or chose a different sport? Or stopped at my first steps?*” echoes the societal pressures and challenges that Semenya has faced throughout her life. These questions, paired with the visuals of her younger self running freely and happily, highlight the contrast between the simplicity of childhood and the complex reality of adult life, especially as a South African female runner.



Figure 29: Screenshot from Sequence 4

The final sequence of the advertisement brings the narrative to a full circle, returning to the image of younger Semenya, now smiling and illuminated by natural light. The commentator's voice from the earlier competitive scene reappears, tying together the themes of destiny and achievement. As the screen fades to black, Semenya's voice delivers the concluding line, *"That's too bad. Because I was born to do this"* directly addressing and linking the Nike's tagline *"When you're born to do it. Just do it"* which encapsulates the essence of the advertisement, a celebration of natural talent and an unapologetic embrace of identity and a clear and undeniable purpose.



Figure 30: Screenshot from Sequence 5

3.5.4 The Actantial Model (I)

The analysis then progresses to the next interconnected layer, the semio-narrative level. As introduced in Chapter1, by analyzing the “*Just Do It: Caster Semenya*” under this framework, it is possible to dissect the narrative roles into their basic components: the subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent. The actants interact and relate to one another revealing the message behind the story.

The following actants were identified within the campaign’s narrative:

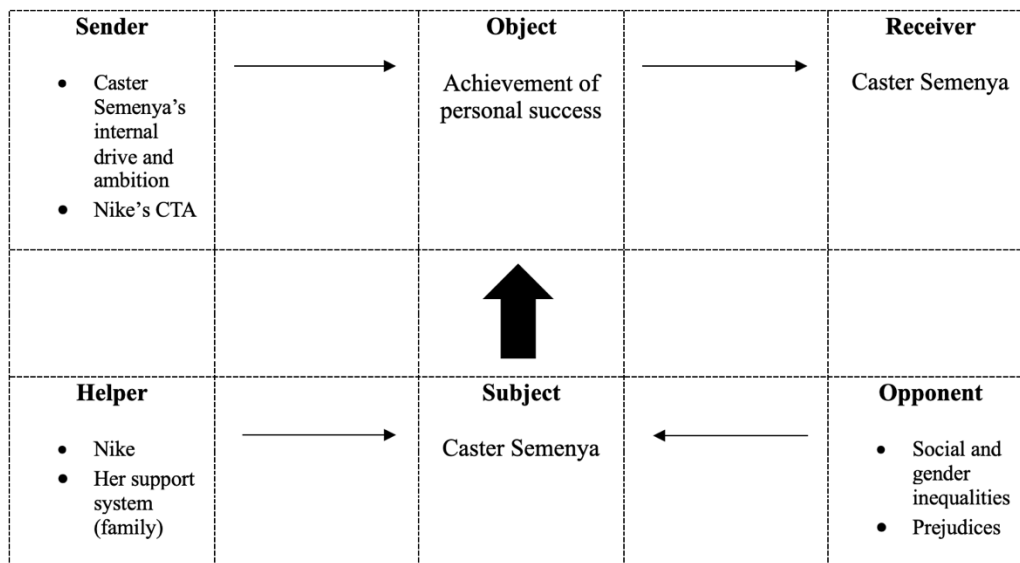


Figure 31: Applied Actantial Model to *Just Do It: Caster Semenya’s Video*

- **Sender:** The sender is represented by both Caster Semenya and Nike. While her internal force pushes her to overcome obstacles and strive for excellence, the brand instigates a call to action to the consumers with the “Just Do It” tagline by promoting its ideology of transcending limits and motivating individuals to strive for personal success.
- **Receiver:** The receiver is also Caster Semenya as she is the one who benefits from the journey of overcoming societal prejudices and achieving personal success. The journey’s end is her self actualization and empowerment.
- **Subject:** Caster Semenya is the subject, as she is the protagonist actively striving towards the goal of breaking barriers and achieving her full potential.
- **Object:** The object is the achievement of personal empowerment and success, as well as challenging societal norms regarding gender in sports.
- **Helper:**

- **Nike:** Nike fits the role of a helper within the narrative as it supports Semenya's journey by providing her with sports tools and a platform to showcase her story, reflecting its brand ethos of perseverance through sports.
- **Semenya's Family:** The supportive figures such as family, fans and perhaps the global community depicted in the advertisement, also act as helpers by providing moral and emotional support.
- **Opponent:** The opponents are societal norms and prejudices that challenge Semenya, particularly the criticisms and the controversies surrounding her gender and eligibility in women's sports. These create obstacles she must overcome, and they are portrayed through the rhetorical questions in her monologue, which challenge viewer perceptions and societal expectations.

3.5.5 The Canonical Narrative Scheme (I)

Incorporating Greimas' *Canonical Narrative Scheme* into an analysis allows us to dissect a narrative through its logical progression of phases, providing a clear structure to understand how a subject moves from motivation to action and eventual resolution. By breaking down a story into the phases of Manipulation, Competence, Performance, and Sanction, the scheme reveals the essential dynamics between the subject's goals, the challenges they face, and the final evaluation of their actions.

Manipulation (Motivational Phase)

In this initial cognitive phase, the *Manipulating Addressers*, represented by Semenya's internal motivation and Nike's call to action, instill values in the object, which is defined by the achievement of personal empowerment and success. These values, including resilience, strength, defiance of societal norms, and the pursuit of authenticity, motivate Caster, the *Operating Subject*, to continue her quest. A value system rooted in persistence and victory through empowerment is introduced in the narrative when the object becomes significant and is internalized by the subject.

The manipulation in this instance operates on two levels: implicit and explicit. Implicitly, it reflects Semenya's internal ambition and desire for excellence, combined with the necessity of winning in the face of adversity. This intrinsic motivation drives her forward, pushing her to break barriers both in sports and in society. On the other hand, the manipulation is made explicit through Nike's iconic command, "*Just Do It*," an external force that encourages Semenya to fully commit to her journey.

This phase begins when Semenya implicitly accepts her mission, represented by the moment she takes her first steps and later manifested in her dedication to daily training under disadvantageous conditions. In these early stages, her helpers are few, limited to her principles, inner determination, and family support. As she grows older and gains recognition, the manipulation evolves. Her growing fame leads to endorsements, such as with Nike, further solidifying her commitment to success. At this moment, the manipulation shifts from implicit to explicit. Nike, as an external force, provides an additional layer of motivation, empowering Semenya with a support system that boosts her confidence and perseverance. This external support echoes the internal commitment already fuelling the pursuit of her goals, reinforcing the value system she had long embraced.

Competence (Qualifying Phase)

The second phase, grounded in a more pragmatic dimension, is known as competence. In this stage, the operating subject acquires the necessary skills, represented by the modalities of “knowing-how-to-do” and “being-able-to-do” (Mangano & Marrone, 2015). In the commercial, Semenya’s journey of trial and error allows her to develop this competence. Running with friends while playing soccer on a desolate field, and committing to daily solo training sessions, serve as pivotal moments where she sharpens her abilities. Through these experiences, she realizes she is capable of achieving her goals, strengthening her intrinsic motivation and reinforcing her confidence through consistent effort.

This daily discipline becomes the key to her progression, preparing her for the central action of the narrative. At this point, Semenya also connects with the helpers — her close family, who offer emotional support throughout her career, and Nike, which not only provides advanced shoe technology that enhances her physical performance but also offers a platform to support her journey and showcase her success. These elements, both emotional and material, serve as the foundation upon which she builds the competence needed to face greater challenges and more impactful competitions, positioning her for success in the main phase of her journey, thus rendering her “qualified” to proceed.

Performance (Action Phase)

During the performance phase, Semenya confronts the *Anti-Subject*, represented by societal gender norms and expectations. This is the central action segment of the narrative, where Semenya strives to achieve the goal set during the manipulation stage: to prove herself and defy the limits placed upon her.

As a hyperandrogenous athlete, someone with naturally high testosterone levels, Semenya's career has been damaged by controversy. This biological characteristic led to public and regulatory scrutiny, questioning whether she had an unfair advantage in women's athletics⁵⁸. The conflict is not merely about her athletic expertise but also about societal expectations regarding gender. The commercial reveals the inner turmoil she faces, capturing the tension between her dedication to hard work and society's pressure to conform to traditional gender norms.

Her journey highlights the discrimination faced by women, especially black women, whose bodies challenge preconceived ideas about femininity. Ever since her arrival on the global stage, she has been subjected to invasive scrutiny; her anatomy debated, her identity questioned, and her right to compete contested. The constant public and media attention on her medical history reinforces the harsh reality of what happens when athletes defy societal stereotypes and prejudices.

The moment where she is shown winning a competition and receiving a medal, represents her triumph over the societal limitations she has faced her entire life, marking the central action of the narrative. The brand's presence during her performance reinforces her resilience and commitment to success, playing the role not only of the provider of physical support through its apparel, but also that of the symbol of strength and empowerment. Later in the video, the confrontation with the anti-subject is illustrated in a powerful scene where Semenya, standing alone in a dark room, is surrounded by flashing lights, a visual metaphor for the immense pressure and judgment she faces. Once again, she is wearing a Nike athletic jacket, emphasizing the brand's support in her journey. As the flashes go off, she stands confidently, flexing her muscles, sending a message: "I am here, stronger than ever. I achieved this on my own, and no one can stop me".

Sanction (Evaluative Phase)

The final cognitive moment, known as the sanction or evaluative phase, involves a judgment of the subject's actions and outcomes by the *Judging Addresser*. In this case, Nike assumes that role, determining whether Semenya's actions align with a defined value system and ultimately granting a reward.

Both society, represented by the audience, and Nike evaluate Semenya's success. The crowd cheers her on, symbolizing collective support. Nike's final line in the ad, "*When you're born to do it. Just do it*" serves as the sanction, affirming that Semenya's achievements are acknowledged and celebrated, despite the struggles she has faced. Her reward is not only personal success but also recognition

⁵⁸ Source: <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/5/3/18526723/caster-semenya-800-gender-race-intersex-athletes>




from the brand and the empowerment that comes with challenging and breaking societal norms. Nike's message aligns with this evaluation, reinforcing the idea that perseverance through adversity leads to triumph.

3.6 Analysis of the AI User-Generated Commercial



3.6.1 Introduction of the commercial (II)



The spec commercial titled “NIKE - *Steps to Mars*”⁵⁹ (2024) was not produced by a traditional agency but by a user, Gregor Haas, who has been exploring AI generated content through platforms like YouTube, utilizing tools such as Pika Labs. This 1 minute and 25 seconds spec ad pictures a futuristic narrative that aligns with Nike's themes of exploration and perseverance, though it was created independently of the brand. While not officially commissioned, the ad is valuable to this research as it provides insight into how user generated AI content may intersect with established brand identities, contributing to an ongoing investigation into whether and how such creations reflect or reinterpret Nike's core values. This speculative piece highlights the potential of AI in expanding the boundaries of brand storytelling, offering new angles for exploration within the context of this thesis.

3.6.2 The segmentation of the advertising (II)

# Sequence	Duration	Visual Column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0.00 – 0.15	<p>- Content description: the video starts with the image of a spacecraft in outer space. In the distance, a planet resembling Earth can be seen. The scene transitions to an astronaut inside a shuttle, gazing out at the immenseness of space. Meanwhile, back on Earth, his wife and daughter watch his departure, knowing that this journey will take him far from home.</p> <p>- Frame width: the sequence begins with a wide shot of the spacecraft (0.00-0.03), followed by a close-up of the astronaut (0.04-0.05). It then transitions to a half-length shot of the mother and daughter at home (0.06-0.08), before returning to a close-up of the shuttle and the astronaut (0.09-0.15).</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p> <p>- Lighting: at the beginning, the source of light is the sun reflecting on the surface of Earth, then it becomes softer as it illuminates the astronaut's face. At home, the light is diffused, coming from a lamp.</p> <p>- Color: in the beginning, the color palette is dominated by the deep blacks of space, gradually transitioning to warmer tones of reds, oranges, browns, and yellows. The contrast is provided by the whites in the outfits of the characters.</p> <p>- Transition: smooth transition to the next scene.</p>	<p>In the background, it is possible to hear the rumble of the shuttle as it departs Earth, the astronaut's heavy breathing, and the ambient sounds of space.</p> <p>From the launch director: - Speech: “3...2...1. We have ignition,”</p> <p>Then the astronaut starts his monologue: - Speech: “I always dream big”.</p>	  

⁵⁹ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKcBiURD5jo>

2	0.15 – 0.30	<p>- Content description: The second sequence focuses on the astronaut's past and of the moments he holds most dear. The viewer is taken on a journey through his life's milestones: from the pride of graduating college to the joy of finding his first love, and ultimately, to the fulfillment of becoming a father.</p> <p>- Frame width: the sequence features close-ups on the characters' faces.</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p> <p>- Lighting: the lighting is soft and natural, creating gentle glows on people's expressions, particularly highlighting the boy and girl's curls.</p> <p>- Color: the primary colors are golden tones, deep reds, greens, all rich in warmth and intimacy.</p> <p>- Transition: clear cut to the next scene.</p>	<p>The astronaut continues his monologue:</p> <p>- Speech: <i>"My biggest achievements, they carry me. My first love. My first steps as a father."</i></p> <p>In the background, as the sequence unfolds, the sounds of cheering crowds, chirping birds, a newborn's cries, and soft music gradually fill the scene.</p>	  
3	0.30 – 0.56	<p>- Content description: the scene shifts again, showing the shuttle landing safely on what looks like an extraterrestrial planet. The camera focuses on the astronaut's Nike shoes (which are the focus of the sequence), as he steps onto the rusty red surface, each step rich in significance. Back home, his wife and daughter cheer him on, relieved and proud that the mission was both successful and safe. The astronaut pauses, taking in the breathtaking view of the vast red planet. The mission was a triumph, and now, he can finally return home to the people he loves.</p> <p>- Frame width: wide shot of the spacecraft, followed by a close-up of the engines (0:30-0:33), close up on the astronaut's expression and Nike shoes (0:34-0:48), wide shot of valley on the planet (0:48-0:50), close-up of the shoes again followed by a full figure of the astronaut (0:50-0:56).</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p> <p>- Lighting: a wide shot of the spacecraft transitions into a close-up of the engines (0:30-0:33). The scene then shifts to a close-up of the astronaut's expression and Nike shoes (0:34-0:48). This is followed by a wide shot of the planet's valley (0:48-0:50). The sequence concludes with another close-up of the shoes, leading into a full-figure shot of the astronaut (0:50-0:56).</p> <p>- Color: similar to the overall tone of the video, the sequence is filled with warm colors, with shades of yellow, red, orange, mixed with metallic gray from the shuttle and bright whites from the boots.</p> <p>- Transition: smooth transition to the next scene.</p>	<p>- Speech: <i>"My dreams brought me here. Every step, a new world. I am coming home."</i></p> <p>The music feels almost ethereal, each step is signaled by a distinct thud, emphasizing the importance it carries for the character and humanity.</p>	   
4	0.56 – 1.10	<p>- Content description: as the astronaut finally returns home, his family is there to welcome him back to Earth with open arms, celebrating his accomplishments and the incredible journey he has complete.</p> <p>- Frame width: close ups of the family embracing one another.</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p> <p>- Lighting: the natural light of the golden hour adds depth to the expressions, making the moment feel intimate and cozy.</p> <p>- Color: soft amber glows, with deep oranges and earthy tones.</p> <p>- Transition: clear cut to the next scene</p>	<p>- Speech: <i>"It is not for fame and glory. It is about passion and love."</i></p> <p>The background is filled with people cheering and applauding.</p>	  
5	1.10 – 1.25	<p>- Content description: finally back home, he has the chance to pass on his legacy by sharing with his daughter the very shoes that made his dream possible. Together, they watch as another mission takes off from Earth. The scene closes with the iconic tagline "Just Do It" and the Nike logo appearing on the screen.</p> <p>- Frame width: medium close-up, capturing the family members from the waist up.</p> <p>- Camera angle: the sequence is shot horizontally.</p>	<p>- Speech: <i>"Passing on a legacy. Being part of something bigger".</i></p> <p>In the background, a piano piece can be heard.</p>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lighting: the light in the family scene is soft and warm, gently coming from above, filling the moment with a golden glow that adds warmth and comfort. In contrast, the rocket scene is lit by a softer, more diffused light, creating a serene atmosphere that highlights the vastness and significance of the moment. - Color: warm colors, with gold creating a sunset-like environment. The sky is painted with shades of orange and pink, with clouds behind the rocket. In the last frame deep blacks contrasts with the white logo, which stands out. - Transition: clear cut to the tagline and logo. 	 
--	--	---	---

3.6.3 Commercial Analysis (II)

The “NIKE - *Steps to Mars*” SpecAd takes the viewer on an emotional journey that brings together a story of space exploration with personal achievements. The ad can be segmented into five key narrative sequences, each building on the previous one to create a story that speaks of ambition, legacy and the pursuit of greatness, values aligned with Nike’s brand essence.

The ad opens with a spacecraft drifting through the vastness of space, with Earth visible in the distance, setting a tone of isolation and adventure. This initial scene is characterized by deep blacks, representing the unknown and the potential that lies beyond our planet. The focus then shifts to the astronaut inside the shuttle, his face is gently brightened up by the reflection of the sun. The transition to his wife and daughter back on Earth introduces a contrast between the coldness of space and the warmth of home, with the colors in this sequence setting the tone for the entire content. The sound of the shuttle mixed with the astronaut’s heavy breathing and the loud silence of space, create an atmosphere that stresses the magnitude of the journey ahead.



Figure 32: SpecAd Screenshot from Sequence 1

The second sequence transitions the viewers to flashbacks of the astronaut's life, showcasing the moments that have shaped him: graduating from college, finding love, and becoming a father. These scenes are captured in close-up shots, highlighting the intimacy and emotional significance of each memory. The use of natural lighting and warm tones fills the image with a sense of nostalgia. The monologue during this sequence "*My biggest achievements, they carry me. My first love. My first steps as a father*" adds depth to the narrative, connecting the astronaut's personal milestones to his professional ambitions. The background sounds of cheering crowds, birds and a newborn's cries, gives an emotional texture to these memories.



Figure 33: SpecAd Screenshot from Sequence 2

Still in this sequence, the visuals return to the astronaut as his shuttle lands on an extraterrestrial planet, likely Mars. The camera focuses on his Nike branded shoes as they make contact with the dusty surface of the inhospitable planet, each step serving as a metaphor of both personal and human achievement. The music during this sequence seems ethereal, with each movement emphasized by a distinct thud, reinforcing the idea that every step is a giant leap for humanity. The astronaut's monologue "*My dreams brought me here. Every step a new world. I am coming home*" conveys the importance of pursuing dreams, signaling the final step in the completion of a monumental journey.



Figure 34: SpecAd Screenshot from Sequence 3

The third sequence shows the astronaut's return to Earth, where his family greets him with open arms. The close-ups of their hugs convey a sense of warmth and intimacy. The astronaut's monologue continues with the words *"It is not for fame and glory. It is about passion and love"* shifting the narrative from external achievement to internal fulfillment. In the background, cheers and applause from the crowd add to the celebratory tone, highlighting the success of the mission.



Figure 35: SpecAd Screenshot from Sequence 4

The final sequence focuses on the theme of legacy. The astronaut shares his Nike shoes with his daughter, symbolizing the passing of the torch to the next generation. Together they watch another mission launching from Earth, with the image suggesting the closing of one chapter and the beginning of another.



Figure 36: SpecAd Screenshot from Sequence 5

3.6.4 The Actantial Model (II)

For the AIUGC, the following actants were identified within the campaign’s narrative:

Sender The Astronaut’s ambitions and dreams	→	Object Successfully going to Mars	→	Receiver The Astronaut
		↑		
Helper • Nike • His support system (family)	→	Subject The Astronaut	←	Opponent • Difficulty of the mission • Being far away from loved ones

Figure 37: Applied Actantial Model to NIKE - Steps to Mars SpecAd

- **Sender:** The sender is the astronaut's ambition and dreams, driving him toward the pursuit of exploration and achievement. His ambition works as a catalyst for the entire narrative, motivating him to pursue a seemingly impossible goal, landing on Mars. The sender represents not just personal ambition but also the collective human desire to push boundaries and explore the unknown.
- **Object:** The object is the successful completion of the Mars mission, symbolizing the fulfillment of the astronaut's dream and the achievement of the broader themes of legacy and pursuit of greatness.
- **Receiver:** The receiver is the astronaut and, symbolically, humanity, who benefits from the achievement and the inspiration it provides.
- **Helper:** The helper is represented by the Nike shoes, which empower his journey and by the astronaut's past experiences and memories, which provide him with the emotional strength to persevere.
- **Subject:** The subject is the astronaut himself, who is the central character around whom the entire story revolves. He is the one pursuing the object, going to Mars, with the journey being the primary focus of the narrative.
- **Opponent:** The opponent in this story is the set of challenges and obstacles that the astronaut faces, both external and internal. Externally, the opponent is the harsh environment of space and Mars, which poses significant risks to the mission. Internally, the astronaut faces emotional challenges, such as the loneliness of space travel and the emotional burden of being separated from his family.

3.6.5 The Canonical Narrative Scheme (II)

These phases were analyzed at the Canonical Narrative level for the AIUGC within the video's narrative:

Manipulation (Motivational Phase):

The *Manipulating Addresser* in this phase is the astronaut's ambition and dreams. His intrinsic motivation drives him toward the object of this phase, represented by the goal of reaching Mars, to which the values of personal success and human achievement are attached.

Competence (Qualifying Phase):

In this phase, the astronaut gathers the emotional and physical strength needed to complete his mission. He reflects on his past achievements, such as graduating from college, finding love, and becoming a father. These memories give him the competence to resolve and face the challenges

ahead. Nike, as the *helper*, provides physical support through its technology. The astronaut becomes qualified to proceed with his journey to Mars, powered by his inner drive and the support from his loved ones.

Performance (Action Phase):

This is the central action of the SpecAd, where the astronaut successfully lands on Mars. The focus on his Nike shoes as he steps onto the surface of the planet signifies the moment of triumph. His conflict with the external environment (Mars and space) and the internal emotional strain of being away from his family are resolved through his perseverance and success.

The camera shots of his landing, followed by his family cheering from Earth, represent the culmination of his journey and the achievement of his dreams.

Sanction (Evaluative Phase):

The final phase sees the *Judging Addresser*, represented by society (his family and the audience), evaluating the astronaut's achievement. The reward is both personal and collective: the astronaut successfully returns home, and the symbolic handing down of the Nike shoes to his daughter represents the legacy of personal commitment and exploration that is passed to the next generation.

3.7 Semiotic Square

After decomposing the visual elements of the commercials and examining their semio-narrative structures, the analysis now moves to a deeper level through the use of the semiotic square. This tool is employed to further explore and comprehend the complexity of meanings existing within Nike's brand discourse.

From this exploration, the interplay of contradictions and contrarities becomes clear, allowing an understanding of how Nike positions itself in the competitive landscape. A list of contradictions was identified: progressive/not progressive; conservative/not conservative; resilient/not resilient; complacent/not complacent. At its core, Nike thrives on a delicate balance of contrariness: progressive versus conservative and resilient versus complacent, and the implication of being progressive and not conservative around social and technological changes. These contrasts are not just rhetorical, they form the basis of the brand's identity, guiding its communication and engagement with audiences.

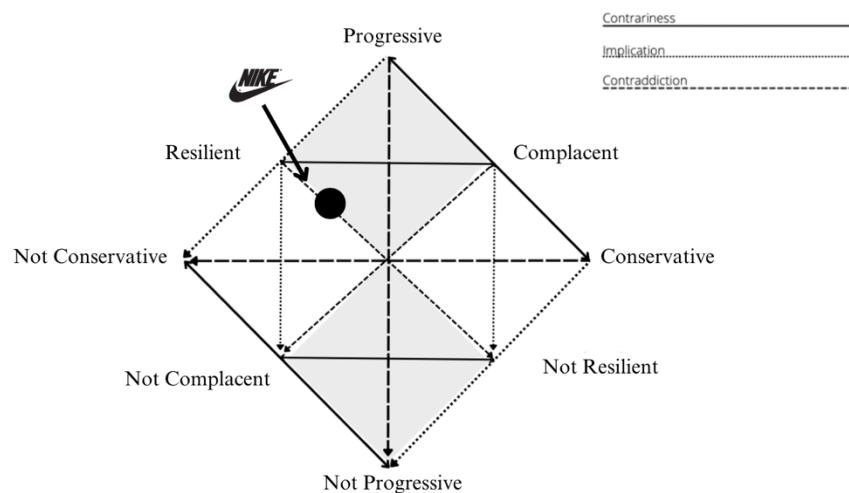


Figure 38: Greimas' Semiotic Square applied to Nike

Nike's emphasis on progressiveness and resilience is evident in its forward-thinking innovations and social contributions. The deeper the analysis goes, the more evident it becomes that Nike's success is rooted in its ability to advocate for social change and to push boundaries, while continually inspiring its audience through personal empowerment. The semiotic square that captures the brand's identity highlights the essential contrarities: Nike's focus on being progressive implies a rejection of conservatism in both thought and action. Meanwhile, the brand's emphasis on resilience positions it in direct opposition to complacency. These are not just arbitrary traits but reflect a deeper value system Nike embodies.

The brand's position as a progressive entity means embracing change and innovation, both technologically and socially. It represents challenging the status quo and promoting diversity, inclusion, and societal evolution. This is particularly evident in the brand's crafted advertising, which consistently reflects these values and reinforces its commitment to driving positive change, which aligns with the overall message that progress isn't just about being ahead in the marketplace, but also in fostering real-world growth. On the flip side, being resilient conveys the importance of pushing beyond limits, overcoming obstacles, and never settling into a state of complacency. This element is powerfully highlighted in both the brand generated advertising and in the AIUGC video. Finally, Nike's narratives around resilience and personal growth inspire consumers to continuously strive for self-improvement, whether in athletics or broader personal and societal development.

Moving forward with a deeper analysis of the semantic universe, we can draw on the "axiology of consumption values" (Floch, 1990). This framework identifies two key approaches: one focuses

on sports as *a goal to be achieved* through the right tools, and the other views sports as *a lifestyle* that transcends its practical dimensions, offering a path to self-discovery. The first approach centers around critical and practical valorizations, while the latter emphasizes utopian and ludic ones (Bateman, 2015).

In one respect, sports are seen as a target to be reached with the appropriate approaches, yet they can also represent a way of life, where the practical side of sports becomes secondary to the exploration of personal and social identity. Within the context of the sports consumption category, purchases are more than just transactions as they serve as ongoing practices through which individuals shape and express their identities, both personally and socially. As Mangano & Marrone (2015) describe, Nike embodies what is referred in semiotics as a “complex term”, summarizing practical and utopian values that go beyond simple binaries. Nike does not merely communicate values but rather valences, that is valorisation of values, which represents the process of infusing values with deeper meaning and relevance. For instance, as seen in its brand commercials, Nike rises above the typical narrative space occupied by its competitors, positioning itself on a higher level without entirely abandoning the traditional narrative structures.

In the Caster Semenya’s commercial, we have seen how Nike assumes the narrative role of the “Addresser” the figure who, at the story’s unfolds, provides the protagonist with the essential values needed to drive their journey. At the conclusion of the story, this role transforms into a *Judging Addresser*, evaluating the hero’s actions. What sets Nike apart is that its narrative universe does not solely focus on winning or overcoming obstacles, but rather emphasizes a deeper quest for personal identity and expression through the brand. Thus, rather than directly communicating a set of values, Nike focuses on valences. In the brand’s stories, values are attributed to objects, and therefore into consumers’ lives, where the viewers connect those values with products, and ultimately use them as a tool to realize their identities through the brand (Bateman, 2015).

While this approach is evident in Nike’s brand-generated ad, the AIUGC content also elevates the brand to new dimensions, even when it’s not the brand directly addressing the subject and evaluating their actions. In this case, the protagonist is seen not merely using Nike products for sports but for reaching another planet, symbolizing the exploration of human potential. This highlights a utopian valorization, where Nike transcends its identity as just a sports brand and evolves into something more — moving into another dimension in the minds of customers, embodying human aspiration and limitless possibilities.

3.8 Media Comparison: superficial level

When comparing the brand generated ad “*Just Do It: Caster Semenya*” and the AIGC “*Steps to Mars*” SpecAd, it was possible to identify key differences and similarities that reflect the nature of their creation and the messages they try to convey.

The brand commercial leverages advanced production techniques, such as reverse shots and slow-motion sequences, to enhance the narrative and emotional impact. These techniques emphasize the struggles and triumphs of Semenya’s journey, adding layers of meaning to each frame. In contrast, the *Steps to Mars SpecAd*, while visually appealing, uses simpler cinematographic techniques. The ad primarily relies on static shots and a consistent color palette, with fewer dynamic transitions or special effects. This approach gives the ad a more straightforward, almost minimalist feel, focusing on the astronaut’s journey in a linear and direct manner. In comparing the two advertisements, the branded ad features much more expressive color treatment, with a greater emphasis on detail and cinematic effects that create numerous expressive touchpoints. While the pacing and narrative structure, including the idea of going back in time, are similar between the two ads, the “*Steps to Mars*” lacks certain technical cinematic effects, such as the reverse motion shots that effectively portray the passage of time.

In the *Caster Semenya* ad, the color palette shifts dramatically across different sequences. It transitions from soft, warm tones in the scenes depicting her childhood, to vibrant and dynamic colors during her competitive races. This deliberate use of color mirrors the emotional highs and lows of her journey, reinforcing the ad’s themes of perseverance and commitment, even through difficult times.

The UGC, instead, maintains a more uniform color palette, dominated by warm tones, which symbolize the welcoming of home. The lighting is consistent throughout the running time, with subtle shifts to highlight key moments, such as the landing on Mars and the astronaut’s reunion with his family. This consistency helps to maintain a cohesive visual narrative but lacks the dramatic color shifts seen in the Semenya ad, which is capable of adding emotional depth to the content.

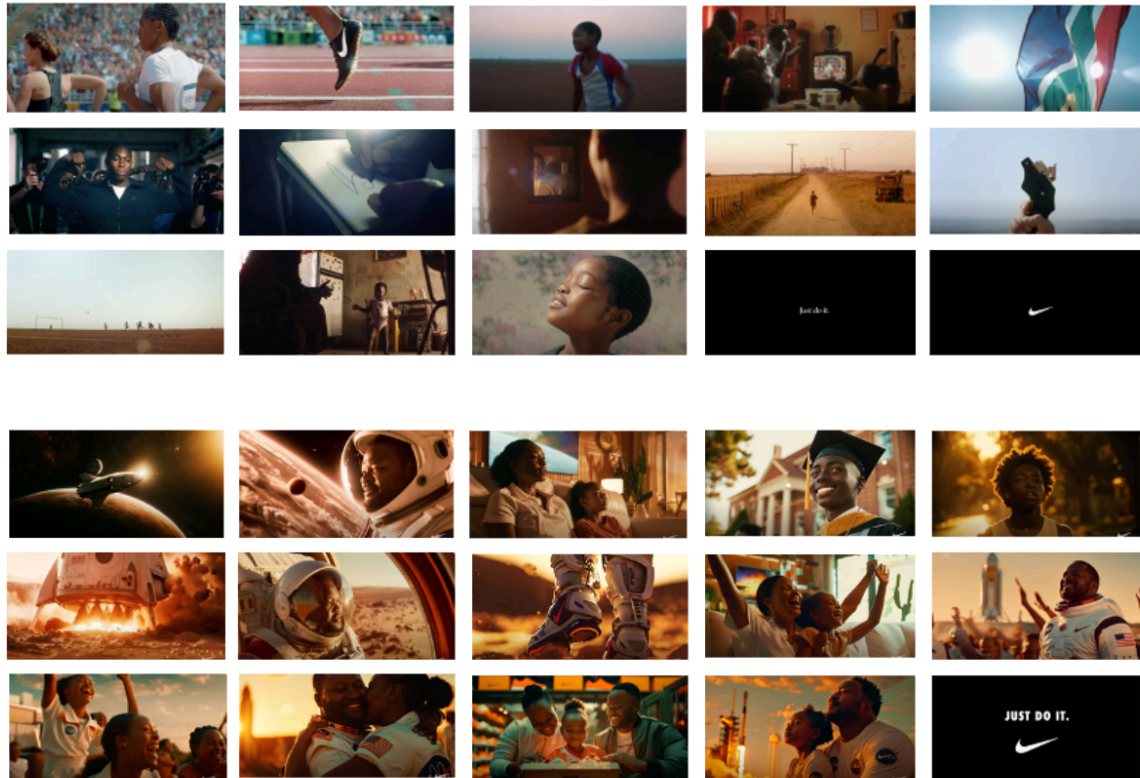


Figure 39: Visual Comparison of the two media

Distinct is also the use of sounds. In the branded ad, the viewer is immersed in an emotional piano piece, a challenging monologue, and rhythmic hums of running, which all together create a dynamic auditory experience that supports the visual storytelling. Conversely, the speculative ad uses a more subtle and consistent musical score. It is thanks to the sound of the astronaut's footsteps that a sense of introspection and solitude is created. However, the overall sound design is less varied and impactful compared to the Semenya ad.

Another difference is the employment of an endorser, which brings an inherent level of credibility and emotional engagement to the narrative, juxtaposed to a fictional story of an astronaut, that, while compelling, lacks the immediate connection that a known figure like Semenya provides. Her struggles and achievements add authenticity to the ad, making it more relatable and powerful.

Furthermore, although both ads feature protagonists from the black community, the role of representation in the branded ad is crucial because it directly connects to the social struggle against racial and gender discrimination. Caster Semenya's identity as a black woman is integral to the narrative, reinforcing Nike's commitment to advocating for marginalized communities. The commercial becomes a vehicle for a larger conversation about identity, rights, and societal pressures. On the other hand, in the SpecAd, the presence of a black character seems less

deliberate, possibly the result of AI generated content based on Nike's trend of featuring African-American individuals in their previous commercials. Additionally, this could be a reflection of inherent biases in AI, which may replicate patterns from the data it is trained on. In this case, the lack of diversity in character representation, where all portrayed characters are black, suggests a failure to incorporate a broader range of identities, emphasizing the need for more careful consideration of diversity in AI-generated content. This also highlights how AIUGC lacks the deeper context of racial and social struggle that the Nike's video possesses, which may make this representation feel more superficial or without specific purpose. This distinction is important because it reflects the different levels of thoughtfulness applied in the creation of these ads where the SpecAd appears to mimic surface-level patterns without engaging in deeper socio-political commentary. Moreover, Nike traditionally sets its stories on planet earth, where real challenges and sacrifices happen every day, and avoids setting its narratives in abstract and distant planets. The SpecAd, while able to capture physical sacrifice, lacks the immediacy of earthly struggles such as the fight for identity and fairness within a world governed by societal norms, where just being oneself and fighting for acceptance becomes a daily struggle. Nike's heroes do not need to leave Earth to prove their worth, their battles are very much part of the human experience here on earth.

Finally, the semio-narrative analysis highlighted the difference in the nature of the opponent between the two advertisements. In the official commercial, the opponent represents societal prejudices and external pressures. This mirrors Nike's tendency to integrate social criticism and activism into its narratives, often addressing issues such as gender and racial discrimination. In Semenya's case, the video emphasizes her personal battle against imposed gender norms and discrimination, aligning her struggle with Nike's social justice discourse. In contrast, the opponent in "*Steps to Mars*" is more introspective, focusing on the sacrifices and physical challenges of space travel. The absence of overt social criticism in this advertisement underlines another difference: while it touches on perseverance and personal sacrifice, it lacks the societal critique that has become integral to Nike's messaging, feeling disconnected from such social themes.

The differences between the two advertisements go beyond technical and cinematic elements, diving into the core of the messages they convey. The Semenya ad is entrenched in social commentary, tackling themes of identity and prejudice in a world full of challenges, while the AIUGC lacks the social critique that Nike often utilizes.

Despite this, both ads share a common narrative that aligns with Nike's overall brand message. The media pieces center around the themes of personal ambition, perseverance, and reaching

goals. In the Caster Semenya ad, this is represented by her fight against societal expectations and her pursuit of excellence. In the “*Steps to Mars*” SpecAd, the astronaut’s journey to Mars symbolizes his chase towards a dream, despite the challenges and sacrifices involved. So, while the content generated with AI falls short in perfectly aligning with Nike social movement, it is able to tap into an utopian valorization through a story that consumers can connect with and later on translate onto its products.

3.9 AI as a Semiotic Actor in the Enunciation Process

In the context of semiotic analysis, the role of AI in the enunciative process in advertisements is fascinating, particularly when comparing an official commercial developed by a brand, to an advertising generated by a user through AI. To explore this process, we must examine how enunciation shifts depending on who controls the narrative, whether it’s the brand or the user leveraging AI. Enunciation in semiotics involves the act of creating a narrative universe by projecting one’s intent through signs (visual, verbal, or symbolic) that resonate with the audience. To quote Marrone (2008, p. 154): “*every conveyed message, in any communicative process, displays within it not only a certain enunciated content, but also some trace of the very process of its production, a kind of signature of its author, an appeal to its user*”. Compared to traditional communication theories, in which we can identify empirical senders and receivers of a message, in semiotics they are understood as the simulacra of the former within the narrative. If we separate the narrative world from the empirical world, we can trace the process of communication construction, in other words the initial strategy. Traditionally, this role of the empirical enunciator is occupied by the company, which carefully crafts messages reflecting its identity, values, and goals within the narrative, having in mind an ideal target (Model Reader, using Eco’s words). In Nike’s professional advertisings, this process is entirely controlled by the brand, where the message is rooted in the brand’s ethos.

However, in the AIUGC, the enunciator’s role shifts to the user and becomes more fragmented. The AI acts as a tool assisting the production of the narrative and enabling the user to craft a message that aligns with Nike’s messages. AI steps in as a medium or extension of the user’s narrative projection, allowing the individual to generate content that aligns with the brand’s semiotic codes without directly being part of its official communication. This shift decentralizes the creation of meaning from the brand to the consumer.

When the brand is the enunciator, the message is controlled and intentional. For instance, in the Nike ad featuring Caster Semenya, Nike’s team constructs a narrative around athletic achievement

and social commentary on gender and identity issues, using Semenya's story as a vessel to communicate resilience and empowerment. On the other hand, in the AI generated media, the enunciator is the user, who crafts the narrative based on their perception of Nike's brand identity. The AI's role here is crucial as it serves as an intermediary that translates the user's prompts into a coherent narrative. This dynamic suggests a form of co-enunciation or co-production where the user and AI collaborate to create a narrative. The user provides the input, the AI interprets it and generates visual and narrative content, and the resulting video communicates with the audience on behalf of both the user and the brand.

In traditional semiotic analysis, the enunciator is seen as the entity producing the message. With AI, the boundaries blur. While the user provides the initial enunciative prompt with an input, the AI becomes an actor in the process, adding layers of complexity to the narrative. AI does not merely serve as a neutral tool but becomes an active participant in shaping the message. It interprets the user's prompt, synthesizes data, and produces content that communicates with the viewer, appearing to take on a partial enunciative role and evolving into a semiotic agent rather than functioning solely as a passive tool. This is a fascinating dynamic where control over the narrative is shared between human and machine.

Furthermore, in the brand ad, Nike occupies the role of the sender (the one who manipulates the subject to perform the action within the story), sending its values through the narrative of Caster Semenya. The object is the achievement of empowerment, which the audience is invited to internalize. When the user generated AI content comes into play, the roles shift. The user, helped by AI, becomes the sender enunciating the story of perseverance.

In both cases, there's a form of *débrayage*, where the enunciation is projected outside of the subject, creating a world that speaks to the consumer. During this process, the subject distances itself from the narrative, and the narrative world is projected out of the subject, creating a kind of separation between the enunciator and the world they are describing (Peverini, 2024). *Embrayage*, on the other hand, involves a re-engagement with the narrative, where the subject reinserts themselves into the narrative world. This is when the enunciator makes their presence more explicit, becoming a visible part of the narrative. In both cases, whether the brand or the user generate content, *débrayage* and *embrayage* can be seen as narrative shifts. When the brand creates a narrative, it steps back (*débrayage*) from direct communication and lets the story of Caster Semenya speak for itself. The same process happens with the AIUGC, as both the user and AI combined

construct a narrative in which their subjectivity is disengaged through a process of actorization, spatialization and temporalization that are different and outside the empirical world. The viewer, in both scenarios, is left at the receiving end of this enunciative projection to interpret the message.

In the context analyzed so far, AI allows users to shift from passive consumers to active co-producers of brand narratives. This reflects a democratization of narrative creation, where the enunciative control shifts from the brand to the consumer via AI. Nevertheless, AI doesn't just facilitate, it actively shapes the narrative, becoming a new player in the semiotic world. This development suggests that future advertising may increasingly involve a co-enunciative process, where users, brands, and AI work in tandem to craft messages that transcend traditional media roles.

Additionally, the significance of user generated AI content for Nike lies in its ability to reinforce the brand's core values through the narratives crafted by third parties. Over time, Nike's strong market positioning has allowed it to establish an authoritative identity that can be accurately interpreted and reconstructed by users, even through AI. When users employ AI to generate content, they prompt it to create an advertisement that mirrors its value system, although not perfectly. This highlights the strength of Nike's semiotic foundation, the brand's coherence and consistency over the years have enabled it to project a narrative universe so robust that it can be replicated by AI, creating a win-win situation, in which the brand indirectly gains authentic promotion, while the users also contribute to the ongoing reinforcement of the brand's values. While AIUGC is not yet fully precise at the current state of the art, it is demonstrating that Nike powerfully structured identity can maintain coherence in a decentralized, user-driven environment.

3.10 Data Collection: Interviews

In addition to the semiotic analysis, in-depth, one-on-one structured interviews were carried out to gather data and explore the research questions, providing insights into people's experiences, perceptions, and feelings about the subject matter.

In qualitative research, purposive or theoretical sampling is often used rather than random sampling. In this study, participants were specifically selected based on characteristics relevant to the research focus, such as their familiarity with branding and AI. Eight participants were involved in the interviews until saturation was achieved. As noted by Saunders et al. (2018), saturation is widely accepted as a key methodological standard in qualitative research. It helps researchers

recognize when enough data has been collected to form a comprehensive and reliable understanding of the research subject (Hennink & Kaiser, 2019). Guest et al. (2006) explain that data saturation occurs when no new insights are emerging from the data, and repeated findings start to surface throughout the analysis process. This signals that data collection can stop (as cited in Faulkner & Trotter, 2017). In other words, when no new information can be extracted from the subjects, saturation has been reached.

Each respondent was exposed to the two videos analyzed through the semiotic tools: “*Just Do It: Caster Semenya*”, the brand generated one, and “*NIKE - Steps to Mars*”, the AI generated one, crafted by a user. This dual exposure allowed for a comparative analysis of how participants perceived authenticity, and the role of AI in shaping brand narratives.

The interview protocol followed these main sections:

- **Introductory Questions:** these questions served as icebreakers, allowing participants to feel comfortable before diving into the core topics.
- **Focused Questions on Branding:** participants were asked about their favorite brands and their associations with advertising, including recent examples that made a lasting impression on them.
- **Video Based Analysis:** participants were exposed to two advertisements, one created by the brand (Nike’s “*Just Do It: Caster Semenya*”) and the other generated by a user through AI (“*Steps to Mars*”). After each video, respondents were asked about their perceptions of the brand’s values, whether they felt any emotions towards the media exposure, and the overall message conveyed by the ads.
- **Comparative Analysis:** after watching both videos, participants were asked to compare the two, considering aspects such as authenticity, creativity, and how the advertisements affected their perceived brand trust.
- **AI Perception and Concerns:** this section investigated participants’ understanding of AI and their concerns about the role of this tool for the future of advertising. Questions also explored how participants felt about the authenticity of AI generated content compared to the branded material.
- **Closing Questions:** the interviews was concluded with questions about the participants’ social media usage, how they interact with content, and whether they create content themselves.

The set of predefined questions (*Protocol*) used for the interview is attached in the Appendix for reference (see *Appendix 1: Protocol*) together with the transcript of the interviews (see *Appendix: 2: Interviews' Transcript*).

3.10.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify and analyze patterns or themes within data. It is particularly valuable in exploratory research because it allows researchers to uncover and interpret themes that naturally emerge from the data, providing deep insights into the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For this research, I employed a theoretical thematic analysis, as it is driven by a specific research question or theoretical framework, allowing me to focus on particular aspects of the data that align with my research objectives. I carried out a manual thematic analysis, a process involving several key steps: familiarizing oneself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes among the codes; reviewing themes to refine them; defining and naming the themes, and finally, producing a report that tells the story of the data in relation to the research questions. This structured approach ensures a rigorous and systematic exploration of the data, leading to meaningful and insightful interpretations.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 40: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Thematic analysis is a cyclical process, rather than a linear one. In particular, this research involved transcribing the interviews, thoroughly going through the data to familiarize myself with the content and identifying key segments by reading and re-reading the material. I highlighted important parts, looked for patterns, and began coding the data. From these codes, I traced the main themes, as shown in *Figure 41*.

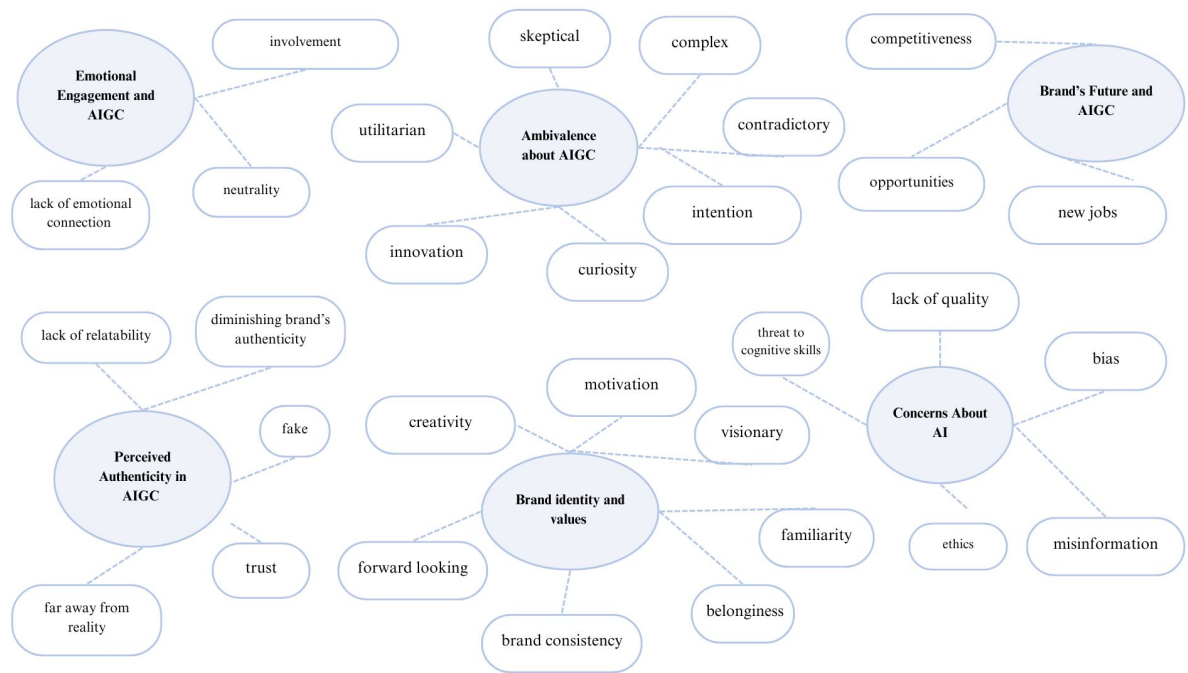


Figure 41: Initial thematic map, showing six main themes

After revisiting the material, I refined the analysis by removing or merging repetitive codes or those lacking internal consistency and external distinctiveness. This process resulted in four main themes and their associated subthemes.

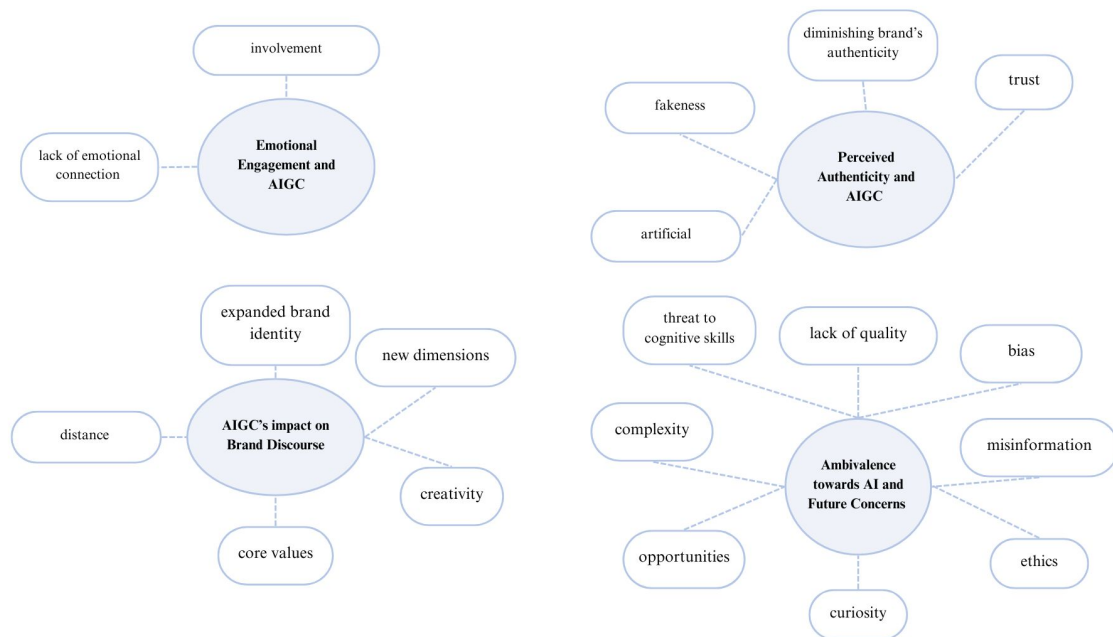


Figure 42: Final thematic map, showing four main themes.

Extracted Themes, Sub Themes and Arbitrarily selected examples of verbatim for each extracted theme.

Themes	Sub Themes	Verbatim
Emotional Engagement and AIGC	<i>Positive Emotional Response</i>	<p>“Ho provato emozioni forti, quando ho visto il bambino piccolo, la moglie, il ritorno a casa, è ricca di emozioni”. (Interview 1 - Lucia)</p>
	<i>Lack of Emotional Connection</i>	<p>“Mi sono sentita spiazzata, perché uno non se lo aspetta. Che cos'è? E' una cosa nuova? Chissà cosa farà? Mi sono sentita emozionata nel scoprire un mondo nuovo”. (Interview 3 - Maria Giulia)</p> <p>“Questo video mi ha toccato molto di più emotivamente, quindi direi emotivo. Quindi qualcosa di molto particolare che mi tocca, perché ha unito carriera e famiglia”. (Interview 7 - Alyssa)</p> <p>“Visti insieme, contemporaneamente non mi ha suscitato chissà cosa”. (Interview 6 - Francesca)</p> <p>“Non mi ha fatto provare emozioni, rispetto a quello di prima”. (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p> <p>“Non ho provato nessuna emozione. Quello di prima sì, questo no”. “L'ho trovato molto cheap, scene messe una dopo l'altra, non ci ho trovato nessuna emozione. Tutto molto piatto”. (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“Mhm... Non ho provato troppe emozioni, neutrale. Mi ha fatto piacere vederlo, non mi disturba, ma non lo andrei a ricercare probabilmente.” (Interview 2 - Andrea)</p>
Perceived Authenticity and AIGC	<i>Higher Authenticity in Brand-Created Content</i>	<p>“Per me autenticità è un brand che manifesta sempre gli stessi valori e gli stessi ideali, anche tramite le pubblicità, e io mi identifico in quelli, poi il brand di conseguenza mi piace di più. Per me è fondamentale l'autenticità perché penso che alla fine ti stia dando un insegnamento, un valore, ti trasmette un valore quindi pensi che quell'azienda abbia dei valori”. (Interview 2 - Andrea)</p>
	<i>Lower Authenticity in AI-Generated Content</i>	<p>“Li ritengo comunque autentici, anche se dipende. Però utilizzati in un certo modo li reputo autentici”. (Interview 2 - Andrea)</p> <p>“La prima, l'ho trovata più <i>relatable</i>. La seconda sembrava la storia di qualcun altro, qualcosa che deve ancora accadere”. “E' più una storia umana, ti identifichi con il personaggio”. (Interview 3 - Maria Giulia)</p> <p>“Leggermente sì, un po' sì. Mi perde un po' di autenticità perché non viene da una fonte ufficiale e tutto quanto, il messaggio rimane forte, però sì, mi cala un pochino”. (Interview 3 - Maria Giulia)</p> <p>“Assolutamente la prima (e.n. <i>più autentica</i>), perché c'è un sentimento che è molto autentico, la superbia”. (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“La prima (e.n. <i>più autentica</i>), perché si vede che sono persone vere, almeno sembra più vero. Sembra più credibile e <i>relatable</i> per me, mi relaziono di più”. “Visionario, esagerato in un certo senso, falso”. (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p> <p>“La seconda (e.n. <i>meno autentica</i>), perché sembra più finta, i personaggi e tutto. Non è una cosa a cui posso relazionarmi, perché non la vedo come qualcosa vicino a me” (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p> <p>“Penso che la storia possa essere autentica, forse più originale. Non mi sento di dire che sia autentica al 100%”. (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p> <p>“Forse la seconda (e.n. <i>più autentica</i>), per il fatto che fortunatamente vivo in una classe agiata, non riesco ad empatizzare al 100% con la prima”. (Interview 6 - Francesca)</p> <p>“Secondo me la seconda (e.n. <i>più autentica</i>), perché per me la famiglia rappresenta l'autenticità, la quotidianità. Poi mi ha colpito di più come pubblicità”. (Interview 7 - Alyssa)</p> <p>“Mi sono chiesta, perché lo hanno utilizzato? Me lo allontana dalla realtà, è artificiale. Mi pone un distacco. Me la allontana, mi distrae. Perché se devi essere autentico, perché la usi?” (Interview 8 - Giulia)</p>
AIGC's impact on Brand Discourse	<i>Positive Perception of Creativity in AI Content</i>	<p>“Innovativo, out of the box, fuori dal comune, e familiare”. (Interview 3 - Maria Giulia)</p>
	<i>Negative Perception of Creativity in AI Content</i>	<p>“Forse la seconda a questo punto, vedere il logo Nike nella tuta spaziale è strano, è anche visionario. Proprio quello che intendevo prima per genialità creativa, lo riconduco proprio a quello”. (Interview 3 - Maria Giulia)</p> <p>“Direi che la linea è sempre la stessa di prima, un po' più fuori dall'ambito sportivo in questo caso. Magari toglierei l'aggettivo sport, però bene o male il messaggio che c'è dietro è lo stesso. Dedizione, identità...” “Lo stesso di prima, quindi un percorso di crescita, di duro lavoro per arrivare a un obiettivo” (Interview 2 - Andrea)</p>

		<p>“La seconda ha cambiato forse un po’ in positivo perché ora mi aspetto qualcosa di nuovo, non mi aspetto la solita Nike, “Just Do It”, le solite cose. Bello forte, però adesso c’è qualcosa di più. Qualcosa di bello.” (Interview 2 - Maria Giulia)</p> <p>“Lui che va su Marte, sullo spazio, è completamente slegato dal brand Nike, forse alla fine la legacy, anche se mi sembra slegato dal resto”. (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“La prima (e.d. <i>più creativa</i>), perché c’era una storia precisa e chiara e le storie necessitano di creatività per essere tratteggiate. Per tratteggiare una storia c’è necessità di lasciare uno spazio creativo anche all’osservatore.” (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“Sempre all’avanguardia, fare qualcosa di incredibile e di nuovo” (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p> <p>“Direi sempre la seconda (n.e. <i>più creativa</i>), perché nella prima ho trovato un po’ di didattica, ci sta, funziona bene, sono entrambe belle. Forse la seconda per gli effetti visivi”. (Interview 6 - Francesca)</p> <p>“Ma il concept di Nike non è cambiato, ha trasmesso quel pensiero comunque delle persone dietro che avranno elaborato ci sono state, quindi non vedo perché debba cambiare idea su quello che penso”. (Interview 6 - Francesca)</p> <p>“La prima non mi sembrava creativa, la seconda di più perché lui andava sulla Luna, ci sono elementi nuovi, nella prima ho visto sabbia, terra, specchi, elementi quotidiani, che vedo sempre”. (Interview 7 - Alyssa)</p> <p>“Assolutamente la seconda, perché me ha aggiunto qualcosa, ho rivisto valori su cui non mi ero mai focalizzata prima d’ora”. (Interview 7 - Alyssa)</p> <p>“Un aggettivo nuovo che mi è venuto in mente è inclusione, la Nike tende ad includere diversi body type che si vedono anche in questa pubblicità”. (Interview 8 - Giulia)</p>
Ambivalence towards AI and Future Concerns	<p><i>Curiosity and Acceptance of AI</i></p> <p><i>Fear and Skepticism About AI</i></p>	<p>“Sono curiosa perché voglio vedere se la useranno bene o se la useranno nel modo sbagliato. Mi crea curiosità vedere come verrà sfruttato questo strumento e il risultato che ne verrà fuori”. (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p> <p>“Sarebbe interessante, non sono contraria, molti colleghi la usano, anche se alcuni non sono soddisfatti e ne hanno paura.” “Io mi ritrovo in questa situazione in cui penso che bisogna sfruttarlo a proprio vantaggio e non averne paura”. (Interview 6 - Francesca)</p> <p>“Qui siamo in un territorio spinoso, [...] E’ come quando hai un coltello, puoi sfamare persone o puoi accoltellare qualcuno. Non è né positivo né negativo, è semplicemente uno strumento”. (Interview 6 - Francesca)</p> <p>“Non mi dà alcun problema, per me è qualcosa che ormai c’è e deve essere utilizzata, non lo vedo come un problema grave”. “Potrebbe essere usato male e creare dei problemi. E’ come viene utilizzato che fa la differenza”. (Interview 7 - Alyssa)</p> <p>“Non mi è ben chiara, onestamente non so bene...”. “E’ uno strumento che devi sapere utilizzare”. “E’ il modo in cui li usiamo che fa la differenza”. (Interview 8 - Giulia)</p> <p>“Un brand che utilizza l’IA con cognizione di causa, non mi preoccupa, perché so che c’è una persona dietro che alla fine stabilisce che quello che sta venendo fuori sia compatibile con il brand”. (Interview 2 - Andrea)</p> <p>“Quindi di conseguenza che possa esserci un insieme di contenuti eccessivo e di poca qualità, che vada non ad innalzare la qualità dei prodotti comunicativi”. (Interview 3 - Maria Giulia)</p> <p>“Sì, la pigrizia. Noi ci impigriremo tutti quanti, al 100%. Un po’ l’effetto Wall-E, è il primo step per non utilizzare più il cervello, che l’essere umano non sia più in grado di utilizzare la materia grigia.” (Interview 3 - Maria Giulia)</p> <p>“L’IA generativa è completamente biased, per loro viviamo in un mondo solo di donne e certe etnie”. (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“L’avevo definita cheap. Sembra realizzata da un ragazzino di quattordici anni che non sa montare i video”. (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“Quello che mi preoccupa è chi decide e chi costruisce questi modelli, l’idea di OpenAI che governi i miei pensieri, che plasmi la frequenza delle parole, gli aggettivi che usiamo, quelli che non usiamo, i concetti, la storia che leggiamo”. (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“Prendendo e usando le immagini dell’IA creano degli influencers che non trasmettono la stessa idea di autenticità [...] o persone vere [...] e sarebbe un problema per l’effetto che crea, una persona finta, inventata, rispetto ad una persona vera che tutti conoscono, come un endorsement”. (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p>

	<p>“O tutte le volte in cui creano deep fakes, tipo l'immagine del Papa, uno non capisce che l'immagine è finta e si crea tanta disinformazione. Oppure le voci finte, che possono creare finti dibattiti politici, fake news”. (Interview 5 - Ludovica)</p> <p>“Perdere la propria creatività, potrebbero farsi dare idee dall'IA e perdere l'innovatività, utilizzare meno il loro cervello, andare più sul comodo”. “Impigrire il cervello delle persone”. (Interview 7 - Alyssa)</p> <p>“Tende a migliorarti, sulla base degli input che metti dentro crea delle fisicità perfette. Erano tutti bellissimi [...] Mi preoccupa come mi preoccupa in generale l'intelligenza artificiale”. (Interview 8 - Giulia)</p> <p>“Un po' che ci abbassi l'intelligenza mi preoccupa. Non ci sono ancora regole, ma anche se ci fossero, è una tecnologia troppo grande, che non puoi controllare”. (Interview 8 - Giulia)</p> <p>“Tanti lavori noiosi spariranno e forse ce ne saranno altri meno noiosi”. (Interview 4 - Francesco)</p> <p>“Come ogni tecnologia, ha chiuso delle porte per alcuni mestieri ma ne apre molte altre, per nuovi”. (Interview 6 - Francesca)</p> <p>“Un'azienda che non la utilizza, nel lungo termine è destinata ad essere declassata dalle altre”. (Interview 2 - Andrea)</p>
--	--

3.10.2 Discussion

The main themes that emerged were *Emotional Engagement and AIGC*, with subthemes of positive emotional response and lack of emotional connection. Another key theme was *Perceived Authenticity and AIGC*, which was divided into higher authenticity in brand created content and lower authenticity in AI generated content. The third theme was *AIGC's Impact on Brand Discourse*, with subthemes reflecting both positive and negative perceptions of creativity in AI content. Finally, the last important theme identified was *Ambivalence Towards AI and Future Concerns* with subtheme of curiosity and acceptance of AI and fear and skepticism about AI.

Emotional Engagement and AI Generated Content

In 2003 Maya Angelou powerfully stated, “*I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel*”. As emotional engagement remains a crucial factor in how consumers perceive and remember brand content, their presence in advertising can significantly influence consumers’ attitudes toward a brand, enhancing brand recall and purchase intentions (Panda & Mishra, 2013). This idea is reflected in the respondents’ recollections of their favorite brands and advertisements, where the elicitation of an emotional link often served as the foundation for their memories. One participant articulated this by saying, “*Se me le ricordo è perché mi hanno fatto ridere o perché erano fuori dal convenzionale. Te lo ricordi perché fa ridere*” (eng. “If I remember them, it’s because they made me laugh or because they were unconventional. You remember it because it’s funny”) [Interview 2 – Andrea], highlighting how stories that evoke strong feelings are more likely to be remembered and cherished. However, the introduction of AI generated content has shown a varied impact on emotional engagement. While a few respondents appreciated the innovative aspects of AIGC, many felt that this ad did not evoke the same

emotional depth as traditional brand generated content. For instance, one respondent noted, “*Non ho provato nessuna emozione. Quello di prima sì questo no*” (eng. I didn’t feel any emotion. The one before, yes, this one, no) [Interview 4 – Francesco]. Another participant mentioned feeling neutral towards the AI generated ad, stating, “*Mhm... Non ho provato troppe emozioni neutrale. Mi ha fatto piacere vederlo non mi disturba ma non lo andrei a ricercare probabilmente*” (eng. Mhm... I didn’t feel too many emotions, neutral. I was glad to see it, it doesn’t bother me, but I probably wouldn’t seek it out again) [Interview 2 – Andrea]. This highlights a potential shortfall of AIGC in replicating the emotional connection that traditional, human crafted advertisements often achieve, possibly due to differences in video quality, low complexity in the story telling and in capturing human emotions. Despite this, some respondents were fond of the AIGC ad, appreciating its novelty and the ability in evoking emotions. One respondent affirmed, “*Mi sono sentita emozionata nel scoprire un mondo nuovo*” (eng. I felt excited to discover a new world) [Interview 3 - Maria Giulia] and “*Ho provato emozioni forti, quando ho visto il bambino piccolo, la moglie, il ritorno a casa, è ricca di emozioni*” (eng. I felt strong emotions when I saw the small child, the wife, him coming home, it is full of emotions) [Interview 1 – Lucia], or again “*Questo video mi ha toccato molto di più emotivamente, quindi direi emotivo. Quindi qualcosa di molto particolare che mi tocca, perché ha unito carriera e famiglia*” (eng. This video touched me much more emotionally, so I would say it’s emotional. It’s something very special that touches me because it combines career and family) [Interview 7 – Alyssa] indicating that while AIGC may not universally elicit emotions, it can resonate with certain audiences. Overall, the findings suggest that while AIGC is still evolving, it has the potential to foster emotional connections, although differently from traditional methods. The results also highlight that emotional elicitation remains a crucial factor that brands should always prioritize when crafting a campaign intended to resonate deeply with consumers. Despite the potential of AIGC, the power of genuine emotional connection should not be overlooked in creating memorable and impactful brand experiences.

Perceived Authenticity and AIGC

As discussed in Chapter 1, authenticity is another critical factor influencing consumer trust and brand loyalty when dealing with content generated by users. Many respondents emphasized the importance of authenticity in their perception of trust towards a brand, linking it to the consistency of values and ideals that the brand communicates. One participant described authenticity as foundational, stating, “*Per me autenticità è un brand che manifesta sempre gli stessi valori e gli stessi ideali anche tramite le pubblicità*” (eng. For me, authenticity is a brand that consistently expresses the same values and ideals, even through its advertisements) [Interview 2 – Andrea].

However, the integration of AI in UGC appeared to challenge this perception for many. The majority of respondents expressed skepticism about the authenticity of AI generated content, with several participants finding it less credible or relatable. For instance, one respondent commented, *“La seconda (i.e. meno autentica) perché sembra più finta, i personaggi e tutto. Non è una cosa a cui posso relazionarmi?”* (eng. The second one (i.e., less authentic) because it seems more fake, the characters and everything. It's not something I can relate to) [Interview 5 - Ludovica]), supported by this intervention *“La prima (i.e. più autentica), l'ho trovata più relatable. La seconda sembrava la storia di qualcun altro, qualcosa che deve ancora accadere, la prima forse è anche più coerente con il periodo che stiamo vivendo (i.e. olimpiadi), e tutto quanto, è più una storia umana, ti identifichi con il personaggio”* (eng. The first one (i.e., more authentic), I've found it more relatable. The second one seemed like someone else's story, something that has yet to happen. The first is perhaps also more in line with the time we are living in (i.e., the Olympics) and everything, it's more of a human story, you can identify with the character” [Interview 3 – Maria Giulia]), suggesting that the perceived artificiality of AIGC can threaten its authenticity, particularly when the content does not align with personal experiences or fails to convey a sense of realism. This relates to the idea that Nike typically addresses real and deeply personal issues, which AI seems unable to replicate.

Similarly, another respondent found the brand made ad more authentic because it conveyed a feeling or emotion that resonated deeply with them, specifically, the sentiment of pride. They stated, *“Assolutamente la prima (e.n. più autentica), perché c'è un sentimento che è molto autentico, la superbia”* (eng. Absolutely the first one [i.e., more authentic], because there is a feeling that is very authentic, pride) [Interview 4 - Francesco]. For this respondent, authenticity was tied to the presence of a genuine emotion that they could identify with, making the brand generated ad stand out as more sincere and impactful compared to the users' one.

Another response reinforces the idea that authenticity is closely tied to the perception of reality and the ability to connect on a personal level. The interviewee found the AIGC problematic because it created a sense of artificiality and distance from reality. She reacted by saying: *“Mi sono chiesta, perché lo hanno utilizzato? Me lo allontana dalla realtà, è artificiale. Mi pone un distacco. Me la allontana, mi distrae. Se devi essere autentico, perché la usi?”* (eng. I wondered, why did they use it? It brings it further away from reality, it's artificial. It creates a distance. It feels far away from me, it distracts me. If you want to be authentic, why would you use it?) [Interview 8 - Giulia], illustrating how the use of AI can introduce a distance between the content and the viewer, while also distracting them from the message the ad is trying to convey.

Lack of authenticity was also linked to the perception of trustworthiness. Another participant echoed this sentiment, noting that the user AI generated content lost some authenticity because it didn't come from what they considered a trustworthy source, stating *“Mi perde un po' di autenticità perché non viene da una fonte ufficiale”* (eng. It loses some authenticity because it doesn't come from an official source) [Interview 3 - Maria Giulia]. This response indicates that their perception of the brand changed more significantly after learning that the ad was not actually created by Nike, but by a user with the support of AI. Another similar statement *“E' cambiata di più quando mi hai detto che non era veramente di Nike”* (eng. It changed even more when you told me it wasn't really from Nike) [Interview 2 – Andrea], suggests that the respondent's view of Nike was altered upon discovering that the ad, which they might have initially thought was an official brand production, was instead user generated. This change in perception likely reflects a sense of disappointment, skepticism or diminished trust in the brand, as the respondent may have felt that the authenticity or quality they associate with Nike was compromised by the fact that the content was not directly produced by the brand itself. These responses together highlight that, for the majority of respondents, perceived authenticity is closely linked to the content's source, realism, and emotional resonance to the stimulus to which they were exposed.

Nonetheless, this perspective was not universally shared, highlighting the complexity and diversity of views on the subject matter. A minority of respondents were able to find authenticity in AI generated content, particularly when it resonated with their values or provided a new perspective. One participant acknowledged that *“Anche l'IA riesce a toccare questo aspetto di autenticità”* (eng. AI can also touch on this aspect of authenticity) [Interview 7 - Alyssa], indicating that, under certain conditions, AI generated content can be perceived as authentic. Similarly, a subject shared, *“Forse la seconda (i.e. più autentica), per il fatto che fortunatamente vivo in una classe agiata, non riesco ad empatizzare al 100% con la prima”* (eng. Maybe the second one [i.e., more authentic], because I come from wealth and I can't fully empathize with the first one) [Interview 6 – Francesca], highlighting how personal circumstances and social context can shape perceptions of authenticity. An interesting take came, again, from Alyssa's interview, where she stated *“Secondo me anche l'IA riesce a toccare questo aspetto di autenticità, non penso che non sia riuscita ad essere autentica in questa pubblicità”* (eng. In my opinion, AI can also touch on this aspect of authenticity, I don't think it failed to be authentic) [Interview 7 - Alyssa], suggesting a growing acceptance that AI generated content can indeed capture elements of authenticity, especially when the content reflects relatable themes or values.

Overall, the interviews painted a complex picture of how people perceive the authenticity of AI user generated content. While some participants recognized that AI could create content that feels

authentic, especially when it aligns with their values, many respondents shared skepticism and had doubts regarding the implementation of generative AI. The majority felt that despite AI's capabilities, this technology still struggles to capture the human touch and originality that make content truly authentic. This skepticism often came from the idea that AI generated content lacks the depth and personal connection that comes from human effort. Additionally, when participants learned that content was created by AI, it sometimes made the content feel less authentic, as it suggested a decrease in human involvement. The findings suggest that, while AI is becoming an unavoidable tool in content creation, its ability to produce truly authentic material remains questionable. People seem to believe that authenticity depends on whether the content can genuinely resonate with them and reflect real human experiences, leaving some doubts about how AI might change the future of creativity and trust in brand messaging.

AIGC's Impact on Brand Discourse

The next theme, the impact of AIGC on brand discourse, is closely linked to the previous discussion focused on authenticity. While some respondents questioned the authenticity of AI generated content, many recognized its potential to innovate and expand the brand's narrative.

A significant portion of participants viewed the video created through AI as a creative extension of the brand, introducing new ideas and perspectives that still fit within the broader brand identity. For instance, one respondent described the ad as *“Innovativa, fuori dal comune, e familiare”* (eng. Innovative, out of the ordinary, and familiar) [Interview 3 - Maria Giulia], signaling that AI content has the capacity to successfully integrate innovative ideas while maintaining a connection to the brand's core values. Creativity, as perceived by the respondents, played a crucial role in the effectiveness of AIGC. As one participant stated, *“Forse la seconda (i.e., più creativa) a questo punto, vedere il logo Nike nella tuta spaziale è strano, è anche visionario. Proprio quello che intendeva prima per genialità creativa, lo riconduco proprio a quello”* (eng. Maybe the second one at this point (i.e., more creative), seeing the Nike logo on the space suit is strange, it's also visionary. That's exactly what I meant before by creative genius, I relate it directly to that) [Interview 3 - Maria Giulia].

Another respondent added, *“La seconda, per la prima volta non vedo solo lo sport, quindi me lo cambia sotto questo punto di vista, perché non usiamo la Nike solo per correre, ma per andare sulla Luna. Puoi farci anche altro, è una scarpa sportiva, però ti guida anche sui passi sulla Luna”* (eng. The second one, for the first time, I don't just see sport, so it changes my perspective, because we don't just use Nike for running, but also to go to the Moon. You can do other things with it, it's a sports shoe, but it also guides you

on your steps on the Moon) [Interview 8 - Giulia], reinforcing the idea that AIGC has the capacity to add new dimensions to the brand's established ones.

Overall, these perspectives shed light on the positive impact of AI on creativity, as emphasized by another interviewee, *“Direi sempre la seconda (n.e. più creativa), perché nella prima ho trovato un po' di didattica, ci sta, funziona bene, sono entrambe belle. Forse la seconda per gli effetti visivi”* (eng. I would still say the second one (i.e., more creative), because in the first one I found a bit of didactic shots, which is fine, it works well, they're both good. Maybe the second one for the visual effects) [Interview 6 – Francesca]. Similarly, another participant shared, *“La prima non mi sembrava creativa, la seconda di più perché lui andava sulla Luna, ci sono elementi nuovi, nella prima ho visto sabbia, terra, specchi, elementi quotidiani, che vedo sempre”* (eng. The first one didn't seem creative to me, the second one more so because he was going to the Moon, there are new elements. In the first one, I saw sand, earth, mirrors, everyday elements that I always see) [Interview 7 – Alyssa].

Moreover, some respondents felt that user's ad added value to the brand by expanding its narrative to include new and forward-looking elements. For example, the association of Nike with space exploration was seen as a bold and visionary step, with one participant stating, *“Sempre all'avanguardia, fare qualcosa di incredibile e di nuovo”* (eng. Always on cutting edge, doing something incredible and new) [Interview 5 - Ludovica]. This idea was further supported by another participant who expressed, *“La seconda ha cambiato forse un po' in positivo perché ora mi aspetto qualcosa di nuovo”* (eng. The second one has perhaps changed a bit for the better because now I'm expecting something new) [Interview 2 - Maria Giulia], and another participant emphasizing, *“Assolutamente la seconda, perché mi ha aggiunto qualcosa, ho rivisto valori su cui non mi ero mai focalizzata prima d'ora”* (eng. Absolutely the second one, because it added something to me, I've seen values that I had not focused on before) [Interview 7 - Alyssa].

Another theme that emerged is the idea of family and loved ones, one respondent added *“Gli affetti, la famiglia, il senso di appartenenza, la sicurezza, la stabilità e l'amore soprattutto per la famiglia, i figli, moglie e il nido, il nucleo familiare”* (eng. Loved ones, family, the sense of belonging, security, stability, and above all, love for family, children, wife, and the home, the family unit) [Interview 1 - Lucia], further supported by this statement *“C'è la realizzazione dei propri sogni a livello professionale, sia la famiglia, il culmine della felicità, hai tutto. Bello questo, di raggiungere i propri obiettivi sotto ogni punto di vista”* (eng. There is the fulfillment of your dreams on a professional level, as well as family, the pinnacle of happiness, you have it all. It's beautiful, achieving your goals from every perspective) [Interview 3 – Maria Giulia], and again *“Di pancia mi viene da dire sicuramente valore nei confronti della famiglia, affetto*

nei confronti della famiglia, seguire i propri obiettivi, ma non solo nell'ambito lavorativo, anche la persona che ti sta accanto, i tuoi cari? (engl. My gut feeling is to say definitely value towards family, affection for family, pursuing your own goals, not only in the professional sphere but also with the person beside you and your loved one) [Interview 6 – Francesca], reinforced by this interviewee stating: *“Questo video mi ha toccato molto di più emotivamente, quindi direi emotivo, familiare perché ho visto la famiglia, il suo primo amore, quindi qualcosa di molto particolare che mi tocca, perché ha unito carriera e famiglia [...] il valore della famiglia, che per me rappresenta autenticità, quotidianità”* (eng. This video touched me much more emotionally, so I would say it's emotional and familiar because I saw the family, his first love — something very special that resonates with me. It united career and family [...] the value of family, which for me represents authenticity and everyday life.) [Interview 7 – Alyssa]. These responses illustrate how themes such as family, loved ones, and emotional fulfillment — values traditionally outside Nike's core focus on individual achievement and sports — could be integrated into the brand's narrative expanding the complexity of Nike's identity. If the brand decides to embrace a more holistic and inclusive values that resonate deeply with consumers, it could extend its message beyond sports and into a new the realm of personal and familiar emotional life.

Additionally, other respondents appreciated how the AI generated content maintained important values typically associated to the brand's identity, remaining well integrated into the Nike universe and effectively promoting the same core values such as dedication, identity, and growth, that Nike has consistently advocated for in its brand discourse over the years. As one participant put it, *“Un aggettivo nuovo che mi è venuto in mente è inclusione, la Nike tende ad includere diversi body type che si vedono anche in questa pubblicità”* (eng. A new adjective that came to mind is inclusion, Nike tends to include different body types, which is also seen in this ad) [Interview 8 - Giulia], while another respondent stated, *“Direi che la linea è sempre la stessa di prima, un po' più fuori dall'ambito sportivo in questo caso. Magari toglierei l'aggettivo sport, però bene o male il messaggio che c'è dietro è lo stesso. Dedizione, identità...”* (eng. I would say the line is the same as before, just a bit beyond the sports field in this case. I might drop the word “sport”, but the message behind it is basically the same. Dedication, identity...) [Interview 2 - Andrea], supported by the following comment, *“Ma il concept di Nike non è cambiato, ha trasmesso quel pensiero, comunque delle persone dietro che avranno elaborato ci sono state, quindi non vedo perché debba cambiare idea su quello che penso”* (eng. But the concept of Nike hasn't changed, it still conveyed the thought of the people behind it, so I don't see why I should change my opinion on what I think) [Interview 6 - Francesca]. According to these responses, AIGC can indeed push the boundaries of a well established brand narrative and enhance creativity, particularly when there is human input involved in crafting the AI's directives. It was recognized that the creativity in the ad wasn't solely the result of AI, but also of the thoughtful prompts and guidance provided by people. This human

effort, which directs the AI to produce visuals that align with the brand's identity, was key to how the ad was perceived. Thus, AIGC is not just a tool for innovation but a means of expanding the brand's core values, with human intervention ensuring that the final output resonates within the Nike universe and is accepted as truly creative.

Nevertheless, a minority of interviewees expressed concerns about how far this innovation could stretch without disconnecting from the brand's core identity. Some participants felt that the content generated through AI drifted too far from what they traditionally associated with the brand, leading to a sense of disconnection. One respondent expressed this by saying, "*Lui che va su Marte, sullo spazio, è completamente slegato dal brand Nike*" (eng. Him going to Mars, to space, it's completely unrelated to the Nike brand) [Interview 4 – Francesco] and another participant mentioned, "*La seconda, in negativo perché ho sempre visto Nike come il brand che crea pubblicità con storie emozionanti di atleti, in questo caso la seconda la sentivo più finta, non mostrava scene di nessuno, mi sembra una storia inventata [...] Capisco l'idea di portare Nike nello spazio, però il fatto che fosse tutto così fake mi ha dato un'impressione negativa*" (eng. The second one, in a negative way, because I have always seen Nike as the brand that creates advertisements with emotional stories of athletes. In this case, the second one felt more fake, it didn't show scenes of anyone, it seems like an invented story [...] I understand the idea of taking Nike into space, but the fact that everything was so fake gave me a negative impression) [Interview 5 – Ludovica].

Although these comments represented a small percentage of the overall feedback, it is important to acknowledge them for the sake of completeness. Not all respondents resonated with the AI generated content in the same way, and it was crucial to present a balanced representation of the diverse perspectives in the data, ensuring that no single viewpoint dominated the narrative.

In conclusion, while most respondents appreciated the creativity and innovation brought by AIGC, there's also an equilibrium that brands need to be mindful of when dealing with storytelling. On one hand, AI opens exciting opportunities to broaden and enrich a brand's narrative, but it also comes with the risk of disconnecting from what people have come to expect from that brand. The data highlighted the importance for iconic brands like Nike to strike for a balance in pushing creative boundaries, without losing sight of their core identity and values. If brands can navigate this balance well, AI generated content has the potential to capture attention and bring a fresh perspective for the audience. The challenge will be in making sure that innovation doesn't come at the cost of authenticity and that human capital supervises the execution of this powerful tool, as will be discussed in the final theme.

Ambivalence Towards AI and Future Concerns

A recurring theme among the respondents is the ambivalence toward AI, particularly in terms of its ethical implications and the potential misuse of its capabilities. Many participants express both curiosity and concern about AI's role in the future, for brands and users alike. For instance, one respondent captured this duality defining AI as a “genius tool” that is central to our generation's future, while admitting that we are still not capable of exploiting it fully *“Sì, è uno strumento di innovazione, geniale che ormai fa parte della nostra generazione ed è in grado di fornirti risposte dal nulla al tutto, è il futuro. Che ancora non sappiamo utilizzare”* (eng. Yes, it's an innovative tool, brilliant, that is now part of our generation and is capable of providing you with answers from nothing to everything. It's the future. But we still don't know how to use it) [Interview 3 - Maria Giulia].

The sentiment was mirrored by another interviewee, which described AI as a neutral tool, similar to a knife, that can be used for good or ill, based on intentions *“E' come quando hai un coltello, puoi sfamare persone o puoi accoltellare qualcuno. Non è né positivo né negativo, è semplicemente uno strumento”* (eng. It's like when you have a knife, you can feed people or you can stab someone. It's neither positive nor negative, it's simply a tool) [Interview 6 – Francesca], emphasizing that its impact is neither inherently positive nor negative, but depends on how it is used. Similarly, another remarked, *“Potrebbe essere usato male e creare dei problemi. E' come viene utilizzato che fa la differenza”* (eng. It could be used poorly and create problems. It's how it's used that makes the difference [Interview 7 - Alyssa], stressing the importance of responsible application to avoid negative outcomes and that it is the person behind the technology that makes all the difference. This common anxiety was reflected especially among the misapplication users could showcase when dealing with AI, as society may not possess the knowledge or skills necessary to use it responsibly yet.

When projecting the question onto brands, respondents all agreed that AI would be implemented into their strategies, with concerns tied to its impact on brand identity and the integration into the brand's strategy, *“Se il brand inizia a fare ragionamenti invertendo il paradigma per massimizzare le vendite, in quel caso si perderebbe la storia che c'è dietro”* (eng. If the brand starts thinking by reversing the paradigm to maximize sales, in that case, the story behind it would be lost) [Interview 2 - Andrea]. The idea behind the statement stresses the belief that AI, if used thoughtfully and ethically, can be a valuable tool for enhancing a brand's narrative. However, if used solely for profit maximization without regard for authenticity, it can undermine the brand's value. There seems to be a shared understanding among the respondents that AI is a powerful tool with the potential for both positive and negative outcomes. The key to exploit its benefits lies in how it is used and the

intentions behind its application. This reinforces the need for responsible and ethical AI practices that prioritize long-term brand integrity over short-term gains.

Several respondents emphasize the crucial role of human oversight in the use of AI, particularly in maintaining brand authenticity and identity. For example, a participant reassured by the knowledge that human intervention is involved in the application of AI by brands, stated “*Un brand che utilizza l’IA con cognizione di causa, non mi preoccupa*” (eng. A brand that uses AI with awareness doesn’t worry me) [Interview 2 – Andrea], believing that human oversight ensures that AI generated content remains consistent with the brand’s core values and narrative. Another feedback also highlights the importance of the human element in guiding AI, noting that the authenticity of this type of content depends on the prompts and guidance provided by people “*C’è dietro un ragionamento, un prompt dato da qualcuno*” (eng. There is a reasoning behind it, a prompt given by someone) [Interview 5 - Ludovica]. This sentiment is further supported by the following survey participant, who advocates for the creation of new roles, such as an “AI creative” to oversee and manage AI in a way that aligns with the brand’s vision, stating “*Ci dev’essere una figura creativa che sappia gestire l’IA*” (eng. There needs to be a creative figure who knows how to manage AI) [Interview 6 – Francesca].

Many participants acknowledge that AI will inevitably lead to the disappearance of certain monotonous or repetitive jobs, which some view as a positive shift. For instance, one participant noted, “*Tanti lavori noiosi spariranno e forse ce ne saranno altri meno noiosi*” (eng. Many boring jobs will disappear, and perhaps there will be others that are less boring) [Interview 4 - Francesco], stressing the potential of AI to eliminate mundane tasks, making way for more engaging and creative roles. The sentiment that AI is not just a disruptor but also a creator of opportunities is echoed in the observation, “*Come ogni tecnologia, ha chiuso delle porte per alcuni mestieri ma ne apre molte altre, per nuovi*” (eng. Like every technology, it has closed doors for some jobs but opens many others, for new ones) [Interview 6 - Francesca]. These comments highlight the dual nature of technological advancement, while it may render certain roles obsolete, it also incentivizes the emergence of new professions that are often more aligned with future needs and innovations.

However, there is also a recognition that embracing AI is not optional but essential for businesses aiming to remain competitive. As one participant pointed out, “*Un’azienda che non la utilizza, nel lungo termine è destinata ad essere declassata dalle altre*” (eng. A company that doesn’t use it, in the long term, is destined to be downgraded by others) [Interview 2 - Andrea]. Recognizing AI as a competitive advantage, companies are urged to invest in these tools and train their employees in their use, or risk being outpaced by more technologically advanced competitors. Collectively, these

responses suggest that human oversight is essential in ensuring that AI is used in a way that enhances, rather than detracts from, a brand's identity and values. The respondents agree that AI should not be left to operate autonomously but should be directed by human creativity and ethical considerations to achieve meaningful and authentic results.

A significant number of participants express concern that as AI takes over more tasks, it could lead to a decline in human creativity and intellectual engagement, ultimately fostering mental laziness. One respondent drew a parallel to the dystopian scenario depicted in the movie *Wall-E*, where technology leads to cognitive decline, stating, “*Noi ci impigriremo tutti quanti, al 100%. [...] L'effetto Wall-E, è il primo step per non utilizzare più il cervello, che l'essere umano non sia più in grado di utilizzare la materia grigia*” (eng. We will all become lazy, 100%. [...] The Wall-E effect, it's the first step towards not using the brain anymore, for humans to no longer be able to use their gray matter) [Interview 3 – Maria Giulia]. This concern was reinforced by another respondent, who feared that an over reliance on AI might lead people to “*far perdere l'innovatività, utilizzare meno il loro cervello, andare più sul comodo*” (eng. Lose innovation, use the brains less, and go for the easier option) [Interview 7 – Alyssa]. Further emphasizing this point, another participant warned, “*Penso che se tu non usi mai il cervello e trovi tutto pronto e preconfezionato, alla fine anche la creatività non la stai utilizzando. La creatività è una questione intellettuale*” (eng. I think that if you never use your brain and find everything ready and pre-packaged, in the end, you're not using your creativity either. Creativity is an intellectual matter) [Interview 1 – Lucia]. These reflections bring to light a crucial dilemma in our relationship with AI. On one hand, AI promises unparalleled efficiency and the potential to drive innovation in ways we've never imagined. On the other hand, there's a very real concern that as we lean more heavily on technology, we might be sacrificing the very qualities that make us uniquely human, our creativity, our ability to think critically, and our intellectual curiosity. These are the traits that have fueled progress and innovation throughout history. The challenge, then, is to find a balance where AI can enhance our capabilities without diminishing our humanity. As we embrace AI, it's vital to ensure that it serves as a tool that amplifies our creative and intellectual efforts, rather than replacing them. This means fostering a work environment where AI complements human skills, allowing us to push the boundaries of what's possible, while still valuing and nurturing the creativity and critical thinking that we can provide.

A major issue raised by participants was the ethical challenges posed by AI, especially given how widely accessible these technologies have become. Many expressed fears about AI being misused to create fake news and spread misinformation. One participant noted, “*Mi preoccupa l'utilizzo sconsiderato di una persona che non ha chiaro ciò che sta facendo*” (eng. I'm worried about the reckless use

by someone who doesn't understand what they're doing) [Interview 2 - Andrea]. Similarly, another respondent pointed out the dangers of deepfakes and AI generated influencers, which could deceive the public "*O tutte le volte in cui creano deep fakes [...] si crea tanta disinformazione*" (eng. Or every time they create deepfakes [...] it leads to a lot of misinformation) [Interview 5 - Ludovica]. These answers underline a collective anxiety of reality distortion, spread of false information, erosion of public trust and fear of identity loss. This sentiment highlights the urgent need for robust ethical guidelines and oversight in the development and deployment of AI technologies. As it was remarked, "*C'è il problema del copyright, si sta ancora dibattendo su questo*" (eng. There's the issue of copyright, which is still being debated) [Interview 6 - Francesca], drawing a parallel to the film "AI" by Spielberg and Kubrick, noting, "*Loro già avevano capito che le persone avrebbero avuto timore di tutto ciò che è nuovo, come è sempre stato*" (eng. They already understood that people would fear anything new, as has always).

It was revealed that biases accounted for deep concerns when AI was involved, as a respondent pointed out that "*L'IA generativa è completamente biased*" (eng. Generative AI is completely biased) [Interview 4 - Francesco], warning that it could reinforce stereotypes and limit creative diversity. Another feedback seemed to point in this direction when a participant voiced her worries, particularly about AI's tendency to idealize physical appearances, by stating "*Tende a migliorarti, sulla base degli input che metti dentro crea delle fisicità perfette. Erano tutti bellissimi [...] Mi preoccupa come mi preoccupa in generale l'intelligenza artificiale*" (eng. It tends to enhance you, based on the inputs you give it, it creates perfect physiques. They were all beautiful [...] It worries me just like AI in general does) [Interview 8 - Giulia]. Finally, uneasiness about who controls these AI models was expressed, "*Quello che mi preoccupa è chi decide e chi costruisce questi modelli, l'idea di OpenAI che governi i miei pensieri, che plasmì la frequenza delle parole, gli aggettivi che usiamo, quelli che non usiamo, i concetti, la storia che leggiamo*" (eng. What worries me is who decides and builds these models, the idea of OpenAI governing my thoughts, shaping the frequency of words, the adjectives we use, those we don't use, the concepts, the stories we read) [Interview 4 - Francesco], revealing the deep ethical and political implications underlying this technology.

In conclusion, given Nike's legacy and the iconic nature of its brand, and combining the semiotic analysis of the media content, a question arises whether the brand can continue to find and represent social tensions effectively in a world where AI plays a significant role in content creation, especially when AI is prone to biases. There's a concern that AI generated visuals might often reflect an idealized version of reality, portraying perfect faces and bodies, or representing a single ethnicity, which could dilute the brand's ability to create thought provoking and culturally resonant

ads. For instance, Nike's recent campaign "*Winning is Not for Everybody*" was provocative and pushed boundaries, capturing the boldness that has defined the brand's storytelling so far. The fear is that if Nike were to rely solely on AI, it might lose its edge, opting for safer and more politically correct narratives that conform to AI's biases, rather than making risky statements that have historically set the brand apart and gave it competitive advantage. Moreover, some respondents voiced concerns about the ethical implications and lack of regulation surrounding AI use, especially in the hands of corporations. The idea that large conglomerates might control our thoughts and expressions through AI generated content raises alarms. If AI, with its potential biases, becomes the primary tool for creating narratives, we might find ourselves in a world where only a narrow, surgical perspective is represented, rather than the diverse and complex reality that drives meaningful cultural discourse.

Chapter 4. Conclusions

4.1 Results

This thesis aimed to explore the potential of AI user-generated content on brand perceptions and values, and its impact on perceived authenticity in advertising. The work was driven by the premise that conventional User-Generated Content had already established itself as a powerful tool for building brand trust, engagement, and credibility. In chapter one, the literature review revealed the evolution of UGC, from its inception as a platform to provide curated insights and fresh ideas, to the recognition of ordinary users as co-creators, acknowledged as crucial contributors, able to bring their personal experiences and uniqueness to the table (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006). Further studies supported UGC's cost-effectiveness and potential to drive engagement (Olenski, 2017), its perceived authenticity and credibility (Kemp, 2023; Mathur et al., 2022) and increased reliability in the eyes of consumers, compared to firm-generated content (Ho-Dac, Carson, & Moore, 2013; Nielsen, 2013). Additional research supported the pivotal role played by authenticity in enhancing marketing effectiveness, which positively influences consumer behavior and strengthens brand trust (Brown et al., 2003; Fritz et al., 2017). The literature review also disclosed that consumers engage in UGC for reasons such as personal expression, social connection, and the need to be involved in a community (Merckel, 2017), adding a layer of credibility that branded content may lack. Furthermore, users may not always perceive UGC as openly persuasive, providing companies with a strategic advantage in building consumer trust and shaping brand narratives (Mayrhofer, Matthes, & Einwiller, 2020).

With the evolving nature of digital platforms and the emergence of Web 3.0, it became necessary to shift the focus from traditional UGC to AI-generated content, an enhanced form empowered by generative AI. The second chapter stressed the impact this technology is anticipated to have across various fields, particularly the discipline of marketing. The pitfalls and limitations associated with this tool were addressed, including biases and ethical implications, the lack of common sense (Choi, 2022), and the opportunities and constraints of AI as a creative agent. Examples of businesses harnessing the power of conventional user-generated content, from Starbucks to Coca-Cola and Apple, showcased how consumers were eagerly drawn to this form of engagement. Cases of AIGC like Coca-Cola's "*Create Real Magic*" and Specs ads, illustrated instead, the power lying in the new frontiers opened by this technology. They particularly underlined the importance for brands to motivate customers to generate content. In this context, the Specs ads stood out as a significant example of consumer-brand interaction, allowing customers to actively participate in

the conversation thanks to the democratic nature of the tool. In this instance, participants were not required to know how to shoot or edit videos to be part of the discussion.

These reflections, along with the identified gap in the literature, prompted the research questions: “*What impact does AI-generated content have on a brand’s values and perceptions?*” and “*How does the integration of AI in User-Generated Content influence consumers’ perceptions of authenticity?*”.

To address these research questions, a qualitative methodology was employed, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the subject through semiotic analysis and structured interviews. The commercials selected for this analysis included Nike’s “*Just Do It: Caster Semenya*” and a AI-generated Speculative ad titled “*NIKE - Steps to Mars*”. The insights gained from the semiotic analysis were consistent with those from the interviews, further reinforcing the findings of the research. First and foremost, the semiotic analysis enabled the identification of signs and symbols emerging from the two commercials, starting from a superficial analysis of visual elements extracted using a decomposition sheet, progressing to the semio-narrative level, and ultimately reaching the deep axiological level to comprehend the complexity of meanings within the brand’s discourse.

What emerged is that these two advertisements are characterized by both differences and similarities. Each explores themes of perseverance and self-improvement, which are values strongly embraced by Nike. However, they approach these themes on different levels. While the branded ad addresses social discrimination, the AI-generated content lacks complexity in both its visual elements and narrative roles. In the branded commercial, the opponent is closely linked to prejudices and discrimination, while in the AI-generated content, this theme does not seem to appear. Instead, the actant is represented by challenges such as being far from home and the difficulties of space exploration. Additionally, the sender differs in both ads. In the first commercial, Nike plays a significant role, acting as the manipulator of the subject and thereby controlling the message and infusing the object with values. In the AI-generated content, however, AI blurs these lines, with the user crafting the message and feeding it through a prompt for AI to generate the final result. From this analysis, it is evident that Nike’s strong market positioning, gained over the years, has allowed the brand to acquire political and cultural authority. This authority also translates into the user, who correctly interprets the brand’s message and translates it into a prompt that AI, leveraging a large dataset of previously stored information, can effectively decipher, producing a noteworthy result aligned with the brand’s identity. Thus, through AI, users become co-enunciators and co-producers of the brand narrative, leaving their signatures as authors

in the production of these contents. The shift transfers the creation of meaning from the brand to the consumer, decentralizing control and giving users a more active role in shaping the brand's message, leaving the final customer to interpret it. This is particularly important for Nike, as it strengthens its positioning and gains free publicity while remaining aligned with its ideals, suggesting how in the near future, advertising may involve co-enunciative processes, where users, brands, and AI work in tandem to craft messages that transcend traditional media roles.

Noteworthy were the insights regarding the potential to explore new thematic frontiers, as indicated by the semiotic analysis and the concept of utopian valorization, an aspect that was also confirmed by participants of the study. Specifically, this includes the possibility of addressing themes such as space exploration, family and loved ones, which are not currently central to Nike's narrative, as the brand has historically focused on individualism. The findings suggest Nike could tap into these emerging themes, which are able to represent new directions and respond to future social tensions, particularly as younger generations increasingly experience isolation and seek community's support for protection and belonging⁶⁰. This idea ties into Nike's ability to be a complex brand, offering not only values but also the valorization of those values, especially a utopian valorization connected to personal goals and ambitions, which are not strictly limited to sports, but, using Marrone's (2015) words "*coupled with soul searching and spontaneous constitution of a community of users*". Nike could leverage these insights to infuse its products with new meanings, which consumers would then translate into their own identities. In this way, consumption doesn't merely stop at the desired purchase phase, but rather becomes part of the construction of personal and social identity.

Moreover, interviewees generally viewed the use of AI in the video as means of enhancing creativity, with many feeling that AI-generated content added new and innovative elements to the brand's narrative, allowing for a fresh and visionary approach. In this context, AI appears capable of addressing these issues, especially when its outputs are guided by human intervention — an aspect repeatedly stressed by interviewees and supported by the literature review. It appears that the core lies in the creativity of the individual crafting the prompt, who successfully interpreted Nike's vision, largely due to the brand's clarity in conveying its ideas. This, combined with AI's ability to accurately translate the input and generate images consistent with the intended message, could lead to valuable answers and solutions that brands can implement in their communication.

⁶⁰ Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2023/07/28/gen-z-the-loneliness-epidemic-and-the-unifying-power-of-brands/> & <https://www.wearepion.com/blog-posts/engage-gen-z-community>

This research also set out to explore whether AI-user generated content could be perceived as authentic. However, the results were less promising in this regard, as most respondents did not perceive the advertisement as particularly genuine, aligning with the limitations highlighted in current research on AI. In this case, the use of Artificial Intelligence does not seem to have worked for several reasons. As revealed in the semiotic analysis, the AIUGC video appears to lack both visual complexity and depth in addressing societal issues. Additionally, the interviewees pointed out an emotional shortfall as respondents did not seem to be particularly engaged at this level. AI was unable to faithfully reproduce emotions perceived as genuine and real, with the video being described as detached from reality, not relatable or credible, fake, and artificial. This could be attributed to the fact that issues depicted in the ad failed to resonate with the audience, possibly because they were distant from everyday problems people face on Earth. As a result, the SpecAd was perceived as lacking in authenticity and emotional impact, both of which remain very important to consumers, especially when a sports brand is involved. Additionally, although respondents initially stated that the implementation of AI would not affect their perception of authenticity, they later described the AI-generated video as less authentic compared to the branded one. The result may be interpreted due to AI's current weakness to replicate human emotions or generate entirely innovative personal experiences, focusing instead on more abstract and distant concepts. Furthermore, authenticity seemed compromised by the unofficial nature of the source, which appeared less trustworthy — an interesting point to investigate, as traditional UGC's strength lies in its perceived credibility, deriving from its non-commercial nature and originality, qualities that are often relatable but hard to replicate.

Eventually, among the concerns that emerge from both the semiotic analysis and the interviews is the lack of diversity and representation. The SpecAd seems to privilege and represent only one ethnicity and predominantly perfect bodies, creating an almost reversed-bias (the minorities are usually underrepresented in the large datasets used to train AI). This could be explained by the fact that the prompt was suggested by the user based on what Nike typically portrays in its campaigns. In Montani's article, this is expressed by the idea that AI is only capable of replicating the world as an image of an already existing image *“algorithmic images are not representations of the world but, in principle, are images-of-images of the world [...] Entirely incapable of capturing emerging phenomena, newly forming shapes, or even simple irregularities or deviations in the real world, these images fail to disrupt existing taxonomies, as their reference world aligns point by point with those taxonomies”*⁶¹. While this may appear contradictory

⁶¹ Source: <https://www.doppiozero.com/ia-e-immaginazione-creativa>

to what previously stated, it provides an opportunity to clarify the concept of biases. In this context, the concern lies in the idea that relying solely on AI-generated content without incorporating alternative perspectives could be detrimental to the company. Should Nike depend exclusively on content produced without human oversight, it may risk presenting a reality that lacks the vices and imperfections characterizing societies, resulting in campaigns that are overly politically correct. This could lead to the loss of the boldness and defiance that have traditionally characterized the brand and contributed to its success in handling controversial topics.

On top of the fear of generating biases, respondents worried this tool could impose a new way of thinking, controlled by large corporations, capable of influencing and shaping our culture through the frequency of words used or the images reproduced. An important aspect to consider is the superhuman power this tool could hold in shaping the culture we live in, resembling a kind of “1984” where whoever controls the questions controls the answers, and whoever controls the answers controls reality (Floridi, 2023). The skepticism towards AI is linked to the apprehension that critical thinking may diminish, and that humans might inevitably become lazier, coupled with the concern about our replaceability as readers, interpreters, translators, and evaluators of content. Our uniqueness and originality as creators of meaning compromised, opportunity to collaborate, brainstorm, and generate new ideas diminished, as well as the possibility of making mistakes and learning from them. From this perspective, the interviews highlighted the idea that new jobs will emerge, while others, more obsolete, will be discontinued to make room for these machines.

Finally, all respondents agreed that both brands and consumers will use this tool in the future, though they expressed more concern for the latter. Consumers and users still need to be educated, as their intentions may not always be noble, potentially leading to issues such as deepfakes or copyright infringement. The fear is not so much about the tool itself but rather the intentions behind those using it. Like any new technology, there is a mix of referential fear and curiosity surrounding the matter.

In conclusion, due to the novelty and complexity of the subject matter, it remains challenging to draw precise conclusions that definitively summarize the research findings. What stands out, however, is the undeniable curiosity and engagement surrounding this technology, which directly involves all of us, partly due to the immense potential it holds. It’s important to remember that we are still at a primordial state, with the technology advancing at an alarming pace. What is certain is that more people will adopt it, and in time, the current limitations may be overcome. At present,

authenticity remains one of the most problematic factors, alongside the ability to generate genuine emotions that closely resemble those of humans. Nonetheless, there are significant opportunities for brands like Nike to explore new frontiers, particularly in leveraging AI's ability to accurately capture the essence of the brand's identity and offering new avenues for creativity and innovation that can enhance the brand discourse. It is paramount to recognize the role of the user in shaping the AI's output, keeping in mind that human oversight is still fundamental. The skepticism and fears expressed by consumers suggest that the success of AIGC will largely depend on how well it will align with the brand core's values. As brands start navigating the potentialities of this instrument, they must carefully consider the balance between embracing AI's power and maintaining the authenticity and emotional connections that are essential to foster consumer trust and loyalty and addressing the ethical implications of its growing role in society.

After all, one thing is certain: we have not become replaceable yet.

4.2 Managerial Implications

We are now living in a speculative bubble regarding AI, and brands that are not using it in their strategy may lose market share⁶², especially with AI projected to grow from \$200 billion in 2023 to almost \$740 billion by 2030 (Statista, 2023). Additionally, as brands are expected to turn to AI user-generated content in their marketing strategies, it is essential for managers to navigate their challenges and opportunities in an effective way. The following managerial implications provide recommendations into how AI and UGC integration may improve brand engagement, increase content creation, and foster authentic consumer relationships, while also addressing ethical and legal limitations. Hopefully, the findings of this thesis can support brand and product managers, marketing managers shaping their communication strategy, and creative agencies.

Firstly, this study's findings support users-brand co-creation of value and the importance of engaging customers in the process of crafting an idea, product, or strategy. When customers feel like they are participating in the co-development and innovation of solutions they are more satisfied which, in turn, generates value (Gulati & Kletter, 2005). Brands need to actively find appealing and creative ways to get consumers involved in the conversation. This could be done by creating fun challenges or providing platforms and tools where customers can experiment and engage with AI and gather to create a sense of community. One way to do this is by fostering the

⁶² Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-businesses-dont-adopt-ai-it-infrastructure-strategist-zqbjc/>

right environment in a safe and accessible way, using shared content to strengthen the bond between the brand and its consumers. Brands should then also try to truly integrate this co-creation by bringing to life a product that started as an AI concept. This shows customers that their input is being heard and gives them a tangible sense of ownership. It must be reminded that UGC is done freely and voluntarily by users, which often leads to a greater positive impact for consumers. Smart brands can cleverly integrate these ideas into their product lines, creating a mix of the brand's identity and a more personalized experience for other customers, halving the costs and bettering the experience.

Thanks to the accessibility and dynamics of social media, marketing managers should leverage AIUGC's visibility and customers' e-WOM, since it is hypothesized that consumers encounter user-generated content more often than firm generated content. Additionally, thanks to platforms such as Tiktok, Instagram and Youtube, AI user-generated content has the unique ability to reach consumers who may not be familiar yet with the brand, making it highly effective in raising awareness and then, if the purchase takes place, in encouraging advocacy (users are more likely to leave feedback when reminded to do so⁶³). However, while this reach is beneficial, brands must be careful not to lose control of their narrative. It's important to set clear guidelines and maintain human supervision to be sure that the content being shared aligns with the brand's values and overall mission, avoiding any risks that could damage their reputation. UGC enhanced by AI gives brands a great chance to tap into new consumer insights and tensions that may have been missed before. By using AI to explore this content, brands can take inspiration from fresh ideas that speak to the evolving needs of their audience, allowing managers to move beyond traditional strategies and embrace new perspectives. To make the most of this, brands should use AI tools to dive deeper into AI user-generated content, looking for curated ashtags online, carrying ad-hoc sentiment analysis and keeping up with emerging trends.

Staying ahead of the curve with these technologies is crucial for maintaining a competitive advantage. As more brands begin to leverage AI-generated content in various formats, it's important to not only be among the first but also to implement it effectively. This means educating employees on how to use AI and in making sure there are professionals within the company who can manage AI tools and integrate relevant content already available online. Being an early adopter is key, but doing it well is what sets a brand apart. Just as consumers now expect AI features like

⁶³ Source: <https://www.forbes.com/councils/theyec/2023/04/17/the-art-of-asking-customers-for-reviews-how-to-do-it-right/#:~:text=Social%20proof%20allows%20businesses%20to,a%20customer%20review%20when%20asked.>

personalized emojis on smartphones. For example, Apple's latest "Apple Intelligence" technology, announced on September 9th, 2024, during their annually recurring Apple event, pushes AI even further by enabling personalized, adaptive experiences across all their devices⁶⁴. Similarly, Samsung's AI editing tools, already present in their latest phones, offer consumers easy, advanced editing options that put AI right in their hands. These innovations show that consumers increasingly expect AI to be part of their everyday interactions, and brands need to be ready to meet those expectations. Besides, it must be expected that more content will be generated once these tools will become available, driving a wave of content-democratization.

On a more serious note, ensuring authenticity is of paramount importance when dealing with this type of media. Brands should select the content, perhaps through market research, to test its emotional impact on consumers and assess its true potentiality. At the same time there exist ethical and legal concerns, especially around transparency and privacy which managers should be well aware of, ensuring consumer data is handled responsibly and in compliance with regulations like the GDPR. Copyright issues will also likely become significant challenges in the near future, especially as it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish whether AI was involved in the creation process. Brands must address these issues while being transparent about content ownership, especially in a digital space where anonymity can hinder liability. Additionally, sustainability concerns cannot be overlooked, as AI systems exploit considerable social and ecological resources.

At last, as largely discusses in this piece of work, another implication is the need for accountability in addressing cultural differences. Managers should ensure AI systems are trained to understand and respect these differences to prevent misrepresentation, appropriation, or the underrepresentation of certain communities, and to avoid causing offense. Brands must remain culturally sensitive, supporting inclusivity and ensuring that AI-generated content accurately reflects diverse voices while avoiding perpetuating existing biases and stereotypes. There is also the potential for AI to negatively influence viewers and to be influenced by biases incorporated in the data, further solidifying the need for checks and balances under this frontier.

⁶⁴ Source: <https://www.financiallounge.com/news/2024/09/10/apple-event-2024-dalliphone-16-ad-apple-intelligence-ecco-le-novita-piu-attese/>

4.3 Limitation and Future Research

Although this thesis provides useful managerial insights, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may affect the applicability of the results and to offer future developments that may be implemented to fill in the gaps.

Specifically, the intrinsic nature of the qualitative research implies that the results are not generalizable to a larger population and cannot be considered statistically significant. The small sample size, consisting of only 8 respondents, cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of the broader audience's perspectives. Moreover, there is an inherent issue of subjectivity in interpreting the results, which is also a limitation of the analysis employed, namely the thematic one. This subjectivity may affect the consistency of the findings, and future research could benefit from more objective and varied analytical methods to mitigate this. To address these limitations, it would be advisable to complement this research with a quantitative analysis, using these findings as an important starting point to further explore the subject.

Another limitation is that the corpus was composed of only two advertisements, and only one brand was selected for the investigation. In this regard, it would be appropriate to expand the sample size to a larger corpus, allowing for a more robust analysis. Additionally, it would be interesting to study how other brands behave, especially those not strictly related to sports, to explore whether the same dynamics may apply. Furthermore, another constraint is the chosen format, which was limited to video advertisements. It could be valuable to study other formats, such as images, audio, or texts, to gain a more comprehensive understanding across various media.

One more challenge lies in the fact that the concept presented to the respondents was in English, while their primary language was Italian. This language barrier could have created an additional layer of separation and potential alienation from the content, impacting their overall engagement and understanding. This is particularly relevant when addressing questions related to the emotional sphere, as elicitations may not have been fully interpreted, possibly influencing the authenticity and depth of the responses. Future research could benefit from presenting the material in the respondents' native language to ensure a more direct connection with the content.

All respondents, after being exposed to the second viewing of the advertisement, were informed that it had been created by a user with AI. Subsequently, a series of questions followed to understand whether their perception had changed or not. However, some of them had correctly anticipated the role of AI in the video, which may have introduced biases in their evaluation.

A further limitation is that, by the time this thesis is completed and the results are presented, the state of the art in AI will likely have already advanced, potentially rendering these findings obsolete due to the fast-paced nature of AI development. Additionally, the quality of AI-generated videos may have improved, making it necessary to conduct more up-to-date studies that can examine the evolution of this tool. Despite this, at the time the corpus was selected, the most recent content available was deliberately chosen to mitigate this issue.

In conclusion, the research focused primarily on the aspects of perceived authenticity and the impact of AI-generated content on brand perceptions and values. While these are important considerations, future research could explore other dimensions of AI that were not covered in this study. For example, examining the impact of AI-generated content on ethical implications, or the long-term effects of this technology on customer loyalty.

Appendix 1:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SEZIONE INTRODUTTIVA

Ciao e benvenuto/a in questa intervista. Ti ringrazio per il tempo e il contributo che dedicherai al mio studio. Lo scopo di questa intervista è di capire quali valori e significati associamo ai brand.

Richiedere il consenso per la registrazione, che deve essere chiaramente espresso dall'informante

I tuoi dati personali saranno trattati in maniera confidenziale e per obiettivi di ricerca accademica. Per favore, sentiti libero/a di esprimere i tuoi punti di vista con franchezza, senza remore e come più ti è congeniale. Qualsiasi idea condivisa con me, anche quella che potrebbe sembrarti non pertinente, sarà preziosa per il mio studio.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?
- Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?
- Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

FOCUSED QUESTIONS

- Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?
- Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?
- Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?
- C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?
- Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

Vedremo ora insieme due video pubblicitari, osservali con attenzione

- **VIDEO 1** (1:13 sec) pubblicità realizzata dal brand Nike (Just Do it: Caster Semenya) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP6cZAfO0Yg>
- **VIDEO 2** (1:25 sec) pubblicità realizzata da un user con l'ausilio dell'Intelligenza Artificiale (Steps to Mars – SpecAd) → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKcBiURD5jo>

****Alla fine di ogni visione, l'intervistato verrà sottoposto alle seguenti domande****

- Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?
- Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?
- Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?
- Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?
- Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?
- Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

****Dopo la visione di entrambe le pubblicità****

- Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?
- Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?
- Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?
- Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

- Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

Rimostro la pubblicità realizzata dall'Intelligenza Artificiale

Spiego che questa pubblicità è stata realizzata da un utente attraverso l'utilizzo dell'Intelligenza Artificiale.

- Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?
- Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?
- Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?
- Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?
- C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?
- C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?
- Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?
- Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?
- Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?
- Pubblici contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?
- Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

Grazie mille per il tempo che hai dedicato alla mia ricerca. Il tuo contributo è fondamentale. Se hai qualsiasi domanda o se ti piacerebbe rimanere aggiornato/a sugli sviluppi di questo progetto, non esitare a contattarmi.

Appendix 2:

Interviews' Transcript

Interview 1 - Lucia

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Bene bene, nel complesso bene. Mia figlia è in cerca di lavoro e quindi un po' tesa in questo periodo. Ma diamoci del tu.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Il cane perché è fedele, così si dice, sono fedele.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: Allora leggere, forse è questo prevale su altre cose.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: Forse Ferrero e anche Adidas. Ferrero mi ricorda la Nutella perché sono rimasta legata all'infanzia. Adidas perché quando compro qualche tuta sportiva è quello che mi viene in mente, lo associo a qualcosa che indosso e mi dà più sicurezza rispetto ad altri.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Comodità, rimane forse immutato nel tempo, non cambia tanto negli anni quindi classico rimasto quasi sempre uguale uguale, nello stile. E poi è qualcosa, che non è un aggettivo, che dà forse forse una maggiore sicurezza quando lo indosso, mi fa sentire attuale, mi fa sentire moderna al passo con i tempi.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: Allora guardo poca televisione, quindi vedo poca pubblicità, però quando la vedo rimango affascinata, non cambio canale. Mi piace guardarla e addirittura penso che siano fatte benissimo, sono pezzi di film e mi ispirano, cerco di capirle, di interpretarle con tutte le difficoltà che comportano perché sono abbastanza complesse.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Ne ho visto tante, però devo dire che rimasta colpita... Paradossalmente mi colpiscono tutte perché ritengo che siano fatte molto bene, però mi dici quale, proprio perché guarda poca televisione, faccio fatica a ricordare. Forse quella del Cynar, risale a tanti tanti anni fa, gli anni novanta. C'era l'immagine di questa donna bellissima che le si sfilava il vestito mentre camminava e mi è rimasta impressa perché ero giovane, forse legata alla giovinezza. Pensavo alla bellezza della modella, al corteggiamento che c'era dietro, ed eri distratta soprattutto dalla bellezza della modella, dalle forme, perché erano gli anni in cui mettevano in evidenza il fisico.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Non mi capita spessissimo, e il mezzo è sicuramente la televisione.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

Ovviamente è un marchio di scarpe, dovrebbe essere qualcosa di molto conosciuto e diffuso, ma non mi viene il nome.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Resistenza, forza e tenacia.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Mi viene da pensare a credere nei propri sogni, quindi fare di tutto per realizzarli, quando uno sa quello che vuole, strettamente legato a quello che dicevo prima, fare in modo che ciò si realizzi. Nella vita una persona deve perseguire questi scopi con tenacia, resistenza e forza.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Anche Nike è un brand che essendo sempre stato utilizzato, anche ai miei tempi, direi qualcosa che dura nei tempi, e gli aggettivi che ho usato prima per Adidas li potrei riutilizzare, anche quelli ti danno un senso di sicurezza, comodità, praticità, resistenza, qualcosa che dura nel tempo. Non tutti se lo potevano permettere, però aspiravano, perché faceva tendenza usarlo.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Suggestisce di impegnarsi in quello che uno fa e bisogna credere per poter realizzare i sogni e capire per cosa si è fatti. La frase che dice alla fine. Io sono nato per fare questo, e devo farlo. C'è anche un aspetto pedagogico ed educativo, un ragazzo sicuramente nero che vuole realizzare un sogno, costatogli fatica, grazie alla sua forza di volontà e fisica, comunque riesci, si realizza, e tutti ce la possono fare se credono nei propri sogni.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Allora, il fatto che fosse in inglese mi ha lasciato un po' spiazzato perché le emozioni si amplificano con la conoscenza della lingua, perché capisci il significato. Mi è piaciuta l'immagine del bambino alla fine, dove da lì si parte e poi quello che lui è diventato, e quindi la sua realizzazione e il compimento di un progetto di vita.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: No... Posso rivederlo un attimo? Sempre Nike?

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Penso gli stessi di prima...

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Gli affetti, la famiglia, il senso di appartenenza, la sicurezza, la stabilità e l'amore soprattutto per la famiglia, i figli, moglie e il nido, il nucleo familiare.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Il messaggio è quello sempre di credere nei sogni, qualsiasi sogno si può realizzare e si completa con il senso di appartenenza, sapere che c'è qualcuno che ti aspetta al quale puoi tornare. Il mondo degli affetti.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Ho provato emozioni forti, quando ho visto il bambino piccolo, la moglie, il ritorno a casa, è ricca di emozioni.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: Sono entrambe belle, ehm la seconda forse mi colpisce maggiormente, per il senso di famiglia e di appartenenza

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: Forse la prima, se non sbaglio nella prima era più concentrata su lui, individuo e la seconda invece era concentrata più sul nucleo familiare, su tutti. Mi sembra di ricordare questo.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: Lo sono entrambe, quindi direi che lo sono allo stesso modo, anche se preferisco la seconda corda però ci sono degli elementi creativi in entrambe le pubblicità.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: Assolutamente sì, influisce, è come se lavorassero puntando su alcuni concetti fondamentali per tutti, come gli affetti e il credere in se stessi, ti dà l'idea che pedagogicamente ti dà dei valori, e di conseguenza tutto il marchio sia improntato su una maggiore serietà perché crede in valori fondamentali nel quale la maggior parte delle persone credono, comunque vogliono. Per me è fondamentale l'autenticità perché penso che alla fine ti stia dando un insegnamento, un valore, ti trasmette un valore quindi pensi che quell'azienda abbia dei valori.

R: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: Come detto prima, preferisco la seconda, però entrambe sono belle. Però la mia percezione non è troppo impattata. Continuo a pensare ciò che ho detto prima.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti

R: Ne ho sentito parlare, è un tema attuale, complesso, però ho le idee abbastanza confuse. Un'intelligenza forse non ho capito se potrebbe essere superiore a quella degli uomini e se un giorno potrebbe stravolgere l'umanità e il lavoro, modificando un po' tutto, il nostro modo di vivere, e non so bene se in meglio o in peggio, in questo non ho le idee chiare su cosa possa diventare.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: Io non la utilizzo mai, ne ho sentito parlare a livello anche scolastico dove potrebbe essere qualcosa di negativo, utilizzata come vado, copio e copio un tema, un riassunto, non ci lavoro e di conseguenza in questo caso visto come qualcosa di negativo perché non ho utilizzato le capacità cognitive di leggere, selezionare un brano, sintetizzare ma sono andata direttamente su Chat GPT e ho copiato senza nessun lavoro e senza aver usato le capacità cognitive e non l'intelligenza umana, quindi il rischio dal punto di vista scolastico potrebbe esserci però non avendo approfondito il tema non so quanto sia reale, si pensa che a livello intellettuale negli studenti copiano possa rendere inattiva l'intelligenza dell'essere umano. Penso che se tu non usi mai il cervello e trovi tutto pronto e preconfezionato, alla fine anche la creatività non la stai utilizzando. La creatività è una questione intellettuale. Se tu vai e copi e appiccichi quelle cose lì, senza nessun tipo di lavoro, dove sta la creatività? Non ti sei sforzata a livello linguistico di cercare un aggettivo piuttosto che un altro o di prendere un'immagine che ti sarebbe piaciuta di

più rispetto ad un'altra. Faccio un esempio, un riassunto dei Promessi Sposi, se tu ci lavori nel libro, leggi, selezioni e poi riassumi, ti immagini, e prendi le parti che a te piacciono proprio perché pur facendo un riassunto i riassunti sono tutti diversi, perché ognuno sceglie in modo soggettivo. Invece lo trovi, lo prendi, lo appiccichi e lo consegna. La creatività si sviluppa con un lavoro intellettuale che tu fai.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: No perché comunque penso che quell'immagine che mi ha trasmesso continua ad essere quella di prima, io non mi sono neppure accorta che sia stata utilizzata l'intelligenza artificiale, e anzi, mi ha dato delle emozioni. Quindi un po' contraddico quello che ho detto precedentemente.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: Penso siano autentici, dal momento che io ho provato comunque delle emozioni, sia nella prima dove non è stata utilizzata, e addirittura la seconda mi è piaciuta di più, penso che possa essere comunque autentica e possa trasmettere delle emozioni e dei valori.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Ma a livello commerciale no, se lo scopo è quello di vendere e comunque viene realizzato in un modo oppure nell'altro, e immagino che lo scopo della pubblicità sia quello di incrementare le vendite, quindi sia in un modo sia nell'altro ottengono lo stesso effetto quindi penso vada bene.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: No, non mi viene in mente niente di preoccupante al momento...

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Assolutamente sì, se utilizzato in modo corretto e appropriato, come nel caso della seconda pubblicità, non ci vedo nulla di male, perché comunque ho visto dei valori non diseducativi, tutt'altro, legati all'affetto, alla famiglia, allo stare insieme, quindi come tutte le cose il modo in cui viene utilizzata, non è lo strumento in sé che mi spaventa, ma il modo in cui viene utilizzato quello strumento. Se viene utilizzato per scopi educativi, o in sanità per salvare delle persone, o per incrementare le vendite di un prodotto, perché no. Dipende sempre dallo scopo e dall'obiettivo che si vuole raggiungere.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Be sì, anche in questo caso immagino di sì. Non so se questa cosa mi possa preoccupare, probabilmente ci sono degli aspetti che sì, però come dicevo prima, dipende sempre da come vengono utilizzati.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: No, tranne Whatsapp, che non so se venga considerato un social. Presumo di no.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: //

D: Pubblichì contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: No, no.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: No.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

F, 53 anni, Professoressa.

Interview 2 - Andrea

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Tutto bene grazie.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Difficile, la lince, perché è attenta, perspicace, pronta, abile ad intervenire velocemente, allerta.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: Al momento palestra, però comunque sport in generale. Se avessi la possibilità pallacanestro.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: Ti direi Nike. Per la pallacanestro e per Jordan, e per la storia che c'è dietro. Mi sono letto il libro di Phil Knight, dove racconta tutta la sua storia e di come ha fondato la Nike. Sono attaccato al brand per quello che c'è dietro e per i pensieri che ha avuto, non tanto per il prodotto ma per il brand stesso.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Dinamico, sportivo e molto sponsorizzato.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: Prima parola che mi viene in mente sicuramente è televisione, non sono un gran fan delle pubblicità convenzionale che ti interrompe. Mi piacciono più pubblicità meno convenzionali, che ti spammano il prodotto senza darti fastidio, senza costringerti a guardarlo per 12 secondi. Ad esempio, nei film di Mission Impossible, mi veniva una gran voglia di prendere una BMW. Uno non se ne accorge nemmeno ma fai l'associazione bella macchina, è una BMW.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Fammi pensare, se me la ricordo è perché mi hanno fatto ridere o perché erano fuori dal convenzionale. La prima che mi viene in mente è forse quella della Fiat per la 500 X, era la

pubblicità con un vecchietto che doveva prendere il viagra e che lo cacciava per sbaglio fuori dalla finestra e c'era sta pasticca che saltava ovunque e finiva nel serbatoio di una Cinquecento normale e questa si gonfiava tutta, e diventava la 500 X. Te lo ricordi perché fa ridere.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Che me ne renda conto mi capita su Youtube, su Prime Video sicuramente, ogni volta che li uso. Televisione non ne guardo. Poi indirettamente mi capita con product placement, o per strada un cartellone pubblicitario ma non me ne rendo conto.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Certo, Nike. Avevo riconosciuto prima che partisse il video.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Dedizione, sportività, identità ti direi.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Un po' collegato all'ultimo aggettivo che ti ho detto, quindi identità. Portare fuori quello che uno è, spingersi al limite per dimostrare e tirar fuori se stesso. Quando alla fine dice "*I'm born to do this*" quello è il valore che attribuisco al brand. Spingerti al limite, quello che puoi tirar fuori.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Un po' le immagini che avevo usato prima, identità, sportività.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Un messaggio motivazionale, esplicito, farebbe comodo le cose fossero andate diversamente, farebbe comodo non fossi qui, però io sono nato per fare questo, faccio questo. E quindi è un po' l'idea della pubblicità non troppo convenzionale che ti mostra un prodotto, ti dicono questo prodotto è bello perché... ma ti cercano di attaccare più ad un livello emotivo, magari il prodotto non lo vedi nemmeno, però ti innamori di quello che rappresenta. Come anche le pubblicità della Apple dove non vedevi neanche l'iPhone, tu non lo vedi il prodotto, non è incentrata sul prodotto, però è incentrata su quello che rappresenta, su quello che puoi o vuoi diventare, e ti attacchi a quello

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Vedendo questo video abbastanza neutrali, mi viene in mente un'altra pubblicità di Nike, che mi è venuta in mente guardando questa pubblicità, a cui invece associo delle emozioni forti, quasi commovente, che me la guardavo di mia spontanea volontà perché per me era quasi come se fosse un video motivazionale. Una pubblicità più lunga, di due minuti e mezzo, che mi ha toccato di più in vita mia, "*Nike dream crazy*".

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, lo Swoosh in basso a destra...

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Direi la linea è sempre la stessa di prima, un po' più fuori dall'ambito sportivo in questo caso. Magari toglierei l'aggettivo sport, però bene o male il messaggio che c'è dietro è lo stesso. Dedizione, identità...

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Mhm... Ti direi famiglia, perché si vedeva la scena con la bambina, aggiungerei questo.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Penso le stesse di prima.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Lo stesso di prima, quindi un percorso di crescita, di duro lavoro per arrivare a un obiettivo. Prima era un obiettivo sportivo, in questo caso più personale. Poi ovviamente c'è la controparte del messaggio implicito che è "vesti Nike e raggiungerai i tuoi obiettivi".

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Mhm... Non ho provato troppe emozioni, neutrale. Mi ha fatto piacere vederlo, non mi disturba, ma non lo andrei a ricercare probabilmente.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: La prima, non ti so dare una motivazione. Mi è sembrata più autentica. Un po' per quello che è il core business di Nike, il vestiario sportivo, e un po' perché l'ho trovata più realistica, l'uomo su Marte mi sembrava un po' più fantascientifica.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: La seconda sicuramente. Per le stesse motivazioni di prima, mi ci identifico di meno.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: Forse la seconda, perché è un po' più diversa rispetto a tutte le altre pubblicità che magari vedo di Nike.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: E' un valore decisamente importante per me sia a livello di pubblicità che a livello di brand, mi rendo conto che per quanto sia stupido, mi ritrovo ad acquistare con più piacere da brand con cui condivido in qualche modo i valori. Poi, che un brand possa realmente avere dei valori, questo è un altro discorso. Per me autenticità è un brand che manifesta sempre gli stessi valori e gli stessi ideali, anche tramite le pubblicità, e io mi identifico in quelli, poi il brand di conseguenza mi piace di più. Se un brand dovesse fare delle pubblicità in una direzione e poi un anno dopo si sposta su una direzione diversa, non lo riterrei autentico, ma solo una strategia di marketing e di conseguenza non mi identificherei più in quello e non gli darei fiducia.

D: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: In questo caso, no. Però perché ho una percezione abbastanza forte del brand. Se fosse un brand sconosciuto per me, la prima mi è piaciuta di più perché l'ho trovata più realistica, probabilmente mi avrebbe fatto cambiare idea e concezione del brand. Queste pubblicità da sole non la modificano perché ci sono tante cose che mi spingono ad amare il brand già di suo, al di là delle pubblicità, film, pulp culture e qualsiasi altra cosa, tipo ho un'immagine. Marco Belinelli, di Bologna, che lui ha vinto un titolo NBA, lui è stato acquistato dagli Charlotte Hornets, il proprietario era Michael Jordan e lui in un'intervista ha raccontato che quando ha ricevuto la chiamata da Michael Jordan, una delle prime cose che gli ha chiesto Michael Jordan è "*quante Jordan hai? Hai scarpe Adidas in casa?*", e questo per me è stato un'immagine forte, un messaggio forte. Al di fuori del mondo delle pubblicità, ti dà l'identità del brand che non è il venditore della

Nike che lo dice, ma M. Jordan. Un po' come con Apple, è il significato che associo al brand, non solo il prodotto.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?

R: Sì, è complicato da descrivere. Per me è una cosa falsamente intelligente, mi viene in mente una frase *“un compito smette di diventare intelligente quando capiamo appieno come risolverla”* e dato che siamo in grado di risolvere qualsiasi tipo di problema, sta pian piano cessando di essere qualcosa di intelligente. Detto questo, una soluzione che ci permette di risolvere compiti che fino a poco tempo fa ci sembravano irrisolvibili, cambiando decisamente il paradigma e quindi non esplicitando in dettaglio quello che vogliamo, ma utilizzando dei metodi per imparare il risultato. Lo vedo uno strumento positivo, ma non uno strumento intelligente. Sapendo come funziona anche nei vari campi, sono quelle cose che quando sai come funziona un trucco di magia, dici “oddio è la cosa più stupida del mondo”, poi rimane super interessante e utile.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: Lo utilizzo tutti i giorni, per scrivere dei papers ChatGPT, poi Copilot per programmare, mi suggerisce righe di codice, e non saprei tornare indietro ora, perché mi salva delle ore. Non lo reputo intelligente, perché la prima cosa che capisci, se capisci come funziona dietro le quinte, la probabilità di ottenere risposte sbagliate è altissima e tu devi essere sempre in grado di verificare la risposta che ti dà, non puoi fidarti al 100%. E' utile per salvare tempo nei compiti più macchinosi, però non è un programmatore di cui ti puoi fidare al 100%.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: No, è cambiata di più quando mi hai detto che non era veramente di Nike, adesso ci vedo cose che non mi quadravano prima. Sul fatto che sia realizzata con l'IA non è cambiata la mia opinione, mi ha un po' infastidito la prima visione nel senso che notavo l'immagine non era reale, ero più concentrato nel guardare il video e chiedermi ma è un video reale, c'è tanta CGI, è fatto con AI, più che concentrarmi su quello che mi stava dicendo.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: Li ritengo comunque autentici, anche se dipende. Però utilizzati in un certo modo li reputo autentici. Per esempio, nel rispondere ad offerte di lavoro ho mandato 200 Cover Letter, e ho utilizzato ChatGPT, quello che mi esce non lo reputo autentico, perché mi crea un profilo ideale, totalmente falso. Io andavo a modificarlo, con un Cover Letter creata da me e partivo da quella, riadattandola per ogni offerta di lavoro. Il risultato allora lo ritenevo autentico. Dipende da come vengono utilizzati questi strumenti, io non vedo la colpa nella tecnologia ma da come sono utilizzati. Utilizzati in un certo modo, per me rimangono completamente autentici.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: No, dal punto di vista di advertising. Anche se dipende chi c'è dietro. Un brand che utilizza l'IA con cognizione di causa, non mi preoccupa, perché so che c'è una persona dietro che alla fine stabilisce che quello sta venendo fuori sia compatibile con il brand. Quello che mi preoccupa è se si utilizza l'IA per andare ad ottimizzare il più possibile magari le vendite, quindi, se invece di fare dei prodotti con un'identità e avere dei clienti che si riconoscono nel brand, se il brand inizia a fare ragionamenti invertendo il paradigma per massimizzare le vendite, in quel caso si

perderebbe la storia che c'è dietro. Altrimenti non vedrei la coerenza nel percorso, vedrei solo dei mercenari che abbandonano l'identità per seguire il profitto, per me perderebbe il valore, e con quelle persone dietro secondo me questo è più difficile piuttosto che una macchina che esegue quello che gli si dice.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Sì, mi preoccupa e la cosa che mi preoccupa di più è una problematica che esiste anche sui social network, ci sono tantissime persone, il 90% dei commenti sono idioti, avere degli strumenti così potenti in mano a tutti è problematico per la quantità di fake news o contenuti falsi che possono essere creati. Mi viene l'immagine di Papa Francesco, è ovvio che uno poteva creare le immagini finte anche prima con Photoshop, però ti richiedeva di essere una persona con le competenze, una persona istruita che ha speso del tempo per imparare ad usare uno strumento e decide di spendere il suo tempo per fare una cosa, c'è uno sforzo dietro. Invece avere uno strumento dove basta che tu dica "generami questo" e lui in dieci secondi te lo crea, mi preoccupa un po'.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Assolutamente, non tanto per la generazione di contenuti perché avendo le risorse per generare contenuti reali penso siano fatti meglio, lo utilizzeranno per migliorare le proprie strategie e fare uso della quantità impressionante di dati. Per esempio il caso di Amazon che sposta i prodotti in base alle statistiche e facendo previsioni di chi comprerà cosa e in quale zona. L'IA non è neanche una questione del "ci ruberà il lavoro" ma una questione di massimizzare dei profitti. Un'azienda che non la utilizza, nel lungo termine è destinata ad essere declassata dalle altre. Poi ora siamo in una bolla e tutto deve avere la parola Intelligenza Artificiale, per ricevere fondi, e tutti vanno in quella direzione.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, lo utilizzeranno con l'accettazione e capire come possa essergli utile, mi fa paura l'utilizzo che ne possano fare perché lo vedo meno controllato. Il brand lo utilizza in maniera più considerata, e mi preoccupa l'utilizzo sconsiderato di una persona che non ha chiaro ciò che sta facendo.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: Sì.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: Spesso, ti direi un'ora al giorno Instagram, perché mi sono messo il limite, altrimenti lo userei di più, almeno mi rendo conto di quanto lo uso.

D: Pubblichì contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: Ultimamente poco, però sì. Foto, video, anche se li uso più per mantenere i contatti con le persone che non vedo frequentemente.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: Interagisco con le persone anche grazie ai contenuti che pubblicano, per mantenere i contatti. Adesso è un utilizzo più considerato, con un obiettivo. Quando ero più piccolo ero attaccato al numero, e ora non mi interessa troppo.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

M, 24, ingegnere

Interview 3 - Maria Giulia

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Tutto bene, grazie. Sono al mare, mi sto riposando.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Io sceglierei la volpe, perché è un predatore e un animale che va a caccia, ma allo stesso tempo che ha una tana, oltre al fatto che sia un animale bellissimo che vive nei boschi, per il mio essere umbra.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: In questo periodo sto leggendo tantissimo, nel mio momento da sola, è il mio hobby preferito. Mi piacerebbe suonare ma purtroppo non lo pratico più, e poi fare gli aperitivi e andare a teatro mi piace molto.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: Ti direi Patagonia su due piedi. Mi piace la mission, anche se non ho niente di Patagonia. Saint Barth, perché siamo in estate ora.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Sostenibile, plurale ed elegante.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: Penso a genialità, persuasione, creatività, diversi generi, il genio creativo. Che sa prendere l'ironia, l'arte della comicità.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Ti dico, ne ho viste di ASRM, della Lindt, un video di quasi tre minuti dove si usa solo l'ASRM. Ha tante visualizzazioni, engagement, e mi è piaciuto particolarmente e penso che arrivi alle persone.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Non guardo televisione, però la vedo sui social. Anche se sono molto "skipper", quando uso Tiktok, voglio vedere il video e non voglio vedere la pubblicità, me ne capitano anche tre di seguito e ho imparato ad ignorarle.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, ovviamente, Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Commovente, profondo e di ispirazione.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Persistenza, il fatto di mettersi in gioco, umiltà, mostra un corridore africano che ha origini povere, pur essendo su un campo olimpionico, e determinazione, valore che tu sei nato per fare quello e sei determinato per fare quello.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Lo riconduco ai concetti della Nike, è uno spot molto coerente con i messaggi e la mission di Nike, nonostante i diversi scenari, va sempre a finire sul concetto di "Just Do It", mi piace questa cosa. E poi non posso fare a meno di pensare ai prodotti che vende, è un brand famosissimo, mi vengono subito in mente i valori di Nike, la sportività, l'inclusività, tutto quanto.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Sempre l'idea di essere nati per fare qualcosa, per realizzare un sogno.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Sì, sì, quando ho capito che stava andando indietro in tutta la sua vita, ho provato un po' di tristezza, mi sono commossa e ho provato un po' il senso di aspirazione, sei nato per fare questo. E mi sono sentita anche rassicurata.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, sì, sempre Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Innovativo, out of the box, fuori dal comune, e familiare.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Sì, mi è rimasto, la storia del protagonista da quando era bambino, quindi anche qui qualcosa di simile, questa ripercussione della vita della persona, mi è rimasta questa sensazione, di continuità. Però è cambiato, non ho mai visto questa pubblicità, il fatto che Nike venga associata allo spazio è una cosa diversa, molto nuova, quindi anche curiosità, che non sai cosa andrà a fare, sono prodotti che non esistono adesso, quindi mi mette molta curiosità e penso, non so, farà qualcosa di sconvolgente, di straordinario, di nuovo.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Mi viene in mente il laboratorio dove hanno creato i prodotti, lo spazio, l'universo.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Qua secondo me era meno chiaro rispetto all'altro, era più generale, sicuramente se tu sei determinato a fare quello che vuoi, arriverai a fare cose grandi, c'è la realizzazione dei propri sogni a livello professionale, sia la famiglia, il culmine della felicità, hai tutto. Bello questo, di raggiungere i propri obiettivi sotto ogni punto di vista.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Mi sono sentita spiazzata, perché uno non se lo aspetta. Che cos'è? E' una cosa nuova? Chissà cosa farà? Mi sono sentita emozionata nel scoprire un mondo nuovo, cose nuove, mi sono sentita un po' nel futuro.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: La prima, l'ho trovata più *relatable*. La seconda sembrava la storia di qualcun altro, qualcosa che deve ancora accadere, la prima forse è anche più coerente con il periodo che stiamo vivendo (i.e. olimpiadi), e tutto quanto, è più una storia umana, ti identifichi con il personaggio.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: La seconda, proprio perché mi sembra futuristica, che deve ancora accadere, una proiezione. Come quando ti raccontano una favola, qualcosa di non reale.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: Forse la seconda a questo punto, vedere il logo Nike nella tuta spaziale è strano, è anche visionario. Proprio quello che intendevo prima per genialità creativa, lo riconduco proprio a quello.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: Molto importante, direi quasi il valore fondamentale, l'autenticità per me significa che riesco a rispettare quello che tu mi dici e quindi è la cosa principale, altrimenti non rimango neanche ad ascoltare o guardare, penso si veda da subito.

D: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: Ti dirò, è rimasta per di più la stessa, sempre con una percezione positiva. La prima ha rafforzato quella che è l'immagine che avevo prima del brand e ha fatto rimanere la mia opinione sullo stesso livello, la seconda ha cambiato forse un po' in positivo perché ora mi aspetto qualcosa di nuovo, non mi aspetto la solita Nike, "Just Do It", le solite cose. Bello forte, però adesso c'è qualcosa di più. Qualcosa di bello.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?

R: Sì, è uno strumento di innovazione, geniale che ormai fa parte della nostra generazione ed è in grado di fornirti risposte dal nulla al tutto, è il futuro. Che ancora non sappiamo utilizzare. Io sono ancora profondamente sconvolta, proprio perché si sta sviluppando in modo super rapido.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: Poco, molto poco, però sì. Non sfrutto tutte le potenzialità che avrebbe perché ho un po' paura anche e non riesco a gestirla bene, però sì, un po' sì.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: Leggermente sì, un po' sì. Mi perde un po' di autenticità perché non viene da una fonte ufficiale e tutto quanto, il messaggio rimane forte, però sì, mi cala un pochino, leggermente sì. Però non voglio risultare incoerente. Non mi sa di lavoro studiato prima, è qualcosa di molto

più fittizio, come se meritasse di meno la mia attenzione, tanto è stata fatta in cinque secondi, non so esattamente in quanti, ma non è frutto del lavoro di persone, di menti che si sono messe insieme per creare qualcosa.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: Per ora non li percepisco come autentici, come sia possibile che sia veramente autentico? Non c'è il lavoro, è qualcosa di estremamente fittizio. So che è una visione estremamente chiusa la mia, però non posso fare a meno che sia qualcosa che fai "click" e viene fuori quello, non può avere lo stesso effetto... Però effettivamente lo ha poi. Perché io ho fatto dei commenti che mi è piaciuta, cavolo... Mi sta spiazzando. Forse è un'idea molto prevenuta la mia su questo. Vorrei rimanere coerente.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Mi preoccupa che si creerebbero sentimenti di ansia condivisa perché ho a disposizione questo strumento, quindi viene normalizzato che io debba fare di più ormai visto che ho questo strumento a disposizione, e quindi di conseguenza che possa esserci un insieme di contenuti eccessivo e di poca qualità, che vada non ad innalzare la qualità dei prodotti comunicativi, poi ci sarà un overload di stimoli che andrà a far perdere l'efficacia di tutto. Non è la questione del lavoro, perché come va a togliere qualcosa, va ad aggiungere posti ed opportunità e più un discorso di efficienza a lungo termine. Però quando succederà ci sarà sicuramente qualcos'altro poi. Il discorso di prima, andare a creare qualcosa con il lavoro, il brainstorming, stare insieme per fare qualcosa che valga, non so quanto l'IA possa velocizzare il lavoro e togliere il valore alle cose.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Sì, la pigrizia. Noi ci impigriremo tutti quanti, al 100%. Un po' l'effetto Wall-e, è il primo step per non utilizzare più il cervello, che l'essere umano non sia più in grado di utilizzare la materia grigia.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, adesso siamo alle prime armi, serviranno anni di estrema ricerca e anni di sperimentazione per poi utilizzarli. Ora siamo agli esordi, non abbiamo gli strumenti per usarla appieno. Voglio essere propositiva e voglio pensare che sarà una cosa bella, un po' di malinconia e sfiducia la ho. Non sono sentimenti completamente positivi, perché sono una persona che vuole lavorare in questo settore e mi mette un po' di paura.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, nella vita di tutti i giorni. Cercare posti per andare in vacanza, consigli. Forse andrà più veloce l'utilizzo da parte dei consumatori che dei brand. Mi sento un po' amareggiata per il discorso della pigrizia, anche se sono curiosa di capire quali saranno gli strumenti a disposizione, per le traduzioni e tutto quanto. Mi aspetto sempre un po' di più, sono curiosa di vedere come verrà utilizzato.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: Certo, tutti i giorni.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: Instagram principalmente, Tiktok un po', LinkedIn, Facebook poco, e Whatsapp, se lo consideriamo come social media.

D: Pubblichi contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: Sì sì, pubblico regolarmente su Instagram. Anche su Tiktok e raramente su LinkedIn. Mi capita di pubblicare immagini al 90%.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: Sì, con i miei amici principalmente, persone che conosco già, interazione non per scoprire persone ma per parlare con persone che conosco, amici.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

F, 24, studentessa.

Interview 4 - Francesco

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Molto bene, ho appena finito di lavorare.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Un ghepardo, perché suona bene.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: Leggere, dipingere, la matematica nel suo complesso. Lavorare, la sartoria maschile, l'antiquariato di tanto in tanto.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: Non ne ho uno, compro pochissimo da brand definiti. Uno da cui ho comprato spesso è Tagliatore. Difficile definire un brand, però se devo adattare Loro Piana, perché la maggior parte dei miei abiti sono in tessuti di Loro Piana. Mi piacciono per la qualità alta, colori, tessuti e fantasie molto varie.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Raffinato, timeless (senza tempo), tagliente.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: La storia americana, corta ma potente.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Sicuramente sui social, perché la televisione non la guardo. Ho visto una cosa di una marca di skincare coreana che mi aveva colpito, perché c'erano delle palline di gelatina che al loro

interno avevano la vitamina C, e la vitamina C si distribuiva uniformemente. Mi veniva voglia di mangiarla, ha creato una risposta quasi fisica.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Sui social, con una frequenza canonica, scandita, ogni cinque storie che vedi.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Scarpette chiodate di Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Medio, grigio, furbo.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Furbizia, ipocrisia, consapevolezza.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Di un centro commerciale enorme, tipo Porta di Roma. Dove tutto è bianco, elegante, però medio, tutto definito.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: E' un messaggio contraddittorio, perché direi che da un lato mostrano un campione assoluto, lo mostrano come inarrivabile, è molto altezzosa (la pubblicità), e dall'altro la parte finale, "Just Do It" è così facile, ero destinato a fare questo quindi è facile. Penso che vogliano trasmettere che comprando le nostre scarpe sarà più facile diventare bravi.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Mi ha fatto sentire la grandiosità, la maestosità, l'autoritas di uno stadio intero che ti guarda.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Soltanto quando lo hanno fatto vedere sulle scarpe del tizio, prima l'ho riconosciuto più velocemente. Lo stile di questa pubblicità è diverso, molto più "cheap".

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Razzista, patriottico, pomposo.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Patriottismo, ostentazione, sportività.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: La polvere che si alza su Marte, perché non penso si possa verificare sul serio. Devo verificare.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Non ci ho visto un gran messaggio, quello di prima era più chiaro. Lui che va su Marte, sullo spazio, è completamente slegato dal brand Nike, forse alla fine la legacy, anche se mi sembra slegato dal resto. Se c'è, io non ho colto il messaggio

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Non ho provato nessuna emozione. Quello di prima sì, questo no.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: Assolutamente la prima, perché c'è un sentimento che è molto autentico, la superbia. La differenza tra superbia e consapevolezza è sottile, nel caso di un campione coincidono le due cose.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: La seconda. L'ho trovato molto cheap, scene messe una dopo l'altra, non ci ho trovato nessuna emozione. Tutto molto piatto.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: La prima, perché c'era una storia precisa e chiara e le storie necessitano di creatività per essere tratteggiate. Per tratteggiare una storia c'è necessità di lasciare uno spazio creativo anche all'osservatore, quindi c'è un doppio lavoro creativo nel tratteggiare le cose, al punto che chi lo guarda può immaginare ancora di più. Guidare l'immaginazione di chi guarda.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: Non influisce sinceramente. Non comprerei il brand comunque. E' uno spot troppo grandioso per essere autentico, tutti e due. Sono troppo distanti dalla realtà artigiana che a me piace. Io voglio l'artigiano marchigiano che non sa parlare italiano, non voglio il brand americano che mi propina il sogno americano.

D: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: La prima sicuramente. La seconda per me è insignificante. La prima perché c'è un senso di superbia che ho apprezzato.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?

R: Sì. Bastone e carota perché come quando hai a che fare con qualcuno e devi insegnare qualcosa, dai le bastonate quando sbaglia e dai la carota quando fa bene. Apprendimento per rinforzo.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: Ci lavoro, ed è principalmente il mio lavoro. Quindi almeno otto ore al giorno.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: No, perché anche prima l'avevo definita cheap. Sembra realizzata da un ragazzino di quattordici anni che non sa montare i video. Che è più o meno lo stadio dell'IA generativa di adesso. Spiega solo di più la stranezza della polvere su Marte.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: No, ma anche questo spiega perché venga rappresentata solo un'etnia. L'IA generativa è completamente biased, per loro viviamo in un mondo solo di donne e certe etnie.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Mi preoccupano le agenzie creative, che spariranno. Fanno dei lavori per lo più mediocri, e lo stesso lavoro mediocre lo puoi fare spendendo un centesimo di quello che si spende.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: L'IA è uno strumento, quindi mi possono preoccupare le intenzioni. False informazioni, roba di questo genere. Anche se le potevi generare anche prima, certo prima era più difficile far dire qualcuno qualcosa, i deep fake, velocizza la generazione di informazioni finte. Ma queste cose esistevano anche prima.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, come tutti noi. Tanti lavori noiosi spariranno e forse ce ne saranno altri meno noiosi.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, è inevitabile. Non mi fa sentire in qualche modo. Ogni volta che c'è uno strumento potente che è alla portata di tutti, tutti lo vorranno usare. Quello che mi preoccupa è chi decide e chi costruisce questi modelli, l'idea di OpenAI che governi i miei pensieri, che plasmi la frequenza delle parole, gli aggettivi che usiamo, quelli che non usiamo, i concetti, la storia che leggiamo. Il fatto che siano una serie di aziende private che lo facciano non mi fa impazzire.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: Sì.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: Instagram, Facebook. Giornalmente.

D: Pubblichiamo contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: Sì, per lo più foto e qualche video.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: Sì, interagisco con i contenuti degli altri e le altre persone rispondo o comunque interagiscono con i contenuti che pubblico.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

M, 26, matematico

Interview 5 - Ludovica

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Bene, grazie. Sono le undici di mattina, mi sono alzata mezz'ora fa. Sto aspettando una chiamata per la nuova casa che devo prendere in Francia.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Un lupo, perché è un po' solitario però sta anche in branco. E' agile, sveglio, intelligente, deve catturare le sue prede.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: La palestra, mi piace leggere libri, mi piace passeggiare nella natura e ascoltare la musica.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: Gymshark, perché lo associo al mio hobby preferito che come accennavo è andare in palestra. Mi piacciono molto i vestiti, è un brand che fa anche accessori per la palestra. Mi piace la qualità, la vestibilità, come mi stanno addosso. Mi sento confident quando li indosso, mi piace che ogni volta che voglio fare un acquisto ci sono degli sconti, perché in realtà i prodotti sono abbastanza costosi.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Di alta qualità, accessibile economicamente, comodo come prodotto e che mi fa sentire a mio agio con me stessa.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: Penso che per fare una pubblicità che ti attira veramente devi sapere cosa le persone vogliono vedere, cosa vuole vedere il tuo target. Perché ogni tanto vedo delle pubblicità che mi attirano e mi fanno dire "mi piace il marketing che c'è dietro", e quindi mi rimangono impresse nella mente. Altre mi fanno schifo e mi rimangono magari comunque in mente ma non mi invogliano a comprare il prodotto.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Ci ho pensato l'altro giorno quando ero a Monaco e c'era un edificio e in cima c'era una statua strana, molto inquietante. E sotto c'era il marchio, il negozio stava sotto la statua. Strano modo di fare marketing.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Ogni giorno, su Instagram.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Profondo, idea della determinazione, se sei nato per farlo, fallo, e poi professionale.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Seguire i propri sogni, le tue idee e le tue aspirazioni e che il brand ti aiuta in questo.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Mi viene in mente dopo questo video il podio (visto il periodo che stiamo vivendo) di Parigi, con una persona che vince e le persone che festeggiano.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Qualcosa come se tu ti senti portato per qualcosa, hai un sogno, fallo, senza pensare agli altri ma solo a quello che vuoi fare.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Sì, mi sono venuti i brividi. Lo sport mi ricorda di quando anche io ero una sportiva, queste persone che hanno dedicato tutta la loro vita allo sport e poi raggiungono questi risultati.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, sempre Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Visionario, esagerato in un certo senso, falso.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Sempre qualcosa di visionario, all'avanguardia, mi sembra che vogliano imporre un po' troppo, esagerato.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Mi ha fatto pensare ai razzi, allo spazio.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Nike vuole portare gli uomini ovunque, anche in imprese incredibili, Nike vuole esserci. Sempre all'avanguardia, fare qualcosa di incredibile e di nuovo.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Non mi ha fatto provare emozioni, rispetto a quello di prima.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: La prima, perché si vede che sono persone vere, almeno sembra più vero. Poi non so se abbiano usato generative AI. Sembra più credibile e relatable per me, mi relaziono di più.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: La seconda, perché sembra più finta, i personaggi e tutto. Non è una cosa a cui posso relazionarmi, perché non la vedo come qualcosa vicino a me, se da una parte conosco una ragazza che è andata alle Olimpiadi e mi posso immaginare il percorso che ha fatto, mi ricorda il percorso che stavo cercando di fare io, in questo caso non posso neanche immaginare qualcuno intorno a me che va sulla Luna, mi sembra una cosa proprio lontana dalla mia realtà attuale.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: In realtà nessuna delle due, hanno lo stesso livello di creatività.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: E' molto importante, perché secondo me è più facile credere ad una persona che è autentica che ti parla, è più facile che ti affidi alla pubblicità. Se senti che c'è qualcosa di finto, pensi se la pubblicità è così, come saranno i prodotti? Non trasferisco l'autenticità nel prodotto.

D: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: La seconda, in negativo perché ho sempre visto Nike come il brand che crea pubblicità con storie emozionanti di atleti, in questo caso la seconda la sentivo più finta, non mostrava scene di nessuno, mi sembra una storia inventata. Capisco l'idea di portare Nike nello spazio, però il fatto che fosse tutto così fake mi ha dato un'impressione negativa.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?

R: Sì, la descriverei come un insieme di tecnologie, machine learning, cose messe insieme complicate che possono fare tasks che fa l'uomo ma in maniera più efficiente e più rapida. Molto complicate da capire, un insieme di cose dietro, che vanno oltre.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: Uso ChatGPT ogni singolo giorno, vado su Netflix e Spotify che usiamo ogni giorno e magari non tutti sanno che c'è l'IA dietro, in maniera più nascosta magari la utilizziamo tutti.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: No, perché me ne sono accorta che era stata usata.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: Penso che la storia possa essere autentica, forse più originale. Non mi sento di dire che sia autentica al 100%. Sì e no, per quanto uno possa creare qualcosa con l'IA, le immagini e i video sono creati dall'IA, c'è sempre dietro una persona che dà i dettagli della descrizione, quindi non è che non è per niente autentico. Magari non sembra super autentico perché la qualità del video non è la stessa di un video creato manualmente, però il contenuto in sé può essere autentico, perché c'è dietro un ragionamento, un prompt dato da qualcuno. Poi non sembra così autentico a causa della qualità.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: L'unica cosa è che magari prendendo e usando le immagini dell'IA creano degli influencers che non trasmettono la stessa idea di autenticità che potrebbero dare campioni o persone vere olimpiche, e sarebbe un problema per l'effetto che crea, una persona finta, inventata, rispetto ad una persona vera che tutti conoscono, come un endorsement.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Sì, ad esempio adesso stavo cercando degli appartamenti su siti affidabili, poi ne ho trovato un altro e ho pensato tutto il tempo non è che questo appartamento è finto, creato con l'intelligenza artificiale? O tutte le volte in cui creano deep fakes, tipo l'immagine del Papa, uno non capisce che l'immagine è finta e si crea tanta disinformazione. Oppure le voci finte, che possono creare finti dibattiti politici, fake news.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, sono curiosa perché voglio vedere se la useranno bene o se la useranno nel modo sbagliato. Mi crea curiosità vedere come verrà sfruttato questo strumento e il risultato che ne verrà fuori.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Secondo me dipende dagli utenti, ci saranno quelli che lo useranno per trollare la gente e quelli che la useranno in modo più intelligente. Un po' come tutte le tecnologie.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: Certo, ogni giorno.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: Instagram, Facebook, Whatsapp, non so se è considerabile, Tiktok e LinkedIn.

D: Pubblichì contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: Storie su Instagram e ogni tanto post, per lo più immagini.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: Sì, poco, qualche like e commenti ai post ma solo con persone che già conosco.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

F, 23, studentessa.

Interview 6 - Francesca

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Bene bene, sono in ferie da oggi. Anche se ho rateizzato il trasloco, e sono stanca.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Sicuramente un animale che va in letargo, questo è sicuro. Forse un orso, non per la potenza, ma perché apparentemente sembra docile, ma è meglio che stia nella sua grotta a riposare.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: A me piace molto disegnare, tant'è sono riuscita a farlo diventare il mio mestiere. Si dice che quando si trasforma la propria passione in un lavoro è come se non si lavorasse mai, diciamo che non è proprio così. Però è soddisfacente, alla fine, quando si riesce a seguire i propri obiettivi.

Anche il nuoto mi piace molto, fare sport, per il resto sono negativissima. Mi concentro solo su quello che riesco a fare, non esco molto dalla mia comfort zone.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: A me piace molto, anche se è un po' costoso, Vivienne Westwood, dal punto di vista estetico, per l'abbigliamento, il mio preferito. A conti fatti, però mi ritrovo a comprare le cose da Bershka.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Mi piace perché è artistico, è storico, perché rappresenta una parte della cultura punk degli anni 80, ha realizzato il design dei Sex Pistols, c'è una parte della storia della moda. Innovazione, comodità, e tradizioni. Sono i tre elementi che la rappresentano. Basti pensare al corsetto, il suo capo più iconico, il corsetto si vede moltissimo nelle rappresentazioni classiche, nei quadri ottocenteschi, il corsetto vittoriano. Quante vittime ha fatto il corsetto. Però lo ha rielaborato, con ossi di balena, e diciamo che ha dato una chiave molto più moderna e comoda, ha reso comodità storia perché ha citato un capo storico british, con il suo inconfondibile stile.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: Quando penso alla pubblicità mi viene quando qualcuno fa qualcosa di nuovo.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Ad esempio, la pubblicità dell'Ichnusa, prima erano pubblicità classiche, amici in un pub o chi coltiva il luppolo, invece Ichnusa ha scelto il connubio tra tradizione, con elementi della Sardegna, con elementi di freschezza dati al montaggio e al taglio. Da lì ho notato che molti brand lo hanno copiato.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Online, quando devo vedere qualcosa in streaming, che non guardo. Oppure su Instagram o gli influencers stessi sono l'incarnazione della pubblicità, specialmente su Tiktok, c'è questa evoluzione non molto positiva per me che parlo da utente, 10 anni fa i content creators avevano fidelizzato dei clienti, dei followers. Poi con il passare del tempo la fidelizzazione si sta esaurendo perché l'ambiente è diventato saturo, si vede tantissimo che c'è molta finzione, ci dev'essere scritto #ad anche se in piccolissimo, ma si capisce subito che è una pubblicità. Magari prima erano più bravi, c'era una elaborazione, un mix tra finzione e realtà. Ora è diventato un po' più aggressivo, se ci sono arrivata io, figurati gli altri, e sicuramente cambierà il loro approccio di fare pubblicità. In un modo meno aggressivo.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Nike, maestra della pubblicità e del marketing.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Sicuramente è un video emotivo, che ti colpisce sui sogni, perché tutte le persone hanno degli obiettivi da raggiungere, anche se si tratta di sport, ci chiama un po' tutti in causa. Un altro aggettivo è modernità, è sempre al passo dei tempi e sicuramente altri brand lo copieranno. Poi il terzo, accademico, perché chi ha montato il video è probabilmente un millennial, chi ha

montato il video ha utilizzato slow motion, immagini che vanno indietro, quindi c'è sicuramente uno studio accademico.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Qualità, perché se un brand ti deve aiutare a raggiungere un sogno e un brand ti deve aiutare, vuol dire che tu ti affidi alla qualità, può essere un tuo compagno. E poi la reperibilità perché Nike è ovunque.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Successo, Nike ti porta al successo. Poi è un brand che vedi a chiunque, poi quando tu hai successo vedi che chiunque lo abbia.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Penso che il messaggio sia sempre che se tu sei nato per qualcosa, devi farlo. Diciamo molto American Dream, più americano di così non si può. Sarebbe bello che tutti seguissero questa filosofia. Ma non tutti abitiamo nella parte giusta dell'America, devi essere anche un americano bianco. Io lo vedo anche nel mio ambito lavorativo, dove aziende americane mi danno lavoro, mentre in Italia è molto difficile. Io ho collaborato con Marvel ma Bonelli neanche a guardarlo con il binocolo, è un'azienda molto chiusa.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Sono una persona purtroppo romantica, mi ha dato proprio quello che dice lo slogan, di non mollare quello che sto facendo. Funziona, l'idealismo funziona sempre.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Qui è sempre Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Di pancia mi viene da dire sicuramente valore nei confronti della famiglia, affetto nei confronti della famiglia, seguire i propri obiettivi, ma non solo nell'ambito lavorativo, anche la persona che ti sta accanto, i tuoi cari. C'è sempre il concetto molto americano.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Famiglia, ambizione.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Tradizione, multiculturalità. Di solito nelle pubblicità americane, degli anni 50, se eri omosessuale venivi dimenticato. Nei giorni nostri possono scegliere fortunatamente un afro-americano.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Il concept di Nike è sempre quello, "Just Do It", però non abbandonare la famiglia, sono tutti dei successi, l'ambito lavorativo e quello personale.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Fondamentalmente, visto il video di prima, provo le stesse emozioni. Questa parte che colpisce nel seguire un sogno, visti insieme, contemporaneamente non mi ha suscitato chissà cosa. E' sempre lo stesso claim, che mi piace.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: Non saprei, perché la prima parla più del proprio passato, una persona che non appartiene alla classe borghese, quindi dal basso verso l'alto, alla celebrità, invece nella seconda non viene identificato se fosse ricco o povero, si parte da una situazione personale, la sua crescita come uomo per poi raggiungere il successo. Forse la seconda, per il fatto che fortunatamente vivo in una classe agiata, non riesco ad empatizzare al 100% con la prima.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: Forse la prima, per il discorso di non sentirmi completamente rappresentanza. Poi mi piace molto l'astronomia, sono appassionata quindi c'è il bonus.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: Direi sempre la seconda, perché nella prima ho trovato un po' di didattica, ci sta, funziona bene, sono entrambe belle e funzionano, una volta che si parla di Nike, se non le sanno fare bene loro, non le sa fare nessuno. Forse la seconda per gli effetti visivi. La prima è più didattica, però funziona. Nella seconda ci sono più effetti visivi, sono belle entrambe per cose diverse.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: E' importante, come ti ho accennato prima sui content creators, alla fine ti stanno vendendo un prodotto, però devono essere bravi a venderlo. Quando capisco che è una cosa macchinosa, diciamo che è come quando guardi un film nello spazio, sai che gli alieni non esistono, però ti ci immedesimi in quel momento. Se vedi che c'è qualcosa di strano che ti distoglie da quello che stai guardando, allora vuol dire che non ha funzionato. Magari un effetto speciale brutto, un problema di lip sync. Stessa cosa nella pubblicità, il cliente non è stupido. Anche nell'UX, alcuni dicono che l'utente sia uno stupido e quindi devi guidarlo tu, quando in realtà non è così, il cliente è intelligente e ci arriva prima o poi.

D: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: Ma forse la prima, perché la seconda è più tradizionale e mi ha fatto subito pensare alla famiglia americana.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?

R: Da quello che ho capito io è una sorta di database dove si inseriscono i dati che ricreano dei contenuti, immagini, video. Il problema è che questi contenuti sono creati da persone e altri enti e poi c'è il problema del copyright, si sta ancora dibattendo su questo.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: Non mi è mai capitato di utilizzarla, per pure pigrizia, perché poi mi devo iscrivere. Sarebbe interessante, non sono contraria, molti colleghi la usano, anche se alcuni non sono soddisfatti e ne hanno paura. Un po' anticipa il film "AI", collaborazione tra Spielberg e Kubrick. Loro già avevano capito che le persone avrebbero avuto timore di tutto ciò che è nuovo, come è sempre stato. Dopotutto le persone hanno avuto paura anche dell'elettricità che usiamo tutti i giorni, ci sono state locandine propagandistiche di uomini fulminati dalla corrente. O il millennium bug. E ora ci ritroviamo in questo nuovo step. Ci sono fotografi che sfruttano l'IA per ricreare le

loro foto, artisti dell'IA, a tutti gli effetti. Magari loro essendo anche programmatori inseriscono dati da programmare. Come ogni tecnologia, ha chiuso delle porte per alcuni mestieri ma ne apre molte altre, per nuovi. Io mi ritrovo in questa situazione in cui penso che bisogna sfruttarlo a proprio vantaggio e non averne paura. David LaChapelle, il fotografo delle star, è intimorito dall'IA ha paura, dice che dobbiamo sviluppare la nostra intelligenza, non quella dell'IA. Invece come direbbe McLuhan, siamo noi stessi ad averla creata, quindi è una nostra estensione. E' parte di noi. Ogni medium, anche gli occhiali, sono una tecnologia che ci permette di ampliare il nostro sguardo. Anche la parola, quindi anche l'IA serve ad espandere la visione delle cose. Non dovremmo averne paura.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: No, perché l'importante è che funzioni. Mi ha sorpresa perché vedevo degli effetti visivi diversi, solo per questo. Ma il concept di Nike non è cambiato, ha trasmesso quel pensiero comunque delle persone dietro che avranno elaborato ci sono state, quindi non vedo perché debba cambiare idea su quello che penso.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: Qui siamo in un territorio spinoso, perché quello che ci mostra l'IA sono dei dati ottenuti o dei contenuti creati da altre persone, quindi sono comunque autentici. Il problema non è quello che creiamo, sono le aziende che poi sfruttano a loro vantaggio dell'IA a discapito dello stipendio delle persone che creano questo tipo di contenuti. E' come quando hai un coltello, puoi sfamare persone o puoi accoltellare qualcuno. Non è né positivo né negativo, è semplicemente uno strumento.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Sì, mi preoccupa non tanto quello che può fare l'IA ma chi c'è dietro e chi può usufruire di questa tecnologia. Mi viene in mente lo sciopero degli sceneggiatori ad Hollywood, lo scorso anno, durato più di un centinaio di giorni, e mi trovo d'accordo con loro. Effettivamente erano minacciati dalle loro aziende e dovevano comunque realizzare delle sceneggiature a basso prezzo, perché altrimenti avrebbero perso il lavoro e sarebbero stati sostituiti dall'IA e comunque estrapolare altri dati da altri sceneggiatori che hanno scritto contenuti. Lo sciopero si è concluso dicendo che ci saranno nuove norme a tutela del copyright e dei diritti d'autore. Su Mid Journey non puoi scrivere "disegnami qualcosa stile Disney", per una questione di copyright. E questo lo trovo corretto.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Sì, ho notato che ci sono stati dei problemi di persone a cui hanno rubato i loro volti, creando dei contenuti non appropriati. Quindi poi vengono minacciati, sessualizzare i corpi delle persone usando per scopi abietti è una cosa molto disgustosa. C'era prima, con i fotomontaggi, ma erano fatti male, invece adesso si può fare molto meglio e più velocemente, tipo i deep fakes.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, assolutamente. Sarebbero stupidi se non lo facessero. Mi sento che bisogna cavalcare l'onda e questa opportunità. Ci dev'essere una figura creativa che sappia gestire l'IA, quindi

magari si creeranno nuovi profili lavorativi, il creativo dell'IA che riesce a progettare grazie a questa tecnologia. Alcuni la vedono come una bacchetta magica, ma per chi lo sa usare.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Ma assolutamente sì, poi con il tempo saranno educati, mi auguro. Ognuno poi lo utilizzerà anche per scopi non nobili, magari con il tempo si educeranno, come a suo tempo Internet, o le chat. Ci saranno anche altre zone oscure sicuramente.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: Sì, sì.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: Instagram e Tiktok da utente, non sono un content creator, mi vergognerei troppo. Lo stacco generazionale mi mette soggezione.

D: Pubblichì contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: Solo per condividere aspetti della mia vita con amici, Facebook lo uso solo per vedere il compleanno degli altri. Instagram mi manda contenuti e Telegram non ho capito la cosa dei canali, lo uso come chat normale.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: Allora io che rispondo ai contenuti degli altri no perché mi vergogno, solo con care amiche. Io sono la tipica persona che si comporta come un fantasma, osservo tutto ma non commento. Questo si riflette sull'utilizzo dei social.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

F, 32, graphic designer/illustratore.

Interview 7 - Alyssa

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Tutto bene, grazie.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Sicuramente sceglierei la pantera perché mi rispecchia nel carattere, forte, coraggiosa, e poi sceglierei il cane per il lato socievole, affettuoso, sempre solare.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: Riposarmi, poi molto spesso vedo documentari riguardanti omicidi, leggo libri in spagnolo, oppure esco a fare passeggiate al tramonto.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: La mia marca preferita perché adoro le borse è Christian Dior. Mi piace il logo, la fantasia che hanno nel creare nuove borse, i nomi che danno alle borse, tipo la Lady Di, in onore di Lady

Diana, e per la qualità delle borse e dell'abbigliamento in generale. Un altro brand che mi piace è Valentino, per il logo.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Esagerato, particolare, ed elegante.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: Il mio Instagram è invaso da pubblicità mentre scorro le storie o le pubblicità che vedo in tv tra un programma e un altro.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Mi è capitato in metro, per le università, la Luiss e altri corsi, oppure la campagna di Geolier, sempre fuori casa.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Su Instagram fin troppo spesso. Tv, e social principalmente.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, sì, Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Prima di tutto, sportivo, dinamico, perché viene usato per attività dinamiche e noioso perché mi ha scocciato, non mi piace come brand.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Voler fare la differenza, incoraggiare con la frase "Just Do It" le persone a fare qualcosa, una pubblicità per spronare.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Mi vengono in mente le scarpe, con il logo.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Bella domanda, non lo so se è fatta esclusivamente per vendere o per spronare le persone a fare qualcosa. Sicuramente ha un significato profondo che io non ho colto. Mi sembra un incoraggiamento, un autoincoraggiamento a dare il massimo.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Quando ho visto l'immagine del ragazzo che si guardava allo specchio, mi sono rivista, io prima di un esame che cerco di darmi carica, perché questo è il significato che ho dato io alla pubblicità. Mi ha fatto sentire capita e meno sola, sembra strano che uno si carichi davanti allo specchio, ma mi ha fatto sentire normale ed inclusa.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sempre Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Questo video mi ha toccato molto di più emotivamente, quindi direi emotivo, familiare perché ho visto la famiglia, il suo primo amore, quindi qualcosa di molto particolare che mi tocca, perché ha unito carriera e famiglia. E poi unito.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: Come ti ho detto prima, il valore della famiglia, perché mi è passato molto questo concetto. Sicuramente gli obiettivi che quella persona voleva raggiungere da bambino, poi carriera e condividere i tuoi successi con gli altri.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Due mani che si stringono, qualcosa che rappresenta l'unione e la condivisione, che per me è la parola chiave di questo video.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Assolutamente sì, penso con questa pubblicità si voglia condividere i propri successi con gli altri, che altrimenti non avrebbero lo stesso sapore. Tornare, avere delle persone che ti aspettano, emozionarsi insieme, che da soli non avrebbe lo stesso sapore.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Sì, è stato molto emozionante per me. Proprio perché mi ci sono rivista e mi ha fatto capire che nella vita puoi realizzarti sia nella carriera che nella famiglia, ed è qualcosa che a me spaventa e ho paura di non realizzare, quindi mi ha emozionato sotto questo aspetto.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: Secondo me la seconda, perché per me la famiglia rappresenta l'autenticità, la quotidianità. Poi mi ha colpito di più come pubblicità.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: Anche la seconda, perché quello che ho visto è esattamente quello su cui io sono indecisa nella vita. Io penso di più all'aspetto carriera piuttosto che aspetto famiglia, e secondo me è difficile avere entrambe le cose. Quindi mi ha colpito di più perché è un argomento che mi interessa tanto e su cui mi faccio domande tutti i giorni, però effettivamente lo sento distante perché non condivido appieno la visione che bisogna avere tutto e secondo me bisogna focalizzarsi su qualcosa. Non so se si può avere tutto, essere così felici a lavoro e in famiglia, se si sta lontano tantissimo tempo. Su questo è distante da me.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: La prima non mi sembrava creativa, la seconda di più perché lui andava sulla Luna, ci sono elementi nuovi, nella prima ho visto sabbia, terra, specchi, elementi quotidiani, che vedo sempre.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: Secondo me in parte aiuta, una pubblicità autentica colpisce di più la sfera emotiva quindi secondo me sì, ha un impatto.

D: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: Assolutamente la seconda, perché me ha aggiunto qualcosa, perché non ho visto molte pubblicità di Nike, ho visto più cartelloni, e quindi ho rivisto valori su cui non mi ero mai focalizzata prima d'ora.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?

R: Bella domanda, penso sia un software, qualcosa che ha un motore di ricerca infinito e può avere risposte su tutti gli ambiti, e materie diverse. Qualsiasi ambito ci interessi può essere toccato dall'IA, può realizzare immagini simili a quelle fatte dagli essere umani. E' sicuramente uno strumento molto forte.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: Frequenza molto elevata, soprattutto ChatGPT, sia per accedere ad informazioni politiche, o di attualità, se non ho avuto tempo di guardare la televisione. O per ricerche, riassunti, lo uso spessissimo per queste due cose.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: Assolutamente no, non è cambiata, rimane la stessa. Indipendentemente da Nike o dall'IA le assegno un significato importante. Mi è piaciuta tanto.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: Per me anche nella seconda pubblicità c'era autenticità, la famiglia, la vedo come qualcosa di autentico. Quindi secondo me anche l'IA riesce a toccare questo aspetto di autenticità, non penso che non sia riuscita ad essere autentica in questa pubblicità.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Forse con l'IA potrebbero farsi dare tante idee che ora non hanno e quindi perdere la propria creatività, potrebbero farsi dare idee dall'IA e perdere l'innovatività, utilizzare meno il loro cervello, andare più sul comodo.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Un po' la stessa cosa, perché mi ci rivedo, io molto spesso faccio la pigra e chiedo un sacco di cose che potrei fare io e invece mi piace ricevere le risposte velocemente, comodamente e quindi impigrire un po' il cervello delle persone.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Penso continueranno ad usarla, sì, sicuramente. Non mi dà alcun problema, per me è qualcosa che ormai c'è e deve essere utilizzata, non lo vedo come un problema grave. Forse riusciranno a fare pubblicità ancora più creative ed arrivare di più alla persone, quindi ci potrebbe essere un aspetto positivo.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, penso ci sarà un uso smisurato. Se usato per cose, ad esempio, come lo utilizzo io per ricerche o un aiuto, per alleggerire il lavoro, va benissimo. Potrebbe essere usato male e creare dei problemi. E' come viene utilizzato che fa la differenza.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: Sì, troppo.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: Instagram e Tiktok almeno sei ore al giorno.

D: Pubblichiamo contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: Su Instagram sì, su Tiktok no. Sono foto di me stessa o di paesaggi o luoghi in cui mi trovo, scattate da me.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: Sì, sempre. Likes, commenti alle foto, cuoricini, questo tipo di interazioni che ci sono su Instagram.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

F, 22, studentessa

Interview 8 - Giulia

D: Come stai? Come è andata la tua giornata?

R: Molto bene, sono stata al mare tutto il giorno, mi sono riposata.

D: Se dovessi scegliere un animale per rappresentarti, quale useresti?

R: Il gatto, perché sono l'incarnazione di un gatto in un'altra vita. Sono riservati, e indipendenti, e non sono in grado di manifestare il loro affetto se non con persone molto specifiche.

D: Quali sono alcuni dei tuoi interessi o hobby principali? Cosa ti piace fare nel tempo libero?

R: Mi piace la fotografia, farle e modificarle. E i telefilm, mi rilassano.

D: Posso chiederti qual è il tuo brand preferito? Perché hai scelto questo brand?

R: Sì, di lusso Prada, Miu Miu, Saint Laurent, mi piacciono le linee. Pulite, eleganti, minimal. Mi danno un senso di potere.

D: Se dovessi associare tre aggettivi per descrivere il tuo brand preferito, quali useresti?

R: Eleganti, minimal, potere e femminili, li vedo connessi alle donne. Anche la figura di Miuccia Prada. L'espressione della donna potente, facevano risaltare le donne, le rendevano indipendenti. Sono tutte cose che hanno spinto in qualche modo le donne.

D: Cosa ti viene in mente quando pensi alle pubblicità?

R: A livello sociologico sono interessanti, ormai non guardo più la tv, quindi non ho più quella pubblicità, come è nata. Vedo le pubblicità dei content creators attuali. Stai comunque pubblicizzando qualcosa, mi chiedo, tutti gli studi fatti dietro, ora li può sostituire questa persona? Da un lato le odi, da un altro, se le riguardi, soprattutto quelle vecchie, sono interessanti perché rappresentano quella che è la società attuale, devono comunque attingere e fare breccia su quello. Quindi in realtà vederle sporadicamente è pure interessante.

D: C'è una pubblicità in particolare che hai visto recentemente che ti ha colpito? Per quale motivo?

R: Torniamo al fatto che non guardando la tv no... Però di recente mi ha colpito quella dell'Ichnusa. Perché paradossalmente, nella pubblicità ci sono delle bottiglie per terra abbandonate, e c'era scritto, "se dovete lasciarle così, piuttosto non bevetele". Che è molto forte e provocatoria, uno dice, caspita, piuttosto non berla... E' di impatto, fa parlare. E' interessante. Quelle dell'Ichnusa tutte mi hanno lasciata colpita. La scelta che usano, in bianco e nero... Curioso.

D: Quanto spesso ti capita di incontrare pubblicità? Quali sono i canali dove ti capita di vedere pubblicità con più frequenza?

R: Sempre su Instagram, e su internet, su qualsiasi servizio gratuito.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, sì, Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: Lo sport, quindi sportivo, poi tipo il potere che ti dà lo sport, c'è un impegno dietro e dedizione.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: La costanza, se penso a "Just Do It" e "if you are born to do it", un po' che ci devi credere, e il riconoscimento delle proprie capacità, se riconosci che potresti farlo, impegnati per farlo e raggiungere quell'obiettivo. Ti carica... Riconoscere quello che sai fare e impegnarsi per raggiungerlo, insieme alla consapevolezza di sé.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Il sudore... per me il sudore.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Un po' la consapevolezza di sé, se riconosci di essere uno sportivo e di avere delle qualità in quel senso, seguile, però chiaramente impegnati per seguile. Fallo, riconosci quello che sai fare e fallo. Che può essere applicato a qualsiasi ambito della vita.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Abbastanza neutrale, l'ho visto con occhi abbastanza neutrali. Ce ne sono altri che mi hanno fatto più effetto.

D: Hai riconosciuto il brand che ha realizzato questa pubblicità? Qual è?

R: Sì, Nike.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali sono tre aggettivi che, di pancia, ti vengono in mente pensando a questo brand?

R: In base a questo video un aggettivo nuovo che mi è venuto in mente è inclusione, la Nike tende ad includere diversi body type che si vedono anche in questa pubblicità. Quindi nuovo, inclusivo e un'americanata, dream big, e altre cose così. Non so bene che aggettivo usare per descriverlo, tendono a venderti il sogno americano. La filosofia del dire, se ci credi abbastanza ci riesci, se ti impegni abbastanza ci riesci, "no pain, no gain", che al giorno d'oggi non penso sia troppo vero.

D: Dopo la visione di questo video, quali valori associ a questo brand?

R: La legacy, loro ci sono sempre come brand, la Nike sta lì a fianco a chi ci crede.

D: Dopo aver visto questo video, che immagine useresti per descrivere il brand?

R: Il film degli astronauti, con Sandra Bullock, "Gravity", perché c'è la donna nera e l'astronauta.

D: Quale pensi sia il messaggio che si vuole trasmettere con questa pubblicità?

R: Dire ci siamo sempre, e ci saremo sempre anche nel futuro.

D: Che emozione assoceresti a questo video? Come ti ha fatto sentire?

R: Americanata, quindi neutrale. E' un po' troppo, l'americano che lo guarda ci crede, e funziona. Un italiano che lo guarda... Forse io lo guardo con occhi diversi, è bella. E' fatta meglio di molto che abbiamo noi...

D: Quale di queste pubblicità trovi più autentica? Perché?

R: Sono molto diverse, non riesco a capire quale sia più autentica. Non ti posso passare la legacy di diventare astronauta. E' chiaro che il messaggio lì sia, ti passo la legacy della scarpa, e del crederci. Mi sembra più autentico il messaggio del "ti lascio in eredità delle scarpe" piuttosto che "corri nell'Africa, e ce la farai", sei uno su un milione. Nessuno dei due è troppo autentico.

D: Quale di queste pubblicità senti più distante? Perché?

R: La seconda mi confonde un po' di più. L'altra però è ambientata in Africa. Le trovo entrambe distanti.

D: Quali di queste pubblicità trovi più creativa? Perché?

R: Forse la prima, perché mi piaceva il fatto che andasse all'indietro.

D: Come influisce l'autenticità delle pubblicità sulla tua fiducia nei brand?

R: E' molto importante, ti porta a crederci di più. E' più vicina a te, per quello funzionano le pubblicità su Instagram, perché sono fatte male e ti sembrano più realistiche, sembra quasi te lo stiano consigliando perché lo hanno provato, non perché lo stanno sponsorizzando. In realtà sono pagate, ma tu lo associ all'autenticità.

D: Una delle due pubblicità cambia la tua percezione del brand più dell'altra? Se sì, in che modo?

R: La prima me lo avvicina all'idea che ho del brand, del sudore. La seconda, per la prima volta non vedo solo lo sport, quindi me lo cambia sotto questo punto di vista, perché non usiamo la

Nike solo per correre, ma per andare sulla Luna. Puoi farci anche altro, è una scarpa sportiva però ti guida anche sui passi sulla Luna, non solo sul deserto dell'Africa.

D: Sai cosa sia l'Intelligenza Artificiale? Se sì, come la descriveresti?

R: Non mi è ben chiara, onestamente non so bene... E' un computer, inserisci tanti dati ed educi questo computer sulla base di tantissimi modelli umani e sono algoritmi, migliori di quelli a cui siamo abituati.

D: Con quale frequenza ti capita di utilizzare l'IA?

R: L'ho utilizzata, ma non tantissimo, due/tre volte.

D: Ora che sei a conoscenza del fatto che l'Intelligenza Artificiale è stata utilizzata per realizzare questa pubblicità, hai cambiato opinione su questa pubblicità? Come è cambiata la tua opinione?

R: Mi sono chiesta, perché lo hanno utilizzato? Me lo allontana dalla realtà, è artificiale.

D: Come percepisci l'autenticità dei contenuti creati con l'Intelligenza Artificiale rispetto a quelli creati senza l'IA? Per quale motivo?

R: Mi pone un distacco. Me la allontana, mi distrae. Perché se devi essere autentico, perché la usi? Mi ha disturbato. Mi sembrano troppo lontani dalla realtà. Già uno sportivo che corre è molto lontano da me, altrimenti diventa un cartone che vuole imitare la realtà, ma in quel caso sappiamo che è finto. In questo caso è un cartone che vuole imitare la realtà.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che i brand possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Tende a migliorarti, sulla base degli input che metti dentro crea delle fisicità perfette. Erano tutti bellissimi, poi è vero che vengono scelte persone belle anche nelle pubblicità. Non so, per me non è la realtà. Mi preoccupa come mi preoccupa in generale l'intelligenza artificiale. E' uno strumento che devi sapere utilizzare.

D: C'è qualcosa che ti preoccupa sull'utilizzo che gli utenti possano fare dell'Intelligenza Artificiale?

R: Forse i brand sono più controllati, per gli utenti questa tecnologia è già là fuori. A disposizione di tutti. Non ho paura che i computer possano prendere il sopravvento sul mondo, è il modo in cui la usiamo noi che fa la differenza, quello che facciamo noi utenti. Un po' che ci abbassi l'intelligenza mi preoccupa. Non ci sono ancora regole, ma anche se ci fossero, è una tecnologia troppo grande, che non puoi controllare.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo i brand faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Sì, tutto è possibile. Sicuramente ci proveranno e vedranno come va. Penso che sia l'impatto minore che possa avere sulle persone e sugli utenti. Penso che le persone possano fare cose peggiori. Non lo vedo come un problema che il brand possa utilizzarlo, al massimo avrà delle conseguenze di mercato se gli utenti si fidano o non si fidano. Bisogna vedere come l'utilizza, a che livello siamo dell'IA e del suo utilizzo da parte nostra, perché se ci abituiamo così tanto a vedere questa realtà falsata, poi funzionerà una pubblicità falsata.

D: Pensi che in un futuro prossimo gli utenti faranno uso più smodato dell'IA? Questa cosa come ti fa sentire?

R: Se continuiamo a modificare così tanto, forse sì. Per ora mi disturba, ci proveranno senz'altro. Poi magari il tempo non è ancora maturo.

D: Infine, posso chiederti se ti capita di usare i social media?

R: Sì, certo.

D: Se li utilizzi, quali social media utilizzi più spesso? Con quale frequenza sei solito utilizzarli?

R: Instagram e Whatsapp, ogni ora.

D: Pubblichi contenuti sui social media? Questi contenuti come vengono realizzati?

R: Sì pubblico contenuti, sono principalmente foto e video scattati da me, nel 90% dei casi. Poi ogni tanto condivido post non miei.

D: Solitamente ti capita di interagire con i tuoi followers una volta che pubblichi dei contenuti? Interagisci con i contenuti pubblicati dagli altri?

R: Sì, mi capita. Rispondo alle storie, commenti, likes. Non dura tanto la conversazione, ma interagisco.

RACCOLTA DEMOGRAPHICS

F, 30, avvocato.

Bibliography

- Acar, S., Tadik, H., Myers, D., van der Sman, C., & Uysal, R. (2021). Creativity and Well-being: A Meta-analysis. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 55, 738–751.
- Agarwal, M. v. (2020). Importance of User Generated Content as a part of Social Media Marketing that drives Customer's Brand Awareness and Purchase Intentions. *The International journal of analytical and experimental modal analysis*.
- Allred, A. M. (2023). Art in the machine: Value misalignment and AI “Art. Y. Luo. (Ed.). *Cooperative design, visualization, and engineering*, 31–42.
- Amitani, S. &. (2002). Supporting musical composition by externalizing the composer’s mental space. In Proceedings of the 4th conference on creativity & cognition . *Association for Computing Machinery*.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.
- Ansari, S., & Munir, K. (2010). Letting users into our world: Some organizational implications of user-generated content. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 79-105.
- Anyoha, R. (2017). *The History of Artificial Intelligence*. From Harvard Education: <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2017/history-artificial-intelligence/>
- Arndt, J. (1967). (1967). Word of mouth advertising: a review of the literature. *Advertising Research Foundation, New York*.
- Baker, R. (2017). *Domino's to become an 'artificial intelligence first' business*. From AdNews: <https://www.adnews.com.au/news/domino-s-to-become-an-artificial-intelligence-first-business#0mPiDLEUG9Sg5FBA.99>
- Balbi, G., & Magaudda, P. (2018). *A History of Digital Media. An Intermedia and Global Perspective*. . New York: Routledge.
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. 17(1).
- Barthes, R. (1998). The semiotic challenge. *Berkeley : University of California Press*.
- Bastide, F. (1981). *The semiotic analysis of discourse*.
- Bateman, J. (2015). *Handbook of Brand Semiotics*. G Rossolatos.
- Batista, H. .. (2022). Humans and machines: A study of the impacts of the technological advances in the light of generative art theory.
- Batra, R., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Integrating Marketing Communications: New Findings, New Lessons and New Ideas. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6).
- Benedek, M. B. (2020). Motives for creativity: Exploring the what and why of everyday creativity. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 54, 610–625.
- Benkler, Y. (2006). The Wealth of Networks: how social production transforms markets and freedom. *Yale University Press*.
- Berger, J. (2014). Word of mouth and interpersonal communication: A review and directions for future research. . *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24(4), 586-607.
- Bianchi, C. (2005). *Spot. Analisi semiotica dell'audiovisivo pubblicitario*. (Carocci, Ed.) Roma.
- Boden, M. A. (2004). *The creative mind: Myths and mechanisms*. Routledge.
- Boerman, S. v. (2012). Sponsorship disclosure: Effects of duration on persuasion knowledge and brand responses. *Journal of Communication*, 62, 1047–1064.
- Bolin, G. (2012). The Labour of Media Use: The Two Active Audiences. *Information, Communication & Society*, 796-814.
- Bolin, G. (2021). *User-Generated Content (UGC): Understanding the Activity of Media Use in the Age of Digital Reproduction* (Vol. 4). (G. Balbi, Ed.) De Gruyter Oldenbourg.
- Bolin, G., & Velkova, J. (n.d.). Audience-metric continuity? Approaching the meaning of measurement in the digital everyday. 2020, 42(7-8), 1193-1209.
- Boush, D. M., & Kahle, L. (2002). Evaluating Negative Information in Online Consumer Discussions: From Qualitative Analysis to Signal Detection. *Journal of Euromarketing*, 11(2), 89-105.

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 77-101.
- Brown, H. (1972). History and the Learned Journal. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 33(3), 365-378.
- Brown, S., Kozinets, R. V., & Sherry, J. F. (2003). Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(3), 19-33.
- Bruyn, A. D. (2020). *Marketing and Artificial Intelligence: Pitfalls and possibilities*. From Essec Metalab.
- Bruyn, A. D., & Lilien, G. (2008). A multi-stage model of word-of-mouth influence through viral marketing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 25(3), 151-163.
- Campbell, C., Sands, S., Ferraro, C., & Tsao, H.-Y. (2019). From data to action: How marketers can leverage AI. *Business Horizons*, 63(2).
- Chen, C. (2011). Tweet this: a uses and gratifications perspective on how active Twitter use gratifies a need to connect with others. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(2), 755-762.
- Choi, Y. (2022). The Curious Case of Commonsense Intelligence. *Daedalus*, 151(2), 139-155.
- Chui, M., Manyika, J., Miremadi, M., & Henke, N. (2018). *Notes from the AI frontier: Applications and value of deep learning*. From McKinsey & Company: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/artificial-intelligence/notes-from-the-ai-frontier-applications-and-value-of-deep-learning>
- Cleland, J. (2017). The qualitative orientation in medical education research. *Korean Journal of Medical Education*, 29(2), 61-71.
- Codeluppi, V. (2020). Semiotica e pubblicità: il problema della marca. *Filosofi e Semiotiche*, 7(1).
- Colicev, A., Kumar, A., & O'Connor, P. (2019). Modeling the relationship between firm and user generated content and the stages of the marketing funnel. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 36(1), 100-116.
- Columbus, L. (2019). *10 Charts That Will Change Your Perspective Of AI In Marketing*. From <https://www.forbes.com/sites/louiscolumbus/2019/07/07/10-charts-that-will-change-your-perspective-of-ai-in-marketing/amp/>
- Consulting, N. M. (n.d.). *Artificial Intelligence Market Size and Share | Analysis - 2030*. From Next Move Strategy Consulting: <https://www.nextmsc.com/report/artificial-intelligence-market>
- Couraris, C. Y. (2010). Twitter users vs. quitters: a uses and gratifications and diffusion of innovations approach in understanding the role of mobility in microblogging. *Ninth International Conference on Mobile Business*, 481-486.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. SAGE.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). Implications of a systems perspective for the study of creativity. . *Handbook of creativity*. New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press., 313-335.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2013). *Creativity: The psychology of discovery and invention*. . New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics. First harper perennial modern classics edition ed.
- Dahlstedt, P. (2021). Musicking with algorithms: Thoughts on artificial intelligence, creativity, and agency. E. R. Miranda. (Ed.). *Handbook of artificial intelligence for music: Foundations, advanced approaches, and developments for creativity*, 873-914.
- Daubs, M. (2019). User-Generated Content. In *International Encyclopedia of Mass Media and Society* (pp. 1825-1827). SAGE.
- Davenport, T. H., D'Almeida, L., & Lucker, J. (2011). Know What Your Customers Want Before They Do. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(12), pp. 84-92.
- Davenport, T., & Mittal, N. (2022). *How Generative AI Is Changing Creative Work*. From Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2022/11/how-generative-ai-is-changing-creative-work>
- Davenport, T., Guha, A., Grewal, D., & Bressgott, T. (2020). How artificial intelligence will change the future of marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48, 24-42.
- De Pisapia, N. &. (2022). Creativity as an information-based process. *Rivista internazionale di Filosofia e Psicologia*, 13, 1-18.

- Dennhardt, S. (2012). *User-Generated Content and its Impact on Branding: How Users and Communities Create and Manage Brands in Social Media*. Springer.
- Dickinger, A. (2011). The trustworthiness of online channels for experience- and goal- directed search tasks. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50, 378–39.
- Dijck, J. V. (2009). Users Like You? Theorizing Agency in User-Generated Content. *Media Culture & Society*, 31(1), 41-58.
- Dye, J. (2011). Mapping Out a Mobile Strategy: Creating Content That Delivers Value On-the-Go. *EContent*, 16-20.
- Eco, U., Lambertini, R., Marmo, C., & Tabarroni, A. (1986). *Latratus canis*. In *L'uomo di fronte al mondo animale nell'Alto Medioevo*. Spoleto, XXXI Settimana di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo.
- Ertimur, B., & Gilly, M. (2012). So What Do You Think? Consumers Create Ads and Other Consumers Critique Them. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(3), 115-130.
- Evans, G. L. (2017). Disruptive technology and the board: The tip of the iceberg. . *Economic and Business Review*, 3(1), 205-223.
- Exoo, C. (2010). *The Pen and the Sword: Press, War, and Terror in the 21st Century*.
- Faulkner, P., & Runde, J. (2009). Technological Objects, Social Positions, and the Transformational Model of Social Activity. *Management Information Systems Research Center*, 37(3), 803-818.
- Faulkner, S., & Trotter, S. P. (2017). Theoretical Saturation. In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*.
- Festinger, L. C. (1957). A theory of cognitive dissonance. . *Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press*.
- Flanagin, A. J. (2001). Internet Use in the Contemporary Media Environment. *Human Communication Research*, 27, 153-181.
- Floch, J.-M. (1990). *Sémiotique, marketing et communication: Sous les signes, les stratégies*. Paris: PUF.
- Floridi, L. (2023). AI as Agency Without Intelligence: on ChatGPT, Large Language Models, and Other Generative Models. *Philosophy & Technology*, 36(1).
- Franke, N., & Shah, S. (2003). How communities support innovative activities: an exploration of assistance and sharing among end-users. 32(1), 157-178.
- Fritz, K., Schoenmueller, V., & Bruhn, M. (2017). Authenticity in branding – exploring antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 324–348.
- Gates, B. (1996). “Content Is King.”.
- George, C., & Scerri, J. (2007). Web 2.0 and User-Generated Content: legal challenges in the new frontier. *Journal of Information, Law and Technology*, 2.
- Geru, M., Micu, A.-E., & Căpatina, A. (2018). Using Artificial Intelligence on Social Media's User Generated Content for Disruptive Marketing Strategies in eCommerce. *Annals of the University Dunarea de Jos of Galati*, 23(3), 5-11.
- Gilmore, J. H., & Pine, J. (2007). What Consumers Really Want: Authenticity. *Harvard Business School Press*.
- Goddard, A. (2002). *The Language of Advertising: Written Texts* (Vol. 2). (Routledge, Ed.)
- Goldsmith, R. E. (2000). The impact of corporate credibility and celebrity credibility on consumer reaction to advertisements and brands. . *Journal of Advertising*, 29(3), 43–54.
- Gordon, P. C., & Holyoak, K. J. (1983). Implicit learning and generalization of the "mere exposure" effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45(3), 492–500.
- Grayson, K., & Martinec, R. (2004). Consumer perceptions of iconicity and indexicality and their influence on assessments of authentic market offerings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(2), 296–312.
- Greimas, A. J. (1974). *Del senso* (Vol. 1). Bompiani.
- Greimas, A. J., & Courtés, J. (2007). *Semiotica. Dizionario ragionato della teoria del linguaggio*. Milano: Bruno Mondadori.

- Greimas, A. J., & Rastier, F. (1968). *The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints*. Yale University Press.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough? *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Gulati, R., & Kletter, D. (2005). *Shrinking Core, Expanding Periphery: The Relational Architecture of High-Performing Organizations* (Vol. 3). Berkeley.
- Ha, S. H. (2015). (2015). Impact of online consumer reviews on product scales: Quantitative analysis of the source effect. *Applied Mathematics & Information Sciences*, 9, 373–387.
- Hackley, C. (2003). *Doing Research Projects in Marketing Management and Consumer Research*. Routledge.
- Harding, K. (2017). *AI and machine learning for predictive data scoring*. From Objective: <https://objectiveit.com/blog/use-ai-and-machine-learning-for-predictive-lead-scoring/>
- Hardt, M. (2005). Immaterial Labor and Artistic Production. *Rethinking Marxism*, 17(2), 175-177.
- Hargadon, A. B., & Bechky, B. A. (2006). When Collections of Creatives Become Creative Collectives: A Field Study of Problem Solving at Work. *Organization Science*, 17(4).
- Hennig-Thurau, T. G. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? . *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 38–52.
- Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2019). *Saturation in Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications Limited.
- Herr, P. M. (1991). Effects of word-of-mouth and product-attribute information on persuasion: An accessibility-diagnostics perspective. . *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(4), 454-462.
- Hertzmann, A. (2022). Toward modeling creative processes for algorithmic painting. 10.
- Hippel, E. V. (1978). A customer-active paradigm for industrial product idea generation. *Research Policy*, 7(3), 240-266.
- Ho-Dac, N. N., Carson, S., & Moore, W. (2013). The Effects of Positive and Negative Online Customer Reviews: Do Brand Strength and Category Maturity Matter? *Journal Of Marketing*, 77(6), 37-53.
- Hoffman, D. M. (2010). Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing? . *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 52(1).
- Holliman, G., & Rowley, J. (2014). Business to business digital content marketing: Marketers' perceptions of best practice. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 8(4), 269-293.
- Holt, D. B. (2004). *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles Of Cultural Branding*. Harvard Business Press.
- Hua, Y., & Niu, S. (2024). Generative AI in User-Generated Content on Social Media. *Extended Abstracts of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*.
- Huang, R. &. (2021). Reframing “aura”: Authenticity in the application of AI to Irish traditional music. . *In Proceedings of the AI music creativity conference*.
- Huizingh, E. K. (2000). The Content and Design of Web Sites: An Empirical Study. *Information & Management*, 37, 123-134.
- IBM. (2024). *What is deep learning?* From IBM: <https://www.ibm.com/topics/deep-learning>
- Idris, A. M. (2020). History of Semiotics. Universitas Hasanuddin.
- Islam, M. A., & Aldaihani, F. M. (2022). Justification for Adopting Qualitative Research Method, Research Approaches, Sampling Strategy, Sample Size, Interview Method, Saturation, and Data Analysis. *ournal of International Business and Management*, 5(1), 1-11.
- Israel, M. J., & Amer, A. (2023). Rethinking data infrastructure and its ethical implications in the face of automated digital content generation. *AI and Ethics*, 3, 427–439.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York University Press.
- Jensen, C. S. (2009). User-Generated Content: The Case for Mobile Services. *IEEE Computer*, 116-118.

- Jensen, J. F. (2007). User-generated Content - a Mega-trend in the New Media Landscape. *Computer Science*.
- Kaila, A. H. (2023). Are we solving the wrong problems – and doing harm in the process? AIMC 2023.
- Kang, Y., Cai, Z., Tan, C.-W., Huang, Q., & Liu, H. (2020). Natural Language Processing (NLP) in Management Research A Literature Review. *Journal of Management Analytics*, 7(2), 139-172.
- Kaplan, A., & Haenlein, M. (2010, February). Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Karahasanovic, A. B. (2009). Co-creation and User-Generated Content-Elderly People's User Requirements. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25, 6.
- Karpińska-Nowak, K. (2017). *From Mobile first to AI first — Google I/O 2017 conference*. From Medium: <https://medium.com/appchance/from-mobile-first-to-ai-first-google-i-o-2017-conference-c93247d8c234>
- Keenan-Lechel, S. F. (2023). A decade of rethinking creativity, technology and learning: reflections with the deep-play research group. *TechTrends*, 67, 7–13. .
- Kemp, A. (2023). *Nearly 90% of consumers no longer trust influencers, new study finds*. From The Drum: <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2023/06/06/nearly-90-consumers-no-longer-trust-influencers-new-study-finds>
- Kim, C., & Shin, N. (2012). User perception of the quality, value, and utility of user-generated content. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 13(4), 305-319.
- Kim, S. L. (2010). Mobile Web 2.0 with Multi-Display Buttons. *Communications of the ACM*, 53(1), 136-141.
- Köbis, N., & Mossink, L. (2021). Artificial intelligence versus Maya Angelou: Experimental evidence that people cannot differentiate AI-generated from human-written poetry. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 114.
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (1995). *Principles of marketing* (Vol. 7). Pearson.
- Kübler, R. V., & Albers, S. (1985). The Impact of Product Recall Communication on Brand Image, Brand Attitude and Perceived Product Quality. *The Journal of the Society of Consumers Affairs Professionals in Business*, 14(1), 18-21.
- Kumar, A., & Bezawada, R. (2016). From Social to Sale: The Effects of Firm-Generated Content in Social Media on Customer Behavior. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(1), 7-25.
- Kumar, C. (2018, August 31). *Artificial Intelligence: Definition, Types, Examples, Technologies*. Retrieved April, 2024 from Medium: <https://chethankumargn.medium.com/artificial-intelligence-definition-types-examples-technologies-962ea75c7b9b>
- Lai, L. S. (2008). Groups Formation and Operations in the Web 2.0 Environment and Social Networks. *Group Decision and Negotiation*, 17(5), 387-402.
- Lazzarato, M. (1996). Immaterial Labor: In Radical Thought in Italy. A Potential Politics,. *University of Minnesota Press* (pp. 133–150). Minneapolis: edited by Paolo Virno and Hanno Hardt.
- Leonard-Barton, D. (1995). *Wellsprings of Knowledge: Building and Sustaining the Sources of Innovation*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Leung, L. (2009). User-Generated Content on the Internet: an Examination of Gratifications, Civic Engagement and Psychological Empowerment. *New Media and Society*, 11(8), 1327-1347.
- Levy, S. (1959). Symbols for sale. *Harvard business review*, 37(4), 117-124.
- Liang, T. I. (2007). Personalized Content Recommendation and User Satisfaction: Theoretical Synthesis and Empirical Findings. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 23(3), 45-70.
- Lie, M., & Sørensen, K. H. (1996). Making Technology Our Own? Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life.

- Liu, H. (2014). Categorization and Construction of Rule Based Systems. *Communications in Computer and Information Science*. Sofia.
- LLC, A. I. (2024). Big Ideas 2024.
- Lobato, R., Julian, T., & Hunter, D. (2012). *Histories of user-generated content. Between formal and informal media economies*. (Routledge, Ed.) Amateur Media.
- Ma, L. K. (2009). Attracting Whom? – Managing User-Generated Content Communities For Monetization. *Thirtieth International Conference on Information Systems, Phoenix, Arizona*, 1-17.
- Makadok, R. (2001). Toward a synthesis of the resource-based and dynamic-capability views of rent creation. *Strategic Management Journal*.
- Mangano, D., & Marrone, G. (2015). Chapter 2: Brand Language - Methods and models of semiotic analysis. In J. A. Bateman, *Handbook of Brand Semiotics*. Kassel University Press.
- Manning, C. (2020). Artificial Intelligence Definitions. *Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence*. Stanford University.
- Marrone, G. (2007). *Il discorso di marca. Modelli semiotici per il branding*. Laterza.
- Marrone, G. (2014). *The Invention of the Text*. Mimesis International.
- Marschiani, F., & Zinna, A. (1991). *Elementi di semiotica generativa. Processi e sistemi della significazione*. Esculapio.
- Mathur, S., Tewari, A., & Singh, A. (2022). Modeling the Factors affecting Online Purchase Intention: The Mediating Effect of Consumer's Attitude towards User- Generated Content. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(7), 725–744.
- Mayrhofer, M., Matthes, J., & Einwiller, S. (2020). User generated content presenting brands on social media increases young adults' purchase intention. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(1), 166-186.
- McMillan, D. a. (1986). Sense of community: a definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, 6-23.
- McNally, M. B. (2012). User-generated online content 2: Policy implications. *First Monday*, 25(5), 402–408
- McQuail, D. (2000). McQuail's Mass Communication Theory. *Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications*(4).
- Mehta, N., Detroja, P., & Agashe, A. (2018). *Amazon changes prices on its products about every 10 minutes — here's how and why they do it*. From Business Insider: <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-price-changes-2018-8?international=true&r=US&IR=T>
- Merckel, H. (2017). *3 Tips for Creating a Social Strategy Fueled by User-Generated Content*. From Adweek: <https://www.adweek.com/performance-marketing/harald-merckel-guest-post-user-generated-content/>
- Merriam-Webster. (2024, April 3). *Artificial*. From Merriam-Webster Dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/artificial>
- Mick, D., & Oswald, L. (2006). *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing. Chapter 3: The Semiotic Paradigm on Meaning in the Marketplace*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Mikhaeil, C. A., & Baskerville, R. (2019). Using semiotics to analyze representational complexity in social media. *Information and Organization*.
- Min, A. (2023). Artificial Intelligence and Bias: Challenges, Implications and Remedies. *Journal of Social Research*.
- Moulard, J. G., Garrity, C., & Rice, D. H. (2015). What Makes a Human Brand Authentic? Identifying the Antecedents of Celebrity Authenticity. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(2), 173-186.
- Muda, M., Musa, R., & Mohamed, R. (2014). Celebrity Entrepreneur Endorsement and Advertising Effectiveness. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 11-20.

- Müller, J., & Christandl, F. (2019). Content is king – But who is the king of kings? The effect of content T marketing, sponsored content & user-generated content on brand responses. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 96, 46-55.
- Naeem, M., & Okafor, S. (January 2019). User Generated Content and Brand Engagement. In *Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments* (pp. 193-220).
- Nam, H., & Kannan, P. (2014). The informational value of social tagging networks. *Journal of Marketing*, 78(4), 21-40.
- Nguyen Thảo, S. T. (2020). Is It Possible for “Electronic Word-of-Mouth” and “User-Generated Content” to be Used Interchangeably? *Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research*, 41-48.
- Nielsen. (2013). *Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages*.
- Nikki, G. (2019). *New and creative examples of user-generated content*. From <https://econsultancy.com/creative-examples-user-generated-content-marketing/>
- Nov, O. (2007). What Motives Wikipedians? *Communications of the ACM*, 50, 60-64.
- Nov, O. a. (2009). Why Do People Share Photos Online? Antecedents of Photos' Quality and Quantity. *AMCIS 2009 Proceedings*.
- O'Hern, M., & Kahle, L. R. (2013). The Empowered Customer: User-Generated Content and the Future of Marketing. *Global Economics and Management Review*, 18(1), 22–30.
- O'Reilly, T. (2007). What is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software. *Communications & Strategies*.
- O'Toole, K., & Horvát, E.-Á. (2024). Extending Human Creativity with AI. *Journal of Creativity*, 34(2).
- OECD. (2007). *Participative Web and User-Created Content: Web 2.0, Wikis and Social Networking*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Olaniran, B., & Williams, I. (2020). Social Media Effects: Hijacking Democracy and Civility in Civic Engagement. In *Platforms, Protests, and the Challenge of Networked Democracy* (pp. 77-94).
- Olaniran, B., & Williams, I. (2020). *Platforms, Protests, and the Challenge of Networked Democracy. Social Media Effects: Hijacking Democracy and Civility in Civic Engagement*.
- Olenski, S. (2017). *4 Ways Brands Should Use Native Advertising In 2017*. From Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2017/02/16/4-ways-brands-should-use-native-advertising-in-2017/?sh=a32331c4c165>
- Opperhuizen, A. E., Pagiotti, S., & Eshuis, J. (2021). The roles of news media as democratic fora, agenda setters, and strategic instruments in risk governance. *Journal of Risk Research*, 24(12), 1517-1531.
- Oswald, L. (2015). *Creating Value: The Theory and Practice of Marketing Semiotics Research*. Oxford.
- Oyedele, O. J. (2015). User-Generated Contents on Online News Media: An Internet-Driven Freedom That Undermines National Development. *Journal of Communication and Language Arts*, 83-111.
- Panda, T., & Mishra, K. (2013). Does Emotional Appeal Work in Advertising? The Rationality Behind Using Emotional Appeal to Create Favorable Brand Attitude. *The IUP Journal of Brand Management*, 7-23.
- Parekh, J. (2018). *Why Programmatic provides a better digital marketing landscape*. From AdWeek: <https://www.adweek.com/programmatic/why-programmatic-provides-a-better-digital-marketing-landscape/>
- Parsons, J. (2010). Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 7(1).
- Pettitt, T. (2007). Before the Gutenberg Paranthesis: Elizabethan-American Compatibilities. Keynote Address at the Media in Transition 5 Conference: Creativity, Ownership and Collaboration in the Digital Age. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19(123-205).
- Peverini, P. (2012). *I media: strumenti di analisi semiotica*. Roma: Carocci.
- Peverini, P. (2024). *Bruno Latour in the Semiotic Turn: An Inquiry into the Networks of Meaning*. SpringerBriefs In Sociology.
- Porter, M. E. (1980). *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. New York: Free Press.
- Riley, M. W. (1954). Communication and persuasion: Psychological studies of opinion change. *American Sociological Review*, 19(3), 355.
- Romey, W. D. (2010). What Is Your Creativity Quotient? *School Science and Mathematics*, 70(1), 3-8.
- Rossolatos, G. (2015). *Handbook of Brand Semiotics*. Kassel University Press.
- Runco, M. A., & Jaeger, G. (2012). The Standard Definition of Creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, 24(1), 92-96.
- Ruths, D., & Pfeffer, J. (2014). Social media for large studies of behavior. *Science*, 346(6213), 1063-1064.
- Ryu, M. K. (2009). Understanding the Factors Affecting Online Elderly User's Participation in Video UGC Service. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 25, 619-632.
- Saleh, Z. (2019). Artificial Intelligence Definition, Ethics and Standards. *Electronics and Communications: Laws, Standards and Practice*.
- Saracco, R. (2018, January 21). *Computers keep getting better ... than us*. From IEEE Future Directions: <https://cmte.ieee.org/futuredirections/2018/01/21/computers-keep-getting-better-than-us/>
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., & Baker, S. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893-1907.
- Schlegel, R. J., & Hicks, J. (2011). The true self and psychological health: Emerging evidence and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 989-1003.
- Schreier, M. (2006). The Value Increment of Mass-customized Products: An Empirical Assessment. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 5(4), 317-327.
- Sebeok, T. A. (1976). Doctrine of Signs. In *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs* (pp. 181-210).
- Senyapar, H. N. (2024). Artificial Intelligence in Marketing Communication: A Comprehensive Exploration of the Integration and Impact of AI. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 55(1), 64-81.
- Shah, S., & Tripsas, M. (2007). The Accidental Entrepreneur: The Emergent and Collective Process of User Entrepreneurship. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 1, 123-140.
- Sheth, J. N. (1991). Why We Buy What We Buy: A Theory of Consumption Values. *Journal of Business Research*, 22, 159-170.
- Shoham, M. M. (2017). Positively useless: Irrelevant negative information enhances positive impressions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27(2), 147-159.
- Smith, R. K., Vandellen, M., & Ton, L. A. (2021). Makeup Who You Are: Self-Expression Enhances the Perceived Authenticity and Public Promotion of Beauty Work. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 48(1), 102-122.
- Statista. (2023). *Artificial Intelligence - Worldwide*. From Statista: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/tmo/artificial-intelligence/worldwide>
- Stern, B. (1994). Authenticity and the textual persona: Postmodern paradoxes in advertising narrative. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 11(4), 387.
- Tang, T. (., & Wang, F. (2014). Is Neutral Really Neutral? The Effects of Neutral User-Generated Content on Product Sales. *Journal of Marketing*, 78(4), 41-58.
- Toffler, A. a. (2006). Revolutionary Wealth.
- Tossberg, A. (2000). Swingers, singers and born-again Christians: an investigation of the uses and gratifications of Internet-relay chat. *master's thesis, Iowa State University, Ames, IA.*

- Trammell, K. (2006). The blogging of the president. *The Internet Election: Prospectives on the Web in Campaign*, 133-146.
- Tunçel, N., & Yılmaz, N. (2020). How Does Firm- and User-Generated Content Benefit Firms and Affect Consumers?: A Literature Review. In *Managing Social Media Practices in the Digital Economy* (p. 24).
- Turing, A. M. (1950). Computing Machinery and Intelligence. *Mind*, 59, 433-460.
- van Reijmersdal, E. F. (2016). Effects of disclosing sponsored content in blogs: How the use of resistance strategies mediates effects on persuasion. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60, 1458–1474.
- Verna, P. (2007). User-Generated Content: Will Web 2.0 Pay Its Way? *eMarketer*, 1-31.
- Vinchon, F. L. (2023). Artificial intelligence & creativity: A manifesto for collaboration. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*.
- Warr, M. H. (2018). Creativity and flow in surgery, music, and cooking: An interview with neuroscientist charles limb. *TechTrends*, 62, 137–142.
- Widiarta, W. R., & Santika, D. (2021). Analysis of Semiotic Found in Football Shoes Advertisements. *Jurnal Harian Regional*.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1996). Semantic Primes and Universals. *United Kingdom: Oxford University*.
- Winton, B. (2024). How Converging Technologies Should Propel A Step Change In Economic Growth. *Platform of Innovation*.
- Woodward, J. (1965). *Industrial organization : theory and practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Woodward, J. (1965). *Industrial Organization: Theory and Practice* (Vol. 1).
- Ye, Q. L. (2011). The influence of user-generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e-word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27, 634–639.
- Youvan, D. C. (2024). From Text to Texture: Exploring the Semiotic Equivalence of Language, Art, and Film in AI-generated Media Background and Context.
- Zhu, F. &. (2010). Impact of online consumer reviews on sales: The moderating role of product and consumer characteristics. *Journal of Marketing*, 74, 133–148.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*.

Sitography

1. <https://www.niemanlab.org/2010/04/the-gutenberg-parenthesis-thomas-pettitt-on-parallels-between-the-pre-print-era-and-our-own-internet-age/>
2. <https://wordpress.lehigh.edu/comm298-398/2021/09/23/users-like-you-theorizing-agency-in-user-generated-content-alana-bonfiglio-9-23/>
3. <https://hbr.org/1995/01/disruptive-technologies-catching-the-wave>
4. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/content-king-ugc-democracy-long-life-both-victor-nine>
5. <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/the-creator-economy-could-approach-half-a-trillion-dollars-by-2027.html>
6. <https://socialmediaagency.one/user-generated-content-web-2-0-advantages-and-disadvantages/>
7. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/user-generated-content-ugc-platforms-market-size-1f#:~:text=The%20global%20User%2Dgenerated%20content,USD%2018644.21%20million%20by%202028>
8. <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/the-creator-economy-could-approach-half-a-trillion-dollars-by-2027.html>
9. <https://cloudinary.com/guides/user-generated-content/ugc-in-marketing-an-authentic-marketing-component-in-the-digital-age>
10. <https://www.giacomobelloni.com/styled-57/page32/>
11. <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/aboutus/resources/stella/projects/glasgowreview/issue3-rulewicz/>
12. https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Actantial-Model-of-A-J-Greimas-Source-Eldridge-2016-p-147-Gertsen-Soderberg_fig1_357268803
13. <http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/canonical-narrative-schema.asp>
14. <https://quantumcs.com/why-marketeers-need-to-investigate-culture-semiotics/>
15. <https://holon.investments/how-did-we-get-here-the-shift-from-web-2-0-to-web-3-0-is-happening-now/>
16. <https://www.creative-tim.com/blog/web-3-0/what-is-web-3-0-everything-explained/>
17. <https://www.creative-tim.com/blog/web-3-0/what-is-web-3-0-everything-explained/>
18. <https://medium.com/@balarampanda.ai/llm-large-language-model-what-is-that-fa51f472d886>
19. <https://www.punto-informatico.it/cose-in-ai-il-llm-introduzione-al-large-language-model/>
20. <https://www.pecan.ai/blog/rule-based-vs-machine-learning-ai-which-produces-better-results/#:~:text=Machine%20learning%20systems%20are%20dynamic,and%20retargeting%20mobile%20game%20players>
21. <https://medium.com/@balarampanda.ai/llm-large-language-model-what-is-that-fa51f472d886>
22. <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2017/history-artificial-intelligence/>
23. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/941835/artificial-intelligence-market-size-revenue-comparisons/#statisticContainer>
24. <https://www.doppiozero.com/ia-e-limmaginazione-creativa>
25. <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2022/reimagining-the-third-place-how-starbucks-is-evolving-its-store-experience/>
26. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/lessons-from-starbucks-white-cup-contest-abbas-kapasi>
27. <https://it.linkedin.com/pulse/la-potenza-del-marketing-emotivo-il-caso-share-coke-lagravinese>

28. <https://thebrandhopper.com/2024/01/07/a-case-study-on-apples-shot-on-iphone-brand-campaign/>
29. <https://createrealmagic.com/>
30. <https://marketingcasehub.com/case-study/creating-the-real-magic-with-human-and-ai-powered-marketing-the-coca-cola-case-study/>
31. <https://embedsocial.com/blog/ugc-ai-generated-content/>
32. <http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem12.html>
33. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIVzq7ItBew>
34. <https://www.meritshot.com/nike-case-study/>
35. <https://www.unionroom.com/the-evolution-of-nike-advertising/>
36. <https://es.pinterest.com/pin/613615517969844021/>
37. <https://www.basketballnetwork.net/off-the-court/michael-jordans-rookie-season-air-1-sold-for-six-figures>
38. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9W-SOtxkIfM>
39. <https://tonireavis.com/2018/07/20/its-gotta-be-da-shoes/>
40. <https://medium.com/@bradcallas/its-gotta-be-the-shoes-99e9f89e67fb>
41. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_Do_It#:~:text=The%20%22Just%20Do%20It%22%20campaign,tough%2C%20take%20no%20prisoners%20ad
42. <https://brandingstrategyinsider.com/behind-nikes-campaign/>
43. <https://medium.com/@ychoi4857/the-beauty-of-nikes-find-your-greatness-campaign-79c99204e200>
44. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/success-behind-nikes-findyourgreatness-campaign-rushabh-shah/>
45. <https://www.timefordesigns.com/blog/2023/11/08/unravelling-the-brilliance-how-nikes-just-do-it-became-more-than-a-slogan/>
46. <https://www.businessinsider.com/25-nike-ads-that-shaped-the-brands-history-2013-8#nikes-just-do-it-25th-anniversary-2013-25>
47. <https://www.mugagency.com/blog/brand-activism-il-caso-nike-e-kaepernick/>
48. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbnGIh1aad0>
49. <https://rga.com/futurevision/articles/Nike-Exemplifies-Just-do-It-Ethos-With-Colin-Kaepernick-Campaign>
50. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2024/08/16/nike-fails-in-the-winning-isnt-for-everyone-ad-campaign/>
51. <https://www.dandad.org/awards/professional/2009/mobile-marketing/17698/nike-photoid/>
52. <https://ris8lifestyle.com/2023/01/23/no-finish-line-il-futuro-senza-limiti-di-nike/>
53. <https://www.typeroom.eu/zak-group-nike-no-finish-line>
54. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/soniathompson/2021/04/21/why-adidas-new-impossible-is-nothing-campaign-is-a-blueprint-for-authentic-representation/>
55. <https://www.iris-worldwide.com/work/here-to-create/>
56. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/darrenheitner/2015/01/28/reebok-reveals-massive-be-more-human-brand-campaign/>
57. <https://newbalance.newsmarket.com/latest-news/new-balance-debuts--fearlessly-independent-since-1906--global-brand-platform-that-reflects-its-herit/s/5f8dc750-3595-4f60-a57e-0617adb6c624>
58. <https://www.screenvoice.cz/en/news/dan-wieden-the-creative-mind-behind-the-biggest-brands/>
59. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/5/3/18526723/caster-semenya-800-gender-race-intersex-athletes>
60. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKcBiURD5jo>

61. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kianbakhtiari/2023/07/28/gen-z-the-loneliness-epidemic-and-the-unifying-power-of-brands/> &
62. <https://www.wearepion.com/blog-posts/engage-gen-z-community>
63. <https://www.forbes.com/councils/theyec/2023/04/17/the-art-of-asking-customers-for-reviews-how-to-do-it-right/#:~:text=Social%20proof%20allows%20businesses%20to,a%20customer%20review%20when%20asked>
64. <https://www.financiallounge.com/news/2024/09/10/apple-event-2024-dalliphone-16-ad-apple-intelligence-ecco-le-novita-piu-attese/>