



Original-Forschungsarbeit

Wie Künstliche Intelligenz digitales Branding und Kundenbindung neu definiert?

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Zusammenfassung:

Künstliche Intelligenz (KI) wird zunehmend als zentrales Werkzeug zur Neudefinition von digitalem Branding und Kundenbindung eingesetzt. Sie umfasst Techniken und Methoden, mit denen Unternehmen Markenwert schaffen, die Effektivität von Kundeninteraktionen erhöhen und Marketingstrategien verbessern. Die Analyse von Experteninterviews zeigt, dass KI-Anwendungen – durch Datenanalyse, fortgeschrittene Algorithmen, Modellierung und andere Techniken – erhebliche Veränderungen in digitalen Branding-Prozessen bewirken und gleichzeitig spezifische Chancen und Herausforderungen bieten. Diese Studie konzentriert sich darauf, KI-Techniken, überzeugende Effekte, Transformationen und Herausforderungen im Zusammenhang mit der Implementierung von KI im digitalen Marketing und der Kundenbindung zu identifizieren. Zur Beantwortung der Forschungsfragen wurde ein qualitativer, feldbasierter Ansatz verwendet. Siebzehn Experten im Bereich KI und digitales Branding wurden gezielt ausgewählt und mittels halbstrukturierter Interviews untersucht, wobei Expertise, Berufserfahrung und praktische Vertrautheit mit KI-Anwendungen im digitalen Branding berücksichtigt wurden. Die Interviews untersuchten die Erfahrungen, Wahrnehmungen und Einsichten der Experten bezüglich der Rolle und Funktionen von KI in Branding-Prozessen. Die Daten wurden mittels thematischer Analyse ausgewertet. Zunächst wurden Codes aus den Interviewtranskripten extrahiert, anschließend kategorisiert und zusammengeführt, um Unterthemen und schließlich die Hauptforschungsthemen zu identifizieren. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die wichtigsten KI-Techniken im digitalen Branding skalierbare Rechenalgorithmen, maschinelles Lernen, Reinforcement-Learning-Algorithmen, Suchalgorithmen, operative Automatisierung, Empfehlungsalgorithmen, Dateninterpretation und -verarbeitung, Mensch-Computer-Interaktionsalgorithmen und KI-basierte Plattformen umfassen. Hinsichtlich der KI-getriebenen Transformationen wurden Themen wie dynamisches digitales Marketing, Veränderungen in Vertriebskanälen, personalisierte Markenkommunikation, dynamische Preisgestaltung, adaptive Geschäftsstrategien, verbesserte Cybersicherheit, Entwicklung interner und externer Datenbanken, verbesserte Kundenerfahrung, gestärkte Markenpositionierung, Entwicklung organisatorischer Prozesse und Systeme, erhöhte Entscheidungsqualität, Globalisierung der Marke, Bildung digitaler Geschäftsmodelle und Wertschöpfung identifiziert. Diese Forschung gehört zu den ersten Studien, die Funktionen und Ergebnisse von KI im digitalen Branding qualitativ auf Basis der Erfahrungen von Experten untersuchen und tiefgehende, praxisnahe Einblicke für Forscher und Praktiker liefern.

Schlüsselwörter: Künstliche Intelligenz, digitales Branding, Kundenbindung, qualitative Forschung, Experteninterviews

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چگونه هوش مصنوعی برندینگ دیجیتال و تعامل با مصرف کننده را باز تعریف می کند؟

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چکیده:

هوش مصنوعی به طور فزاینده‌ای به عنوان ابزار کلیدی در بازتعریف برندینگ دیجیتال و تعامل با مشتری استفاده می‌شود. این فناوری شامل تکنیک‌ها و روش‌هایی است که کسب‌وکارها برای خلق ارزش برند، بهبود اثرگذاری تعاملات مشتری و بهینه‌سازی استراتژی‌های بازاریابی از آن بهره می‌برند. تحلیل مصاحبه‌ها نشان می‌دهد که کاربردهای هوش مصنوعی — از طریق تحلیل داده‌ها، الگوریتم‌های پیشرفته، مدل‌سازی و سایر تکنیک‌ها — تحولات قابل توجهی در فرآیندهای برندینگ دیجیتال ایجاد می‌کنند و در عین حال چالش‌ها و فرصت‌های خاصی را نیز ارائه می‌دهند. بر این اساس، این مطالعه بر شناسایی تکنیک‌های هوش مصنوعی، اثرات متقاعدکننده، تحولات و چالش‌های مرتبط با اجرای آن در بازاریابی دیجیتال و تعامل با مشتری تمرکز دارد. برای پاسخ به پرسش‌های پژوهش، رویکرد کیفی مبتنی بر میدانی به کار گرفته شد. هدفه متخصص در زمینه هوش مصنوعی و برندینگ دیجیتال به صورت هدفمند انتخاب و از طریق مصاحبه‌های نیمه‌ساختاریافته مورد مطالعه قرار گرفتند. معیار انتخاب شرکت کنندگان شامل تخصص، تجربه حرفه‌ای و آشنایی عملی با کاربردهای هوش مصنوعی در برندینگ دیجیتال بود. هدف مصاحبه‌ها بررسی تجربیات، ادراکات و بینش‌های متخصصان درباره نقش و عملکرد هوش مصنوعی در فرآیندهای برندینگ بود. داده‌های مصاحبه با استفاده از تحلیل تماتیک بررسی شد. ابتدا کدها از متن مصاحبه استخراج و سپس دسته‌بندی و تجمیع شدند تا زیر‌تم‌ها و در نهایت تم‌های اصلی پژوهش شناسایی شوند. نتایج نشان داد که تم‌های اصلی مرتبط با تکنیک‌های هوش مصنوعی در برندینگ دیجیتال شامل الگوریتم‌های محاسباتی مقیاس‌پذیر، یادگیری ماشین، الگوریتم‌های یادگیری تقویتی، الگوریتم‌های جستجو، اتوماسیون عملیاتی، الگوریتم‌های پیشنهادگر، تفسیر و پردازش داده‌ها، الگوریتم‌های تعامل انسان-کامپیوتر و پلتفرم‌های مبتنی بر هوش مصنوعی است. در خصوص تحولات ناشی از هوش مصنوعی در برندینگ دیجیتال، تم‌هایی مانند بازاریابی دیجیتال پویا، تحول در کانال‌های توزیع، ارتباطات برند شخصی‌سازی شده، قیمت‌گذاری پویا، استراتژی‌های کسب‌وکار تطبیقی، افزایش امنیت سایبری، توسعه پایگاه داده‌های داخلی و خارجی، بهبود تجربه مشتری، تقویت جایگاه برند، توسعه فرآیندها و سیستم‌های سازمانی، ارتقای کیفیت تصمیم‌گیری، جهانی‌سازی برند، شکل‌گیری مدل‌های کسب‌وکار دیجیتال و خلق ارزش شناسایی شد. این پژوهش یکی از نخستین مطالعاتی است که به طور کیفی عملکردها و پیامدهای هوش مصنوعی در برندینگ دیجیتال را بر اساس تجربیات واقعی متخصصان بررسی می‌کند و بینش‌های عمیق و کاربردی برای پژوهشگران و حرفه‌ای‌های حوزه ارائه می‌دهد.

واژگان کلیدی: هوش مصنوعی، برندینگ دیجیتال، تعامل با مصرف کننده، پژوهش کیفی، مصاحبه با متخصصان

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Original Research Paper

How AI redefines digital branding and consumer?

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used as a key tool to redefine digital branding and customer engagement. It encompasses techniques and methods that businesses leverage to create brand value, enhance the effectiveness of customer interactions, and improve marketing strategies. The analysis of interviews indicates that AI applications – through data analysis, advanced algorithms, modeling, and other techniques – bring significant transformations in digital branding processes, while also presenting specific challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, this study focuses on identifying AI techniques, persuasive effects, transformations, and challenges associated with AI implementation in digital marketing and customer engagement. To address the research questions, this study employed a qualitative, field-based approach. Seventeen experts in AI and digital branding were purposefully selected and interviewed using semi-structured format. Participant selection focused on expertise, professional experience, and practical familiarity with AI applications in digital branding. The interviews aimed to explore experts' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding AI's role and functions in branding processes. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initially, codes were extracted from the interview transcripts. These codes were then categorized and aggregated to identify sub-themes and, ultimately, the main research themes. The findings indicate that AI applications in digital branding are primarily built on advanced computational and learning-based techniques, including scalable algorithms, machine and reinforcement learning, search and recommender systems, automation, data processing, human-computer interaction, and AI-enabled platforms. These capabilities drive major transformations to digital branding, such as more dynamic and personalized marketing activities, changes in distribution and pricing mechanisms, adaptive business strategies, enhanced decision-making and cybersecurity, improved customer experience, stronger brand positioning, the emergence of digital business models, brand globalization, and value creation. This research contributes to the limited qualitative literature examining AI functions and outcomes in digital branding by drawing on experts' lived experiences, and providing rich and practical insights for researchers and practitioners in the field.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, digital branding, consumer engagement, qualitative research, expert interviews Introduction

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1. Introduction

Marketing is a fertile domain for for the use of content produced by generative AI.. In AI-powered digital marketing, innovative and customized content helps businesses differentiate themselves from competitors (Kannan & Li, 2017). This technology has transformed content creation for campaigns, lead generation, customer acquisition cost reduction, customer experience management, employee-focused marketing, and leveraging accessible customer databases through social media (Van Eijk & Black, 2021). Individual customer data can also be collected more rapidly in this context, enabling real-time personalized advertising (Tang et al., 2020).

Research in the field of AI-driven marketing and digital branding (Wan & Black, 2021; Morgai, 2018; Benedict, 2020; Hussein, Hussein, & Ali, 2022; Cloli, Green, & Dawn, 2019; Akter & Kumar, 2021) shows that AI significantly influences brand preferences, marketing strategies, and customer attitudes. However, there has been limited effort to integrate this literature into a unified framework that explains how AI can align with branding research (Ming et al., 2020; Van Zeldt Hoven & J. Vantinen, 2019).

Despite the growing body of research on artificial intelligence in digital marketing, existing studies predominantly focus on specific tools or applications—such as personalization algorithms, chatbots, or recommendation systems—often examined in isolation and within developed market contexts. Consequently, limited attention has been paid to how these AI-driven capabilities collectively reshape digital branding strategies and consumer engagement practices in emerging markets. Moreover, prior research tends to adopt quantitative or technology-centric perspectives, offering limited insight into the lived experiences and strategic interpretations of branding experts.

To fill these gaps, the present study adopts a qualitative design that integrates expert interviews with a thematic synthesis of prior scholarship. By capturing practitioners' and scholars' perspectives, this study develops a comprehensive framework illustrating how artificial intelligence redefines digital branding and consumer engagement. In doing so, the research extends existing AI-branding frameworks by offering context-sensitive, practice-informed insights and contributes to a deeper theoretical and managerial understanding of AI-enabled branding in dynamic digital environments.

Therefore, this study seeks to thoroughly investigate the use of AI in branding by businesses. The findings of this research may contribute substantially to the relevant literature and provide a roadmap for branding scholars and professionals to utilize AI effectively, prompting organizations to adapt their business models. The questions are what AI techniques are used in branding? what are the persuasive influences of AI in generating brand value for consumers? what are the consequences of using AI in branding? what are the main challenges of applying AI in digital branding?

2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Digital Branding

Digital branding is a value-creation process that leverages digital tools and platforms to shape meaningful customer experiences and encourage repeated purchasing behavior (Foroudi, 2019). In this view, branding extends beyond brand name communication to the development and reinforcement of relationships between brands and key stakeholders, including customers, users, and partner organizations (Granata & Scozzese, 2019). Within digital environments, these relationships are formed through interactive mechanisms that promote dialogue and stakeholder engagement, thereby fostering trust and loyalty and sustaining long-term brand-customer relationships (Granata & Scozzese, 2017). Such relationships are dynamic, integrating customers' emotions, cognitions, and behaviors, and may strengthen or weaken over time, similar to interpersonal relationships (Keller, 2016).

Continuous and meaningful engagement through digital mechanisms enhances brand love, customer trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships, making technology a strategic imperative for effective branding (Huda, 2019; Boukis, 2019). Ongoing interactions in digital spaces generate consumer data that provide valuable insights into preferences and behaviors, enabling more informed branding decisions (Mamuni et al., 2019). The widespread use of mobile devices, cloud computing, and the Internet has led to massive data growth, accelerating the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and expanding opportunities to design, plan, evaluate, and improve digital branding activities (Dwivedi et al., 2019). Consequently, the ability to analyze

and apply these data has become essential for assessing and enhancing brand performance (Kelvin et al., 2019).

In the digital era, AI has emerged as a key technology reshaping marketing communications and branding processes by transforming brand-consumer interactions across digital channels (Qiao et al., 2019). AI applications are widely used in operational marketing, including customer targeting, advertising, pricing, and risk identification, to improve profitability and efficiency (Marniechak et al., 2018). Through big data analytics, machine learning, social media data analysis, algorithmic decision-making, and simulation modeling, AI enhances brand visibility, influences consumer attitudes, and supports strategic branding in competitive global markets (Yao et al., 2019).

Recent studies highlight AI's growing role in branding, demonstrating its capacity to associate products with emotional and social cues, transform brand search through keyword- and voice-based technologies, and support product innovation and brand-led product development (Galloway, 2016; Yuganarasimhan, 2014; Domingo, 2015; West et al., 2018). Furthermore, AI-driven applications in segmentation, personalization, pricing, and sales forecasting enable more targeted and intelligent brand management (Columbus et al., 2019). As data volumes continue to expand, AI plays an increasingly central role in planning, targeting, and evaluating digital marketing campaigns, involving brands, advertisers, and customers as interconnected stakeholders in a data-driven branding ecosystem (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Moujati et al., 2020). Overall, branding in the AI era represents a competitive, technology-enabled process through which brand identity is continuously designed, developed, and redefined.

2.2. Research Background

In recent years, digital branding has been increasingly shaped by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), natural language processing, augmented reality, and virtual reality. Research highlights the influence of AI on customer experience, brand perception, brand voice, and brand management (Abdelfattah, 2017; Nguyen, Quach, & Pachmapurn, 2020; Kohli, Derty, & Yin, 2019; Hagberg, 2020). AI applications have also enhanced employer branding, talent acquisition, and human resource practices (Bartley & Colney, 2021), while components such as social media analytics, neural

networks, chatbots, algorithmic recommendations, and brand love are recognized as drivers of digital innovation and competitive advantage (Akter & Kumar, 2019). The “Third Platform” concept illustrates how AI is transforming e-commerce, branding, and business intelligence (Morgai, 2018), though barriers to adoption require managers to develop technical skills, emotional intelligence, and creative capabilities (Zahed, Eghrar, & Ali, 2023). AI and related technologies have also improved digital advertising, deepening audience engagement and enhancing brand appeal through quality interactions and social identity reinforcement (Kohli & Yin, 2019; Fattah, 2019; Quach, Mai, & Taigon, 2020). Moreover, optimizing AI-driven marketing processes has demonstrated substantial time and cost savings while reducing errors (Holmie, 2021).

3. Research Method

The present study was conducted using a qualitative approach with the aim of gaining a deep understanding of experts’ experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital branding. Considering the exploratory nature of the topic and the study’s focus on understanding the meanings and lived experiences of actors, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method.

The research population consisted of experts in AI, digital marketing, and branding, who were purposefully selected. A combination of judgmental purposive and snowball sampling methods was employed to identify individuals possessing relevant knowledge, experience, and specialized insights. The sampling and interviewing process continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that no new concepts, themes, or categories emerged from the data. In total, seventeen semi-structured interviews were conducted. This sample size was guided by qualitative research principles that prioritize information-rich cases and thematic saturation over statistical representativeness. This sample size is consistent with prior qualitative studies in digital marketing and branding that employ expert interviews to investigate complex and emerging phenomena.

The interviews were designed and executed to explore participants’ practical experiences with AI applications in digital branding processes, their

impact on brand identity, customer experience, and marketing decision-making. The interview questions were flexible, allowing for in-depth discussion and follow-up on emerging topics during the conversations.

For data analysis, thematic analysis was employed. Initially, the interviews were fully transcribed, and the coding process was carried out in multiple stages. In the first stage, initial codes were extracted from the data. Subsequently, similar codes were grouped into categories and sub-themes, and finally, the main themes of the study were identified. This process was iterative, moving back and forth between the data and theoretical concepts to ensure analytical rigor and depth.

To enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings, a test-retest method was applied. Three interviews were randomly selected, and their coding was repeated by the researcher after a ten-day interval. The test-retest reliability was calculated at 85.5%, indicating an acceptable level of reliability in the data analysis process. In addition, to further strengthen analytical rigor, a dual-coder reliability procedure was employed. A second researcher independently reviewed and coded selected interview transcripts. Any discrepancies in coding were discussed and resolved through consensus, leading to refined and agreed-upon thematic structures.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided voluntary consent prior to participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured, and the interview data were used solely for academic purposes. Furthermore, researcher reflexivity was maintained by critically reflecting on potential interpretive biases during data collection and analysis, particularly given the researchers' familiarity with the field of artificial intelligence and digital branding.

Table 1. Reliability Result of Re-Test

Title of interview	Total codes	Agreements	Disagreements	Reliability percentage
E1	75	34	16	90
E2	68	26	8	76.4
E3	72	32	12	88
Total	215	92	36	85.5

- Inter-coder test: To assess the reliability of the interviews, a PhD student proficient in thematic analysis techniques and experienced in MAXQDA software was asked to participate in coding three interviews in collaboration with the researcher. The inter-coder reliability was 75.4%, which is considered acceptable.

Table 2. Reliability Obtained from Dual Coder Test

Title of interview	Total codes	Agreements	Disagreements	Reliability percentage
E1	71	28	14	78.8
E2	64	24	17	75
E3	69	25	12	72.4
Total	204	77	43	75.4

4. Results

4.1. Presentation of Interview Findings

In this section, the interview transcripts with participants are presented in a separate table according to the research questions. The data have been organized into meaningful textual statements, which are further categorized into basic themes and overarching themes.

Table 3. Interviewees' Initial Codes and Corresponding Meaningful Units

Participant Code	Overarching Themes	Basic Themes
E1	Challenges of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Digital Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High risk associated with the design and implementation of artificial intelligence systems -Decline in investment in the field of artificial intelligence -Lack of trust among some senior managers toward artificial intelligence technologies - Unrealistically high expectations held by certain senior managers - Absence of clear implementation timelines and managerial impatience in adopting technorational solutions
E1	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence in Digital Branding for Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancement of user experience - Improvement of digital branding algorithms - Service innovation - Audience persuasion through understanding customer needs

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Participant Code	Overarching Themes	Basic Themes
E1	Artificial intelligence techniques in branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Image processing -Data analysis using bots -Monitoring brand image on social media -Monitoring users' mental perception of the brand -Recommendation algorithms -Automation of activities -Search improvement -Considering user behavior based on past searches -Increasing click-through rate -Improving search and ranking algorithms
E2	AI tools and techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Data collection -Data processing and analysis -Creating an intelligent customer database
E2	Persuasive effects of artificial intelligence in branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improving user experience -Increasing customer satisfaction -Enhancing the brand through user brand awareness -Improving brand image in the user's mind
E2	AI transformations for organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Change in marketing strategy -Change in business model canvas -Management of customer interactions -Brand enhancement
E2	Challenges of artificial intelligence in Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of a rational perspective on artificial intelligence -Being deluded when facing new technology -Organizational instability -Insufficient knowledge and information
E3	AI Techniques in Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Natural Language Processing (NLP) -Data Analysis -Automated Decision Making -Changing Content Production Trends
E3	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence in Branding for Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enhanced User Experience -Personalization -Easier and More Accurate Purchasing Power -Improved Marketing -Increased Customer Satisfaction
E3	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased Customer Satisfaction -Increased Sales -Improved Audience Search Scope -Changing Marketing Methods
E4	Artificial Intelligence Techniques in Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Data collection and processing technology -Deep learning -Neural networks
E4	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Helping improve brand perception in users' minds -Aligning with global standards -Enhancing brand intelligence
E4	Challenges of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Elimination of certain job positions in organizations -Closure of some businesses due to lack of alignment with innovation

Participant Code	Overarching Themes	Basic Themes
E5	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	-Employee monitoring -Employee location management -Enhancement of organizational physical security
E5	AI Techniques in Branding	-Facial recognition technology -Image processing -Deep learning -Neural network-based recognition
E5	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Customers	-Improving customer experience -Enhancing user experience -Strengthening customer security
E5	Organizational Transformations through Artificial Intelligence	-Enhancing security through access control -Increasing business efficiency and productivity
E6	Challenges of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	-High risk in AI design -Time-consuming nature of AI -Shortage of skilled specialists
E6	AI Tools or Techniques	-Chatbots -Machine Learning -Deep Learning -Chatbots
E6	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Customers	-Greater appeal of conversational AI -Increased user satisfaction -Improved user experience
E7	Artificial Intelligence Tools	-Speech-to-text in Persian -Text-to-speech -Voice-to-text conversion -Natural language processing
E7	Artificial Intelligence Transformations for Organizations	-High-quality data collection -Training AI model-based systems -Designing new text-based product models -Creating competitive advantage -Voice-to-text technology in Iran
E7	Artificial Intelligence Challenges in Iran	-Stability and security of AI systems in Iran -Sanctions on certain applications -Lack of proper integration with major global companies
E8	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	-Improving brand image in the user's mind -Increasing brand awareness for the user -Enhancing audience engagement
E8	Artificial Intelligence Tools	-Face recognition technology -User image processing under different conditions -Lack of connection between industry and academia
E8	Artificial Intelligence Challenges in Iran	-Shortage of skilled workforce -Insufficient personnel for each company -Inefficiency of academic knowledge in practical settings
E9	AI Techniques in Branding	-Chatbots -Machine Learning -Chatbots

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Participant Code	Overarching Themes	Basic Themes
E9	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Customers	-Enhanced user experience -Improved customer service processes -Increased customer satisfaction -Improved search scope
E9	AI-driven Organizational Transformations	-Intelligent customer response -Increased response speed -Improved employee mental well-being -Increased organizational revenue
E9	Artificial Intelligence Challenges in Iran	-Businesses relying on aggressive advertising and traditional methods -Lack of innovation in various sectors -Inadequate understanding of the audience and lack of personalized planning
E10	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Customers	-Enhanced user experience -Increased user satisfaction
E10	AI Techniques in Branding	-Development of AI algorithms -Deep learning -Machine learning -Data processing
E11	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	-Increased performance speed -Increased sales -Improved service delivery process
E11	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Customers	-Improving user experience -Increasing sales -Attracting and retaining customers
E11	Artificial Intelligence Techniques in Branding	-Accuracy and quality in processing speed -Data analysis
E12	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	-Solving organizational challenges -Better understanding of customer needs -Reducing the steps required for customers to achieve their goals
E12	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Customers	-Faster purchasing processes -Improved service usage process -Increased satisfaction
E12	AI Techniques in Branding	-Image processing -Chatbot -Speech-to-text conversion
E13	Techniques of Artificial Intelligence in Branding	-Dynamic pricing -Enhancing suggestion range based on search
E13	Persuasive effects of artificial intelligence for customers	-More affordable pricing -Selecting the optimal routes to reach the goal -Time management
E14	Artificial intelligence tools in branding	-Online appointment scheduling -Information processing services -Service -Algorithm development -Personalization of user recommendations -Analysis of user data and search history

Participant Code	Overarching Themes	Basic Themes
E14	Persuasive effects of artificial intelligence for customers	-Strengthening user-brand connection -Enhancing user experience -Personalization
E15	Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence in Organizational Branding	-Organizing organizational activities -Improving customer communication processes -Maintaining employees' mental well-being -Enhancing recommendations to the audience -Adjusting organizational strategies in response to market changes
E15	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Customers	-Creating Diverse User Experiences -Improving User Experience -Personalization According to User Needs
E15	AI Techniques in Branding	-Data Collection Technology -Data Processing
E16	Artificial Intelligence Techniques in Branding	-Information gathering and processing technology -Improvement of search scope -Image processing -Intelligent decision-making
E17	Artificial intelligence tools in branding	-Chatbots -Speech-to-Text Technology -Data Training and Development
E17	Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Branding for Customers	-High speed in purchasing and using services -Reduced user waiting time in support queues

Question 1: The Techniques and Tools of AI in Digital Branding

Based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews with experts in artificial intelligence (AI) and digital branding, a total of nine main themes related to AI techniques and tools in digital branding were identified. The findings indicate that experts perceive AI not as a standalone tool, but as an interconnected set of infrastructures, algorithms, and platforms that operate across different levels of digital branding.

One prominent theme is the use of scalable computational algorithms alongside search engine optimization and cloud computing. Participants believed that this technological combination enables the management and development of brands on a large scale. They emphasized that the simultaneous application of these techniques allows brands to process extensive audience data, optimize digital content, and intelligently enhance brand presence in digital environments. Statistical modeling and advanced

computational analytics were also highlighted as tools for extracting audience behavior patterns and supporting brand-driven decision-making. Additionally, some experts pointed to the role of algorithmic impact assessment (AIA) systems, which facilitate monitoring and evaluating algorithm performance and the algorithms' effects on brand image.

The findings also indicate that machine learning and its associated tools are among the primary AI techniques used in digital branding. According to participants, employing machine learning algorithms and natural language processing (NLP) enables brands to personalize their communications and create more meaningful interactions with customers. Moreover, artificial neural networks and deep learning were identified as tools for advanced data analysis and the detection of complex customer behavior patterns, aiding brands in improving market and audience understanding.

Another theme identified is reinforcement learning algorithms. Experts emphasized that these algorithms, by leveraging environmental feedback, allow brands to dynamically and adaptively adjust their strategies. Participants noted that applying reinforcement learning in digital branding enhances user experience, increases customer engagement, and supports smarter decision-making in product and service design.

Keyword search algorithms and AI-based search analytics tools were also highlighted as important techniques. These algorithms improve audience access to brand content and products, playing a significant role in increasing visibility and strengthening brand awareness. Interviewees stated that analyzing search data helps brands better understand audience behavior and needs, facilitating the design of more effective interactive strategies.

Operational automation, including the automation of repetitive tasks and organizational processes, emerged as another key theme. Experts suggested that AI-based automation reduces the workload of repetitive activities, allowing brands to focus more on strategic and creative tasks. This, in turn, can enhance service quality, increase efficiency, and strengthen brand image.

In the area of audience engagement, tools such as recommendation algorithms, voice assistants, and AI-based content generation (including text, image, audio, and video) were identified as key instruments in digital branding. According to participants, recommendation algorithms play a crucial role in increasing engagement, loyalty, and positive audience

experiences by delivering content aligned with user preferences. Voice assistants facilitate more natural and interactive communication between brands and audiences. Additionally, AI-powered automated content generation enables brands to produce and distribute diverse and engaging content with greater speed and quality.

Finally, AI-based platforms, including chatbots, the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data infrastructures, were identified as critical foundations of digital branding. Participants emphasized that these platforms allow for the analysis of extensive data, direct interaction with audiences, and continuous monitoring of customer behavior, helping brands create an integrated, intelligent, and value-generating experience for their audiences. Overall, the findings indicate that the simultaneous application of these techniques and tools plays a decisive role in enhancing brand recognition, trust, and loyalty in the digital space.

Beyond listing AI techniques and tools, the findings indicate that artificial intelligence operates as an integrated branding infrastructure rather than a set of isolated technologies. Experts emphasized the interdependence of data-driven algorithms, automation systems, and interactive platforms, reflecting a shift from tool-based adoption toward ecosystem-level branding strategies. This integration allows brands to simultaneously enhance operational efficiency, personalized communication, and adaptive decision-making. In particular, machine learning and reinforcement learning were described as mechanisms through which brands continuously learn from audience interactions and dynamically reshape brand experiences, transforming digital branding into an evolving, feedback-driven process of value co-creation.

Table 4. Artificial intelligence techniques and tools in branding

General Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
Techniques of AI in Digital Branding	Scalable Computational Algorithms	Search Engine Optimization
		Statistical Computing Development
		Algorithmic Impact Assessment (AIA)
	Machine Learning	Machine Learning Libraries
		Neural Networks
		Deep Learning
	Reinforcement Learning algorithms	Reinforcement Learning
	Search Algorithms	Keyword search
		Mechanical AI Search

General Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
	Operational Automation	Automated Repetitive Tasks
		Process Automation
	Recommendation Algorithms	Voice Assistants
		Algorithmic Recommendations
		Algorithmic Recommendation Systems Based on Purchase
	Data Interpretation and Processing	Image Processing Systems
		Predictive Analysis
	Human-Computer Interaction based Algorithms	Translation, Inference, or Coding through new language models like PaLM by Google LLC
		Natural Language Processing (NLP) for Customer Service and Brand Development
	Tools of AI in Digital Branding	AI-based Platforms
Big Data		

Question 2: The Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence in Digital Branding

Findings from the field interviews indicate that artificial intelligence (AI) plays a significant role in shaping the persuasive effects of brands. These effects can be explained at three levels: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral.

At the cognitive level, AI increases brand awareness, mental engagement, and attitude change toward the brand through behavioral data analysis and the delivery of personalized content. This process allows the brand to be perceived as an intelligent, responsive entity that aligns with individual customer needs.

At the emotional level, personalization of brand experiences and AI-driven interactions strengthen emotional bonds between customers and the brand. These bonds are manifested in concepts such as trust, intimacy, attachment, and brand love. Interactive experiences and intelligent recommendations enhance customers’ sense of value and attention, thereby increasing the likelihood of loyalty and repeat purchase.

At the behavioral level, AI operates by predicting consumer behavior, enhancing engagement, fostering brand advocacy, and promoting customer cooperation with the brand. Intelligent monitoring systems and rapid response to feedback prevent communication crises and play a key role in maintaining a positive brand image. Overall, AI-enabled systems function as persuasive mechanisms, enhances brand equity by strengthening customer cognition, emotion, and behavior.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the persuasive effects of AI are not limited to overt interactions; they gradually lead to a redefinition of customer perceptions of brand identity. Interviewees emphasized that brands leveraging AI to predict needs, schedule communications, and align messages are perceived as “intelligent” and “responsive” in customers’ minds. This perception plays a crucial role in enhancing brand credibility and reducing customers’ mental resistance to marketing messages. Consequently, AI-based persuasion is not only a short-term mechanism for stimulating purchases but also a long-term process for shaping brand equity.

Analytically, the findings suggest that AI-driven persuasion in digital branding operates as a layered and cumulative process rather than as isolated cognitive, emotional, or behavioral effects. Experts’ perspectives indicate that cognitive personalization lays the foundation for emotional attachment, which in turn facilitates behavioral engagement and advocacy. This sequential interaction highlights how AI-enabled persuasion extends beyond message optimization to influence the construction of brand meaning over time. By continuously learning from consumer responses, AI strengthens brand credibility and reduces resistance to marketing communication, positioning persuasion as an adaptive and long-term branding mechanism rather than a short-term sales tactic.

Table 5. The Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence in Branding

General Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
Persuasive Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Branding for Customers	Emotional Persuasion of the Brand	Increasing Brand Intimacy with Customers
		Love for the Brand
		Addiction to the Brand
		Increasing Trust in the Brand
		Paradigm shift
	Cognitive Persuasion of the Brand	Increasing Audience Awareness
		Increasing Audience Engagement with the Brand
		Increasing Brand Awareness through Personalization of Audience Interests and Changes in Marketing Strategies
	Rational Persuasion of the Brand	Increasing Brand Loyalty
		Increasing Dynamic Interaction with the Brand
	Credibility Persuasion of the Brand	Specific Brand Equity for the Customer
		Providing Customer Experiences through Platforms

Question 3: Developments and Opportunities of AI in Digital Branding

Based on the interview findings, the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) has led to both structural and strategic transformations in digital branding. One of the key transformations is the shift toward dynamic, data-driven digital marketing, in which campaigns, content, and brand messages are adjusted in real-time according to audience behavior. This has resulted in more effective brand communications and optimized marketing costs.

Transformations in digital distribution and sales channels also represent a key outcome of AI adoption. Intelligent platforms enable personalized user experiences, expansion into global markets, and the development of digital business models. In this context, dynamic pricing, intelligent data management, and the development of intra- and inter-organizational databases play a critical role in strategic brand decision-making.

At the organizational level, AI has contributed to improved decision-making quality, process development, system automation, and enhanced cybersecurity. Moreover, enhancing customer experience, increasing trust, improving brand positioning, and fostering sustainable and competitive brands are among the major achievements of these transformations. Overall, AI is not merely an operational tool for branding but acts as a strategic driver of brand transformation in the digital space.

The findings further indicate that AI-driven transformations have blurred the boundaries between branding, marketing, and business management. Interviewees emphasized that AI has aligned strategic brand decisions with customer behavioral and operational data, enabling brands to respond more swiftly to environmental changes. This shift moves brands from linear and static structures toward dynamic, adaptive ecosystems grounded in continuous learning. In such an environment, digital branding is no longer merely a communication activity but becomes an integral part of the broader logic of value creation and competitive advantage for organizations.

From an analytical perspective, these developments illustrate a shift in digital branding from a functional support activity toward a strategic, data-driven capability embedded within organizational decision-making. The findings suggest that AI enables brands to integrate market intelligence, operational efficiency, and customer insight into a continuous learning

system, thereby redefining how branding contributes to competitive advantage. Rather than optimizing isolated branding activities, AI-driven transformations support the emergence of adaptive branding ecosystems in which value creation, strategic positioning, and customer experience evolve simultaneously. This highlights AI's role not only as an enabler of opportunity but as a catalyst for long-term brand transformation.

Table 6. Advancements in Artificial Intelligence for Digital Branding

General Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
Transforming digital marketing with AI	Dynamic Digital Marketing	Social Media Analytics
		Redesigning Email Marketing
		Refining Ads with Algorithms
	Transformation in Distribution Channels	Multi-purpose Digital Platforms
		Changing Sales Channels
		Increasing Global Digital Sales Channels
	Personalization of Brand Communications	Personalizing Marketing through Consumer Insights and Behavior Analysis
		Deeper Brand-Customer Relationships
		Increased Accuracy and Efficiency in Identifying Brand-Customer Interactions
	Dynamic Pricing	Custom Pricing
		Implementing Pricing Systems
	Dynamic Business Strategies	Changing Business Strategies
		Changing Digital Marketing Strategies
		Business Strategy Development
		Changing Branding Strategies
		Improving Digital Business Policies
		Changing Marketing Performance Strategies to Engage Consumers
	Enhancing Cybersecurity	Protecting Privacy and Data Security
		Data and Big Data Security
		Preserving Privacy with Surveillance System Development
	Development of Internal and External Databases	Digital Data Storage Technology for Organizations
		Designing New Data Science Pathways in Marketing
		Data Storage Management
		Optimizing Data Storage Capacity
	Providing a Better Customer Experience	Improving Customer Experience
		Changing Customer-Brand Relationships Based on Technorational Transformations
		Providing Customer Experiences through AI Algorithm-Based Platforms
	Strengthening Brand Position and Status	Brand Sustainability in Market Crises
Brand Superiority		
Improving Brand Preferences by Customers		
Enhancing Employer Brand through Business Strategy Changes		

General Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
	Development of Organizational Processes and Systems	Automating Processes and Improving Business Systems
		Designing Appropriate Interview Questions to Match Organizational Needs
		AI-Based Recruitment Systems
	Improving Decision-Making Quality in Organizations	Enhancing AI-Based Decision-Making by Business Leaders
		Improving Management Processes
		Accurate Data Analysis for Pattern Extraction
	Globalization of Brands	Global Transparency of Brand Activities
		Global Connection between Brand Consumers
	Formation of Digital Business Models	Developing Digital Business Models
		Digital Business Ecosystem
		AI Marketing Canvas for Branding Idea Implementation
	Creating Additional Value	Transforming Value Chains into Value Networks
		Increasing Sales
		Developing Social Value through Digital Transformation

Question 4: Challenges of Digital Branding with Artificial Intelligence

The findings indicate that the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital branding faces multidimensional challenges. One of the most prominent challenges concerns the consequences of automation, including the elimination of certain jobs and the inability of traditional businesses to adapt to technorational innovations. This issue highlights the need for workforce retraining and organizational restructuring. Ethical and legal challenges, particularly regarding privacy violations, data security, and algorithmic design risks, represent additional major concerns. Similar concerns have been identified in broader research on AI deployment, which shows that data-driven systems – despite improving predictive accuracy and efficiency – may generate risks related to algorithmic bias, surveillance overreach, and insufficient regulatory oversight, underscoring the need for institutional readiness and transparent governance frameworks (Salehi & Habib Zadeh Khiyaban, 2025). Extensive collection and analysis of personal data, in the absence of regulatory and ethical frameworks, may lead to diminished public trust in brands. Furthermore, the vulnerability of AI systems to cyber threats underscores the necessity of investment in technology security and sustainability.

At the managerial and structural level, the lack of skilled personnel, limited applied knowledge, low trust among senior managers, weak

collaboration between industry and academia, and insufficient investment in AI are fundamental obstacles to the development of intelligent branding. In addition, infrastructural limitations, technology-related sanctions, and the time-consuming nature of implementing AI projects create significant contextual challenges. Overcoming these obstacles requires smart policymaking, human resource development, and the establishment of a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

Beyond technorational and human challenges, the findings point to cultural and cognitive barriers in adopting AI for branding. Interviewees emphasized that fear of human replacement, exaggerated perceptions of AI capabilities, and the lack of realistic understanding of its applications lead to conservative or misguided decision-making within organizations. Comparable research shows that AI-driven job displacement is frequently associated with heightened fear and skepticism, shaping perceptions of institutional trust and influencing organizational responses to technological change (Sabbar & Habib Zadeh Khiyaban, 2023). This situation, particularly in environments with economic and infrastructural constraints, impedes the effective utilization of AI in branding. Therefore, developing AI-based digital branding requires not only technorational investment but also managerial mindset transformation, enhancement of data literacy, and fostering organizational trust in this technology.

Analytically, these challenges reveal that the adoption of artificial intelligence in digital branding is not solely a technorational issue but a socio-technical transformation that intersects with organizational culture, managerial cognition, and institutional trust. The findings suggest that without ethical governance, data transparency, and workforce readiness, AI-driven branding initiatives risk undermining brand credibility and long-term consumer trust. Comparable critical analyses of AI implementation emphasize that opaque algorithmic systems, when deployed without structured accountability and human oversight, can generate significant socio-legal and trust-related risks, underscoring the importance of transparency and regulatory clarity in AI-driven environments (Salehi et al., 2026). Moreover, contextual constraints—such as infrastructural limitations and regulatory uncertainty—shape how brands in emerging markets experience and respond to AI adoption. These insights highlight that successful AI-based digital branding requires an integrated approach that

balances technorational innovation with ethical responsibility, human capability development, and cultural alignment.

Table 7: The Challenges of Implementing Artificial Intelligence in Branding

General Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
Challenges of Artificial Intelligence	Elimination of Jobs and Businesses	Elimination of certain job positions in organizations due to automation
		Elimination of some businesses due to incompatibility with innovation
	Violation of Privacy	High risk in AI system design
		Stability and security of AI systems
	Lack of Awareness and Understanding of AI Capabilities by Businesses	Misconceptions about new technology
		Lack of trust among some senior executives
		Lack of a rational perspective toward AI
	Limited Availability of Specialists	Shortage of specialized personnel
		Insufficient workforce for each company
	Limited Practical Knowledge in AI	Inefficiency of academic knowledge compared to practical applications
		Lack of innovation utilization in various sectors
	Organizational Instability and Inefficiency	Lack of organizational stability
		Inadequate audience understanding and insufficient personalization planning
	Infrastructure Limitations	The time-consuming nature of AI implementation
Sanctions on some applications		

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to elucidate the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital branding, with a particular focus on the experiences and perspectives of experts in this field. This research employed a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews and systematically analyzed the data gathered from expert discussions to answer four research questions. The findings indicate that, from the interviewees' perspective, AI provides a diverse set of tools and techniques that directly influence the formation, strengthening, and management of digital brands.

Based on the thematic analysis of the interviews, the key AI techniques utilized in digital branding include scalable computational algorithms, machine learning, reinforcement learning algorithms, search algorithms, operational automation, recommendation algorithms, data processing and interpretation, human-computer interaction-based algorithms, and AI-based

platforms. Experts emphasized that these tools enable smarter decision-making, more targeted engagement with audiences, and more dynamic brand management.

Furthermore, interviewees highlighted fundamental transformations brought about by AI adoption in digital branding. These transformations include a shift toward dynamic digital marketing, changes in distribution channels, personalization of brand communications, dynamic pricing, redefinition of business strategies, enhanced information security, development of organizational databases, improved customer experience, strengthened brand positioning, optimization of organizational processes, enhanced managerial decision-making quality, global brand expansion, and the creation of new digital business models. According to the experts, these transformations simultaneously generate added value for both brands and customers.

The analysis also revealed that the persuasive effects of AI in digital branding operate across three interrelated dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral persuasion. Rational persuasion and credibility-based persuasion, as emphasized by interviewees, are embedded within these dimensions, particularly through cognitive processing of information and behavioral responses shaped by trust and perceived intelligence. Through message personalization, precise behavioral analysis, and enhanced transparency in brand communications, AI plays a crucial role in strengthening trust, loyalty, and positive customer perceptions over time.

Finally, experts identified multiple challenges in the application of AI in digital branding. The most significant challenges include the displacement of traditional jobs, privacy concerns, limited managerial awareness of AI's real capabilities, shortage of skilled personnel, limited applied knowledge, organizational misalignment, and weak technical infrastructure. Collectively, these challenges indicate that successful AI-based digital branding requires a realistic, gradual approach aligned with organizational capacities.

5.1. Practical Suggestions

Based on the interviewees' insights, organizations aiming to effectively leverage AI in digital branding should prioritize their data infrastructure. Experts emphasized that without access to accurate, transparent, and reliable

data, AI tools may fail to create a competitive advantage and could potentially lead to misguided decisions. Therefore, establishing an integrated system for data collection and processing, along with a secure environment for data usage, is essential.

The findings also highlight the heightened importance of customer-centricity in digital branding. Experts noted that today's consumers are active, informed, and impatient, and may quickly switch brands if they do not perceive value. Consequently, AI deployment should aim to foster a deeper understanding of audiences and address their emotional, cognitive, and rational needs. Creating a personalized and meaningful experience emerged as one of the most critical factors for enhancing brand equity according to the experts.

Moreover, successful AI implementation in digital branding requires internal organizational readiness, trust in specialized personnel, and the presence of knowledgeable and flexible management. Coordination between traditional staff and young, skilled professionals was highlighted as a key factor in reducing organizational resistance and facilitating the digital transformation process.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions

Like other qualitative studies, this research was not intended for broad generalization; its findings are based on the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees. A key limitation is that the study population was limited to experts active in organizations and established brands in Tehran. Conducting similar studies in other geographical regions could enrich the findings.

Given the multifaceted and complex nature of AI and digital branding, future research is recommended to investigate each of the identified themes more deeply, ideally through case studies or organization-focused research. This area holds significant potential for developing applied research grounded in real organizational data.

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