

New times will always come: artificial intelligence as a market strategy in the volkswagen film “gerações”

“O novo sempre vem”: inteligência artificial como estratégia de mercado no filme *gerações da marca Volkswagen*

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Resumo: *Na conjuntura atual das indústrias criativas, recursos de inteligência artificial vêm sendo amplamente utilizados na concepção e criação de peças publicitárias. Em 2023, um comercial da marca Volkswagen recriou digitalmente a imagem da cantora Elis Regina, mais de 40 anos após sua morte. Diante disso, apresentamos, como objetivo deste trabalho, analisar o uso de inteligência artificial como estratégia mercadológica no filme publicitário *Gerações* e os seus efeitos no público. Como procedimento metodológico, utilizamos a Análise de Conteúdo para investigar comentários publicados na rede social X por pessoas que foram expostas ao comercial. Os resultados apontam que esse tipo de recurso é capaz de despertar emoções positivas que são impulsionadas pela memória coletiva, mas também gera questionamentos, especialmente por conta de dilemas éticos envolvendo o uso da tecnologia.*

Palavras-chave: *Propaganda; Memória Afetiva; Inteligência Artificial; Deep-fakes; Elis Regina.*

Abstract: *In the current conjuncture, artificial intelligence resources have been widely used as a creative solution in the conception of advertising pieces. In 2023, a Volkswagen commercial digitally recreated the image of singer Elis Regina, more than forty years after her death. Therefore, the objective of this work*

is to analyze the application of artificial intelligence as a marketing strategy in the advertising film “Gerações” and its effects on the public. As a methodological procedure, we used Content Analysis to investigate comments published on social network X by people who were exposed to the commercial. The results indicate that this type of resource is capable of provoking positive emotions that are driven by collective memory, but also raises questions, especially due to ethical dilemmas involving the use of the technology.

Keywords: Advertising; Affective Memory; Artificial Intelligence; Deepfakes; Elis Regina

Introduction

In the contemporary context, we are experiencing a moment of unprecedented informational acceleration that has significantly impacted corporate marketing efforts. Nevertheless, Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) argue that it is necessary to use new technologies (artificial intelligence, sensors, robotics, augmented reality, etc.) as tools so that marketing professionals can create, communicate, deliver, and increase value throughout the customer journey so that technology fulfills its role without losing humanity in the relationship between company and consumer.

From this perspective, artificial intelligence (AI) presents a variety of resources, such as creating customer service robots, automating repetitive tasks, and applying augmented and virtual reality experiences, besides enabling data analysis processes and new strategies for optimizing user experience. Sectors such as technology, healthcare, finance, retail, manufacturing, automotive, agriculture, and public services use these applications, consolidating AI as a rapidly spreading tool and an established reality. In this context, the technique known as deepfake, which uses AI resources to create audio and video that simulate reality, has been used as a creative solution to design audiovisual pieces.

As an example, we brought up for discussion the advertising film *Gerações* [Generations] released by Volkswagen (2023) to celebrate the brand's 70th anniversary in Brazil, which shows singer Elis Regina, more than 40 years after her death, alongside her daughter, singer Maria Rita. By using AI to recreate Elis' image, the brand appeals to consumers' collective and emotional memory, mobilizing a new path for marketing strategies by bringing to the present personalities and icons of popular culture who have already passed away but were successful in the past.

However, the campaign generated contradictory reactions. While some of the public felt moved by the reappearance of one of the greatest voices of Brazilian music, others reported feeling awkward about the film, considering it disrespectful to the artist's memory. Given these mixed reactions, we present the following research problems. 1) How

does using AI as a market strategy affect the (re)creation of personalities who died years ago through deepfakes? 2) What memories does this type of strategy evoke in the public when promoting brands?

That said, the objective of this paper is to analyze the employment of AI as a marketing strategy in the advertising film *Gerações*, by the Volkswagen brand, in light of the (re)creation of Elis Regina and its effects on evoking collective and affective memories. On a theoretical basis, we mobilized authors such as Halbwachs (2006), Sant'Anna (2007), Mori (2012), Benjamin (1987), and Eco (1984).

As a methodological procedure, we used Content Analysis (CA) to analyze comments published on social media X¹ by people exposed to the commercial. According to Bardin (2011), CA consists of a set of techniques that allow us to attribute meaning to discursive manifestations through a series of systematic procedures that include exploring the material and interpreting results.

We emphasize that the combination of memory and technology studies, such as AI, offers an innovative perspective for understanding the future of the advertising market, consumer relations, and ethical issues related to the use of attributes of famous deceased people. Furthermore, we highlight that, besides the repercussions among the public, the Volkswagen campaign impacted the academic community with publications in the area of law (FIGUEIRA; RENZETTI FILHO; LUCA, 2023; KHAUAJA, 2023) that raise questions about the use of images by AI and propose ways of thinking about this dilemma legally, reinforcing ethical concerns regarding the technology.

Given this, we seek to raise a current discussion that contemplates, at the same time, the trends of marketing 5.0 (KOTLER; KARTAJA-YA; SETIAWAN, 2021), the use of collective and affective memories as a market strategy, and the challenges imposed by the use of technologies such as deepfakes.

1 The social media previously named Twitter.

Affective memory and advertising

Advertising has the unique power to evoke deep and lasting emotions in the minds of consumers as a discursive genre that articulates communication and consumption. In such competitive markets, advertising must engage the target audience to motivate them to act. As Sant'Anna (2007) states, the object of an ad will only capture the public's attention if it presents compellingly, impressing or motivating viewers. One of the strategies to achieve this goal would be the adoption of affective arguments. In this context, we believe that affective memory can be crucial in shaping how people perceive, remember, and relate to brands and products over time.

In a previous study (BRESSAN JÚNIOR; LESSA, 2018), we argued that affective memory occurs through a drive that changes the subject's state based on the emotional experiences that arise with remembrance. We need to enjoy experiences of this nature since, according to Le Breton (2009), we are emotionally present in the world. This way, we see ourselves intrinsically connected to our emotions, constantly affected by them, whether in relationships with people, objects, the environment in which we find ourselves, or our own experiences and memories.

Parallel to this, we consider that memory is not only linked to individual experiences but also collective ones. Hence, Halbwachs (2006, p. 71) presents us with the concept of collective memory.

Let us assume, however, that we could organize memories in two ways, either grouping them around a particular person who sees from their point of view or distributing them within a large or small society of which they are partial images. Therefore, there would be individual memories and collective memories, so to speak.

Thus, besides the memory that is unique to each individual, we have collective memories shaped by our coexistence in different groups and the experiences we share in each of them. According to the author, that is possible because "to evoke one's past, a person generally needs to resort to the memories of others and transports oneself to reference points that

exist outside of them, determined by society” (HALBWACHS, 2006, p. 72). We use the memories of others as “support” to access our memories.

From this perspective, Huyssen (2000) observes that the emergence of memory constitutes one of the main phenomena of recent years, becoming a cultural and political concern in Western societies. In our previous work (LESSA; BRESSAN JÚNIOR, 2018), we added that there is also a strong marketing appeal in the issue of memory since we are increasingly nostalgic, and the sale of products related to the past has generated profitable business. Fashion, cinema, television, design, architecture, and advertising reflect this trend.

Recently, we have come across successful examples of advertising pieces that explored the emotional nature of consumers’ memories. “Advertising that provokes emotions in individuals aims to drive their latent desires so strongly that they feel compelled to work to satisfy them” (Sant’Anna, 2007, p. 85). That happened in campaigns for brands such as Oreo, which, in 2022, launched a series of marketing efforts inspired by the series Castelo Rá-Tim-Bum (1994-1997), and Renault, which, in 2019, made a commercial inspired by the classic animation Dungeons & Dragons (1983-1985). Both campaigns generated results that exceeded the brands’ expectations.

However, we should note that searching for a total memory cannot be successful since we can idealize the return to the past but never truly realize it. In this sense, Spinoza (2009, p. 122) states, “He who remembers a thing, in which he has once taken delight, desires to possess it under the same circumstances as when he first took delight therein.” It is not just a matter of reviewing what has happened. For the feeling of affection to be completely positive, the person remembering yearns for authenticity. Otherwise, affection can come with sadness or frustration, which can be dangerous for brands.

A tool used in this search for an “authentic” memory is artificial intelligence, as we will see in the next section.

Artificial intelligence and the act of remembering: from the uncanny valley to the loss of aura

Drawing from Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021, n.p.), we understand AI as a type of technology that “[...] uses computer algorithms to perform specific tasks that previously required human intelligence”. Besides allowing companies to automate a large part of their processes (fraud detection, payment security, loan approval, customer service, risk management, etc.), AI offers a variety of creative solutions to the field of marketing, especially if integrated with other technologies.

Röhe and Santaella (2023) describe different types of AI. The Classification type categorizes things automatically through machine learning. Predictive AI identifies patterns in past events and predicts future events. Generative AI produces synthetic texts or images by imitating patterns from a database. When we talk specifically about Generative AI, we observe the rise of the controversial phenomenon of deepfakes. This type of technology challenges the limits of visual perception by allowing the creation of hyper-realistic artificial media generated entirely by AI software. “In practice, they are artificial media generated from a large number of real files of a given person and using a machine learning algorithm” (ESTADÃO, 2022, n.p.).

There was a time when editing audio, photos, and videos was restricted to the domain of experts. However, technological advances have made audiovisual manipulation widely available to the general public. Some employments of deepfakes are already easily created by mobile apps and shared extensively on social media. Examples include an image of Pope Francis wearing an oversized white designer jacket and a photograph showing the police arresting former US President Donald Trump (Figure 1). The two imaginary scenes created using the Midjourney platform, which generates images from text commands, went viral on the internet in March 2023, demonstrating the high degree of accuracy and realism that AI can achieve.

Figure 1 – Deepfakes generated from an AI image creation service



Source: X (2023), captured by the authors.

Different media, like video games, cinema, television, and advertising, have gradually incorporated deepfakes. In these scenarios, the good use of deepfakes can generate content that delights the public. The film *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) digitally recreated the image of actress Carrie Fisher for an appearance of the young Princess Leia.

However, this technological revolution brings psychological, cultural, ethical, and social implications. In this context, we highlight that this level of image manipulation is capable of generating problems such as disinformation campaigns, distrust, loss of credibility by the media, production of pornographic material, and identity fraud. Moreover, manipulated images generate controversy due to their artificial aspect, which could create “illusory realities.” In light of such concerns, we present the concept of “uncanny valley,” proposed by robotics professor Masahiro Mori (2012). According to him, the greater the similarity between a robot and a human being, the greater the affinity and empathy of those who observe it. Industrial robots, for example, have a design based on functionality and bear little resemblance to the human form. Therefore, people do not feel affection for them. On the other hand, toy robots whose forms consist of two arms, two legs, a torso, and a face can enchant and bring children closer, given the playful dimension they achieve.

However, Mori (2012) argues the initial feeling of empathy tends to turn into discomfort and even strong repulsion when a robot reaches a certain point on the scale of similarity to a human being. In this sense, the peak of estrangement would be when an object is very similar to a person but still falls within the realm of almost identical. It is in this “almost” that the uncanny valley resides. To exemplify this concept, the author talks about prosthetic limbs, which cause estrangement despite presenting a high realistic degree.

One might say that the prosthetic hand has achieved a degree of resemblance to the human form, perhaps on a par with false teeth. However, when we realize the hand, which at first site looked real, is in fact artificial, we experience an eerie sensation. For example, we could be startled during a handshake by its limp boneless grip together with its texture and coldness. When this happens, we lose our sense of affinity, and the hand becomes uncanny. (MORI, 2012, p. 99).

We can see the same thing happens with deepfakes, given their high degree of verisimilitude. However, technology is not yet capable of replicating the image of human beings perfectly, leaving us adrift in the uncanny valley. Still, the author states that observers’ reactions become positive again, overcoming the uncanny valley if realism increases to the point where a robot is effectively identical to a healthy human being. The graph below (Figure 2) shows the uncanny valley represented in the relationship “affinity x similarity with humans”.

Figure 2 – The uncanny valley represented in the relationship “empathy x verisimilitude”



Source: YouTube (2023), captured by the authors.

Benjamin (1987) allows us to think about the issue of deepfakes from the perspective of our relationship with reality and authenticity in a world where digital manipulation is increasingly present. The author argues that mechanical reproducibility, through techniques such as photography and cinema, has fundamentally changed people’s relationship with art. In the current context, deepfakes represent a radical evolution of this idea of reproducibility.

“In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place.” (BENJAMIN, 2019, p. 167). According to the author, the aura of the work of art stems from the “here and now,” the sense of singularity and authenticity that each work carries within itself, which is present in the moment of contemplation.

What, then, is the aura? A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be. To follow with the eye-while resting on a summer afternoon-a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder is to breathe the aura of those mountains, of that branch. In the light of this description, we can readily grasp the social basis of the aura's present decay. It rests on two circumstances, both linked to the increasing emergence of the masses and the growing intensity of their movements. Namely: the desire of the present-day masses to "get closer" to things, and their equally passionate concern for overcoming each thing's uniqueness [Oberwindung des Einmaligen jeder Gegebenheit] by assimilating it as a reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at close range in an image [Bild], or, better, in a facsimile [Abbild], a reproduction. (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 170)

Thus, Benjamin's analysis of technical reproducibility resonates in the context of deepfakes, especially in cases such as the Volkswagen campaign, which reproduces the image of a deceased person. In line with what the author tells us, the commercial reinforces this desire to make things "feel closer." In this case, it is not a physical approximation but a temporal approximation with an unrecoverable past. From this, we understand that the reproduction of Elis Regina's image also has no aura since the AI cannot capture and represent her real presence.

Huyssen (2000) reinforces this argument by stating that we are in an era of obsession with repetition that creates a culture of copying. In the same sense, Eco (1984, p. 12) tells us that "[...] there is a constant in the imagination and taste of the average North American for whom the past must be preserved and celebrated in the form of an absolute copy, real format, one-to-one scale: a philosophy of immortality as duplication." With this, it is as if there were a desire to replace memories with representations of the past: since one cannot go back in time, we revisit these pasts through the culture of copying. However, just as Benjamin criticizes the loss of aura, Eco (1984) tells us that, in these cases, what we are savoring is nothing more than a lie.

Furthermore, we must consider the ethical implications of using deepfakes in advertising. We understand the act of digitally recreating the image of public figures or celebrities after their death can lead to situations in which these personalities are portrayed inappropriately or appear involved in messages that contradict their beliefs and values. In the case of the Volkswagen campaign, CONAR (National Council for the Self-Regulation of Advertising) opened an ethical process against the company. However, the council archived the action since the company had the consent of the artist's heirs to use her image. Nevertheless, we believe that the advancement of AI tools presents significant ethical challenges related to transparency, privacy, and respect for individual rights. In this context, the use of Elis' image in the Volkswagen film led to the creation of Bill No. 3592/23, which is currently in the Senate² and aims to establish guidelines for the use of images and audio of deceased individuals through AI to preserve the dignity, privacy, and rights of individuals even after their death.

Given this, in the next section, we present an analysis of the advertising film *Gerações* based on the impact among consumers on social media through comments published on social media X.

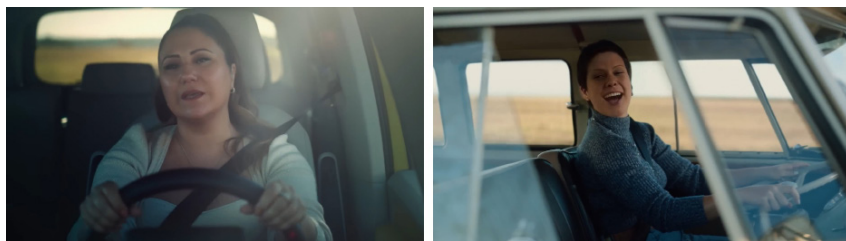
Analysis of comments on the film *Gerações* by Volkswagen

The two-minute film *VW 70 anos | Gerações | VW Brasil* was released on the YouTube channel of Volkswagen Brazil on July 3, 2023, and has over 30 million views.³ The video begins by showing an ID.Buzz, an electric version of the popular Kombi, with Maria Rita driving it through an open field as she sings *Como Nossos Pais*. At one point, a classic blue and white model of Kombi appears with Elis Regina as the driver. Mother and daughter drive and sing together side by side on the road.

² Data refers to March 2024.

³ Data refers to March 2024.

Figure 3 – The commercial shows Maria Rita and Elis Regina driving and singing together



Source: YouTube (2023), captured by the authors.

The commercial quickly generated a great deal of attention on the Internet. That said, we analyzed messages published on the social media X. To collect data, we used the platform’s search tool, looking for posts in Portuguese that simultaneously contained the terms “Elis” and “Volkswagen” and were published the day after the film was released. In total, we recorded 1,059 messages.

Next, through a semantic analysis, we determined a series of indexes and indicators to classify the messages. This procedure resulted in the data presented in the table below.

Table 1 – Classification of collected messages by indexes and indicators

| Índices | Indicadores | Quantidade |
|---------------|---|------------|
| Positivo | Descreve emoções positivas, relata memórias afetivas, elogia a marca | 309 |
| Negativo | Expressa preocupações éticas com o uso da IA, questiona as decisões criativas da campanha, demonstra estranheza diante do <i>deepfake</i> , apresenta uma má aceitação do filme | 247 |
| Neutro | Se refere ao filme sem demonstrar opinião favorável ou contrária | 270 |
| Notícia | Notícia ou repercute o lançamento do filme (geralmente portais de notícias ou páginas de entretenimento) | 151 |
| Não se aplica | Apresenta os termos “Elis” e “Volkswagen”, mas não faz referência ao filme lançado pela marca | 82 |

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2024).

After defining the indexes and indicators, we selected the documents by applying the rule of relevance, according to which “the documents retained must be suitable as a source of information to correspond to

the objective that incites the analysis” (BARDIN, 2011, p. 128). Thus, to constitute the research corpus, we selected only messages that bring positive and negative indexes, reflecting consumers’ feelings, opinions, and perceptions about the campaign. We present the most relevant ones according to the proposed objectives in the analysis here.

Initially, we highlighted publications that demonstrate uncanniness in the face of the appearance of Elis Regina, digitally recreated with the help of AI, more than 40 years after her death. Some terms appear in bold to highlight what we will address in the following paragraph. We kept the spelling errors to preserve the content of the messages.

*that's absurdly **uncomfortable** that **doll** they made of Elis is **BIZARRE**, the commercial being for Volkswagen is even more bizarre.*

*I found that Volkswagen's commercial with elis regina looking like a **stuck doll bizarre***

*I felt more **scared** than moved by that Volkswagen commercial. I imagine they could have done a beautiful campaign using old videos of Elis without using artificial intelligence but the impact of seeing her with her daughter is really moving. Ps. Each day, I am more **averse** to ai.*

The highlighted terms in the comments reflect the uncanny valley phenomenon (MORI, 2012). The use of expressions like “uncomfortable”, “bizarre”, “scared,” and “averse” reveals that, despite resembling the image of the singer, the deepfake representation of Elis Regina causes repulsion. After all, the technology cannot yet replicate human expressions perfectly, sometimes creating the impression that she is a “doll.” Furthermore, we interpret that this uncanniness occurs, in part, due to the absence of aura (BENJAMIN, 1987). In this sense, the replica of Elis’s image attempts to recreate her original artistic aura. However, there is a lack of authenticity since the aura does not lend itself to replicas. In this way, technology use compromises the emotional connection, as we can see in the last message, which says: “I felt more scared than moved.”

From this uncanniness, it is also possible to establish a connection with Spinoza's theory (2009) that, thinking about the theme of memory, states that those who remember something that generated pleasure in the past want to have that experience under the same circumstances in the present. Thus, when viewing a representation of Elis Regina that is not faithful to reality, viewers are disturbed by negative feelings.

In parallel, we observed comments that raise ethical questions about using the image of a deceased person through AI.

Everyone is melting over Volkswagen's new commercial, and all I can think about is how would Elis feel if she saw a deepfake of hers singing an anthem against the dictatorship in a commercial for a company that collaborated not only with the military regime but also with the Nazi regime?

Regarding the Volkswagen controversy, I'll take another point here, and I'm not even going to question the lyrics and the commercial. Would Elis, if she were alive, have given up her image to make the commercial? It's kind of crazy to think that her image could be used after her death without her consent.

Volkswagen's ad is atrociously bad taste. That pedestrian interpretation of the song, pardon the pun, is a truly profane use of Elis' memory and what it means for national memory. And it's still lining the pockets of the same old crowd, the same one from 64...

Considering Elis Regina's image, consumers identify different aspects of the advertisement that raise ethical concerns. First, they question the recreation of Elis through a deepfake to promote the product of a company with a controversial history, such as Volkswagen. The singer was a relevant voice in the fight against the military dictatorship in Brazil, which would make her association with a company that collaborated with authoritarian regimes problematic.⁴

4 According to the National Truth Commission, Volkswagen actively collaborated with the dictatorship's repressive apparatus with acts that included denouncing and handing over employees to repressive bodies and donating or lending vehicles for persecution activities (CARTA CAPITAL, 2021).

Another factor highlighted in the comments is that the use of the image of a public figure after her death (and, therefore, without her consent) also poses a relevant ethical issue. “Would Elis, if she were alive, have given up her image to make the commercial,” asked the author of the second message. Some posts present other ethical dilemmas in this context.

*Controlling the past is a weapon of the elites. The dictatorship persecuted Elis. She supported the ABC strikers. Volkswagen supported the dictatorship. There are reports of torture with the support of this company. They want to clean up their image and erase the past. **Money can even buy a past for a false present.***

*There are several ethical dilemmas in this commercial with Maria Rita and Elis Regina for Volkswagen, but what stressed me the most was thinking we **can no longer die in peace.** If they put me up for a car sale in memoriam, I'll come back to pull their legs.*

In these cases, the highlighted phrases suggest something that different authors have pointed out: an obsession with repetition (HUYSSSEN, 2000), a desire to make things closer (BENJAMIN, 1987), and a philosophy of immortality as duplication (ECO, 1984). It is as if we can no longer preserve the past through memory alone. Instead, we are constantly feeding the culture of copying, yearning for ever more accurate reproductions of the past, but that are nothing more than falsifications, as Eco (1984) states.

However, we emphasize that not all reactions to the commercial are negative, especially when we direct our attention to messages that reflect the public's affective memories, as we will see in the following comments. In this sense, we emphasize that, besides appealing to the image of Elis Regina, the film uses other resources to evoke the past with scenes that bring an old aesthetic, always presenting Volkswagen vehicles in moments starring families or groups of friends, which could reinforce the emergence of a collective memory.

Figure 4 – Images with an vintage aesthetic appeal to consumers’ memory of the brand



Source: YouTube (2023, captured by the authors).

In this regard, we observed comments from viewers who shared their memories awakened by the commercial in posts on the social media X.

*AI allows us to “travel” through time. Watching Maria Rita and Elis together in the new Volkswagen ad is **moving**. Until very recently, that video would have been very difficult or near impossible to make.*

*Dude, it’s not about Volkswagen... It’s about our **childhood memories, going on rides in a Kombi or a Fusca. It’s about Elis. It’s nostalgia. It’s loving the past** and living like our parents. Let us get a little emotional without turning it into a problem that won’t get us anywhere!*

*This Volkswagen commercial **touched** me on a certain level... **It brought back memories of my mother, a longing for the hug she gave me while listening to Elis.** Growing up hurts, and many times we lose some privileges.*

*Volkswagen, this 70-year-old video deserves all the applause. **Beautiful, moving, forever Elis Regina.** Artificial intelligence is **wonderful**. Congratulations to everyone.*

The first message emphasizes technology used to activate affective memories, highlighting the commercial provides a “time travel” that one can only achieve through AI. In the same perspective, the other messages reinforce that this memory also occurs through relationships with others and with the environment in which we are. We observe that in comments such as “childhood memories,” “going on rides,” and “memories of my mother” in the second and third posts. Such feelings are

only possible because, as Le Breton (2009, p. 111) states, “man is affectively present in the world.”

Furthermore, these memories reinforce the collective nature of memory. As Halbwachs (2006) points out, our memories become more easily accessible through collective memory. After all, the relationship with others determines how we constitute memory. As a result, the images we remember link and mix with reflections of the people and groups around us, strengthening the emotional relationship with the nostalgic elements presented in the film.

In the second post, by stating that “growing up hurts,” the viewer shows that the feelings evoked by memory are not always positive (SPINOZA, 2009). The impossibility of recovering the past, a mother’s hug, and the good time of childhood generates sadness and frustration.

From a marketing perspective, it is interesting to note that the ad is not only based on memories of Elis but also on the brand through the cars that were part of the lives of many Brazilians, visible when the author of one of the posts mentions “the Kombi and the Beetle.” Thus, advertising appears as a powerful tool capable of evoking positive feelings. That is what we see through expressions such as “moving,” “beautiful,” and “wonderful.” In view of this, we return to previous work (BRESSAN JÚNIOR; LESSA, 2018) to highlight that affective memory awakens impulses that change the subject’s state. That change makes viewers feel emotional and touched when watching the commercial.

Finally, we present posts that highlight the effectiveness of nostalgia as a sales tool.

What matters is that the Volkswagen commercial with Maria Rita and Elis’ virtual spectrum worked, at least for the fool speaking to you. I felt like buying an old Kombi and the new electric version. But it’s only a wish because I’m poor.

Oh, people, I am not problematizing the commercial with Elis. If I had money, I would have bought the new Volkswagen Kombi. Forgive me.

I loved the Volkswagen commercial with Elis Regina, and now I want an electric Kombi to zap around.

In these posts, consumers report a desire to purchase Volkswagen products based on the feelings aroused by the campaign. As Sant'Anna (2007) states, using affective arguments in advertising activates emotions capable of driving purchases. A consumer public is willing to pay for products and services from brands that, in some way, provide an experience of “returning to the past.” Thus, we understand that appealing to consumers’ memories can represent a competitive advantage for brands that know how to explore the affective factor in their campaigns.

In view of the data presented, we understand the effects caused by the use of AI in evoking affective memories from the film *Generations* by VW Brazil. Despite the “uncanniness” factor generated by deepfake technology and the ethical questions raised by AI, we emphasize the positive feelings that stem from collective memory. In view of the above, we present the final considerations of the research in the next section.

Final considerations

When analyzing the current situation, it is notable the advertising industry is using AI as a powerful tool. At the same time, issues related to memory and nostalgia are increasingly reinforcing its importance. Once combined, these factors can generate successful advertising campaigns, allowing companies and brands to connect with their consumers emotionally.

In this context, our analysis met the objectives of the research. Initially, we highlight that, when exposed to the Volkswagen advertising film, the public brings up questions and reflections for understanding AI as a marketing resource. There are positive reactions, especially due to the emotions triggered by memories the commercial incites, a factor that becomes even greater in light of the phenomenon of collective memory, which enhances the emotional connection with the music, the image of Elis Regina, and the other nostalgic elements present in the film. Thus, we emphasize using AI to appeal to consumers’ memory can represent a good strategy in the context of advertising.

Among the negative comments, we highlight concerns regarding the ethical dilemmas of using images of deceased people in the creation of deepfakes. In this sense, we argue there needs to be regulation for the ethical use of artificial intelligence, especially in media such as advertising, which uses this type of image for commercial purposes. We recognize that AI brings both opportunities and challenges, and it is essential to address these issues responsibly, promoting the ethical development of technology to maximize its benefits and mitigate its risks. Furthermore, phenomena such as the loss of aura and the uncanny valley contribute to the rejection of the commercial by a portion of consumers, as we could observe through the comments published on social media X. Finally, we understand the use of artificial intelligence in creating representations of the past symbolizes a new moment for the act of remembering. If, in the past, resources such as photography could record moments and evoke memories, AI allows us to elevate representations of the past to another level, transcending the limits we knew until now. It is a technology capable of recovering the past and creating new experiences, building new bonds, and producing new meanings. Such considerations lead us to reflect on how these technologies can influence our perception of memory and our relationship with different temporalities. Given these considerations, we aim to contribute and inspire new perspectives on the subject so that the results presented here contribute to unprecedented discussions in memory studies and, consequently, in the academic environment.

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