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## **The Evolution of AI-Based Marketing: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities.**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Verma et al. (2021) demonstrate that artificial intelligence enables companies to analyze considerable datasets to identify consumer buying behavior patterns, consequently facilitating the formulation of more effective, focused marketing campaigns. Kumar, Ashraf, and Nadeem (2024) further emphasize that AI is expected to transform marketing, noting enhanced customer insights, automated marketing strategies, and upgraded operational efficiency as major improvements.

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Artificial intelligence has also had an important role in increasing customer engagement. Gupta and Khan (2024) observe that AI-based chatbots and digital assistants improve the

customer experience by providing rapid, personalized responses, thereby elevating consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

However, applying artificial intelligence to marketing introduces ethical and data privacy challenges. Senyapar and Nurgul (2024) caution that companies must adopt responsible practices, ensure transparency in automated processes, and protect consumer rights.

This EJABM special issue accentuates the value of understanding AI-driven technologies in marketing. These technologies are changing marketing practices by increasing efficiency and personalization, while also transforming consumer relationships, ethical standards, and competition dynamics in an ever-more digital, data-driven environment.

## 2. STRUCTURE OF THE ISSUE

This special issue features five peer-reviewed articles that investigate recent developments in AI-based marketing and digital consumer practices:

The first article, **“Emotional Vs. Functional Approaches on Instagram: The Disney Brand,”** investigates how emotional and functional content strategies affect follower engagement. The results show that emotional content generates higher levels of interaction and affective responses, illustrating the value of emotional branding in digital contexts.

The second article, **“V-Commerce: Factors Influencing the Purchase Intention of Portuguese Consumers,”** examines the impact of immersive technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, on consumer purchase intention. The study finds that perceived usefulness, ease of use, and convenience shape attitudes toward virtual commerce in Portugal.

The third contribution, **“The Emotional Response to Colour Theory in E-Commerce,”** analyzes how color influences consumer opinions and behavior in online shopping environments. The results suggest that warm colors increase urgency and purchase intention, while cooler tones increase trust and aesthetic perception, with practical implications for digital interface design.

The fourth article, **“Deepfake: Threat or Opportunity? Creating Trustworthy Hyperreality in AI-Based Marketing – The Malaria Must Die Case,”** examines the ethical and communicative implications of deepfake techniques in marketing. The study argues that, when used transparently, deepfakes can improve affective engagement and support socially responsible communication policies.

The fifth article, **“Artificial Intelligence as a Driver of Competitiveness in Micro and Small Enterprises: A Systematic Review on the Democratization of Data-Enabled Marketing,”** investigates how artificial intelligence enables small businesses to access advanced marketing capabilities. The findings show both the chances offered by democratization and the challenges presented by digital skills, resource limitations, and organizational adaptation.

Together, these contributions provide a comprehensive overview of the emerging field of AI-based marketing, encompassing emotional interaction, immersive technologies, visual design, ethical communication, and the democratization of digital tools.

### **3. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We express our sincere appreciation to the authors and reviewers who contributed to this issue. Their academic discipline and dedication to advancing knowledge have ensured that EJABM remains a respected platform for innovative and applied research.

We are also grateful for the continued support of our indexing partners: EBSCO, CROSSREF, GOOGLE SCHOLAR, LATINDEX, DRJI, ICI JOURNALS MASTER, REDIB, MIAR, and RCAAP. Their collaboration improves the international visibility and reputation of our journal.

We hope that this issue fosters expanded dialogue, encourages future research, and supports research-based decision-making in business, governance, and social practice.

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