

Algorithmic Contestation



Theoretical Background

Generative AI & Brand Meaning

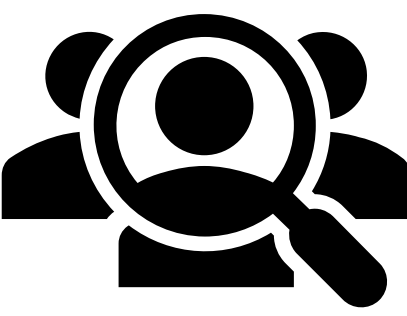
Generative AI shapes how consumers understand brands by synthesizing cultural discourse into authoritative narratives, influencing brand legitimacy. (Mars et al., 2023; Sajan & Giri, 2025)



Brand Antifragility

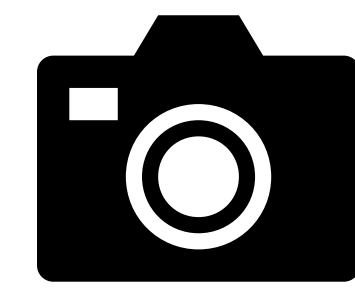
Brand antifragility suggests that brands can grow stronger through disruption and contestation, challenging traditional models that prioritize control. (Taleb, 2012; Dietrich & Russell, 2021)

Research Overview & Data



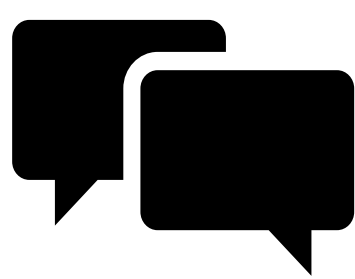
Research Objective

- Explore how generative AI reshapes brand contestation by influencing how consumers encounter and interpret brand meanings through *AI-mediated systems* (Mars et al., 2023)
- Understand how brands can turn *AI-driven disruptions* into a source for growth and legitimacy



Theoretical Lens

- Reflective sensemaking* as theoretical lens for exploring the Human-AI brand meaning co-creation
- Generative AI both destabilizes established brand meanings and enables adaptive learning for brands to evolve through *cultural tensions* and *adaptive personalization* (Swaminathan et al., 2020).



Data Collection

- Phenomenological, in-depth interviews* with consumers and brand managers, experiencing AI-driven transformations in their industries, such as retail, media, IT (McCracken, 1988)

Evolving Theoretical Dimensions



Dimension	Core Focus	Key Implications for Brand Antifragility
AI-mediated Consumer–Brand Relationships	AI-mediated access to information, evaluation, and meaning	Reshapes brand trust, self–brand connections, and moral legitimacy; requires transparency and human accountability.
Algorithmic Brand Contestation	Iterative innovation, adaptive ecosystems, human–AI sensemaking	Enables brands to convert disruption into adaptive learning, renewal, and growth rather than fragility.
Brand Managers in the AI Era	Interpretation of AI signals, alignment with brand values, GEO	Positions brand managers as cultural intermediaries, who facilitate controlled disruption and guide brands through uncertainty.
Cultural & Ethical Context	Cultural variation, ethical AI, governance, legitimacy	Highlights antifragility as a culturally contingent achievement dependent on ethical coherence and contextual sensitivity.

Key Sources

- Dietrich, D., & Russell, C. A. (2021). A Framework of Brand Contestation: Toward Brand Antifragility. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 48(4), 682-708.
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- McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sajan, A., & Giri, P. (2025). *Understanding artificial intelligence and its major role in branding*. In Strategic Brand Management in the Age of AI and Disruption (pp. 127-154). IGI Global Publishing.
- Swaminathan, V., et al. (2020). Branding in a hyperconnected world: Refocusing theories and rethinking boundaries. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(2), 24-46.
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