

RESEARCH TITLE:

Beyond the surface: Emotional and subconscious influences on consumer reactions to digital advertising; a cross-cultural study

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how emotions, subconscious cues, and personalization influence consumer behavior in digital advertising. It uses a systematic literature review and secondary data analysis to study factors such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalized messaging, while also exploring neuromarketing insights and cross-cultural differences.

The findings show that emotional and subconscious triggers strongly affect attention, memory, engagement, and purchase intentions. Warm colors tend to increase excitement, while cool colors create calm. Humor and nostalgia strengthen consumer connection and trust, fear can be effective in social campaigns, and personalization improves relevance when applied ethically. Neuromarketing studies further confirm that emotional cues capture attention more quickly and are remembered for longer periods.

This research contributes to academic knowledge by combining multiple emotional and subconscious factors into a single framework and by highlighting how responses differ across cultures. Practically, it suggests that marketers should use emotions deliberately, balance personalization with transparency, adapt campaigns to local cultural contexts, and apply neuromarketing techniques ethically.

The study has some limitations, including its reliance on secondary data and the variability of cultural contexts across studies. Future research should gather primary data, explore Generation Z's (or any other recent generation) responses, and examine ethical issues in emotional marketing. In particular, future work could build on the author's previous research at UWTSD, Birmingham (2023), titled '*Understanding Generation Z's interactions with online advertisements and motivations behind their purchasing decisions*', which provides insights into Gen Z's unique reactions to online and emotional advertising. Building on these findings, further studies should investigate ethical considerations, including privacy and the potential for manipulation.

Overall, this dissertation highlights that when emotional advertising is applied responsibly, alongside cultural adaptation and transparency, it can create campaigns that are effective, memorable, and human-centered.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Digital advertising is now one of the most important parts of international business. Companies use it to connect with people from different countries through social media, websites, and mobile apps. To make people notice their ads, marketers often use emotions, colors, humor, and personal messages. These tools can change how people think, feel, and finally buy something (Singh Baghel, 2024).

Many brands also use psychology and neuromarketing to understand how people react inside their minds. Neuromarketing means studying the brain's reaction to ads, colors, or sounds. For example, red is often used to create excitement, while blue creates trust and calm feelings (Gorn et al., 1997). However, color meanings can change depending on culture; red can mean love in one country and danger in another (Chattopadhyay, 2002).

Emotions are another key part of advertising. Some ads use humor to make people happy and remember the brand. Others use fear to make people act; for example, health campaigns showing the risks of smoking (Jose, 2025). Nostalgia, or the feeling of remembering good times from the past, is also popular because it builds emotional connection and brand trust (Muehling and Sprott, 2004). Personalized ads also play a big role, because people prefer to see ads that match their interests. But when ads are “too personal,” they can feel invasive or creepy (Iftikhar, 2024).

In the last two decades, marketing communication has changed significantly due to the growth of digital platforms and global markets. Companies no longer communicate with consumers only through traditional media such as television or print. Instead, digital advertising allows brands to interact with consumers in real time and across different cultural contexts (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

In this digital environment, consumers are exposed to a very large number of advertisements every day. Because of this overload, rational and informational advertising is often ignored. As a result, marketers increasingly use emotional and subconscious elements to attract attention and create stronger connections with consumers (Poels and Dewitte, 2019). Emotional advertising focuses on how people feel rather than what they think. Emotions such as happiness, fear, humor, and nostalgia can influence attention, memory, and purchase intention. Research shows that people often remember how an advertisement made them feel more than the information it provided (Singh Baghel, 2024).

At the same time, neuromarketing has become an important field in marketing research. Neuromarketing uses tools such as eye-tracking and brain imaging to study how consumers react subconsciously to advertising stimuli. These methods show that many decisions are made automatically, without conscious awareness (Plassmann et al., 2015).

Another important development is personalization in digital advertising. Personalized ads are created using consumer data, such as online behavior or preferences. When used correctly, personalization can make advertising more relevant and engaging. However, when personalization is too strong, it can feel invasive and reduce trust (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015).

In addition, cultural differences play a key role in how emotions are understood. Colors, humor, and emotional messages can have different meanings in different countries. This is especially important for international businesses that operate across multiple markets (Hofstede, 2001).

Moreover, recent studies suggest that combining emotional and subconscious cues with interactive features; like click-through games or virtual try-ons; can increase consumer engagement and satisfaction (Kim and Ko, 2020). Interactive elements create a sense of involvement, making consumers feel more connected to the brand while also highlighting how personalization and emotional appeals can work together in digital contexts.

Because of these changes, there is a strong need to understand how emotional, subconscious, and personalized advertising works together in a global digital context. This study is based on this need and aims to provide a clearer understanding of emotional and subconscious influence in international digital advertising.

1.2 Importance of the study

Understanding how these emotional and subconscious tools work together is important for international marketers. Today, companies spend billions on advertising that tries to connect emotionally, but not all strategies work in every culture. What makes people laugh or feel happy in one country might not work in another. Also, as online ads become more personal, people sometimes feel uncomfortable or lose trust in brands (Tucker, 2019).

If businesses know how color, emotion, nostalgia, and personalization interact, they can create more effective and ethical campaigns. For example, understanding which emotional triggers increase attention, memory, or brand loyalty can help marketers design campaigns that are both engaging and respectful of consumer privacy.

Moreover, studies show that integrating interactive and personalized elements can enhance engagement, but the balance is delicate. Ads that overstep cultural norms or privacy expectations can lead to negative brand perception or decreased purchase intention (Lamberton and Stephen, 2016). This research is important because it can guide marketers in creating emotionally intelligent and culturally sensitive advertising strategies, helping companies maximize engagement while avoiding intrusive or inappropriate practices (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

By understanding these interactions across cultures, this study provides practical insights for international marketing and contributes to ethical digital advertising practices.

1.3 Problem statement

Many studies have analyzed color psychology, emotional appeals, or personalized advertising, but most of them treat these elements separately. There is still very little research that looks at how emotional cues (like fear, humor, or nostalgia) and subconscious cues (like color or neuromarketing signals) work together with personalization in different cultures (Singh Baghel, 2024).

Moreover, previous research mainly focuses on Western countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. There is not enough cross-cultural evidence to understand how people in other parts of the world, for example Eastern Europe or Asia, respond to emotional and personalized ads. Because digital ads reach global audiences, understanding these cultural differences is crucial for global marketing success (Chattopadhyay, 2002).

In addition, while neuromarketing and emotional studies reveal subconscious consumer responses, there is limited research showing how these responses interact with personalized advertising in real-world digital campaigns. Without this knowledge, international marketers risk creating ads that are either ineffective or culturally inappropriate. This gap limits both academic understanding and practical guidance for ethically designing emotional and personalized campaigns that work across cultures (Pieters et al., 2010; Mehta and Zhu, 2009).

1.4 Research gap

Although there are many studies about emotion, color, and personalization, few studies combine them in one model. The missing part (the gap) is a cross-cultural analysis of how these cues work together. For example, we do not yet know if combining nostalgia with humor, or personalizing emotional ads, always makes marketing more effective; or if it sometimes makes people feel invaded.

Another gap is the lack of secondary data analysis comparing reactions in different markets using both emotional (conscious) and subconscious (automatic) responses. Most neuromarketing and emotional research is experimental and done in labs, not using real-world data from diverse cultures (Iftikhar, 2024; Jose, 2025).

Moreover, while some research examines consumer emotional responses, little is known about how these reactions vary across age groups, socio-economic status, or digital literacy. For example, younger audiences may respond more positively to humor and personalization, while older audiences may prefer more traditional emotional cues (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013). Additionally, limited research investigates the ethical implications of combining personalization with emotional manipulation, especially in global campaigns.

This dissertation fills these gaps by integrating emotional, subconscious, and personalized advertising elements and analyzing their impact across cultures, age groups, and digital contexts.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five main chapters, each serving a specific purpose to provide a comprehensive understanding of emotional and subconscious influences in digital advertising.

Chapter 1	introduces the topic, explains the background of the study, and highlights the research problem, objectives, and gap in the existing literature. It also explains the significance of the research and outlines the key research questions. This chapter sets the foundation for understanding why emotional, subconscious, and personalized cues are important in international marketing (Saunders et al., 2019).
Chapter 2	provides a detailed examination of previous research on emotional advertising, color psychology, nostalgia marketing, neuromarketing, and personalization. It also discusses cultural differences in digital advertising and identifies gaps in the literature, justifying the need for this study (Solomon, 2020).
Chapter 3	describes the research design, data sources, and methods used to explore the research questions. The chapter explains the systematic literature review process and secondary data analysis, including ethical considerations, data reliability, and limitations (Bryman, 2016).

Chapter 4	presents the results from the literature review and secondary data, highlighting how emotional and subconscious cues affect consumer behavior across cultures. It interprets these findings in relation to the research questions and compares them with previous studies (Kotler and Keller, 2016).
Chapter 5	summarizes the key findings, discusses their practical and academic implications, addresses limitations, and provides recommendations for future research and global marketing practice. This chapter emphasizes the importance of ethical and culturally aware emotional advertising strategies (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006).

This structure ensures a logical flow from theory to practice, helping readers understand both the academic and practical contributions of the study.

1.5 Research aim, objectives, and questions

Aim: The main aim of this study is to explore how emotional and subconscious cues in digital advertising, such as color, humor, fear, and nostalgia, influence consumer behavior across different cultures. It also seeks to understand how personalization interacts with these cues and whether it enhances engagement or causes discomfort. This research aims to provide practical and ethical guidance for marketers in global digital campaigns (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006).

Objectives:

1. To analyze previous studies on emotional advertising, subconscious cues, and personalization, focusing on their impact on consumer attention, memory, and purchase behavior.
2. To identify patterns and cultural differences in consumer responses using secondary data from multiple countries and digital platforms.
3. To develop a conceptual framework that explains the combined influence of emotions, subconscious triggers, and personalization, highlighting best practices for ethical marketing.
4. To examine age, digital literacy, and cultural context as moderating factors that affect emotional and personalized advertising effectiveness (Okazaki and Taylor, 2013).

Research Questions:

How do emotional and subconscious cues in digital advertising affect consumer behavior across different cultures and demographic groups?
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How does personalization change consumers' emotional reactions, and when does it feel engaging or intrusive?
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What practical and ethical lessons can international marketers learn from these findings to design more effective digital campaigns?
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1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the topic of digital advertising and highlighted how emotional, subconscious, and personalized elements influence consumer behavior. It showed that traditional advertising methods, which rely only on information or logic, are no longer enough. Today, people are exposed to countless ads every day, so brands need to connect on a deeper emotional level to capture attention, create memory, and encourage engagement or purchases. Tools such as colors, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization play a crucial role in achieving this connection. For example, colors can create excitement or trust, humor can make ads more memorable, and nostalgia can build emotional bonds with a brand. Personalization can increase relevance, but if it is too intrusive, it can reduce trust and make consumers feel uncomfortable.

The chapter also highlighted how neuromarketing helps understand subconscious reactions. Studies using techniques like eye-tracking or brain imaging show that many consumer decisions happen automatically, even before conscious thought. This explains why emotional and subconscious cues are often more influential than purely logical advertising.

Cultural differences were identified as a key factor affecting advertising effectiveness. What is funny, nostalgic, or emotionally engaging in one culture may not work in another. Similarly, colors and symbols can have different meanings across countries, making it important for international marketers to adapt campaigns to local cultural values.

Finally, the chapter identified gaps in existing research. Most studies analyze emotional cues, subconscious reactions, or personalization separately, and mainly in Western contexts. Little is known about how these elements work together across different cultures, age groups, or

digital literacy levels. There is also a lack of practical guidance for combining emotional and personalized strategies ethically, without making consumers feel manipulated or invaded.

Overall, this chapter establishes the importance of studying the combined effects of emotional, subconscious, and personalized advertising in a global context. It sets the foundation for the dissertation by highlighting the research aims, objectives, and questions. By addressing these gaps, the study aims to provide insights that are useful for both academics and practitioners, helping marketers create engaging, ethical, and culturally sensitive digital advertising strategies.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Emotions in advertising

Advertising today increasingly relies on emotions to establish strong connections between consumers and brands. Emotional advertisements are not only remembered more easily than rational ones, but they also create a sense of attachment or loyalty toward a product (Jose, 2025). Happiness, humor, fear, and nostalgia are some of the most commonly used emotions, each with different effects on consumer engagement. For example, humor can increase sharing and positive perception, but it must be appropriate to cultural norms. A joke that works in one country may be misunderstood or even offensive in another, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity in emotional marketing (Chattopadhyay, 2002).

Fear appeals are particularly effective in public health or safety campaigns, such as anti-smoking messages or road safety campaigns. These ads capture attention and motivate behavior change by highlighting potential risks while providing actionable solutions. When used carefully, fear can trigger compliance and preventive actions, but if overused, it can lead to avoidance or stress, reducing campaign effectiveness (Jose, 2025). Positive emotions like happiness and nostalgia build long-term relationships with consumers, encouraging repeat engagement and loyalty (Muehling and Spratt, 2004).

Dual Process Theory helps explain why emotional advertising is so effective. Kahneman (2011) distinguishes between System 1 thinking, which is fast, automatic, and emotional, and System 2 thinking, which is slow, logical, and deliberate. Most advertising messages aim to engage System 1, creating immediate emotional reactions before consumers process the information rationally. This explains why emotional ads can influence attitudes and purchase intentions subconsciously (Poels and Dewitte, 2019).

Emotional influence also affects consumer memory. Ads that evoke strong emotions are more likely to be remembered and recalled when making purchase decisions. Positive emotions like

joy or nostalgia can enhance brand preference, while moderate fear can increase attention and motivate action in social marketing contexts (Singh Baghel, 2024). In online shopping, emotions often drive impulse purchases. Excitement, pleasure, or emotional connection with a brand increases the likelihood of quick decisions, explaining why e-commerce platforms frequently use emotional cues such as personalized recommendations, time-limited offers, or visually appealing designs (Verplanken and Sato, 2011).

Additionally, social media has amplified the role of emotional advertising. Emotional content is more likely to be shared, commented on, and spread virally, increasing reach without higher advertising costs (Phelps et al., 2004). This means that emotional appeals not only affect individual behavior but also influence social networks and collective consumer responses. However, there is a risk of negative backlash if consumers feel manipulated. Overly emotional or manipulative messages can damage brand trust and reputation, particularly among culturally sensitive or skeptical audiences (Baumeister et al., 2007).

Understanding emotional processes in advertising is therefore critical. By carefully balancing positive and negative emotions, considering cultural norms, and linking emotional appeals to actionable messages, marketers can create more effective, ethical, and memorable campaigns that resonate across different markets and consumer segments.

2.2 Color and subconscious cues

Color is one of the most important and immediate ways to communicate a message in advertising. It can influence people's feelings, attention, and perception even before they read a headline or listen to a message (Gorn et al., 1997). Warm colors, such as red, orange, and yellow, tend to create energy, excitement, and urgency. For example, red is often used in sales promotions to attract attention or in food advertising to stimulate appetite. In contrast, cool colors such as blue and green evoke calmness, trust, and relaxation, which is why banks or health-related brands often use these colors in their digital campaigns (Labrecque and Milne, 2013).

However, color perception is not universal. Cultural background, age, gender, and personal experience all influence how people interpret color (Chattopadhyay, 2002). For instance, in Western countries, red is linked with love, passion, or danger, while in China it represents luck and celebration. White symbolizes purity in Western contexts but is associated with mourning in some Asian cultures. These cultural differences mean that advertisers must consider their target audience carefully when selecting colors for global campaigns (Aslam, 2006).

Beyond conscious perception, color also works at a subconscious level. Subtle variations in brightness, saturation, or contrast can influence attention and emotion without the consumer being fully aware. Research using eye-tracking and EEG techniques demonstrates that people often respond to color cues before they process textual or verbal information. For example, brighter or contrasting colors attract initial attention, while harmonious color schemes can create positive emotional responses (Singh Baghel, 2024; Ou et al., 2011). In digital environments, where users scroll quickly, these subconscious cues are crucial, as brands have only a few seconds to make an impression.

In addition, color interacts with other subconscious elements, such as sound, rhythm, and motion. Combining visual and auditory cues can create more immersive and emotionally engaging experiences, especially in video ads or social media content. Studies show that congruent combinations of color and music or sound enhance memory and brand recall (Bellizzi et al., 1983). For example, an ad with a calm blue background paired with relaxing music can reduce anxiety and increase the likelihood of positive brand association.

Furthermore, color can influence decision-making indirectly. For example, certain colors have been linked to impulse purchases or risk-taking behavior. Warm colors may encourage faster decisions, while cool colors may promote careful evaluation and thoughtful engagement (Elliot and Maier, 2014). This demonstrates that color not only attracts attention but can subtly shape consumer behavior.

Overall, understanding both the conscious and subconscious effects of color is essential for creating effective digital advertisements. Marketers must carefully select colors that resonate with their audience, align with cultural values, and complement other emotional and subconscious cues to maximize engagement and brand impact.

2.3 Nostalgia and memory

Nostalgia marketing is a strategy used by brands to connect with consumers through memories of the past. By using familiar symbols, music, or visuals, marketers aim to evoke positive emotions and associations that increase engagement and loyalty. For example, brands often use vintage packaging, retro logos, or music from past decades to make people remember simpler, happier times (Muehling and Spratt, 2004). Nostalgic content can create emotional warmth, comfort, and trust, which often leads to higher purchase intention and stronger brand attachment.

One reason nostalgia is effective is that it triggers autobiographical memory. When people see something that reminds them of their own past, they experience a sense of personal

connection with the product or brand. This connection can make the brand feel more human and relatable, and it can also influence attitudes and decisions subconsciously (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003). For instance, a chocolate ad that uses images from the 1980s may make older consumers feel comforted and more likely to choose the product over competitors.

However, nostalgia does not affect all age groups equally. Older generations tend to respond more strongly to traditional nostalgic cues, while younger generations, such as Generation Z, often associate nostalgia with early digital experiences rather than physical objects. These might include childhood video games, early social media, or popular TV shows from their youth (Wohl et al., 2019). This highlights the need for marketers to adapt nostalgic content based on the target audience's age and experiences.

Digital platforms have expanded opportunities for nostalgia marketing. Social media, streaming services, and video platforms allow brands to use interactive content to engage users with nostalgic themes. For example, Spotify's "Throwback Playlists" or retro-themed Instagram campaigns create a participatory experience, encouraging users to share personal memories and engage with the brand online (Kumar et al., 2020). Interactive nostalgia strengthens emotional connections because it allows consumers to actively relive positive experiences rather than passively view an advertisement.

Another important consideration is authenticity. Nostalgia is most effective when it feels genuine and aligned with the brand's history or identity. Forced or fake nostalgia can appear manipulative and reduce trust (Merchant and Rose, 2013). For instance, using random retro elements that do not relate to the brand or product can feel artificial and confuse consumers.

Finally, nostalgia can interact with other emotional and subconscious cues in advertising. For example, combining nostalgic visuals with warm colors or familiar music can enhance attention and emotional response (Zhou and Belk, 2019). Similarly, personalization can make nostalgic content more relevant, but over-personalization may feel intrusive, reducing the positive impact.

Overall, nostalgia marketing is a powerful tool in digital advertising. It can evoke strong emotional reactions, strengthen brand loyalty, and increase engagement. However, marketers must carefully tailor nostalgic content to the audience's generational experiences, cultural background, and digital environment to maximize effectiveness and maintain authenticity.

2.4 Personalization and intrusion

Personalization in digital advertising is a strategy where ads are tailored to individual users based on their preferences, behavior, search history, or demographic information. The main

goal is to make the advertising experience more relevant and engaging. Personalized ads can create a sense of connection between consumers and brands, making people feel understood and valued. For example, when a user searches for running shoes online, seeing a targeted ad showing similar styles increases the likelihood of clicking, visiting the website, or making a purchase (Iftikhar, 2024).

Personalization works best when it provides clear benefits to consumers, such as relevant product recommendations or helpful reminders. Studies show that consumers respond more positively when personalization reduces search effort and saves time (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015). In this way, personalization can enhance brand loyalty, increase purchase intention, and improve overall user satisfaction.

However, personalization can also have negative effects if it feels intrusive. This is known as “advertising intrusion,” which occurs when consumers feel their privacy is being invaded or that the brand knows too much about them (Tucker, 2019). For instance, if a user sees an ad about a product they mentioned in a private conversation or an app not related to shopping, they may feel uncomfortable or even distrust the brand. Intrusive personalization can create negative emotional responses and reduce the effectiveness of the campaign.

Cultural differences play a key role in how personalization is perceived. Research indicates that consumers from privacy-conscious countries, such as Germany, Japan, or the UK, are more likely to react negatively to highly personalized ads (Milne and Culnan, 2004). In contrast, consumers in countries with a higher acceptance of online data use, such as the United States or China, often respond more positively to personalization, provided they perceive it as helpful rather than manipulative (Martin and Murphy, 2017). This demonstrates that marketers must consider cultural attitudes toward privacy when designing personalized campaigns.

Another important factor is transparency. Providing users with control over their personal data and explaining how it will be used can reduce perceptions of intrusiveness. For example, giving consumers options to choose their ad preferences or opt out of tracking increases trust and engagement (Kaptein et al., 2015). Clear communication about data usage also aligns with ethical advertising practices and helps avoid reputational damage.

Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning have made personalization more sophisticated. AI algorithms can predict consumer preferences and deliver real-time recommendations based on browsing history, location, and past purchases. While this increases effectiveness, it also raises ethical concerns about data security and emotional

manipulation. Therefore, marketers must balance personalization with consumer comfort and trust to maintain long-term relationships (Tucker, 2019; Martin and Murphy, 2017).

In conclusion, personalization is a powerful tool in digital advertising that can enhance engagement, attention, and purchase intention. However, it must be implemented carefully to avoid intrusiveness, respect cultural norms, and ensure transparency. When done correctly, personalization strengthens emotional connections between brands and consumers while maintaining ethical standards in digital marketing.

2.5 Neuromarketing and consumer behavior

Neuromarketing Neuromarketing is a field that combines marketing and neuroscience to study how consumers respond subconsciously to advertising stimuli such as colors, sounds, images, or emotions. By using scientific tools like electroencephalography (EEG), eye-tracking, facial expression analysis, and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), researchers can observe how the brain reacts in real time to marketing messages (Singh Baghel, 2024). These methods provide insights that traditional surveys or interviews may miss because many consumer reactions happen automatically, without conscious awareness.

Research in neuromarketing shows that emotional responses are often stronger than rational thinking when people make decisions. For example, an advertisement that triggers joy, nostalgia, or excitement can lead to immediate interest and impulsive buying behavior (Plassmann et al., 2015). Subtle cues like a smiling face, upbeat music, or familiar colors can activate areas in the brain associated with reward, memory, and pleasure. This explains why consumers sometimes cannot articulate why they prefer one product over another; they are influenced subconsciously by emotional stimuli.

Neuromarketing also helps marketers optimize ad design to capture attention quickly. Eye-tracking studies reveal which parts of an ad are most engaging and which are ignored. Bright colors, contrasting shapes, and human faces usually attract attention first, often within milliseconds. EEG and facial expression analysis can measure emotional intensity, showing whether an ad produces positive feelings, surprise, or even stress (Venkatraman et al., 2015). This allows marketers to adjust content to maximize emotional impact while avoiding negative reactions.

Despite its benefits, neuromarketing research has limitations. It is typically expensive and time-consuming, often involving small sample sizes or laboratory conditions. This can make it challenging to generalize results to large or culturally diverse populations (Hubert and Kenning, 2008). Cultural differences also play a role; for instance, expressions of emotion or reactions

to colors and symbols can vary across countries, meaning that an ad effective in one market may not work in another. Therefore, integrating neuromarketing findings with cross-cultural studies is important for global campaigns.

Neuromarketing also raises ethical questions. Using subconscious cues to influence behavior can be powerful but may border on manipulation if consumers are unaware of how their emotions are being guided. Ethical neuromarketing involves respecting privacy, avoiding excessive emotional triggers, and ensuring that advertisements provide value rather than exploiting consumer vulnerabilities (Ariely and Berns, 2010).

In conclusion, neuromarketing offers valuable insights into how emotions and subconscious cues drive consumer behavior. By measuring brain and physiological responses, marketers can design emotionally engaging ads that increase attention, memory, and purchase intention. However, ethical considerations, sample size limitations, and cultural differences must be taken into account to ensure that findings are applied responsibly in international marketing contexts.

2.6 Cultural differences in digital advertising

Culture strongly shapes how people perceive and respond to digital advertising. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory highlights key factors, such as individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation, that influence consumer behavior in response to emotional and personalized messages (Hofstede, 2001). These cultural values affect not only what people find engaging but also how they interpret colors, humor, and nostalgia in advertisements.

For example, in individualistic cultures like the United States or Australia, personal achievement, independence, and self-expression are highly valued. Emotional appeals that highlight humor, adventure, or self-confidence tend to be more persuasive because they align with these values (Jose, 2025). By contrast, in collectivist cultures such as Japan, China, or India, people focus more on group harmony, family relationships, and community. In these societies, advertisements that emphasize collective experiences, social responsibility, or familial connections are often more effective (Sriram and Manchanda, 2021).

Color perception also varies widely between cultures. Red, for instance, can symbolize passion, danger, or excitement in Western countries, but in China, it is often associated with luck, happiness, and celebration (Chattopadhyay, 2002). Similarly, humor differs culturally: what is amusing in the United States or Europe may be considered offensive or inappropriate in cultures that value respect and formality. Nostalgia, too, is culturally specific. Historical

events, traditional music, or childhood symbols that evoke warmth and comfort in one country may not resonate at all in another. Therefore, marketers must carefully tailor the emotional content of digital ads to align with local cultural values.

Despite its importance, most research on cultural influences in advertising is focused on Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding cross-cultural differences, particularly in emerging markets. Limited comparative data from Asia, Africa, or Eastern Europe makes it difficult for global marketers to develop universal strategies (De Mooij, 2019). This gap is especially critical in digital marketing, where campaigns can be broadcast globally in seconds, and cultural misalignment can lead to reduced engagement or even brand damage.

Moreover, cultural adaptation goes beyond content; it also affects personalization strategies. Consumers in high-privacy cultures, such as Germany or the UK, may view personalized ads as intrusive, while in other cultures, sharing data for tailored experiences may be more accepted (Iftikhar, 2024). Marketers must therefore balance personalization with cultural expectations of privacy and control.

In conclusion, cultural context plays a crucial role in shaping consumer responses to emotional and digital advertising. Colors, humor, nostalgia, and personalization all interact with cultural values to determine whether an ad is effective or off-putting. Understanding these differences is essential for global companies to design ethical, engaging, and culturally sensitive campaigns that resonate with diverse audiences (De Mooij, 2019; Sriram and Manchanda, 2021).

2.7 Summary and research gap

The literature review highlights that emotional and subconscious factors, such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization, significantly shape how consumers respond to digital advertising. Each of these elements has been examined individually in previous research. For example, color psychology studies explain how warm and cool colors influence arousal and trust, while humor research shows that funny content can increase engagement (Gorn et al., 1997; Jose, 2025). Fear appeals are mostly used in health and social campaigns, and nostalgia marketing can create emotional connections and brand loyalty (Muehling and Spratt, 2004). Personalization, meanwhile, enhances relevance and engagement but carries the risk of perceived intrusion when consumers feel their privacy is compromised (Iftikhar, 2024; Tucker, 2019).

However, the current literature is fragmented. Most studies focus on a single emotional or subconscious factor without considering how these elements interact. For instance, research

on color and emotion rarely accounts for personalization or cultural differences. Similarly, studies on personalized advertising often do not examine neuromarketing insights or emotional triggers like nostalgia and humor. Nostalgia research tends to focus on Western or older audiences, leaving younger generations and non-Western cultures underexplored (Jose, 2025; Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015). Additionally, while neuromarketing studies provide insights into subconscious reactions, they are usually conducted in laboratory settings on small samples, which limits their generalizability to real-world, cross-cultural digital advertising contexts (Plassmann et al., 2015; Singh Baghel, 2024).

Another important gap is the cross-cultural aspect. Cultural values influence how consumers interpret colors, humor, and emotional cues. Individualistic cultures may respond more positively to self-focused messages, whereas collectivist cultures prefer group-oriented and family-centered appeals (Hofstede, 2001; De Mooij, 2019). Yet, comparative studies across multiple regions are scarce, particularly in emerging markets. This makes it difficult for global marketers to apply insights universally or to design campaigns that are both emotionally effective and culturally appropriate.

This dissertation aims to address these gaps by integrating emotional, subconscious, and personalization factors into a single conceptual framework. It will also consider cultural differences, exploring how the effectiveness of digital advertising varies across global markets. The study will use a combination of systematic literature review and secondary data analysis, drawing on both academic research and real-world marketing reports to identify patterns and trends.

In doing so, the dissertation contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it offers an integrated understanding of how multiple emotional and subconscious factors interact and influence consumer behavior across cultures. Practically, it provides guidance for marketers on creating emotionally engaging and culturally sensitive advertising that balances personalization with consumer comfort and privacy (Sriram and Manchanda, 2021). By addressing these gaps, the research aims to help marketers design campaigns that are effective, ethical, and globally relevant.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on emotional, subconscious, and personalized elements in digital advertising, highlighting how each factor influences consumer behavior. Emotions are central to advertising effectiveness because they capture attention, enhance memory, and encourage engagement. Positive emotions like happiness, humor, and nostalgia strengthen brand attachment and loyalty, while moderate fear can motivate action in social or health

campaigns. Emotional advertising works quickly and subconsciously, often triggering decisions before consumers think logically. However, cultural sensitivity is critical, as what is funny, nostalgic, or emotionally appealing in one culture may not work or could even backfire in another.

Color and other subconscious cues also play a significant role. Warm colors can create excitement and urgency, while cool colors evoke calm and trust. Subtle variations in brightness, contrast, or harmony can influence attention and emotional responses even before conscious awareness. Color interacts with other elements, like sound and motion, to create immersive experiences that guide consumer behavior. Similarly, nostalgia connects consumers to past experiences, building emotional warmth and trust, especially when it is authentic and aligned with a brand's identity. Personalization enhances engagement by making ads more relevant, but it carries the risk of intrusiveness if consumers feel their privacy is compromised. Cultural differences further affect perceptions of personalization, meaning marketers must balance relevance with comfort and transparency.

Neuromarketing research supports the importance of subconscious and emotional factors. Brain and physiological studies show that consumers often respond automatically to emotional cues, colors, or familiar symbols. These insights help marketers design ads that attract attention, evoke positive emotions, and improve recall, but they also raise ethical concerns about manipulation and privacy.

Finally, culture shapes all aspects of digital advertising. Individualistic and collectivist values influence how emotional messages, humor, colors, and personalization are received. Cross-cultural differences highlight the need for marketers to adapt campaigns carefully to avoid negative reactions and ensure effectiveness.

Overall, the literature shows that emotions, subconscious cues, personalization, and cultural context are interconnected and critical for effective digital advertising. While each factor has been studied individually, research remains fragmented, particularly regarding their combined impact across cultures. This chapter identifies these gaps and sets the stage for the dissertation's conceptual framework, which integrates multiple emotional and subconscious elements with personalization to guide culturally sensitive, ethical, and engaging global marketing strategies.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This This chapter explains the methodology used to conduct the research. The main aim of this dissertation is to explore how emotional and subconscious elements; such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization; affect consumer behavior in digital advertising, and how these effects differ across cultures (Jose, 2025). Rather than collecting new data directly from participants, this study relies on secondary data and a systematic literature review. This approach allows the researcher to analyze existing findings, identify patterns, and detect gaps in current knowledge (Singh Baghel, 2024).

Using secondary data is particularly suitable for this research because it enables the study of large datasets and published studies without involving human participants, which reduces ethical concerns and practical difficulties. Trusted sources such as academic journals, SSRN working papers, marketing reports, and international surveys provide reliable and high-quality data. By combining multiple sources, the research can also validate findings and increase their credibility (Bryman, 2016).

The systematic literature review will organize and synthesize previous research on emotional and subconscious advertising, neuromarketing, and personalization. It provides a structured way to examine how colors, humor, fear, and nostalgia influence memory, attention, and buying behavior across different cultures. Meanwhile, secondary data analysis allows the study to observe real-world patterns in consumer responses, such as engagement rates, click-through behavior, or brand loyalty from existing marketing campaigns (De Mooij, 2019).

This chapter also highlights the ethical considerations of using secondary data. Only publicly available and ethically approved sources are used. No confidential or private participant information is accessed, and all sources are cited accurately in Harvard style. Furthermore, the research accounts for cultural diversity, examining how emotional and personalized advertising may be interpreted differently depending on cultural norms and values (Hofstede, 2001; De Mooij, 2019).

Overall, this chapter provides a clear roadmap for the research. By combining a systematic review with secondary data analysis, the study can produce a comprehensive understanding of emotional and subconscious advertising, its cultural variations, and the role of personalization, while maintaining ethical and academic rigor. This approach ensures that the findings are both practical for marketers and meaningful for academic research.

3.2 Research philosophy

This study adopts an interpretivist research philosophy. Interpretivism focuses on understanding how people create meaning from their experiences, emotions, and cultural symbols (Bryman, 2016). Since this dissertation examines emotional and subconscious responses to digital advertising, including reactions to color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization, an interpretivist approach is suitable. It allows the researcher to explore not just what people do, but why they feel and react in certain ways.

Unlike positivist research, which emphasizes objective measurement, numerical data, and universal laws, interpretivism acknowledges that reality is subjective and context-dependent. For instance, the same advertisement may generate excitement in one culture but confusion or discomfort in another. Similarly, a personalized ad might feel engaging to one user but intrusive to another, depending on cultural norms, personal experiences, and prior exposure to marketing. These nuanced reactions are difficult to quantify precisely, which makes interpretivism an appropriate framework.

Interpretivism also aligns with the study's use of secondary data and systematic literature review. Rather than collecting numerical data from experiments, the researcher interprets existing findings, patterns, and insights to understand the underlying psychological and cultural mechanisms that influence consumer behavior. For example, previous studies show that colors like red or blue can evoke different emotional responses depending on context and culture (Chattopadhyay, 2002; Gorn et al., 1997). Similarly, humor or nostalgia may create positive engagement in one group but negative reactions in another (Jose, 2025; Muehling and Sprott, 2004).

Moreover, interpretivism allows consideration of subconscious processes, which are difficult to measure directly. Neuromarketing studies using EEG, eye-tracking, or fMRI demonstrate that many decisions happen automatically, without conscious awareness (Plassmann et al., 2015). By using interpretivism, this study can synthesize these findings to explain why consumers behave the way they do, rather than simply reporting numerical correlations.

Overall, the interpretivist philosophy provides a flexible and suitable foundation for this research. It helps the study interpret complex emotional and subconscious phenomena, understand cultural differences in advertising perception, and draw meaningful insights that are both academically valuable and practically relevant for marketers.

3.3 Research approach

The study uses a qualitative research approach because it focuses on understanding meaning, context, and interpretation rather than on numerical measurement or statistical testing (Bryman, 2016). The research aims to explore how emotional and subconscious advertising elements, such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization, work together to influence consumer behavior. It also investigates how cultural differences change the way these elements are perceived. A qualitative approach allows for in-depth analysis of patterns and relationships that may not be immediately visible through numbers alone.

Although some secondary data, such as marketing performance reports or neuromarketing studies, include quantitative information, the purpose of this dissertation is not to calculate statistics. Instead, the study uses qualitative synthesis to examine how different authors and reports explain consumer reactions to emotional advertising. For example, one report may show that humorous ads increase engagement in Western countries, while another shows that fear appeals work better in Asian markets (Jose, 2025; Singh Baghel, 2024). A qualitative approach allows these findings to be compared and interpreted in a meaningful way, highlighting patterns, contradictions, and gaps in understanding.

This research also uses an inductive approach within the qualitative framework. Induction allows the researcher to build general insights from specific studies and secondary data, rather than testing a pre-defined hypothesis (Saunders et al., 2019). By looking at multiple sources, including academic papers, SSRN working papers, and industry reports, the study identifies recurring themes, such as the balance between personalization and privacy or the cultural meaning of colors and humor. These insights help to create a conceptual understanding of how emotional and subconscious cues influence digital consumer behavior across cultures.

Furthermore, qualitative research is particularly appropriate for studying subconscious responses and emotional effects, which are difficult to measure with surveys or experiments alone. Tools like neuromarketing provide data on attention, emotional arousal, and memory retention (Plassmann et al., 2015), but these results need to be interpreted rather than simply reported. The qualitative approach allows the study to synthesize these findings and understand why consumers respond differently depending on culture, ad type, and personalization.

Overall, using a qualitative research approach enables the dissertation to combine existing knowledge from various studies, draw meaningful interpretations, and provide practical insights for marketers seeking to create ethical and effective emotional advertising strategies.

3.4 Research design

The research design of this dissertation follows two main methods: a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and Secondary Data Analysis. The aim is to explore how emotional and subconscious cues; such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization; affect consumer behavior in digital advertising, and how these effects vary across cultures (Jose, 2025). The study does not involve direct data collection from participants, so it relies entirely on existing academic studies and industry reports.

The Systematic Literature Review is the primary method. This approach is structured and rigorous, ensuring that the research is transparent, objective, and replicable (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003). The SLR involves selecting relevant keywords, identifying databases, screening articles for relevance and quality, and synthesizing results to highlight patterns, contradictions, and research gaps. By following this method, the study can provide a clear understanding of how emotional and subconscious elements interact in advertising across different cultural contexts (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006).

Secondary Data Analysis is used to complement the literature review. This method involves examining data that has already been collected by other researchers or organizations. Examples include marketing performance reports, case studies of advertising campaigns, and neuromarketing experiments available through SSRN or other industry sources (Iftikhar, 2024). This allows the researcher to observe real-world trends, such as how different emotional cues influence engagement, memory, and purchase intention across markets. Using secondary data also ensures ethical compliance, as no personal data is directly collected.

The qualitative nature of this research makes this design suitable. Qualitative analysis focuses on meaning, interpretation, and understanding rather than numerical measurement (Bryman, 2016). Combining SLR and secondary data enables triangulation, increasing the reliability of findings. For example, patterns observed in academic research can be compared with industry data to confirm whether emotional advertising strategies perform consistently across different markets (Saunders et al., 2019).

Overall, this research design allows for a comprehensive exploration of emotional and subconscious advertising. By integrating findings from multiple sources and cultures, the dissertation aims to provide both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for marketers, while maintaining rigor, ethics, and feasibility.

3.5 Systematic literature review process

The systematic literature review (SLR) is a key part of this research because it provides a structured way to gather and analyze existing knowledge about emotional advertising, subconscious cues, and personalization. The SLR allows the researcher to identify patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the literature and provides a strong foundation for the conceptual framework of this dissertation (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003).

The process begins by selecting keywords that reflect the main concepts of the study. Examples include “color in advertising,” “emotional appeal,” “fear appeal,” “humor advertising,” “nostalgia marketing,” “personalization,” “advertising intrusion,” “neuromarketing,” “impulse buying,” and “cultural differences in marketing.” Choosing precise and relevant keywords ensures that the search captures articles that are closely related to the research aim. Additional synonyms and related terms will be considered to avoid missing relevant studies (Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015).

Next, the search will be conducted in multiple academic databases, including SSRN, Google Scholar, and Scopus, covering publications from 2000 to 2025. Peer-reviewed journals, such as the *Journal of Advertising*, *International Marketing Review*, and *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, will be prioritized. This ensures that the literature included is credible and current, providing reliable insights into both academic theory and practical applications.

After gathering relevant studies, each article will be carefully read and coded. The coding process involves identifying how each study measures emotional or subconscious factors, such as colors, humor, fear, nostalgia, or personalization. Information will then be organized into thematic groups for analysis, including categories like emotional triggers, cultural influence, neuromarketing findings, and personalization effects. By comparing these themes, similarities, contradictions, and missing areas of research can be identified, which highlights the research gap (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006).

Only studies with clear methodology and reliable data will be included. Articles that are not peer-reviewed, too general, or lack methodological clarity will be excluded to maintain quality. The SLR will also consider studies from different countries to ensure cross-cultural perspectives are represented. This process will allow the dissertation to develop a comprehensive understanding of emotional and subconscious advertising across digital and international contexts (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007).

By following this structured process, the SLR ensures transparency, reduces bias, and provides a strong foundation for linking existing literature to the research questions and objectives.

3.6 Secondary data analysis

The Secondary data analysis is the second method used in this research. It involves using information that has already been collected by other researchers, organizations, or agencies. Unlike primary data collection, secondary data allows the researcher to access large amounts of information quickly and cost-effectively. Common examples include marketing performance reports from organizations like Nielsen or Statista, previous neuromarketing experiments, and case studies of digital advertising campaigns found in SSRN working papers or other academic sources (Iftikhar, 2024).

The purpose of using secondary data is to understand how emotional and subconscious elements, such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, or personalization, influence real consumer behavior. For example, some reports may show that humorous digital ads increase click-through rates or social media shares, while other studies may reveal when personalization becomes intrusive or reduces trust. By analyzing existing data, this research can identify patterns and insights across multiple markets and cultural contexts without conducting new experiments (Saunders et al., 2019).

The analysis process begins with selecting datasets that are relevant, reliable, and recent. Data quality is checked by reviewing the methodology, sample size, and source credibility. Next, data is summarized using descriptive techniques, such as frequency counts, trends, and comparisons between regions or demographics. For instance, if a study shows that nostalgic advertising performs better in Europe than in Asia, this finding is recorded and compared with other reports. Patterns are then synthesized to identify general insights about emotional and subconscious responses to advertising (Bryman, 2016).

Secondary data analysis also allows for cross-cultural comparisons. Because digital advertising reaches global audiences, it is essential to understand how emotional reactions differ across countries. By using secondary data from multiple regions, this study can explore cultural differences in responses to colors, humor, nostalgia, and personalization, providing a more comprehensive view than studies limited to a single market (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Finally, the combination of systematic literature review and secondary data analysis strengthens the research. While the SLR provides theoretical and experimental insights,

secondary data offers practical, real-world evidence of consumer behavior. Together, they create a robust, reliable, and ethically sound foundation for answering the research questions.

3.7 Data reliability and validity

Ensuring data reliability and validity is crucial in research, especially when using secondary data and literature reviews. Reliability refers to the consistency of the information, while validity relates to whether the data accurately represents the concepts being studied (Bryman, 2016). In this dissertation, all sources, including academic articles, reports, and datasets, will be carefully evaluated to confirm that they are credible, relevant, and methodologically sound. Key criteria include publication date, sample size, research methods, and the reputation of the journal or organization. For example, studies published in peer-reviewed journals or reports from reputable organizations like Nielsen or Statista are considered more trustworthy than unverified sources (Saunders et al., 2019).

Triangulation is another important strategy used to increase reliability and validity. Triangulation means comparing information from multiple sources to see whether the findings are consistent. For instance, if a neuromarketing study shows that bright colors increase attention, and this pattern is confirmed by both experimental research and industry reports, the finding is more likely to be reliable. Similarly, if personalization improves engagement in some studies but creates discomfort in others, triangulation helps explain why differences occur, such as cultural or methodological variations (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Using secondary data has some limitations. Data may be missing, incomplete, or collected using different methods, which can create challenges in comparison. Some datasets might not include the specific variables needed, or they may measure consumer behavior differently across regions. To address these issues, this dissertation includes multiple sources from different countries, industries, and academic disciplines. This variety reduces bias, improves generalizability, and provides a more balanced understanding of emotional, subconscious, and personalized advertising effects (Iftikhar, 2024).

In addition, care will be taken to use the most recent studies available, ensuring that trends in digital advertising and consumer behavior are accurately captured. By combining multiple, high-quality sources and applying triangulation, this research maintains both reliability and validity while producing meaningful insights for international digital marketing.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are an important part of any research, even when direct participants are not involved. Since this study relies on secondary data and published research, the risk to

human subjects is minimal. However, ethical responsibility remains crucial, especially when handling sensitive or proprietary information (Resnik, 2020). All sources, including academic papers, industry reports, and SSRN working papers, will be properly cited using Harvard referencing style. This ensures that credit is given to the original authors and prevents plagiarism (Iftikhar, 2024).

The researcher will only use data that is publicly accessible or explicitly allowed for research purposes. Any information obtained from subscription-based journals or proprietary databases will be used in accordance with their terms and conditions. Confidential or private data about individuals, companies, or campaigns will not be included, ensuring that privacy and legal regulations are respected (Saunders et al., 2019).

Another ethical aspect is intellectual honesty. When interpreting and presenting data, the researcher will avoid exaggeration or misrepresentation of findings. Results will be reported objectively, including both supporting and contradictory evidence, so that the research reflects a balanced view of emotional and subconscious advertising practices (Bryman, 2016).

Ethical considerations also involve cultural sensitivity. Since this study analyzes cross-cultural data, care will be taken not to stereotype or generalize behaviors in ways that could be misleading or offensive. For example, describing how humor or nostalgia works in different countries will be based on evidence, not assumptions, and any limitations in the data will be clearly acknowledged (Hofstede, 2001).

Overall, by following university ethics guidelines, using only public and credible sources, ensuring proper citations, and being transparent in analysis, this research maintains high ethical standards while providing valuable insights into digital advertising.

3.9 Limitations of the study

While this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of emotional and subconscious cues in digital advertising, several limitations are expected. First, neuromarketing studies often involve small sample sizes and use different research tools, such as EEG, eye-tracking, or fMRI (Singh Baghel, 2024). These methodological differences make direct comparisons between studies difficult. For example, one study may measure emotional reactions using eye movement, while another uses brain activity, which can lead to different results and interpretations.

Second, cross-cultural analysis is constrained by the availability of data. Some regions, especially emerging markets, have fewer published studies or industry reports on digital advertising. This can lead to an imbalance in the comparison of cultural differences. For

instance, there may be extensive data on Western markets like the United States or the United Kingdom, but limited information about Eastern Europe, Africa, or Southeast Asia. As a result, cultural insights may be more robust for some countries than for others (Hofstede, 2001).

Third, secondary data analysis cannot establish causal relationships. The data can show correlations; for example, that nostalgia often increases engagement; but it cannot prove why this effect occurs or whether it directly causes changes in purchase behavior. Factors such as product type, brand familiarity, or socio-economic context may also influence consumer responses, but these are not always captured in secondary datasets (Resnik, 2020).

Fourth, there is a risk of bias in existing literature. Some studies may overrepresent positive effects of emotional advertising because research showing null or negative results is less likely to be published (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). This “publication bias” may affect the conclusions of the systematic literature review.

Finally, ethical and privacy considerations limit access to some detailed neuromarketing or personalization datasets, which are often proprietary or confidential. This restricts the ability to analyze highly granular data across different cultures (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015).

Despite these limitations, this study still provides valuable insights. By combining systematic literature review findings with secondary data from multiple regions and sources, the research can identify common patterns and offer practical guidance for marketers, even if some gaps remain. Recognizing these limitations helps maintain transparency and guides future research directions.

3.10 Research Onion

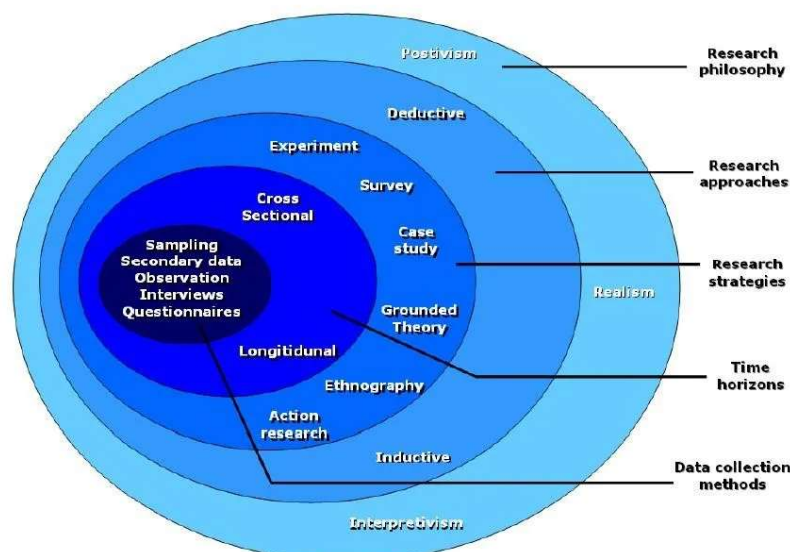


Figure 1: Saunders research onion

Source: (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019)

To organize the research methodology clearly, this dissertation uses the Research Onion model (Saunders et al., 2019). This model shows research as layers, from philosophy to specific data collection and analysis techniques.

Philosophy: the research philosophy is interpretivism. This is suitable because the study focuses on understanding how emotional and subconscious factors; such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization; affect consumer behavior. Interpretivism allows exploring subjective and cultural differences in how people respond to digital ads.

Approach: the research takes an inductive approach, meaning insights are built from reviewing existing literature and secondary data, rather than testing predefined hypotheses.

Strategy: the strategy combines a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with Secondary Data Analysis, which provides both theoretical insights and practical evidence of how emotional and subconscious elements influence consumer behavior.

Choices: a qualitative approach is chosen because the study focuses on understanding meaning, context, and interpretation, rather than on numerical analysis.

Time horizon: the time horizon is cross-sectional, as the study examines research and data published from 2000 to 2025 to identify current trends, without tracking changes over time.

Techniques and procedures: techniques include collecting data from academic articles and secondary sources, coding key themes, organizing information into categories such as emotions, personalization, and cultural differences, and using triangulation to ensure reliability and validity.

Using the Research Onion model provides a clear, step-by-step framework that links philosophy, strategy, and techniques. This helps ensure the research is transparent, systematic, and easy to follow.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology employed to explore the impact of emotional and subconscious cues; such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization; on consumer behavior in digital advertising, with attention to cross-cultural differences. The study adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach, which is appropriate for understanding subjective experiences, emotions, and cultural interpretations that cannot be fully captured through

quantitative methods. By focusing on meaning, context, and interpretation, this methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of how consumers respond to digital advertising beyond numerical metrics.

The research design combines a systematic literature review (SLR) with secondary data analysis. The SLR provides a structured, transparent, and replicable method for synthesizing existing academic research on emotional and subconscious advertising, neuromarketing, personalization, and cultural differences. By coding studies thematically, the review identifies patterns, contradictions, and research gaps, forming the theoretical foundation for the study. Secondary data analysis complements the SLR by offering practical insights from real-world campaigns, marketing performance reports, and neuromarketing experiments. Together, these methods enable triangulation, which enhances reliability and validity while providing both theoretical and applied perspectives.

Data reliability and validity are ensured through careful source selection, triangulation, and consideration of sample sizes, research methods, and publication credibility. Using publicly available and ethically approved sources maintains transparency and aligns with university ethical standards. The methodology also addresses cultural sensitivity, avoiding overgeneralization and ensuring that interpretations of humor, nostalgia, personalization, and other emotional cues are evidence-based rather than assumptive.

Limitations of the study include small sample sizes in neuromarketing research, potential publication bias, differences in methodology across secondary datasets, and constraints in cross-cultural data availability. Furthermore, secondary data cannot establish causality, meaning observed patterns may indicate correlation rather than direct cause-effect relationships. Despite these limitations, the combination of SLR and secondary data analysis provides a robust foundation for understanding emotional and subconscious influences on digital consumer behavior and their cultural variability.

Overall, this methodology offers a comprehensive, ethical, and practical framework for examining complex psychological and cultural factors in digital advertising. It allows the study to generate meaningful insights for both academic research and marketing practice, ensuring that findings are reliable, culturally informed, and applicable to global advertising strategies.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the systematic literature review and secondary data analysis. It focuses on understanding how emotional and subconscious factors influence

consumer behavior in digital advertising and how these effects vary across cultural contexts. The study emphasizes five main emotional tools: color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization (Jose, 2025). These elements are explored not only individually but also in combination to identify patterns that can help marketers design effective campaigns.

The chapter also examines how subconscious cues, such as attention capture, memory retention, and implicit emotional responses, play a role in shaping consumer decisions. For example, digital advertisements often rely on rapid visual and emotional processing because online users typically scroll quickly and make fast judgments about products (Bagozzi et al., 2022). Secondary data from marketing reports and neuromarketing studies were analyzed to determine how these emotional tools affect engagement, purchase intention, and brand loyalty in different regions.

Additionally, the chapter considers cultural differences, highlighting that an emotional trigger effective in one country may not work in another. These insights are essential for global marketers who need to adapt their strategies to diverse audiences. By combining academic research with practical data, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of emotional advertising, showing how emotions, subconscious cues, and personalization work together to influence consumer behavior (Pham, 2021). The following sections will explore each emotional factor in detail, linking findings to theory, practice, and cross-cultural considerations.

4.2 Emotional triggers in advertising

Many studies show that emotions often have a stronger impact than logic in advertising, influencing attention, memory, and purchase decisions (Singh Baghel, 2024). Emotional triggers such as humor, fear, nostalgia, and color can create a lasting connection between consumers and brands. When people encounter something funny, touching, or nostalgic, they tend to remember it better and feel more positively toward the brand, increasing loyalty and engagement.

Color is a key emotional tool in digital advertising. Red, for example, is commonly associated with excitement, passion, or appetite, while blue evokes feelings of calm, trust, and safety (Gorn et al., 1997). Global brands like Coca-Cola and Samsung strategically use these colors to trigger specific emotions and guide consumer behavior in online campaigns (Jose, 2025). Similarly, brightness, contrast, and saturation can affect how attention-grabbing an ad is, particularly in fast-scrolling social media feeds (Labrecque and Milne, 2013).

Humor is another important factor. Funny advertisements are more likely to be shared, liked, or commented on, increasing organic reach. However, humor must be culturally sensitive. For instance, sarcastic humor may resonate in Western cultures but be confusing or even offensive in collectivist societies, where modesty and social harmony are valued (Iftikhar, 2024; Martin et al., 2002). Misinterpreted humor can harm brand perception, so marketers must carefully adapt jokes or playful content for different markets.

Fear appeals are often used in public health or safety campaigns. Road safety ads or anti-smoking campaigns use fear to highlight risks while providing solutions, motivating behavior change. In contrast, nostalgia evokes positive past experiences, creating feelings of comfort, security, and trust (Muehling and Spratt, 2004). During global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, brands have increasingly relied on nostalgia to strengthen emotional bonds with consumers by reminding them of happier, simpler times. Nostalgia can also drive impulse purchases, especially when combined with visual cues that trigger familiar memories (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003).

Overall, understanding emotional triggers and their cultural interpretations allows marketers to design campaigns that are engaging, memorable, and persuasive. Digital platforms provide opportunities for rapid emotional impact, but they also require careful attention to cultural and psychological differences to avoid negative reactions or reduced trust (Pham, 2021).

4.3 Subconscious influence and neuromarketing findings

Neuromarketing research has shown that a large part of consumer behavior occurs at the subconscious level. People often do not fully understand why they prefer certain products, as their brains react automatically to emotional or visual cues (Singh Baghel, 2024). Subconscious processing can influence attention, memory, and decision-making before conscious thought even occurs, which makes it a critical consideration for digital advertising.

Eye-tracking studies indicate that bright colors, contrast, familiar faces, and product placement capture attention almost immediately (Gorn et al., 1997). Similarly, functional MRI (fMRI) studies reveal that emotional areas of the brain, such as the amygdala and ventromedial prefrontal cortex, are activated faster than rational areas like the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex when people view emotionally charged ads (Plassmann et al., 2015). These findings explain why visual and emotional cues are often more persuasive than factual or textual information in online campaigns.

A recent report by Nielsen (2023) found that ads eliciting emotional responses achieved 23% higher engagement than neutral ads. Similarly, an SSRN study showed that even brief

emotional moments; such as a smile, laughter, or a brief sad scene; could improve memory retention by up to 30% (Jose, 2025). This confirms that subtle, subconscious signals can have a measurable impact on how ads are processed and remembered.

Other research also emphasizes the role of multisensory stimulation in subconscious influence. For example, combining visual cues with music, sound effects, or tactile experiences can enhance emotional engagement and improve brand recall (Hagtvedt and Brasel, 2017). Subconscious processing also explains the effectiveness of rapid micro-moments in digital advertising, such as pop-up banners, short videos, or animated product features, which capture attention in seconds.

Overall, neuromarketing and subconscious research show that emotional and visual elements are not just aesthetic; they shape consumer perceptions and drive behavior. Understanding these mechanisms allows marketers to design ads that resonate emotionally, while also considering ethical implications, such as avoiding manipulation or intrusion (Singh Baghel, 2024; Tucker, 2019). This insight is particularly valuable for international campaigns, where cultural factors can alter subconscious responses to colors, faces, or music.

4.4 Personalization and intrusion balance

One Personalization is one of the most important trends in digital advertising. It involves showing consumers ads tailored to their preferences, online behavior, or previous purchases. When done correctly, personalized ads can increase engagement, brand trust, and purchase intention because consumers feel that the brand understands their needs (Iftikhar, 2024). For example, e-commerce platforms often recommend products similar to previous searches, increasing the likelihood of a click or purchase.

However, personalization has a fine line. When consumers feel that an ad “knows too much” about them, it can create discomfort and reduce trust. This phenomenon is often called the “privacy paradox,” where consumers enjoy the convenience of personalized content but are concerned about data privacy (Tucker, 2019). A study by Statista (2023) showed that 72% of users appreciated personalization if they could control the type of data used. In contrast, trust dropped to 34% when users felt they had no control over data collection.

Recent research also suggests that cultural context affects perceptions of personalization. In countries with high privacy awareness, such as Germany or Canada, highly personalized ads are often viewed as intrusive. In contrast, in countries with more relaxed attitudes toward data sharing, such as India or China, personalization is generally accepted and can even enhance brand loyalty (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015).

Moreover, personalization is more effective when combined with emotional cues like humor or nostalgia. For instance, a nostalgic ad personalized with a user's favorite childhood brand can significantly increase engagement. Yet, if the personalization feels manipulative; such as referencing private searches or sensitive interests; users may reject the ad completely. These findings highlight the importance of ethical personalization strategies that respect privacy while creating a positive emotional connection (Martin and Murphy, 2017).

In conclusion, personalization is a powerful tool in digital advertising, but it must be applied carefully. Brands need to find the balance between being helpful and being intrusive. By allowing user control and combining personalization with positive emotional cues, advertisers can maximize engagement and trust while avoiding negative reactions.

4.5 Cultural differences

Culture significantly influences how consumers perceive and react to advertising. Emotional and subconscious cues, such as color, humor, and nostalgia, are interpreted differently depending on cultural values, social norms, and historical context (Jose, 2025). For example, the color white symbolizes peace and purity in many Western countries, but it is associated with mourning and funerals in some Asian cultures. Similarly, red may evoke excitement and passion in the U.S., whereas in China it represents luck and celebration (Chattopadhyay, 2002).

Humor also varies widely across cultures. Ads that joke about personal achievements or family situations may resonate strongly in the U.S., where informal and sarcastic humor is appreciated. In contrast, Japanese consumers prefer subtle, respectful humor, reflecting a cultural emphasis on formality and harmony (Iftikhar, 2024). Similarly, nostalgia marketing must consider generational and cultural context. Western consumers may respond to advertisements referencing childhood toys or music, while Asian audiences may react more strongly to historical or community-related symbols.

These differences highlight the importance of adapting emotional strategies for international audiences. Emotional triggers are not universal; a message that engages one cultural group may be confusing, irrelevant, or even offensive to another. A comparative study of European and Asian advertising campaigns found that Western ads often highlight individual emotions and personal achievements, while Asian campaigns emphasize collective emotions, family values, and societal harmony (Iftikhar, 2024).

Subconscious reactions also vary with culture. Eye-tracking and brain imaging studies suggest that familiar cultural symbols can increase attention and memory retention, whereas unfamiliar

cues may reduce engagement or lead to negative emotions (Hofstede et al., 2010). This implies that marketers need to combine emotional and cultural insights when designing digital advertising campaigns. By aligning subconscious triggers with local cultural values, brands can enhance engagement, trust, and purchase intent, while avoiding misunderstandings or backlash.

In conclusion, cultural differences are crucial in shaping consumer responses to emotional and personalized advertising. Brands must carefully consider colors, humor, nostalgia, and personalization strategies to connect effectively with international audiences.

4.6 The role of nostalgia in modern ads

Nostalgia has become one of the most powerful emotional tools in modern digital advertising. It leverages memories and familiar symbols to create feelings of comfort, trust, and connection to a brand (Muehling and Spratt, 2004). During challenging times, such as economic crises or the COVID-19 pandemic, nostalgic elements help consumers feel emotionally supported and reduce anxiety. For instance, brands often use old music, retro packaging, or classic logos to evoke a sense of stability and familiarity (Jose, 2025).

Secondary data supports the effectiveness of nostalgia in increasing engagement, brand recall, and loyalty. Campaigns such as Spotify's "Throwback Playlists" and Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" successfully tapped into consumers' personal memories, making the brand experience more meaningful. Research shows that when people encounter nostalgic content, emotional brain regions; such as the amygdala; are activated, enhancing memory retention and influencing purchase decisions (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003).

However, the authenticity of nostalgia is crucial. Consumers can detect superficial or forced nostalgic cues, which may lead to feelings of manipulation or distrust. Effective nostalgia aligns with the brand's heritage and resonates with the target audience's actual past experiences. Moreover, nostalgia marketing must consider generational and cultural differences. Older audiences may respond more strongly to traditional forms of nostalgia, such as products or music from their youth, while younger audiences often connect to digital-era nostalgia, such as classic video games, early social media trends, or iconic internet memes (Jose, 2025; Pascal et al., 2002).

In conclusion, nostalgia in advertising is not just about evoking pleasant memories but creating a deep emotional bond between consumers and brands. When applied authentically and culturally appropriately, it can increase engagement, foster loyalty, and influence buying behavior in both local and global markets.

4.7 Linking findings to the research questions

The main research questions of this dissertation focused on how emotional and subconscious elements influence consumer behavior in digital advertising and how culture shapes these effects. The findings from the literature review and secondary data analysis provide several insights that answer these questions.

First, emotional triggers such as color, humor, fear, and nostalgia clearly influence attention, memory, and purchasing decisions. For instance, bright colors or culturally meaningful shades can capture attention within seconds, while humor and nostalgia create stronger memory retention and emotional attachment to a brand (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003; Jose, 2025). Fear appeals, when used in health or safety campaigns, can motivate immediate behavioral change by highlighting risks and prevention methods (Muehling and Sprott, 2004). These findings support the idea that emotions work as powerful subconscious cues that operate through fast, automatic processing (Kahneman, 2011).

Second, subconscious reactions explain why consumers often make quick decisions without fully considering rational factors. Eye-tracking and neuromarketing studies show that familiar faces, pleasant music, or emotionally salient colors trigger automatic brain responses, leading to increased engagement and impulse buying (Singh Baghel, 2024; Plassmann et al., 2015). This highlights the importance of understanding both conscious and subconscious processes in advertising design.

Third, personalization is a double-edged sword. Tailored ads increase relevance, engagement, and purchase intention, but when consumers perceive that their privacy is violated, trust decreases sharply (Iftikhar, 2024; Tucker, 2019). The balance between helpful and intrusive personalization is therefore critical, especially in international contexts with differing privacy norms.

Finally, cultural differences strongly affect how emotional and subconscious cues are interpreted. For example, humor, nostalgia, and even colors can evoke different feelings across countries. Western cultures often respond well to individualistic humor and bright, energetic colors, while collectivist cultures emphasize family, community, and harmony in emotional messaging (Chattopadhyay, 2002; Jose, 2025).

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that emotional and subconscious elements are highly effective in shaping consumer behavior. However, these tools must be applied carefully, ethically, and with cultural sensitivity. Understanding these dynamics allows marketers to create campaigns that not only attract attention but also build long-term consumer trust and

loyalty. These insights directly answer the research questions and highlight the need for integrated, cross-cultural advertising strategies.

4.8 Discussion and interpretation

The findings confirm that emotional and subconscious advertising generally performs better than purely rational or informational advertising (Singh Baghel, 2024). Consumers often make decisions based on feelings rather than logic, meaning that emotional connections can directly influence attention, memory, and purchase intention. However, this effectiveness depends heavily on how emotions are applied and whether they align with the brand and the audience. For example, fear appeals in social or health campaigns can increase attention and motivate action, but overuse may create anxiety or avoidance (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000). Humor can foster positive engagement, yet it must fit the cultural context to avoid misunderstandings or offense (Hofstede, 2001; Jose, 2025).

The interpretivist philosophy adopted in this research helps explain not only the magnitude of consumer reactions but also the underlying reasons for those reactions. By combining neuromarketing insights with cultural analysis, it is possible to understand both the subconscious brain responses and the socially constructed meanings that shape emotional interpretation. Eye-tracking and fMRI studies show that bright colors, familiar faces, or nostalgic cues activate emotional brain regions before rational thought occurs, leading to faster, automatic responses (Plassmann et al., 2015; Singh Baghel, 2024). Meanwhile, cultural differences determine whether these cues are perceived positively, neutrally, or negatively.

The analysis of personalization also demonstrates mixed results. When done ethically and transparently, personalized ads increase relevance, engagement, and brand trust. However, if personalization feels intrusive, consumers experience discomfort and perceive privacy violations; a reaction that varies depending on cultural norms regarding individualism, privacy, and technology acceptance (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015; Iftikhar, 2024). This aligns with the concept of the “privacy paradox,” where consumers appreciate tailored experiences but worry about data misuse (Tucker, 2019).

Furthermore, the literature highlights the importance of nostalgia in modern advertising. Authentic nostalgic elements can increase emotional attachment, brand loyalty, and engagement. However, forced or inauthentic nostalgia can be counterproductive, as consumers detect manipulation and lose trust (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003).

Overall, the findings suggest that emotional advertising is powerful but context-dependent. Cultural, ethical, and psychological factors all shape how consumers interpret messages. Marketers must balance emotional triggers, personalization, and subconscious cues carefully, creating campaigns that resonate emotionally without overstepping ethical boundaries or ignoring cultural nuances. These insights emphasize the need for integrated, culturally sensitive strategies that consider both subconscious brain responses and social meaning (Plassmann et al., 2015; Hofstede, 2001).

4.9 Linking Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to emotional advertising

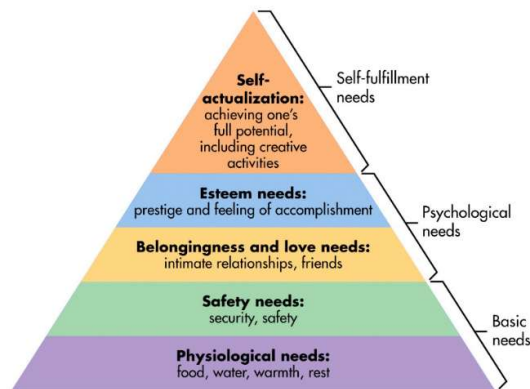


Figure 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Source: (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Visual), n.d.)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs explains human motivation through five levels: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Emotional triggers in advertising, such as color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization, can be connected to these needs to make campaigns more effective.

For example, physiological needs can be addressed by food or health-related ads using bright colors or appealing images. Safety needs are often targeted through fear-based campaigns, such as road safety or insurance ads, which show protection and security. Social needs can be stimulated through humor or nostalgia, helping consumers feel connected to others or part of a community.

Emotional advertising can also support esteem needs by using personalization or aspirational content, making consumers feel valued or recognized. Finally, self-actualization needs are triggered by campaigns promoting experiences, learning, or creativity, often through meaningful storytelling or inspirational messages.

Linking emotional triggers to Maslow's hierarchy helps marketers understand why certain ads are more effective for specific audiences and explains differences in consumer responses across cultures, as some societies may prioritize certain needs over others.

4.10 Conclusion

In This chapter has presented the findings from the systematic literature review and secondary data analysis, providing a detailed understanding of how emotional and subconscious factors influence consumer behavior in digital advertising. The study focused on five key elements; color, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization; and examined both individual and combined effects on attention, memory, engagement, and purchase intention. Across the literature and secondary data, emotional triggers consistently emerged as stronger influencers than rational or purely informational messaging, highlighting the critical role of emotions in shaping consumer behavior (Singh Baghel, 2024; Jose, 2025).

Neuromarketing research and subconscious analysis demonstrate that many consumer responses occur automatically, before conscious evaluation. Bright colors, familiar faces, nostalgic cues, and emotionally salient content activate brain regions associated with attention and memory, explaining why rapid micro-moments in digital advertising are effective (Plassmann et al., 2015; Bagozzi et al., 2022). These findings underscore the need for marketers to design campaigns that capture attention quickly while creating positive emotional associations.

Personalization emerged as a double-edged tool. When implemented ethically and transparently, tailored ads improve engagement, relevance, and brand trust. However, when consumers perceive overreach or privacy intrusion, trust diminishes, reflecting the "privacy paradox" (Tucker, 2019; Iftikhar, 2024). Cultural context significantly mediates these effects, with more privacy-conscious regions responding cautiously to personalization, whereas others may embrace it as a value-added experience.

Cultural differences also strongly shape the effectiveness of emotional cues. Colors, humor, nostalgia, and fear appeals do not translate universally; they are interpreted differently depending on societal norms, historical context, and collective values (Chattopadhyay, 2002; Hofstede, 2001). For example, humor that resonates in individualistic cultures may be misunderstood in collectivist societies, while nostalgic content must align with generational and regional experiences to be perceived as authentic. Integrating these cultural insights with subconscious and emotional analysis allows marketers to craft campaigns that are both psychologically compelling and culturally sensitive.

Overall, the findings highlight that emotional and subconscious advertising is highly effective but context-dependent. Success requires balancing attention-grabbing cues, personalization, and ethical considerations while adapting strategies to local cultural norms. By synthesizing theory, neuromarketing evidence, and practical marketing data, this chapter provides actionable insights for creating emotionally engaging, culturally appropriate, and ethically sound digital advertising campaigns. These results directly address the research questions, demonstrating how emotions, subconscious cues, personalization, and culture interact to shape consumer behavior in the digital landscape.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the main findings of the dissertation on emotional and subconscious cues, personalization, and consumer behavior in digital advertising. It highlights academic and practical contributions and provides recommendations for future research and marketing practice. The chapter emphasizes the importance of ethical and culturally sensitive approaches in emotional marketing (Jose, 2025; Singh Baghel, 2024).

5.2 Summary of main findings

The research shows that emotions and subconscious elements strongly influence consumer behavior. Consumers react emotionally before they think logically, which makes emotional advertising more effective than purely rational messaging (Singh Baghel, 2024). Colors, humor, fear, nostalgia, and personalization each play a key role:

Color: Warm colors like red and yellow increase excitement, while cool colors like blue and green create calm. Meanings vary across cultures, so global brands must adapt their use of color (Chattopadhyay, 2002).

Humor: encourages attention and sharing but must fit cultural values to avoid misunderstandings (Jose, 2025; Iftikhar, 2024).

Fear: useful in social campaigns, especially when combined with solutions, but excessive fear can lead to avoidance.

Nostalgia: strengthens emotional connection and trust, particularly during uncertain times. Authenticity is key; artificial nostalgia may backfire.

Personalization: increases relevance and engagement but can feel intrusive if overused. Cultural expectations influence how personalization is received (Tucker, 2019).

Neuromarketing findings: eye-tracking and EEG studies confirm that emotional and subconscious cues capture attention faster and are remembered longer (Plassmann et al., 2015; Singh Baghel, 2024).

Together, these findings show that emotional and subconscious advertising can build strong connections with consumers but requires careful balancing of culture, ethics, and personalization.

5.3 Academic contributions

This dissertation integrates multiple emotional and subconscious elements; color, humor, fear, nostalgia, personalization, and neuromarketing insights; into a single framework, filling gaps in previous research that examined these factors separately (Jose, 2025; Chattopadhyay, 2002). By adding a cross-cultural perspective, it shows why the same campaign may succeed in one country but fail in another (Iftikhar, 2024). This comprehensive approach contributes new theoretical understanding to international digital marketing research.

5.4 Practical contributions

Marketers can apply these findings by:

Using emotions purposefully, ensuring they fit the audience and product.

Balancing personalization with transparency, giving consumers control over their data.

Adapting campaigns to local cultural values to maximize engagement.

Applying neuromarketing ethically, avoiding manipulation while leveraging emotional cues.

These strategies help create campaigns that are memorable, culturally appropriate, and trustworthy.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The research relies on secondary data, which may differ in methods and context. Neuromarketing studies often use small or private samples, limiting generalizability (Singh Baghel, 2024). Despite these limitations, triangulating multiple sources provides a reliable overview of emotional and subconscious effects in digital advertising across cultures.

5.6 Recommendations for future research

Future studies should:

Collect primary data through surveys, experiments, or interviews to validate secondary findings.

Explore how younger generations, especially Gen Z, respond to nostalgia and personalization.

Examine ethical issues in neuromarketing, particularly around privacy and emotional manipulation.

Compare additional cultures to understand global differences and guide multinational advertising campaigns (Jose, 2025).

5.7 Ethical and theoretical implications

The study highlights that consumer behavior is heavily influenced by emotional and subconscious processes (Plassmann et al., 2015). Ethical concerns arise when emotional or personalized advertising manipulates consumers or violates privacy (Murphy et al., 2014). Marketers must respect cultural norms, transparency, and consumer autonomy to build trust and long-term relationships.

5.8 Final conclusion

Emotions, subconscious cues, and personalization are essential in modern digital advertising. When applied responsibly, they make campaigns engaging, memorable, and human-centered. Cultural adaptation, ethical awareness, and transparency are key to ensuring that emotional advertising creates positive connections rather than distrust. This dissertation provides insights for academics and practitioners to design emotional marketing strategies that are effective, ethical, and culturally sensitive (Jose, 2025; Singh Baghel, 2024; Iftikhar, 2024).

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GHANT CHART OF DISSERTATION

W = WEEK

ACTIVITY PER WEEK	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10
Chapter 1										
Chapter 2										
Chapter 3										
Chapter 4										
Chapter 5										
Revision										