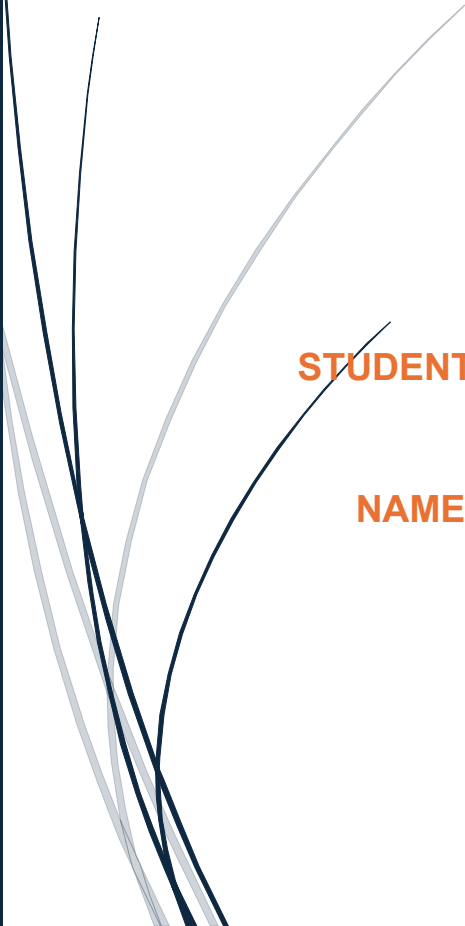




DISSERTATION-PROPOSAL (LCMB7035)

PROPOSED RESEARCH TITLE:

**Artificial Intelligence as a Symbolic Catalyst in Brand
Perception: A Quantitative Study of CUPRA in the UK
Market**



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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Rationale.....	3
3. Literature Review.....	4
3.1 Digital Marketing and Brand Perception.....	4
3.2 Electric automotive and technological innovation	4
3.3 CUPRA as a case study.....	5
4. Methodology	6
4.1 Research philosophy.....	6
4.2 Approach.....	7
4.3 Strategy	7
4.4 Methodological choice	7
4.5 Time horizon	7
4.6 Sample and participants.....	7
4.7 Data collection instrument	8
4.8 Data analysis	8
4.9 Ethical considerations	8
5. Expected Findings and Limitations.....	9
5.1 Expected Findings	9
5.2 Limitations	10
6. Gantt Chart.....	11
7. Conclusion	12
8. References	13

1. Introduction

Digital transformation has changed the way automotive brands connect with their audiences. The incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into electric vehicles not only marks a technical advancement but also creates symbolic and emotional value for the brand. CUPRA, an emerging brand within the SEAT group, has chosen a narrative that combines disruptive design, advanced technology, and sustainable mobility (Kotler & Keller, 2020; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kim & Ko, 2020). However, there is a lack of academic literature regarding how consumers interpret this proposition in specific markets, such as the UK.

This study aims to analyse how AI-driven digital marketing affects CUPRA's brand perception among British consumers interested in electric vehicles. The research is set against the backdrop of the increasing demand for innovative and sustainable mobility, alongside the strategic application of AI for personalisation, segmentation, and emotional communication.

General Objective:

To explore the impact of artificial intelligence on CUPRA's brand perception through its digital marketing strategies within the UK electric automotive market.

Specific Objectives:

- Identify the AI elements present in CUPRA's digital communication.
- Analyse how UK consumers interpret these elements in terms of innovation and emotional value.
- Evaluate the relationship between technological perception and purchase intention.

Main Research Question:

How does the integration of artificial intelligence in CUPRA's digital marketing influence brand perception among British consumers interested in electric vehicles?

2. Rationale

The choice to study CUPRA stems from its emerging role as a technology brand within the British electric vehicle market. CUPRA effectively combines emotional design, advanced innovation, and a disruptive digital identity. In today's digital transformation landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved from a mere functional tool to a symbolic resource that enhances the brand narrative and fosters emotional differentiation (Kotler & Keller, 2020).

While CUPRA has incorporated AI systems into models such as the Born and Tavascan, there has yet to be an in-depth academic analysis of its strategic communication as a technology brand, particularly in the UK context. This study aims to explore how British consumers perceive this technological integration and its impact on their emotional connection to the brand.

The research is warranted for three primary reasons:

1. Sectoral Relevance: The British electric vehicle market is rapidly expanding, and distinguishing through technology is essential for competitive positioning (Kim & Ko, 2020).

2. Communicative Innovation: CUPRA leverages AI not just in vehicle design and driving experience, but also in its digital narrative. This approach allows for a symbolic analysis of technological marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

3. Academic Gap: There is limited literature addressing how AI is communicated as a brand value within the European automotive industry, particularly in markets like the UK, where perceptions of technology are often associated with exclusivity and sustainability (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Patil, 2017).

This study will enhance our understanding of how digital marketing transforms technical innovation into emotional perception and competitive advantage, offering both academic and practical insights into smart mobility in the UK.

3. Literature Review

The bibliographic review is organised around three fundamental themes that support the theoretical framework of this research: digital marketing and brand perception, technological innovation in the electric automotive sector, and the strategic positioning of CUPRA as a case study.

3.1 Digital Marketing and Brand Perception

Digital marketing has evolved into a narrative focused on the consumer experience, with personalisation and technological innovation as key elements. Kotler and Keller (2020) emphasise that brands must create symbolic value through coherent, emotionally meaningful digital experiences. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) note that artificial intelligence allows for audience segmentation, content automation, and the creation of more relevant interactions, all of which directly influence brand perception.

Recent studies reinforce this perspective. Seth (2025) argues that AI-powered marketing strategies transform consumer expectations by delivering predictive and emotionally resonant content. Sambangi (2025) further asserts that AI enhances brand loyalty when used to personalise digital touchpoints, especially in the technology sector.

However, some authors caution against the risks of excessive automation. Beecham and Panday (2025) stress that an over-reliance on AI can diminish perceived authenticity, particularly for brands that rely on emotional connections. This tension between automation and emotional connection is central to CUPRA's positioning, which aims to blend advanced technology with an emotional and sporty identity.

3.2 Electric automotive and technological innovation

The automotive industry is undergoing a transition toward electric and intelligent vehicles. This transformation involves integrating artificial intelligence (AI) across assisted driving, cabin personalisation, predictive maintenance, and connectivity. Kim and Ko (2020) assert that perceptions of technological innovation in electric vehicles significantly influence purchasing intentions and brand loyalty. Smith and

Johnson (2020) emphasise that consumers value not only a product's functionality but also the narratives surrounding sustainability and intelligence.

Recent research in the UK (IEEE, 2024) indicates that consumers increasingly associate AI integration with exclusivity and innovation, particularly within premium electric brands. CUPRA, with models like the Born and the Tavascan, aligns with this trend, though its communication strategy has yet to be thoroughly explored in academic literature.

Conversely, Hsu and Chang (2021) found that while AI enhances perceived value, it must be communicated clearly to avoid confusion or scepticism. This highlights the necessity to examine how CUPRA translates its technical features into symbolic brand value through digital marketing.

3.3 CUPRA as a case study

CUPRA has established itself as a brand that merges emotional design, sporty performance, and advanced technology. According to its official strategy, the brand aims to position itself as a leader in disruptive innovation within the Spanish and European markets (CUPRA Official, 2025). Models such as the CUPRA Born and the Tavascan utilise AI systems designed to enhance the driving experience.

Various sources indicate that CUPRA has successfully adapted to the demands of the digital age, creating a hybrid experience that combines physical and digital interactions. This approach allows customers to engage with the brand from anywhere and receive personalised attention (America Retail, 2025). The strategy aims to dismantle barriers between the physical and virtual realms, offering an immersive and cohesive experience.

Despite its technological positioning, the communication of AI as a brand value at CUPRA has received limited academic attention. This research aims to address that gap by analysing how British consumers interpret CUPRA's digital messages regarding artificial intelligence.

By integrating insights from consumer psychology, branding in the tech industry, and dynamics of the UK market, this study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how innovation is perceived within brand narratives.

4. Methodology

This research employs a quantitative approach to analyse how the integration of artificial intelligence into CUPRA's digital marketing influences brand perception among British consumers interested in electric vehicles. The methodology follows the "onion peel" model proposed by Saunders et al. (2019), which organises methodological decisions in a coherent, structured manner.

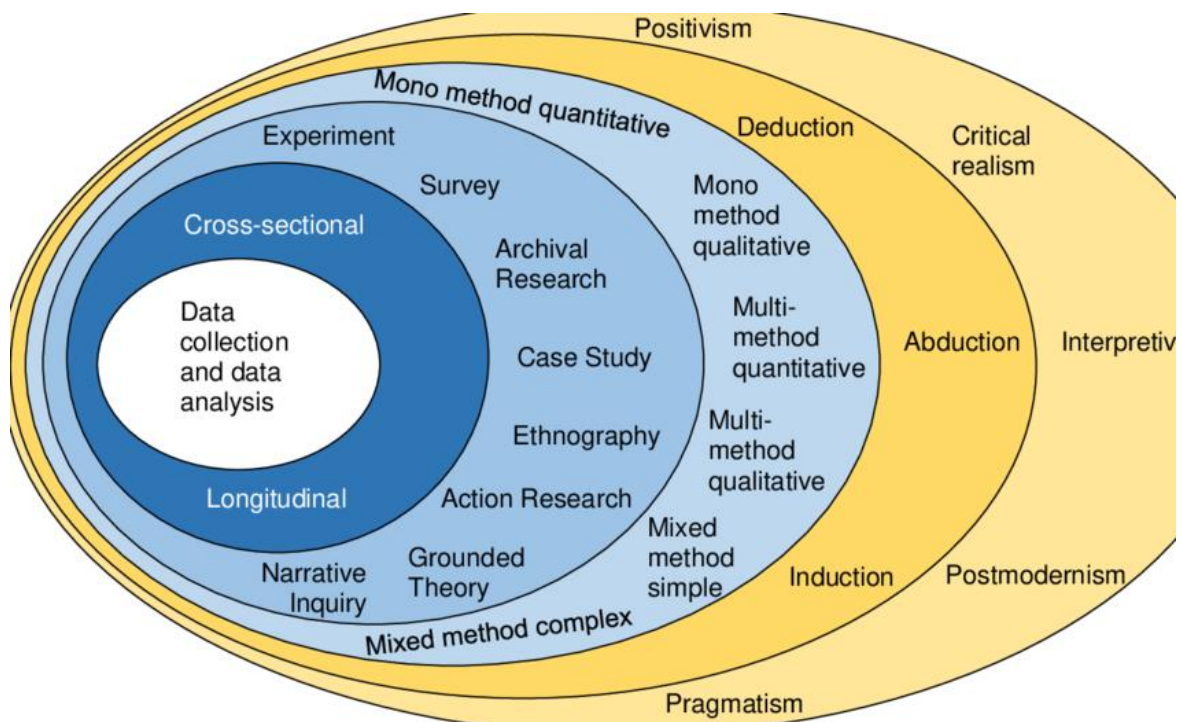


Figure 1 The Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2019)

4.1 Research philosophy

A positivist stance is adopted, aiming to observe and measure objective phenomena such as brand perception, innovation valuation, and purchase intention using quantifiable, replicable data (Creswell, 2014). This perspective enables establishing relationships among variables and validating hypotheses with empirical evidence.

4.2 Approach

The approach is deductive, beginning with existing theories related to digital marketing, brand perception, and technological innovation, and then empirically testing them in the context of CUPRA (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This method allows applying theoretical models to a specific case and facilitates their validity assessment.

4.3 Strategy

The primary strategy involves using a structured survey as the data collection instrument. This technique allows for the collection of standardised information from a large sample of participants, thereby facilitating statistical analysis and comparison of responses (Groves et al., 2009).

4.4 Methodological choice

A quantitative single-method design is selected, concentrating exclusively on numerical data obtained through closed-ended questions. This choice addresses the need to objectively and systematically measure perceptions and attitudes.

4.5 Time horizon

This study will be cross-sectional, meaning that data will be collected at a single point in time without any longitudinal follow-up. This approach is necessary due to the time constraints associated with completing a master's dissertation.

4.6 Sample and participants

The sample will consist of 50 adults residing in the United Kingdom, selected using convenience sampling. Participants will be required to demonstrate an interest in electric mobility, which will be verified through a filter question at the beginning of the survey.

The choice of the United Kingdom as the study's context is based on the country's maturity in the electric vehicle market and CUPRA's increasing presence in the region. While this sample may not allow for generalisation to the entire population, it provides a valid basis for exploratory analysis.

4.7 Data collection instrument

A digital questionnaire will be created using Microsoft Forms, comprising closed Likert-type questions and dichotomous questions. The dimensions to be evaluated include:

- Level of knowledge about CUPRA
- Perception of innovation and technology
- Assessment of AI integration
- Purchase intent
- Trust and emotional connection with the brand

The questionnaire will be distributed through social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook), e-mobility interest groups, and personalised emails. These channels will help reach British consumers who have a technological profile and an affinity for electric vehicles.

4.8 Data analysis

The data will be analysed using descriptive statistics, frequencies, means, and standard deviations in Microsoft Excel. The analysis will aim to identify patterns linking the perception of artificial intelligence (AI) to brand valuation and purchase intention.

4.9 Ethical considerations

This research will adhere to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David's ethical guidelines. The following principles will be upheld:

- Informed consent
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Right to withdraw at any time

- No sensitive data will be collected
- Data will be securely stored and deleted after project evaluation

Participants will be informed that the study is for academic purposes only and that their responses will not be used for commercial purposes.

5. Expected Findings and Limitations

5.1 Expected Findings

This research is expected to demonstrate that integrating artificial intelligence into CUPRA's electric vehicles positively affects brand perception among British consumers. Specifically, it is anticipated that:

- AI will be viewed as a symbol of innovation, exclusivity, and modernity.
- Consumers will regard the digital experience as a fundamental aspect of CUPRA's identity.
- Technological communication will enhance purchase intent and foster an emotional connection with the brand.
- Emotional perception will be intertwined with CUPRA's narrative of brilliant and disruptive mobility.

In the UK context, consumers with a higher affinity for technology are expected to associate AI integration with a premium value, particularly when communicated through personalised digital channels. This approach could strengthen CUPRA's differentiation from other emerging electric vehicle brands.

Additionally, AI will likely be perceived not only as a functional enhancement but also as a symbolic catalyst that reinforces brand identity. This symbolic aspect may be crucial in industries where emotion, design, and innovation significantly influence purchasing decisions.

The results could validate that, when communicated effectively, AI improves the user experience and serves as a narrative element that builds brand equity. This aligns with the findings of Kim and Ko (2020), Patil (2017), and Kotler and Keller (2020), which emphasise the role of technology as a meaning generator in contemporary branding.

5.2 Limitations

The research presents several limitations that should be acknowledged:

- Small sample size: With only 50 participants, the results may not be generalizable to the entire British population.
- Self-selection bias: Participants may have a predisposed positive attitude towards technology or branding, which could skew their responses.
- Difficulty isolating variables: Brand perception can be influenced by multiple factors (design, price, sustainability), not just artificial intelligence (AI).
- Limited time frame: As this is a cross-sectional study, it does not capture changes in perception over time.

Additionally, the British electric vehicle (EV) market is dynamic and diverse, which can impact the stability of perceptions. Factors such as cultural influences, media exposure, and prior familiarity with the brand may also affect responses. These variables will be recognised and controlled as much as possible during the analysis.

It is recommended that future research expand the sample size, incorporate longitudinal tracking, and compare CUPRA with other brands that utilise AI in their automotive marketing strategies. This approach would help validate the findings and further explore the symbolic implications of technology in brand building.

6. Gantt Chart

The project planning has been structured over a 10-week horizon, following a logical sequence that integrates the theoretical review, methodological design, data collection, analysis, and final writing. This planning aims to ensure coherence between the study's objectives and the available time, while respecting the standards of the master's degree in international business.

The tasks are distributed as follows:

- **Weeks 1–2:** Literature review and questionnaire design
- **Weeks 3–4:** Data collection via digital survey
- **Weeks 4–5:** Descriptive statistical analysis
- **Weeks 5–6:** Interpreting results and drawing conclusions
- **Weeks 7–10:** Final proofreading, editing, and preparation for delivery

Table 1 Weekly planning table by Francisco

TASK	WEEK 1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10
LITERATURE REVIEW										
QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN										
DATA COLLECTION										
DATA ANALYTICS										
INTERPRETING RESULTS										
DRAFTING CONCLUSIONS										
FINAL REVIEW										

7. Conclusion

This proposal presents a relevant and feasible research project focused on the role of artificial intelligence in shaping brand perception within the electric automotive sector, specifically examining CUPRA's digital strategy in the British market. By employing a quantitative approach through a structured survey, we aim to collect objective data that directly addresses the research question and outlined objectives.

The critical literature review has highlighted an academic gap in understanding the symbolic communication of AI as a brand value, particularly concerning emerging brands like CUPRA. This study aims to provide empirical evidence on how British consumers interpret the technological elements in the brand's digital narrative.

The proposed methodology aligns with the master's degree program's ethical and academic standards, and the timeline ensures thorough execution within the established deadlines. While we acknowledge certain limitations of the study, such as sample size and time constraints, we also believe this research lays a strong foundation for future investigations.

In summary, this project represents a significant contribution to digital marketing, technological innovation, and brand management. It offers a critical examination of the relationships among symbolic perception, technology, and consumer decision-making in the contemporary automotive landscape.

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