

# Chapter 16

## Necromarketing and AI Reviving: Celebrities in Advertising Campaigns

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter examines the use of artificial intelligence in advertising, focusing on the digital recreation of deceased celebrities (delebs). Through a bibliometric study and a case analysis, the conceptual and emotional aspects of necromarketing are explored, a strategy that employs elements of death to capture public attention. The chapter highlights the “Con Mucho Acento” campaign by Cruzcampo, which digitally revived Lola Flores. The bibliometric analysis classified necromarketing into three categories: necrotainment, necrocommunication, and necroadvertising. Neuromarketing techniques and focus groups revealed cultural differences in the campaign's perception between Latin American and European audiences. Elements that combine technology with cultural authenticity generated greater emotional impact and credibility. The chapter concludes that, while necromarketing has significant commercial potential, it also presents ethical challenges that brands must carefully manage to effectively and respectfully resonate with their audiences*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The digital revolution has profoundly transformed the marketing industry, redefining communication and entertainment strategies for modern audiences. At the heart of this transformation is the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI), a tool that has undergone significant advancements in recent years, offering innovative and effective solutions for the creative sector (Kumar et al., 2024). AI has not only enhanced efficiency and accuracy in advertising content creation but has also opened new possibilities, such as the “revitalization” of deceased celebrities for their inclusion in advertising campaigns. This

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has been made possible by subfields like deep learning and deepfake technology, which enable greater realism in generated content (Lessa & Júnior, 2024; Mustak et al., 2023).

The practice of integrating deceased iconic figures into advertising campaigns is not a new phenomenon, but it has taken on new dimensions with advancements in artificial intelligence. With the growing commercialization of nostalgia and the rise of digital media, brands have turned to deceased figures to promote products, establishing a bridge between collective memory and consumption (Petty & D’Rozario, 2009). This phenomenon has evolved with the massive digitization of image and sound archives, facilitating the creation of hyper-realistic representations of historical personalities.

The origins of this controversy date back to the early 1980s, when terms like *Deleb*, short for *Dead Celebrity*, were adopted. This term emerged at a pivotal moment for copyright and image rights legislation, particularly when the *Celebrity Rights Act* was enacted in California, United States (Petty & D’Rozario, 2009). This law was the first to recognize post-mortem rights, setting a precedent by prohibiting the unauthorized use of any identifiable aspect of a celebrity—including their name, voice, signature, photograph, or likeness—without the explicit consent of the deceased’s family for a period of 50 years after their death.

This legal framework laid the foundation for a new era of rights protection but also introduced unique challenges in the digital age, especially with the advent of advanced AI technologies capable of recreating the images and voices of deceased individuals with astonishing precision. These technological advancements have intensified the debate on the ethics and legality of “reviving” celebrities for commercial purposes, challenging the boundaries between tribute and exploitation (Boeuf & Darveau, 2019). In this context, consumer perception plays a crucial role in determining the acceptance or rejection of such campaigns, depending on factors such as the quality of the recreation, its alignment with the celebrity’s identity, and the respect for their legacy.

The use of *delebs* in advertising presents both an ethical and strategic dilemma for agencies, which must carefully assess whether the inclusion of these figures meets brand expectations without compromising public perception. The challenge lies in balancing potential admiration with possible audience backlash. A notable example of this phenomenon is the highly successful 2021 campaign in Spain by the well-known beer brand *Cruzcampo*, promoted under the hashtag *#ConMuchoAcento*. Starring *Lola Flores*, the iconic Spanish actress and singer who had already passed away, the advertisement used deepfake technology to “revive” her. This case highlights the complexities of using digitally recreated images of deceased personalities, blurring the lines between respectful homage and commercial exploitation.

The *Con Mucho Acento* campaign stood out not only for its technological innovation but also for its commercial success, generating an estimated media value of €9.4 million in just four weeks (Palomo-Domínguez, 2021). This case demonstrates the potential of technological inclusion to create a significant advertising impact. However, the ability to convincingly recreate iconic figures raises fundamental questions about consent, authenticity, and the integrity of deceased celebrities’ images. Beyond audience reception, this type of strategy also faces challenges within the entertainment industry and in the legal framework of digital identity protection.

In this context, *necromarketing* emerges as a key discipline for analyzing the implications of using death in advertising strategies. It is defined as the application of traditional marketing principles and techniques to exchange information that meets the needs and expectations of individuals, organizations, and entities in contexts explicitly or implicitly related to tragedy and death (Mikuláš & Wojciechowski, 2015, p. 194). *Necromarketing* not only encompasses the use of *delebs* in advertising but also examines how brands capitalize on collective memory and the emotions associated with the loss of iconic figures.

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