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Attention Is Not All You Need: How AI Is Reshaping Consumer Attention and the Future of Brand Strategy

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of artificial intelligence as a cognitive extension represents a fundamental shift requiring businesses to optimize content for both human and AI consumption. As AI systems evolve from passive tools to active mediators of consumer attention, brands must master a new paradigm: AI Optimization (AIO). We propose a four-step framework for this dual optimization challenge: (1) Structured Data for AI Parsing, (2) Real-Time Performance Tracking, (3) Mastering Contextual Relevance, and (4) AI Personas. Through analysis of System 0's characteristics—its epistemological role, computational foundation, and structural hybridity—we demonstrate how this cognitive evolution impacts brand-consumer relationships. Drawing on extended mind theory and empirical evidence from early AIO implementations, we outline practical strategies for organizations adapting to AI-mediated consumer choice. Our analysis suggests that success in the emerging attention economy requires understanding both human psychology and AI decision-making processes, as content optimization increasingly determines visibility in AI-curated consumer experiences.

Keywords: System 0, Attention Economy, AI Optimization (AIO), Extended Mind Theory, Cognitive Architecture, Human-AI Interaction

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