

AI versus Human Advertising: Interview Analysis in Romania

Andra DĂNESCU*

University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania

*Corresponding author, andradanescu99@gmail.com

Abstract. *The rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in advertising has brought key questions regarding brand image, emotional engagement and ethics. The purpose of this paper is to investigate marketing professionals' perceptions regarding AI-generated marketing content (RPMC) in the Romanian context. With a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted to two senior marketing experts specialized in brand management and online marketing. The results indicate that rather than as a replacement for human creativity or strategic judgment, AI is seen as an augmentative tool to improve efficiency and scalability. Although AI-generated content can drive consumer engagement, its impact is mostly contingent on human control as well as brand maturity and audience nature. Ethics, transparency and AI disclosure, also represent interesting, investigated topics, in relation to trust and brand perception. Taken together, the study demonstrates the need of a blend model in which AI-powered efficiency meets human creativity and moral responsibility in advertising industry today.*

Keywords: AI-advertising, brand image, AI ethical guidelines, AI-generated content, emotion generation, AI marketing bias.

Introduction

In recent decades, the advertising market has profoundly changed in structural and functional terms, particularly due to the rapid technological evolution and the rise of digital media environments (Ford et al., 2023). Advertising, too, is increasingly moving away from the traditional mass-media process to a data-driven, interactive digital form of communication. Amidst this changing environment, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing a key role as an enabler and disruptor that challenges the way advertising content is produced, shared and, finally, perceived by consumers.

According to the depiction of (Ford et al., 2023), citing from (Qin & Jiang, 2019); artificial intelligence refers to a set of disruptive technologies that enable machines to perform tasks traditionally associated with human intelligence, including problem-solving, learning, decision-making, and pattern recognition. In advertising, AI-driven systems increasingly automate and optimize core functions such as consumer insight generation, media planning and buying, content personalization, creative production, and campaign performance evaluation (Chen et al., 2019); (Deng et al., 2019); (Li, 2019). Among the business domains most affected by AI adoption, marketing stands out due to its reliance on consumer data, predictive modelling, and persuasive communication (Sallaku et al., 2024).

The proliferation of content generation technologies driven by AI has generated a key point of tension in today's advertising industry: the comparison between AI-created and human-produced advertising material. Although there is an increasing number of papers analyzing consumer reactions to AI in advertising, the understanding of marketing practitioners' perceptions regarding the potential for AI adoption in regards to effective advertising and brand-consumer relationships (especially in respect to specific regions) remains limited. In the case of the Romanian market, a developing and transitional one, where the implementation of emerging marketing technologies depends on the degrees of digital maturity and consumer consciousness, these

dynamics may lead to specific challenges and opportunities. The Romanian market thus represents an appropriate example for understanding how global technological trends are recontextualized and renegotiated locally, but also how ethics standards and professional practices adapt as AI becomes part of the workplace.

Thus, rather than directly measuring consumer behavior, the purpose of this paper is to study the changing role that artificial intelligence plays in human creativity in advertising by assessing consumer perception about AI-generated versus human-created advertising contents. Thus, instead of directly examining consumer behavior, this research explores expert perceptions of how AI and human authored ad content impacts brand image evaluation, emotional arousal engagement and ethical consideration to affect consumer response. In particular, it investigates the extent to which marketing professionals internalize the ideas and arguments about technology imparted through AI technologies in terms of how such technologies might mediate advertising practices and consumer-related outcomes, as well as how firm representatives determine where to draw a line between technological efficiency and human creativity. Moreover, the research also discusses some of the ethical implications that come along with this growth in AI-powered advertising, such as issues regarding transparency and authenticity, and responsibility. The methodological approach of the paper relies on a systematic review of the recent academic literature regarding AI vs human advertising and qualitative research based on in depth interviews with marketing specialists working/ operating within the Romanian market. This study aids in achieving a heightened, context-sensitive understanding into AI adoption in advertising by bringing together theoretical insights and practitioner-based needle-shifting behaviors, as well as offering a conceptual and empirical basis for future research (and managerial choices) around this platform.

Literature review

Evolution of AI advertising: acceptance, adoption, and resistance

Ratta, Muneer, & Hassan (2024) depicts how industry estimates suggest that over half of advertiser actively uses AI to reach consumers, and that AI has significant impact on the digital ad market size.

Although powered by AI, the work on advertising also exemplifies a more widespread trend: the integration of technology into creative and strategic business roles. According to Feng (2025), AI-generated advertising content is broadly defined as advertising created or personalized through advanced AI techniques, that encompasses text, image, video, and synthetic media-based content creation.

In advertising, these improvements have enabled data-driven engagement tactics, content-generation robots and flexible brand messaging strategies. Thus, the consumer landscape is currently lifting up to scalable, algorithmic-driven ad options (Zhang & Hur, 2025).

On the other hand, studies indicate that AI aversion sought to exist, particularly when consumers feel that the human touch in advertising is lost or infringed upon. Overcoming such aversion would require a better understanding of how consumers compare AI-generated advertising with human-authored advertising, especially in contexts involving authenticity, creativity and moral judgment (Wu & Wen, 2021).

Taken together, the results indicate that attitudes toward the advertising in an AI context are unlikely to be universally positive or negative and instead depend on the nature of the

advertising appeal and consumers' beliefs regarding both capabilities and limitations of artificial versus human intelligence.

Although existing studies provide ample evidence on the global uptake of AI in advertising, as well as the emergence of both acceptance and resistance patterns globally, these findings are still predominantly found within hyper-digitalized markets. The understanding of how these dynamics play out in emerging or transitional markets – where technology adoption is irregular and influenced by local industry practices, cultural attitudes and differing levels of consumer awareness – is limited. Real-life social experiments, however, are still lacking in the context of the Romanian market that conveys a relevant, yet sparsely explored environment, in which the interplay between accelerated technology spread and comparably uneven digital maturity could lead to contrasting levels of professional endorsement and perceived efficiency for AI-based advertising materials.

Types of AI-generated content and integration across marketing channels

According to Ratta, Muneer, & Hassan (2024), new developments on generative artificial intelligence has dramatically broadened the creative tasks considered doable only by a human expert. Tasks such as graphic design, visual storytelling, and even creative writing or music composition, previously solely a human domain, are being performed more often by AI systems capable of generating materials that are difficult for potential audiences to differentiate from human-authored productions.

Evidence from practical advertising situations suggests that consumer reactions to AI-generated images are likely heterogeneous across product types and communication goals. When consumers do not know where advertising images come from, this information is no longer available as an evaluation pin: people have to rely on their perception of the content. Under these situations, trust, attitudes differences are not significant; preferences and purchase intention for AI content versus human-made advertising images barely noticed or statistically insignificant. These findings lead to the conclusion that in source-blind settings AI-composed visuals have no systematic advantage nor disadvantage over human-created imagery in affecting consumer experiences. (Cha & Wang, 2025)

In addition to visual text, AI-written text-based advertising (including the use of large language models like ChatGPT) has been expanding on digital marketing platforms. There is an extensive discussion in the academic literature regarding also about how efficient AI-generated copywriting is, but recent developments raise deeper issues relating to societal and ethical concerns around generative AIs in advertising. In particular, the increasing availability of brand-initiated and consumer-initiated AI-generated content raises concerns regarding misinformation, false narratives and lessened accountability which extends beyond advertiser-curated environments in which AI advertising has traditionally been contained (Huh et al., 2023).

While the literature recognizes an increase in AI-generated content across various marketing channels, there remains some lack of clarity on how different formats are evaluated strategically in practice. Specifically, AI-driven content's success should not be explored merely in terms of the medium (text/image/video) but also its role in larger communication frameworks and how it ultimately shapes knowledge/non-knowledge/behavior among consumers. This is consistent with emerging perspectives on generative artificial intelligence within the broader marketing ecosystem where AI-generated content has interdependence with predictive modeling, customer behavior analytics, and the assessment of digital communication efficacy (Lazaroiu & Rogalska, 2024; Krizanová & alții, 2019).

Benefits and challenges of AI applications in advertising

Following the background on AI adoption and resistance at the macro level in advertising, as well as consumer perceptions about different types of content generated by AI, this section adds a more specific analysis on the effects resulted for brands from using such technologies. Namely, how AI-generated advertisement content affects brand-related response through the perception of such advertisements by consumers.

On the positive side, the utilization of AI is characterized as "revolutionizing", about the way advertising and marketing are configured. These creative outcomes are believed to capture more attention from the consumer resulting in higher involvement than human-only-generated ads (Ratta et al., 2024).

Scientists also stress on AI's precision in market analysis, consumer insights generation and competitive intelligence that makes it a dependable resource for strategic decision-making (Wu et al., 2025). In programmatic and computational advertising, AI is used for automatic media planning, ad placement and real-time optimization which result in very selective targeting of consumers (Ford et al., 2023).

In terms of psychology, the issue with using AI in advertising is linked to whether it can create emotional impact on the clients, as compared with the human creatives. Emotion is important in consumer management since consumers' emotional reactions influence decision making, brand loyalty and overall customer experience (Sallaku et al., 2024). This theoretical connection is related to Cognitive Load Theory (Chen et al., 2024), which assumes that AI-based content is easier for learners to read and think about than human-generated texts because of its clarity, structure, and conciseness, leading to reduced cognitive load in processing information (Ratta et al., 2024). Though prior research has thoroughly investigated the cognitive efficiency of AI-generated materials, end users' perception of cognitive and emotional load in AI-generated versus human-created advertising has received little attention.

On the other hand, recent studies are seeking to bridge this gap by comparing emotional reactions between AI-generated ad texts and human-created ad texts. Specifically, upon how AI will enable Business Process Management (BPM) frameworks (Sallaku et al., 2024).

Surprisingly, and in contradiction with the presented theory, the above-mentioned research proved that AI-authored advertisements could activate consumers as well as human-authored ones on central emotional characteristics (pleasure, arousal and dominance). The findings challenge the belief that AI cannot achieve emotional engagement.

However, while there's no significant data that indicates a difference in emotional reactions between content produced by man and machine, the researchers favour a combined creative method. In this approach, you could use AI to create first advertising drafts that then would be polished by human experts.

Nevertheless, while the value of AI in advertising is evidently high, it also comes with significant challenges and constraints. One important moderator is the product category. Notably, one line of research suggests AI-generated advertising can be counterproductive for luxury products that are associated with high perceived value and expectations about human craftsmanship, creativity, and effort. In that space, AI-produced ads cheapen perceived brand authenticity and creative investment, eroding overall brand value (To et al., 2025).

Researchers also distinguish productivity of AI advertising between efficiency and effectiveness (Yang, 2025). Generative AI certainly automates time-consuming activities such as copywriting, image creation and large-scale personalization, ensuring efficiency. However, although AI-created advertising is quicker and less expensive than traditional commercials, its

ability to build an emotional, symbolic or realistic bond with viewers can vary widely. There might be less originality and authenticity in AI-generated content, provoking attitudes and behaviours that are not so positive. The key question for the advertising industry is whether AI runs the risk of facilitating mass production of efficient but ineffective communication, or if it can be used to determine this balance between efficiency and effectiveness.

Finally, recent research underlines that AI-created and human-generated advertising content need to be strategically aligned with specific communication objectives. With the growing legal mandates for transparency in terms of AI use in advertising, advertisers are advised to deploy code-based automation mostly for agentic content domains, while retaining a human touch where it comes to communally oriented and emotionally sensitive advertising contexts (Chen et al., 2024).

The above findings indicate that AI advertising exists in a balance of ability and restriction. AI can speed up the process, offer scalability, and accuracy with data analysis; however, to ensure effectiveness, AI must be capable of delivering meaningful information relevant to the context and response that resonates on an emotional level. This discrepancy also points to an important gap in the existing literature with regards to how practitioners manage the dilemma between automation and authenticity in practice. In markets such as Romania, where both resource constraints and creative expectations coexist, this balance may be particularly relevant, reinforcing the importance of examining AI adoption through the lens of professional practice rather than solely consumer response.

Ethical discussion

The debates surrounding artificial intelligence generated advertising, focusing on both its functional and perceptual dimensions have been explicated above. As AI-generated content evolves to manifest itself more seamlessly than ever across formats, channels, and outputs, issues of transparency, authorship, bias and responsibility are no longer peripheral but central to the evaluation of advertising effectiveness and consumer trust.

The fast rise of generative AI in advertising has heightened ethical discussions surrounding its responsible use. As AI-based tools have become more powerful in shaping advertising, new research suggests that there is a clear need for a set of ethical guidelines to inform advertisers on how they can gain advantage through AI use without inflicting harm. According to (Sands et al., 2024), there can be considered a set of 6 such ethical rules: *Be transparent, Respect privacy and intellectual property, Act to avoid bias, Incorporate human oversight into AI workflows, Create rules and play by them, Take responsibility*.

Empirical evidence shows that ethical issues related to advertising generated by AI are not just associated with short-terms effect of a given campaign on consumers but also have strong impact on consumer trust and how society is perceived (Zhang & Hur, 2025). The disclosure of the use of AI is one of the key ethical conundrums.

The ethics of AI disclosure are also complicated by the advertising task. Research suggests that for emotional, subjective, and symbolic messages AI disclosure is likely to decrease the credibility of a message (and likely brand) confirming that ethical appraisals are context dependent (Sun et al., 2025). Additionally, another ethical issue is regarding the total non-transparency of AI use, as the disclosure can result in higher perceived value and stronger purchase intentions (Bui, 2025). However, there is currently no global legal requirement for AI disclosure in advertising, but hiding the role of AI faces a potential loss of trust over time if consumers interpret this practice as dishonest after discovering that it was concealed.

Notably, these ethical issues associated with AI-based advertising do not mean to lead to consumer negative outcomes. These findings offer evidence that ethical transparency, if strategically and genuinely implemented, can serve as a trust-building instrument rather than only a compliance mandate (Zhang & Hur, 2025).

Despite increased attention by academic researchers to ethical issues around AI advertising, we still know little about how these principles are understood and implemented by marketing practitioners in context. Emerging markets like Romania represent an underexplored space in terms of transparency and disclosure practices. Given the immediate relevance of ethical perceptions that may directly translate into professional practices and consumer trust, this practice-oriented exploration within a context-sensitive framework may offer a closer look to the stated dilemma.

Methodology

Practical approach: AI marketing in Romania, interview analysis

The design of this study is qualitative, in depth, based on semi-structured interviews. A qualitative research design was adopted based on the appropriateness of exploring complex, perception-based phenomena such as ethical judgment, emotional engagement and strategic decision-making in AI supported advertising. The participants are currently specialists in marketing, brand management, and digital marketing in Romania, and they have been selected purposefully based on their considerable experience. Online audio-based meetings were held for interviews; all discussions were recorded with consent of the participants through enabled technology. Each interview took between 20 and 30 minutes, thus providing a detailed coverage of the predefined themes, while at the same time allowed flexibility for follow-up questions. All contributors had consented to their conversations being recorded and the use of their identity in accordance with ethical research guidelines. Given the limited number of participants, this research is framed as a pilot exploratory study, designed to provide preliminary insights into expert perceptions and to inform future research with broader and more representative samples.

Objectives & research questions

Objective 1: To investigate the effects of AI-written ad content on brand image and consumer perceptions as a function of disclosure practices.

RQ1: The influence of AI in advertising on brand image is moderated by disclosure type, with undisclosed AI-generated content seen more positively in regards to effectiveness, while disclosed involvement increases scrutiny and may harm perceived authenticity – particularly for emotionally engaging brands (Zhang & Hur, 2025; To et al., 2025).

Objective 2: To examine perceptions of ethics and transparency norms related to AI-based advertising in the Romanian context.

RQ2: The extent to which marketing specialists in Romania believe that principles of ethics associated with AI are implemented within the Romanian advertising market is mixed and to some degree situational, relative to brand positioning, industry standards and dependent on the sensibility for consumers (Sands et al., 2024; Bui, 2025).

Objective 3: To measure if AI-generated advertising is less engaging with emotions and psychological impact than human-generated advertising.

RQ3: While AI-generated advertising content is perceived as capable of generating cognitive engagement and functional, structural appeal, human-created content is considered superior in eliciting deep emotional responses, empathy, and long-term brand attachment (Yang, 2025).

Objective 4: To investigate the level of AI implementation present in various marketing activities and its influence on consumer purchase behaviour.

RQ4: AI is considered the most effective tool in data-based and scalable marketing activities (e.g., copywriting optimization, result analysis, forecasting) that positively influence decision speed and purchase intention; its effectiveness subsequently decreases with subjective judgment and cultural nuance (Sallaku et al., 2024).

Objective 5: To consider the degree to which various marketing channels moderate consumer reactions to AI-produced ad content.

RQ5: AI-created ads are more acceptable and effective in digital performing-oriented media (e.g., social media, online), while traditional and high-visible ones are sensitive to authenticity and human creativity prejudice.

Objective 6: To delve into strategic points of view on the coming AI-driven balance between machine efficiency and human creativity in advertising.

RQ6: Marketing specialists expect an AI-integrated advertising model in which the technology operates as a “efficient enabler” allowing humans to direct strategy, tell emotional stories and make ethical decisions.

Results & discussions

Interview analysis

The qualitative interviews provided in-depth insights into how marketing professionals in Romania perceive the integration of artificial intelligence into advertising practices. The findings are structured around six main themes.

1. Main Theme: AI use and brand image perception

When considering the impact of AI adoption on brand image, the respondents had two main ideas to consider: 1) it is recommended transparent AI disclosure as part of responsible brand communication; 2) without strong consolidation and clearly defined identity guidelines, excessive reliance on AI may negatively affect brand image by generating inconsistency, confusion, and visual fragmentation – the respondent also stated that “AI-generated materials currently lack the precision required to consistently preserve brand identity standards, making human oversight essential for maintaining perceptual coherence and a unified brand image”.

These responses highlight the insight that the use of AI can negatively influence the brand image perception in specific scenarios such as low involvement of expert guidance, usage non-disclosure, and the lack of brand’s maturity on the market.

By continuing the ideas of AI usage disclosure versus non-disclosure and brand image perception the respondents added that there is significant risk of non-disclosure, particularly among more educated or ethically attentive audiences, and that some segments of the public may not notice or may be indifferent to AI usage: “brands addressing premium, highly educated, or ethically sensitive audiences, such as publicly listed companies, face greater reputational risks when AI usage is not disclosed, especially given their higher visibility and media exposure compared to smaller businesses.” Additionally, the respondents emphasized that these perceptions are influenced by factors such as openness to novelty and technological readiness.

Thus, considering the answers, it can be concluded that simultaneously with AI usage, brands must continuously assess their multiple target audiences rather than assuming a single homogeneous public – the impact of AI disclosure remains highly context-dependent and audience-specific.

When asking about brand types or product categories where these differences of perception may become more apparent, the respondents described how audience expectations, rather than product categories alone, play a decisive role. One respondent mentioned that “the more premium the target audience, the higher the risks associated with AI usage and disclosure, making AI less advisable in such contexts.” Additionally, differences emerging in the quality of AI-generated content, which can range from low-quality outputs to highly refined materials, were also mentioned. The other respondent added that “rather than focusing on products or industries, the respondent emphasized audience typologies, particularly the distinction between early adopters of innovation and more conservative audiences. At this stage, she refrained from drawing rigid boundaries across industries, suggesting that consumer openness to technology remains the more relevant determinant”.

This information can suggest that the focus should not necessarily be on brand or product categories for interpreting the AI usage perception, but that the audience expectations determine whether AI-generated content is perceived as acceptable or detrimental.

2. Main Theme: Ethical considerations and transparency

Concerning ethical issues regarding AI usage in the context of advertising on the Romanian marketing, opinions converge towards a critical point of view: as things stand today, ethical principles are not appropriately implemented, neither at local nor industry level. While some organizations seem to adhere to ethical frameworks, intuitively, respecting their core values, audience pressure and expectations, these are rather only particular examples and cannot represent a general state of the entire market. One respondent highlighted the scale of the problem with a rough estimate: “80% to 90% of local practitioners who generate AI content do not actively respect ethical principles.” That indicates a gap between theoretical frameworks and actual practice.

The findings also suggest that ethical responsibility should be conceptualized through a lens beyond immediate consumer-facing considerations. These discussions have ranged from how AI is affecting creative industries (and what risks might be associated with intellectual property and authorship) to what content has either succeeded or failed because of its readability or pragmatic nature. “Beyond surface level ethical principles, we need to consider how undisclosed AI usage impacts creators, artists and content professionals,” establishing copyright protection as a “foundational ethical requirement.”

On transparency and disclosure, both responses acknowledge that non-disclosure of AI-generated content is indeed a significant ethical risk. Normatively, the absence of disclosure is thought to violate the consumer’s right to clear information about a product. This is complemented by noting that “AI-generated content in Romania lacks proper disclosure,” mostly due to the low awareness and understanding of intellectual property frameworks. Thus, transparent disclosure becomes more than just a recommended practice; it is the bare minimum for ethical communication.

Overall, these findings indicate that the Romanian advertising market is at an early stage of ethical alignment with respect to AI use and exhibits unpredictable practices, limited regulation internalization and a strong need for clearer standards. The few dimensions in need of further development should focus on transparency, accountability and respect for intellectual property, which aligns with the wider case for responsible AI and considering stricter governance methods in advertising.

3. Main Theme: Emotional Engagement, AI versus human-created content

When examining AI content and its ability to create an emotional response and further drive brand engagement, the received responses suggest that it is used in a conditional manner and

dependent on human creators. Ultimately, AI can deliver content that is functionally good enough; however, its current capability of producing emotionally impactful and strategically effective advertising on its own will continue to be limited. This is reflected by the comment that “content produced entirely with AI, without any human strategic input, leads to weak marketing effectiveness,” indicating that emotional resonance heavily relies on human services.

However, a remarkable outlier is found under the umbrella of political communication where AI has shown to be particularly good at creating emotionally driven content. As emphasized, AI can generate messages that are “potentially capable of significantly manipulating mass audience as we saw in the context of the Romanian presidential elections in December 2025 and May 2026,” often because they articulate emotional triggers or skew reality. Such considerations have crucial implications for the intersection of emotional resonance and ethical accountability, particularly regarding lower media literate audiences.

The findings do suggest that the emotional performance of AI-generated content is not intrinsically inferior, but rather contingent on the level of human input. As one answer emphasizes, “AI outputs reflect the inputs provided by specialists,” which reinforces this idea that AI is more of an amplifier than it is a top-level generator of emotional heights. Thus, in such a scenario, excessive emotional stimulation generated through AI, particularly when lacking strategic grounding, may reduce perceived authenticity, highlighting the continued importance of human judgment in balancing emotional and rational appeals.

As if to underscore the impact of emotional messaging, findings consistently indicate that human-generated content outperforms AI text generation when emotional complexity and strategic context is called for. This distinction is especially important when considering the difference between AI-assisted and solely AI-delivered outputs. Although AI can effectively produce emotionally driven content with the help of powerful prompts and storylines, “emotionally driven messages generated by professionals outperform those written solely by artificial intelligence, generally,” This only accentuates the point that strong emotional engagement takes professional skills.

Overall, the findings lend support to a hybrid outlook; AI involvement can help with efficiency and execution but generating genuine, contextually driven and strategically relevant emotional communication requires human contribution.

4. Main Theme: Marketing activities and AI application

When examining the areas of marketing and advertising most impacted by AI, the findings indicate that the highest level of adoption occurs in functions that were already undergoing automation. Activities that are performance driven and data-centric, like paid media or automatic processes, seem to be most compatible with AI integration since they’re mostly structured data and optimization based. By contrast, fields that rely on relational intelligence, contextual sensitivity, and strategic nuance, like public relations or influencer marketing, are much harder to fully automate. As noted, while AI can help with specific tasks like “press release writing or event structuring,” it cannot replace the complexity of integrated communication processes which establishes a clear line between operational support and strategic execution.

In terms of effectiveness, the results show a nuanced balance between quality and efficiency. While AI output is often seen as lower quality in terms of impact and refinement of delivery, the advantages are clearly in scalability and speed. For example, “routine social media content can effectively be supported by AI under the guidance of specialists,” implying that AI is especially useful in high-volume content contexts. At the same time, effectiveness measurement does not fundamentally differ between AI and human outputs, as both rely on the same performance

indicators. This suggests that perceived effectiveness differences reflect measurement framework less than execution quality and strategic alignment.

As for future implications, the findings indicate a significant level of uncertainty about how AI will influence consumer decision-making in the long run. AI could assist and simplify some purchasing processes, but its impact on consumer trust and behavior is still uncertain. On one hand is the prospect of further normalization and acceptance of AI-generated content; on the other are signs of possible backlash, including trends toward more humans-in-the-loop sources of information, like influencers. As the responses suggest, “future consumer responses are unclear,” and indications from the current marketplace show that AI will probably “run alongside” human-driven strategies rather than replace them altogether.

Across the board, the results reconfirm the view that AI acts mostly as an engine of efficiency and scale in marketing tasks with human expertise remaining essential to high-level strategic, relational and higher-order communication results.

5. Main Theme: Marketing channels and AI-Generated content

Results show that the largest proportion of AI content is being used in marketing channels in Romania (especially social media, where a high-frequency and scalable production of content can be supported). Conversely, content meant to provide tangible results still needs human input as well, thus making a differentiation between efficiency-driven and impact-driven communication. AI (particularly orientated towards data) works well in more autonomous use cases such as email marketing, however the potential risk factors surrounding this are often engaging generating inaccuracies or “hallucinations” to be present without much intervention.

An emerging trend is the growing ability of audiences to detect AI-generated content, as “informed audiences can increasingly identify AI-specific linguistic patterns.” Such growing recognition impacts content reception and judgment. How consumers react varies greatly, from engagement to rejection, and seems to rely less on the channel in question and more on what is written as well as audience characteristics.

These findings overall suggest that although AI is present throughout the majority of channels, its effectiveness really relies on strategic use, human oversight and how aligned it is with audience expectations.

6. Main Theme: Strategic and future-oriented perspectives

The findings given by the respondents place AI as an aiding tool, not a separate decision maker in marketing and advertising. Its significance is expected to increase under human supervision and autonomy cannot be achieved in the near future. It would be more accurate to describe AI as an enabler that increases efficiency; however, human savvy is indispensable when it comes to strategy and decision-making.

In terms of AI and human creativity balance, the results indicate that this equilibrium is still in formation. In fact, the success of any AI-powered innovation is ultimately based on how good its human input was; without smart specialists behind it pushing towards meaningful results, applications can fall disturbingly flat. An additional focus is ethical responsibility, both in terms of acting transparently without misleading or creating harmful material.

The overarching takeaway suggests a hybrid path forward, in which the efficiency of AI is completed by human ingenuity and ethics for genuine creative performance in advertising.

Results interpretation

This paper explored the psycho-ethical and strategic implications of AI-generated advertisements in a Romanian-specific context, uncovering patterns both consistent with and which nuance

existing findings in the literature. These findings indicate that AI's effect on brand image is not intrinsically unfavorable and depends on factors like the age of the brand, the quality of the script's execution, and audience expectations, supporting the notion that technology adoption does not solely influence a company's reputation. This partially validates the earlier assumptions about AI's contingent effect on brand image.

Simultaneously, transparency becomes an important moderating variable. In line with previous work on AI disclosure, the results suggest that non-disclosure can create reputational risks, especially among more highly educated or ethically sensitive audiences, while transparent communication may reinforce perceptions of authenticity and trust. This contributes to the wider theoretical discussion of persuasion knowledge and consumer awareness within AI-mediated communication.

One notable finding is the gap between said ethical frameworks and actual practice. International platforms may have set some standards for AI-generated content, but local implementations are incomplete, with ethical principles including transparency, accountability and intellectual property being only partially followed. Such discrepancy points to a structural tension between global governance mechanisms and local professional practices, thus implying the conclusion that ethical compliance seem more obliged by organizational values rather than formal regulations or market pressures. Likewise, the results substantiate the identified gap between normative ethical protocols and practical application in this sense.

In terms of emotional engagement, the findings suggest that although AI-generated content can mimic certain emotional triggers, particularly in high-impact contexts like political communication, it will always rely on human strategic input to achieve effectiveness. This is consistent with the literature that already exists on AI simulating but not replicating the depth of human emotional intelligence and contextual understanding.

Functionally, many view AI as a productivity tool that can boost efficiency in relatively mundane and data-heavy marketing activities, while human interpretation expertise is still needed to deliver insights at the strategic, connector and creative level. This duality also suggests a template for future-facing scenarios, where AI's are never positioned as autonomous agents (decision-makers) but simply an enabler of its will, enforcing the new paradigm of hybrid intelligence in advertising.

Taken together, the results point toward a hybrid model in which AI-enhanced efficiency exists complementarily with human creativity, moral reasoning and emotional intelligence, thus indicating that the future of advertising is not one of replacement but balanced integration.

Limitations

There is also a list of limitations of this study that should be recognized. First, the research's qualitative approach and the small number of respondents prevent any generalization of findings. Second, the research is based on perceptions from experts rather than consumers, so the outcomes are representative of professional opinions about audience behavior and not empirically measured consumer responses. Third, the rapidly evolving nature of AI technologies in advertising may affect the temporal validity of the findings, as industry practices and consumer attitudes continue to shift.

However, each of these limitations opens key directions for future research. In particular, quantitative studies could be conducted to test the assumptions of the experts regarding consumer acceptance or rejection of AI-generated advertising. Experimental designs that contrast consumer reactions to AI-created versus human-produced content, large-scale surveys assessing attitudes

toward disclosure of AI use, or behavioral studies examining engagement and purchase intention metrics would provide rich empirical evidence to augment and expand the current findings.

Conclusions

As the research illustrates, the impact of AI in advertising is nuanced and context dependent; its effects on brand perception, ethical stance and consumer engagement will vary depending on execution quality as well as transparency and audience attributes. AI is not a replacement for human input, rather it is a tool that increases efficiency, and needs management accordingly. The findings provide evidence for building a hybrid advertising model, one in which AI capabilities are integrated with human creativity, ethical sensibility and strategic decision-making.

From a managerial perspective, the change from “amateur” to “professional” AI usage is vital for the Romanian advertising industry. This implies many practical steps: the investment in specialist training to raise the level of input or prompting and output evaluation; embedding AI into a structured workflow, where it sits alongside humans with validation at key moments of truth; promotion of communication transparency around what is AI or human-produced; codifying AI usage so that there are clear guidelines around how it fits within brand standards. Firms also need to create their own internal general set of guidelines around ethical issues, such as disclosure, bias, and intellectual property, that goes beyond informal or “instinctual” practices.

In summary, the research emphasizes that AI adoption per se will not be able to deliver a competitive advantage to firms but the responsible and strategic implementation of such technologies into current marketing processes will enable organizations to expand their overall potential value. Future research should further explore these dynamics through larger samples, consumer-based empirical studies, and cross-cultural comparisons to better understand the long-term implications of AI-driven advertising.

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