

A Comparative Study of Consumer Perception Toward AI Generated and Human-Created Content in Digital Marketing and Advertising

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines how consumers perceive AI-generated content compared to human-created content in digital marketing and advertising. With the rapid adoption of generative AI tools, businesses increasingly rely on automated systems for content creation. The research focuses on key factors such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention. Using a structured questionnaire based on a Likert scale, primary data was collected from respondents. The findings suggest that while AI-generated content performs well in efficiency and clarity, human-created content is perceived as more authentic and emotionally engaging. The study highlights the importance of balancing AI use with human creativity in marketing strategies.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence has significantly transformed digital marketing and advertising, enabling businesses to generate content efficiently at scale. This study examines consumer perception toward AI-generated content in comparison to human-created content, focusing on key factors such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention. As brands increasingly adopt AI tools for content creation, understanding how consumers respond to such content becomes essential for effective marketing strategies.

The study concludes that although AI offers significant advantages in scalability and cost-effectiveness, it cannot fully replace human creativity and relatability. A balanced approach that integrates AI capabilities with human input is recommended for businesses to enhance consumer trust and engagement in digital marketing and advertising.

KEYWORDS:

Artificial Intelligence, AI-Generated Content, Consumer Perception, Digital Marketing, Advertising, Trust, Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

The digital marketing landscape has evolved rapidly over the past decade, driven by technological advancements and changing consumer behaviour. One of the most transformative developments in recent years is the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) in content creation. AI-powered tools are now widely used to generate advertisements, social media posts, product descriptions, and even video content. These tools enable businesses to produce large volumes of content quickly and cost-effectively, making them highly attractive in a competitive digital environment. As a result, AI-generated content has become an integral part of modern marketing and advertising strategies.

Despite its growing adoption, the use of AI in content creation raises important questions about how consumers perceive such content. Consumer perception plays a critical role in determining the success of marketing efforts, as it influences trust, engagement, and purchasing decisions. While AI-generated content is often praised for its efficiency,

consistency, and data-driven personalization, it may lack the emotional depth, creativity, and authenticity typically associated with human-created content. This distinction becomes particularly important in digital marketing, where emotional connection and relatability often drive consumer behaviour.

Human-created content, on the other hand, has traditionally been valued for its originality, storytelling ability, and capacity to build meaningful relationships with audiences. Consumers may perceive human-generated advertisements as more genuine and trustworthy, especially in contexts where authenticity is essential. However, with advancements in generative AI, the gap between AI and human content is narrowing, making it increasingly difficult for consumers to distinguish between the two. This creates a complex dynamic in which both types of content coexist and influence consumer perceptions in different ways.

Furthermore, the increasing use of AI-generated content has implications for consumer trust and transparency. When consumers are aware that content is generated by AI, their perception may change, potentially affecting their level of trust and willingness to engage with the brand. This highlights the importance of understanding not only how consumers perceive AI-generated content, but also how factors such as disclosure, context, and type of content influence their responses. Marketers must carefully consider these aspects when integrating AI into their communication strategies.

In this context, the present study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of consumer perception toward AI-generated and human-created content in digital marketing and advertising. By examining key factors such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention, the study seeks to provide insights into how consumers evaluate different types of content. The findings of this research will help businesses develop more effective marketing strategies by balancing the efficiency of AI with the creativity and emotional appeal of human input.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To compare consumer perception of AI-generated and human-created content To analyse the level of trust and authenticity associated with both

AREA OF STUDY

This research falls under the fields of marketing and consumer behaviour, with a specific focus on digital marketing and advertising. It examines how artificial intelligence is being used in content creation and how consumers perceive AI-generated content compared to human-created content. The study integrates concepts from technology adoption, consumer psychology, and marketing communication to analyse factors such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention. It is particularly relevant in the context of the growing use of generative AI tools in modern business practices.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is limited to analysing consumer perception of AI-generated and human-created content within the domain of digital marketing and advertising. It focuses on commonly used content formats such as online advertisements, social media posts, and promotional materials. The study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from a selected group of respondents.

Geographically, the research is confined to a specific area (you can mention your city/region if required), and the sample size is limited, which may affect the generalization of the findings. The study considers key variables such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention but does not cover technical aspects of AI development. Additionally, it reflects consumer perceptions at a particular point in time and may evolve as AI technology advances.

LITREATURE REVIEW

Nizar et al. (2026) A structured review on AI-generated content highlights that consumer responses are often ambivalent, driven by psychological factors such as trust, perceived manipulation, and emotional discomfort. The study emphasizes that AI-generated marketing content may trigger “persuasion knowledge”, where consumers suspect

strategic intent, reducing trust. Chintalapati & Pandey (2021) This study explores the role of AI in marketing and finds that AI significantly enhances efficiency, personalization, and scalability in digital marketing. However, it also notes that the integration of AI changes traditional consumer-brand interactions, raising concerns about authenticity and human touch.

Farooq & Yuen (2024) A systematic review on AI in consumer behaviour reveals that AI technologies influence consumer attitudes, preferences, and decision-making.

While AI improves personalization and engagement, concerns regarding privacy and trust remain critical barriers to adoption.

Mukherjee (2024) This study discusses the risks of AI-generated content in marketing, particularly its ability to produce misleading or fabricated information. It highlights that such content can negatively affect consumer trust and distort perception, emphasizing the need for ethical regulation and human oversight. Cao et al. (2023)

This survey explains the development of AI-generated content technologies and their growing role in producing high-quality, human-like outputs. It highlights that while AI improves efficiency, challenges remain in maintaining creativity, originality, and contextual understanding.

Wu et al. (2023) The study defines AI-generated content as a tool that can assist or replace human creativity in content production. It emphasizes its potential in marketing but also points out limitations such as lack of emotional intelligence and contextual nuance. Wang et al. (2023) This research highlights the transformative impact of generative AI like ChatGPT in content creation. It discusses benefits such as cost reduction and speed, but also raises concerns regarding ethical issues, privacy risks, and misinformation, which influence consumer perception.

Vogue Business AI Consumer Survey (2026) Recent findings show that consumers still have low trust in AI-generated content, especially in creative industries like fashion. Only a small percentage of respondents fully trust AI-generated campaigns, while many prefer human creativity and interaction, citing lack of originality in AI outputs.

Creator Economy and AI (2026) Research on AI influencers indicates that while AI can replicate human-like content, it struggles with authenticity and emotional connection, which are critical in marketing. Consumers often perceive human creators as more credible and relatable.

UCSD Study on AI Content and Purchase Behaviour (2025) This study finds that AI-generated summaries can significantly increase purchase intention, even when the information may be inaccurate. It suggests that AI content can influence decision-making but raises concerns about consumer vulnerability to biased or misleading information.

AI in Advertising Trends (2025) Research indicates that although AI-generated advertisements are cost-effective and scalable, they often lack emotional depth and originality, leading to negative consumer reactions when identified as AI-created. Human creativity remains essential for impactful advertising. Industry Adoption of AI in Marketing (WSJ Report) This study shows that companies are increasingly adopting AI for content creation and campaign management. However, it emphasizes that human oversight is still necessary, as AI lacks the ability to fully understand consumer emotions and preferences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Type: Descriptive and Comparative Data Collection Primary data through questionnaire, Secondary data from journals, articles, and reports.

Sampling Method Convenience Sampling Sample Size 50–100 respondents Tool Used Structured questionnaire (Likert scale: 1–5) Data Analysis Techniques Percentage analysis, Mean score analysis, Graphical representation (bar charts, pie charts)

Research designs the present study adopts a descriptive and comparative research design. The descriptive aspect focuses on understanding and explaining consumer perceptions toward AI-generated and human-created content in

digital marketing and advertising. It helps in identifying key factors such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention. The comparative design is used to analyse the differences between consumer responses to AI-generated content and human-created content. This approach enables the researcher to evaluate which type of content is more effective from the consumer's perspective. The study is based on primary data collection through a structured questionnaire using a Likert scale. Respondents are presented with statements related to both AI-generated and human-created content, and their opinions are measured accordingly. The collected data is then analysed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis and mean scores to draw meaningful conclusions.

Nature of the study the nature of this study is quantitative and empirical. It is quantitative because it involves numerical data collected through structured questionnaires, which allows for statistical analysis and objective interpretation of results. The study is empirical in nature as it is based on real-world data collected directly from respondents, rather than purely theoretical assumptions. It aims to observe and measure actual consumer perceptions and behaviours in relation to AI-generated and human-created marketing content. Additionally, the study is cross-sectional, as the data is collected at a single point in time, and it reflects the perceptions of consumers during that specific period. The research is also non-experimental, as it does not involve manipulation of variables but instead focuses on analysing existing opinions and attitudes.

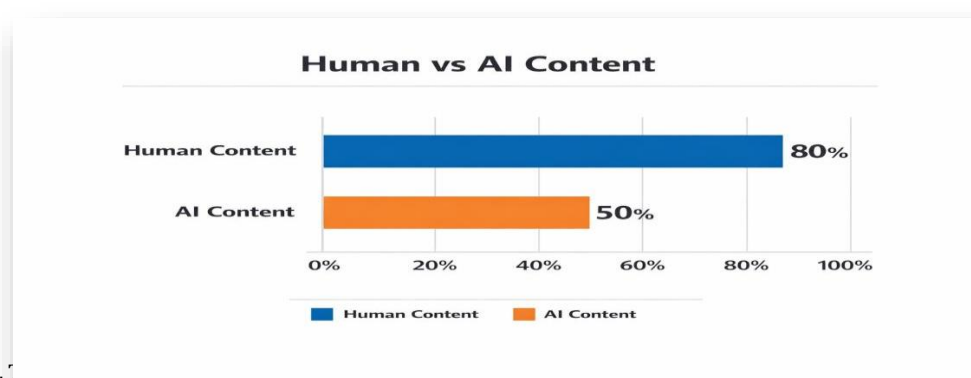
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

QUESTIONNAIRE (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) (Likert scale)

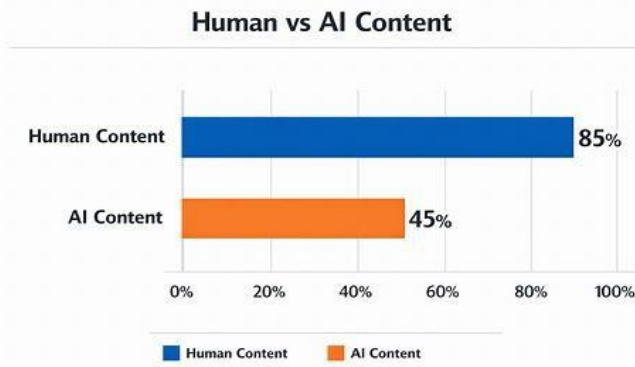
1. I trust human-created advertisements more than AI-generated ones
2. AI-generated content is clear and informative
3. Human-created content feels more authentic
4. AI-generated ads are engaging
5. I can easily distinguish between AI and human content
6. I feel emotionally connected to human-created content
7. AI-generated content influences my purchase decisions
8. I prefer brands that use human creativity over AI.

FINDINGS

1. Trust Majority of respondents agreed that human-created content is more trustworthy than AI-generated content. AI content faced scepticism, especially when identified as machine-generated.

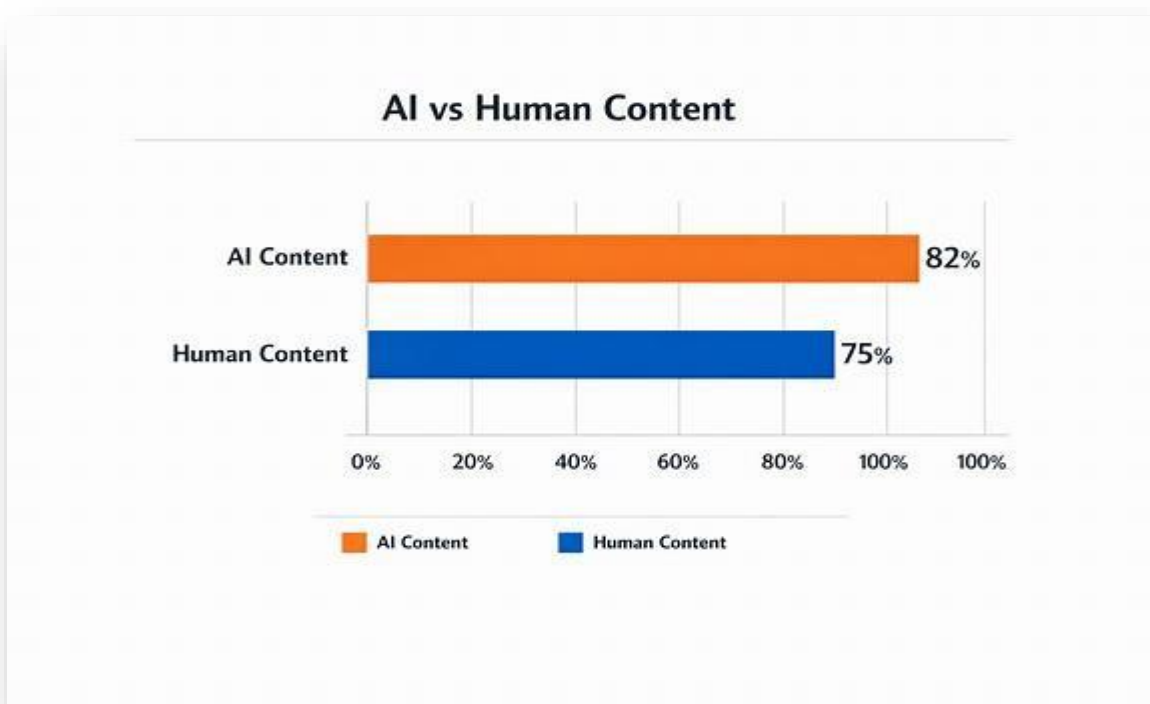


This bar chart shows the trust people in human content and AI content 2. Authenticity Human-created content scored higher in authenticity and originality. AI content was often seen as generic or less personal.



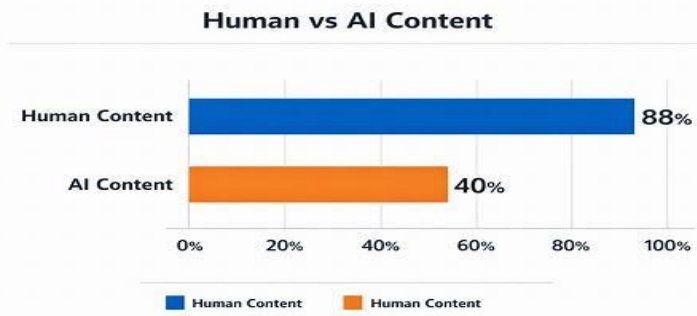
This bar chart shows the trust of people in Authenticity of content

3. Clarity & Information AI-generated content was rated high in clarity, structure, and informativeness. Respondents found AI content easy to understand.



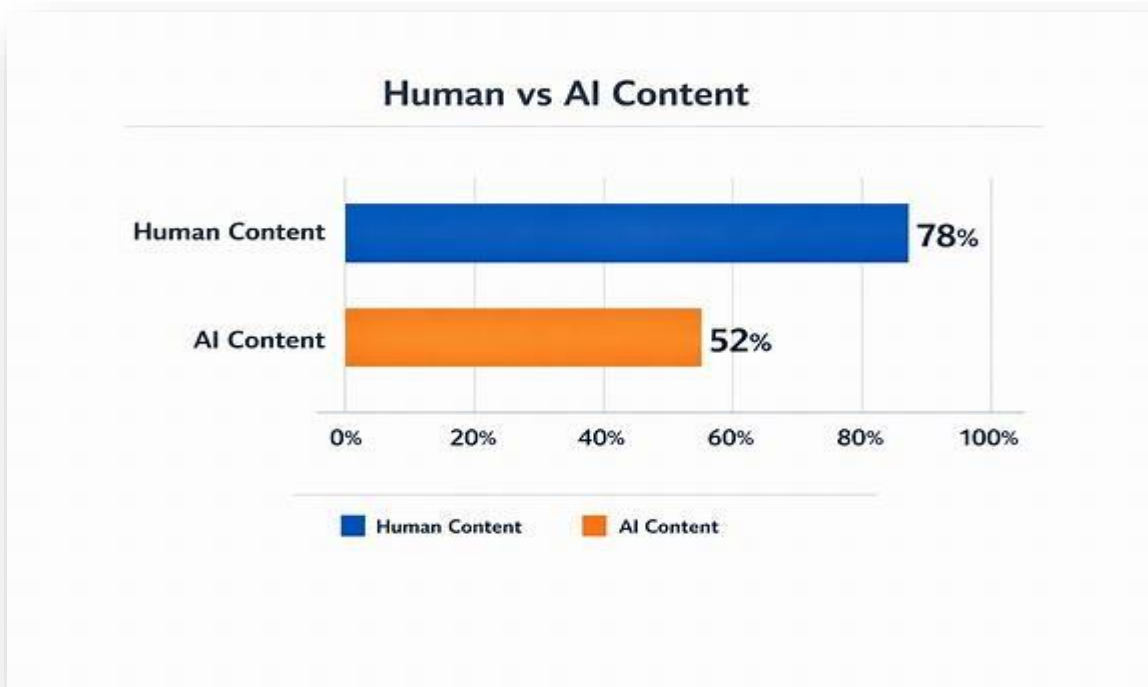
This bar graph shows the clarity on information generated by AI and Human.

4. Emotional Connection Human-created content showed strong emotional engagement. AI content lacked emotional depth.



This bar chart show the Emotional Connection of AI and Human made content

5. Engagement Slightly higher engagement was observed with human-created advertisements.



This shows the engagement in advertisement created by human and AI.

6. Purchase Intention Consumers were more likely to trust and purchase based on human-created content.

7. Awareness Many respondents reported they cannot easily distinguish between AI and human content.

8. Many Respondents choose brand created by human in Brands created by AI or human beings.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is a clear difference in how consumers perceive AI- generated and human-created content in digital marketing and advertising. While AI- generated content is appreciated for its efficiency, clarity, and ability to deliver structured information, it falls short in areas such as trust, authenticity, and emotional connection. On the other hand, human-created content is perceived as more genuine, relatable, and engaging, which plays a significant role in influencing consumer attitudes and purchase decisions.

The findings also indicate that although many consumers are unable to clearly distinguish between AI-generated and human-created content, their perception changes when they are aware of the source. Human involvement continues to hold greater value, especially in building trust and emotional appeal in marketing communication.

Overall, the study suggests that businesses should not rely entirely on AI for content creation. Instead, a balanced approach that combines the efficiency of AI with human creativity and emotional intelligence is recommended to achieve better consumer engagement and marketing effectiveness

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limited Sample Size The study is based on a relatively small number of respondents, which may not fully represent the entire population. **Geographical Constraint** Data is collected from a specific region, so the findings may not be applicable to consumers in other locations or cultures.

Time Constraint The study is conducted within a limited time period, which may affect the depth of analysis and data collection. **Subjective Responses** The results depend on respondents' personal opinions, which may be biased or influenced by individual experiences. **Limited Awareness of AI** Some respondents may not have a clear understanding of AI-generated content, which could impact the accuracy of their responses.

Cross-Sectional Nature The study captures consumer perception at one point in time and does not account for changes in perception as technology evolves. **Restricted Variable** The research focuses only on selected factors such as trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention, and does not include other possible influences.

Non-Experimental Design The study does not involve controlled experiments, so cause-and-effect relationships cannot be strongly established.

RESEARCH GAP

Despite the growing body of literature on artificial intelligence in marketing, several important gaps remain, particularly in understanding consumer perception of AI-generated versus human-created content. Most existing studies primarily focus on the technical efficiency, scalability, and performance of AI tools rather than examining how consumers emotionally and psychologically respond to such content. This creates a gap in understanding the human side of AI adoption in digital marketing.

Furthermore, limited research has been conducted on direct comparative analysis between AI-generated and human-created content within the specific context of digital marketing and advertising. While some studies discuss AI applications broadly, they do not clearly evaluate differences in trust, authenticity, engagement, and purchase intention from a consumer perspective. This lack of focused comparison highlights the need for more empirical studies in this area.

Another significant gap is the impact of awareness and disclosure. There is insufficient research on how consumer perception changes when they are informed that content is AI-generated. Additionally, variations in perception across different demographic groups (age, education, digital literacy) are not extensively explored.

Lastly, most studies are conducted in developed markets, with limited focus on emerging markets like India, where consumer behaviour, technological awareness, and trust levels may differ significantly. Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by providing a comparative, consumer-focused analysis within the context of digital marketing and advertising.

RECOMMENDATION & SUGGESTION

RECOMMENDATION Adopt a Hybrid Content Approach Businesses should combine AI-generated content with human creativity to achieve both efficiency and emotional appeal. **Prioritize Consumer Trust** Marketers should ensure that content—whether AI or human-created—maintains high levels of authenticity and credibility.

Use AI for Operational Efficiency AI tools should be used for tasks like content drafting, data analysis, and personalization to save time and cost. **Maintain Transparency** Companies should be transparent about the use of AI in content creation to avoid misleading consumers and to build trust. **Enhance Emotional Engagement** Human input should be included to add storytelling and emotional depth, which AI alone cannot effectively deliver.

Train Marketing Professionals Organizations should invest in training employees to effectively integrate AI tools into marketing strategies.

SUGGESTIONS **Increase Sample Size in Future Studies** Future research should include a larger and more diverse group of respondents for better generalization. **Explore Other Sectors** Studies can be extended to sectors like healthcare, education, entertainment, and e-commerce. **Conduct Longitudinal Studies** Future research should analyse how consumer perception changes over time as AI technology evolves.

Examine Demographic Differences Researchers can study how factors like age, education, and digital awareness influence perception. **Study Impact of AI Disclosure** Further research is needed to understand how informing consumers about AI-generated content affects trust and behaviour. **Use Advanced Analytical Tools** Future studies can apply statistical techniques like regression or correlation for deeper insights.

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