THE HUMAN vs THE MACHINE

CONSUMER REACTIONS TO AI-GENERATED ADS IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL NATIVES

Artificial Intelligence has recently entered the spotlight with the release of Large Language Models such as OpenAI's ChatGPT or Googles Gemini. The capabilities of these technologies are varied and extensive, as a result many industries are set to be revolutionised including the field of marketing. As marketing is a consumer facing industry consumer reaction to these changes must be tested, therefore this study aims to investigate how consumers respond to AI versus human made advertisements, with a focus on the moderating role of perceived threat of Artificial Intelligence.

Using a between-group experimental design participants in the age group 18 to 25 were randomly exposed to either an AI or human created advertisement and asked to rate its persuasiveness. The study also measured individual perceptions of AI as a threat across several factors. Contrary to expectations, AI-generated advertisements did not significantly reduce perceived persuasiveness by itself, however a significant interaction effect was found: individuals who perceived AI as more of a threat rated AI-generated ads as less persuasive
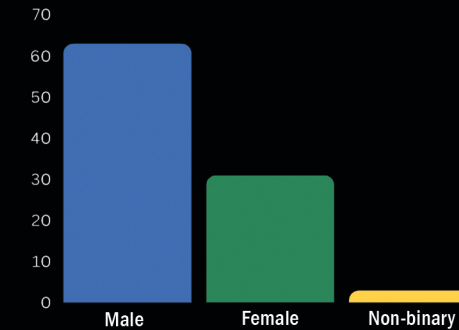
The survey used a between-group design where the independent variable was AI generated vs non ai generated advertisement where the material was either created by people or was created by AI. Persuasiveness of the advertisement was the dependent variable being studied, with the moderator variable being Perceived threat of AI. During the survey both the dependent and moderator variable were measured
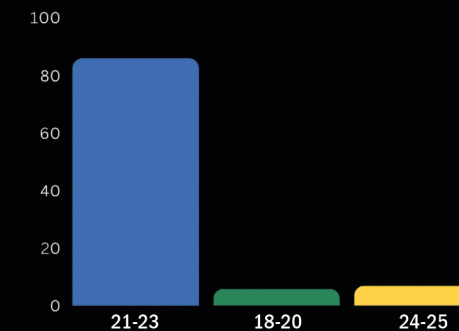
This study used two static digital poster advertisements for the Heinz brand. One was a real ad created by the Heinz marketing team, showing the slogan "It has to be..." alongside a bottle of Heinz ketchup. The other was an AI-generated version of an ad for the same product, using the tagline "The tomato's final form." Both ads featured the same product but differed in their messaging style.

The AI-generated ad included a small note in the corner that read "generated by AI" so participants were aware of its origin. The aim of using these two materials was to see how the creation origin of the ad, either AI or human, influenced how persuasive participants found it. Keeping the brand and product the same helped reduce the effect of outside factors like brand preference.
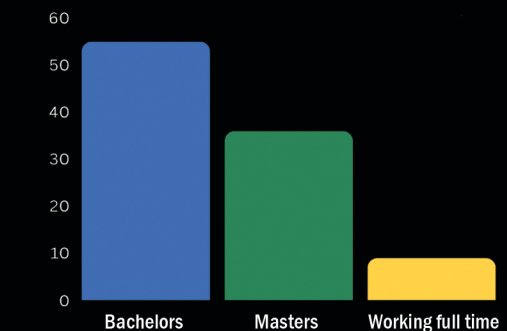

IT HAS TO BE HEINZ TOMATO KETCHUP

THE TOMATO'S FINAL FORM

HEINZ

AI generated

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

Male | Female | Non-binary

AGE COUNTS

21-23 | 18-20 | 24-25

CURRENT STATUS

Bachelors | Masters | Working full time

AI FAMILIARITY

Extremely familiar | Very familiar | Moderately familiar | Slightly familiar
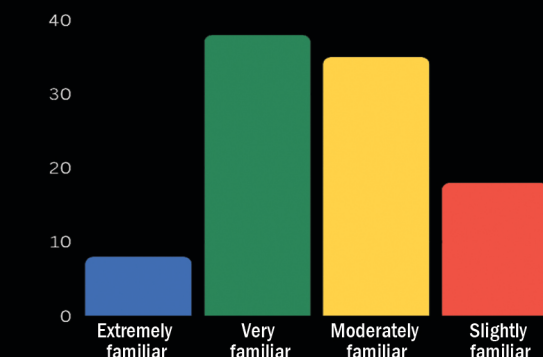
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Bachelor Thesis Economics and Business Economics

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