Brands May Actually Benefit From Advertising Next to AI Content, Per Study

The rise of low-quality AI-generated online content, colloquially known as “AI slop,” has sparked backlash among many consumers. Some brands are virtue signaling with ad campaigns that mock AI.

But the current state of AI-generated content is more nuanced. Not all of it is perceived as slop, and some of it may actually benefit the brands advertising next to it, according to a new study from OM Media Trials, the consumer research arm of Omnicom Media Group, and brand safety vendor Zefr.

OM Media Trials and Zefr surveyed nearly 5,000 people in the U.S. and Canada, gauging how they reacted to ads shown after eight types of AI-generated video. They found that people reacted positively to ads shown after AI-generated satire, youth depictions, or artistic content, perceiving the brands to be “refreshing” or “innovative.”

There are also real risks associated with AI-generated content. Many brands have experienced this firsthand with their own AI-created ads, including Valentino’s “disturbing” AI ads for handbags and a McDonald’s AI-created Christmas ad deemed “unsettling” and “creepy” by consumers.

In the survey, participants responded negatively to ads shown next to AI spam or misinformation about public figures. Advertising next to AI content is particularly problematic for categories like financial services.

Inescapable AI

The stakes are high considering the proliferation of AI-generated content. Gartner estimates that 90% of internet content will be created by AI by 2030.

Adding to the complexity, many people can’t tell the difference between human- and AI-created content. According to the study, 32% of people suspected that human-created content was actually generated by AI.

Troublingly, audiences are most likely to believe that AI-generated misinformation about public figures is real.

Transparency is key

The results provide a roadmap of sorts for brands wading deeper into AI-generated content. One potential solution to mitigate any negative association is simply to disclose when content is made with AI.

The survey found that for 41% of respondents, their brand opinion improved when the content was clearly labeled as being AI-generated.

“AI content is only going to become more prevalent in the months and years ahead,” Kara Manatt, EVP of Intelligence Solutions at OM Media Trials, said in a statement. “The solution is not to shut off an entire category of content, but to give brands the control and intelligence to align with the right AI environments, and avoid the ones that create risk.”

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