Consumer Perceptions of AI-Generated Promotional Posters in Social Media Advertising

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ABSTRACT

The growing use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in social media advertising has created new opportunities for producing promotional visuals while raising questions about how consumers evaluate AI-generated content. This conceptual paper examines the roles of perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity in shaping consumer attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters. The paper develops a conceptual framework based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory to explain how consumers' perceptions of visual attractiveness and authenticity may shape their attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters. The proposed framework positions the AI-generated promotional poster as the stimulus, perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity as two internal consumer evaluations and attitude towards the advertisement as the response. It proposes that both perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity may be positively associated with advertising attitude. By distinguishing aesthetic appeal from perceived genuineness, the paper extends the conceptual discussion of consumer evaluation beyond the visual qualities of AI-generated advertising. The framework also provides a foundation for future empirical research examining these relationships across different advertising contexts. For practitioners, the discussion highlights the importance of considering both perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity when developing AI-generated promotional posters for social media platforms.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence, Social Media Advertising, Perceived Visual Attractiveness, Perceived Authenticity, Consumer Response

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced new possibilities for the production of digital advertising content including promotional posters, product images and social media advertisements. AI tools help advertisers generate and modify visual content with increasing speed and flexibility, potentially changing conventional advertising production practices. Within social media environments, visual content competes for users' attention and AI-generated promotional posters offer opportunities for creative experimentation and the development of visually distinctive advertising messages. However, the adoption of AI in advertising also raises questions about how consumers interpret and evaluate content produced through these technologies. Consequently, understanding consumer responses to AI-generated advertising has become an important research area in digital marketing and communication research.

One important issue concerns the relationship between perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity. AI-generated promotional posters may capture attention through their aesthetic quality, creative presentation and visual novelty. However, visually appealing content does not necessarily guarantee favourable consumer evaluations. Consumers may question whether AI-generated images accurately represent a product or perceive the advertising content as artificial or insufficiently genuine. Previous research has examined several aspects of consumer responses to AI-generated marketing communication. Kirk and Givi (2025) indicate that consumer responses to AI-generated marketing communication can be influenced by perceptions

of authenticity and by awareness of AI involvement. Wortel et al. (2024) examined the effects of AI disclosure in Instagram advertisements on consumer attitudes, while Zhang and Hur (2025) investigated consumer attitudes towards AI-generated advertising images under different advertising conditions. Shi and Jiang (2026) further examined consumer responses to AI disclosure labels in relation to novelty and authenticity. Although these studies provide insights into consumer evaluations of AI-related advertising, they address different aspects of the advertising experience. Further conceptual examination is needed to consider how perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity may each relate to attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters.

This concept paper addresses this gap by applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework to consumer evaluations of AI-generated promotional posters in social media advertising. The framework positions the AI-generated promotional poster as the stimulus, perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity as two internal consumer evaluations, and attitude towards the advertisement as the response. The paper proposes that both perceptions are positively associated with advertising attitude. By bringing these two distinct evaluations into a single conceptual framework, the paper provides a basis for future empirical research on consumer responses to AI-generated advertising visuals. The proposed relationships remain to be empirically tested.

The scope of this paper is limited to consumer evaluations of AI-generated promotional posters used in social media advertising. It focuses on the perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity of promotional posters and their proposed associations with attitude towards the advertisement. The framework is not restricted to a particular social media platform, product category, consumer group or geographical context. Its applicability across different advertising settings therefore remains an area for future empirical investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generative AI in Social Media Advertising

Generative AI has emerged as an important development in marketing communication. It enables the production of new content including text, images and videos. In advertising, generative AI can support the creation of promotional visuals, product images and social media advertising materials, offering opportunities for greater production efficiency and creative experimentation (Kshetri et al., 2024). Grewal et al. (2025) further explain that generative AI can transform marketing content creation while highlighting the importance of appropriate human involvement in developing and evaluating AI-generated outputs. These capabilities have implications for advertising practitioners seeking to produce visual content across digital platforms.

The application of generative AI to advertising visuals is particularly relevant to social media, where promotional materials compete with other content for users' attention. AI-generated promotional posters allow advertisers to experiment with different visual styles and creative concepts. However, the ability to generate advertising visuals does not necessarily ensure favourable consumer responses. Zhang and Hur (2025) found that consumer responses to AI-generated advertising images varied across advertising contexts and conditions of AI disclosure. Their findings suggest that the evaluation of AI-generated visuals depends on more than the technical capacity to produce images.

Understanding these consumer evaluations provides a basis for examining how audiences perceive the visual appeal and authenticity of AI-generated promotional posters. The following subsection discusses these two dimensions of consumer evaluation.

Perceived Visual Attractiveness of AI-generated Promotional Posters

Perceived visual attractiveness refers to consumers' subjective evaluations of the aesthetic appeal of an advertisement. In visual advertising, characteristics such as colour, composition, layout and visual complexity contribute to how advertising content is perceived and processed (Pieters et al., 2010). In the context of generative AI, advertisers can produce promotional posters in different visual styles and arrangements, creating

opportunities to experiment with aesthetic presentation. However, the technical sophistication of AI-generated images does not necessarily correspond to consumers' perceptions of visual attractiveness. Accordingly, this paper conceptualises perceived visual attractiveness as consumers' overall assessment of the aesthetic appeal of an AI-generated promotional poster, rather than the technical quality of the AI system used to produce it.

Visual attractiveness may be particularly relevant to social media advertising because promotional posters compete with other relevant content for users' attention. An aesthetically appealing poster may create a favourable initial impression and encourage consumers to engage with the advertisement. However, visual attractiveness and advertising attitude are distinct concepts: the former concerns the perceived aesthetic appeal of the poster, while the latter concerns consumers' overall evaluation of the advertisement. Neither should be equated with purchase intention. Although research has examined consumer responses to AI-generated advertising images (Zhang & Hur, 2025), the proposed relationship between perceived visual attractiveness and attitude towards AI-generated promotional posters require further examination.

Building on this literature, perceived visual attractiveness can be conceptualized as a relevant factor in consumers' evaluations of AI-generated promotional posters in the present framework. Its proposed relationship with advertising attitude is examined alongside perceived authenticity, which concerns a different aspect of how consumers evaluate AI-generated promotional content.

Perceived Authenticity in AI-Generated Promotional Posters

Perceived authenticity refers to consumers' evaluation of whether advertising content conveys a genuine and credible presentation of the brand being promoted. In the context of generative AI, consumers may evaluate not only the content of a promotional message but also whether its presentation appears sincere and original. Perceived authenticity is therefore relevant to understanding how consumers evaluate AI-generated promotional posters.

Recent research provides evidence that perceived authenticity can influence consumer responses to AI-generated marketing communications. Kirk and Givi (2025) found across a series of experiments that consumers' perceptions of AI authorship reduced positive word of mouth and customer loyalty for emotional marketing communications, with perceived authenticity helping to explain these side effects. However, their research focused on written marketing communication rather than AI-generated promotional posters. Their findings provide a relevant theoretical basis for considering authenticity in AI-generated advertising, although the findings should not be assumed to apply identically to visual content.

Authenticity may also be influenced by how consumers interpret the use of AI in advertising. Wortel et al. (2024) found that disclosing AI involvement in Instagram advertisements negatively affected attitudes toward the advertisement, although the effects varied across outcomes and were partly explained by consumers' inferences of manipulative intent. Shi and Jiang (2026) further demonstrate the importance of authenticity in consumer responses to AI disclosure label, identifying competing effects involving perceived novelty and authenticity. Their findings indicated that increased perceived novelty was associated with more favourable consumer responses, whereas reduced perceived authenticity was associated with less favourable responses. Together, these studies highlight the relevance of consumers' interpretations of AI involvement when evaluating AI-related advertising. However, disclosure and perceived authenticity are not interchangeable. Disclosure concerns whether AI involvement is communicated, whereas authenticity concerns whether the advertising content is perceived as genuine.

In the present framework, perceived authenticity is conceptualised as a distinct consumer evaluation alongside perceived visual attractiveness. A promotional poster may be aesthetically appealing without necessarily appearing genuine or accurately representing the advertised product. Examining both perceptions provides a basis for investigating how each may be associated with consumers' attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters.

Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Framework

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework as introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) explains how external stimuli influence individuals' internal cognitive and affective states, which may subsequently shape their responses. The framework continues to inform contemporary research on visual marketing as demonstrated by Chaudhuri et al. (2026), who applied the S-O-R model to examine how product image composition influences consumers' image appeal, product perceptions and willingness to pay in e-commerce.

In marketing and advertising research, the S-O-R framework offers a useful perspective for examining how consumers respond to advertising stimuli. For AI-generated promotional posters, these evaluations may involve both the poster's visual appeal and consumers' perceptions of its authenticity.

Attitude towards the advertisement refers to consumers' overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of an advertisement. In this paper, the construct concerns consumers' evaluations of AI-generated promotional posters rather than their general attitudes towards artificial intelligence, the advertised brand or their intention to purchase the product. This distinction is important because consumers may respond positively to a poster without necessarily developing purchase intentions.

In the proposed framework, the AI-generated promotional posters represent the stimulus, perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity represent two distinct internal consumer evaluations, and attitude towards the advertisement represents the response. This application of the S-O-R framework provides the theoretical basis for the two propositions developed in Discussion section.

DISCUSSION

Beyond Visual Appeal

The literature reviewed in this paper suggests that the evaluation of AI-generated promotional posters involves more than their aesthetic qualities. Although generative AI enables advertisers to produce visually polished and varied promotional materials, visual appeal alone may not fully explain consumers' attitudes towards these advertisements. Consumers may also consider whether the content appears genuine and consistent with the brand being promoted. This distinction is important because an advertisement can be aesthetically appealing without necessarily being perceived as authentic.

Perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity therefore represent two conceptually distinct aspects of consumer evaluation. Perceived visual attractiveness concerns the aesthetic qualities of the poster as perceived by consumers, whereas authenticity concerns the perceived genuineness of the advertising content. Although the two evaluations may interact, they should not be treated as interchangeable. A visually attractive poster may create an initial favourable impression but concerns about artificiality, unrealistic product representation or inconsistency with the brand may impair consumers' overall evaluation.

Existing research on AI-generated marketing communications provides a basis for considering these concerns. Kirk and Givi (2025) demonstrate the relevance of perceived authenticity in consumer responses to AI-authored marketing communications, while Wortel et al. (2024) show that disclosure of AI involvement can influence consumer attitudes towards Instagram advertisements. However, these findings do not establish that the same effects will occur for every type of AI-generated promotional poster. Instead, they support the need to examine how consumers interpret visual advertising produced using generative AI.

Thus, this paper considers perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity as two distinct dimensions of consumer evaluation. By examining both within the proposed framework, the paper provides a basis for considering how aesthetic appeal and perceived genuineness may each be associated with attitudes towards AI-generated promotional poster. This perspective also informs the propositions developed in the following subsections.

Proposed Conceptual Framework and Propositions

Building on the Stimulus-Organism-Response S-O-R framework, this paper proposes a conceptual framework for examining consumer attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters. As illustrated in Figure 1, the AI-generated promotional poster represents the stimulus (S), perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity represent two internal consumer evaluations within the organism (O), and attitude towards the advertisement represents the response (R).

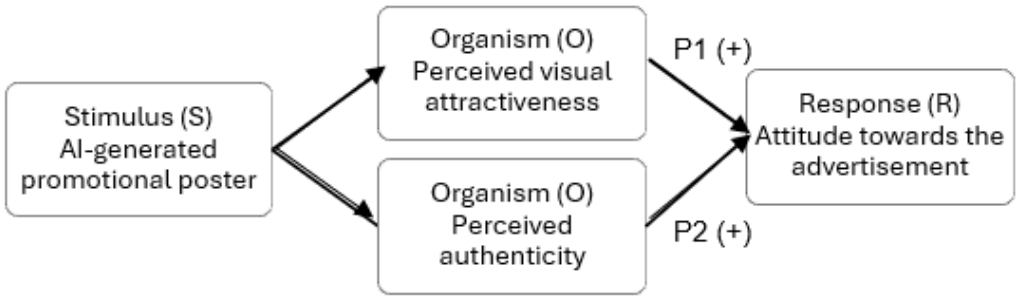


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework for consumer evaluations of AI-generated promotional posters.

The framework proposes that perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity are each positively associated with consumers' attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters. Although these perceptions may be related, they represent different aspects of consumer evaluation and are therefore examined separately.

Perceived visual attractiveness may be positively associated with attitude towards AI-generated promotional posters because an aesthetically appealing poster may create a favourable impression and encourage a positive evaluation. Elements such as colour, composition, layout and the overall arrangement of visual content contribute to how consumers perceive an advertisement. Pieters et al. (2010) demonstrated that visual complexity is relevant to the way consumers process advertising, highlight the importance of visual characteristics in advertising communication. However, visual appeal alone may not determine consumers' overall attitudes particularly when the content raises concerns about its genuineness or the accuracy of its representation of the advertised product. In the context of AI-generated promotional posters, consumers who perceive a poster as visually attractive may form a more favourable attitude towards the advertisement. This provides a theoretical basis for first proposition.

Proposition 1 (P1): Perceived visual attractiveness is positively associated with consumers' attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters.

Perceived authenticity may also be positively associated with advertising attitude because consumers may evaluate whether the content appears genuine and consistent with the brand and product being promoted. Shi and Jiang (2026) found that AI disclosure labels could influence consumer responses through competing pathways involving novelty and authenticity with reduced perceived authenticity contributing to less favourable evaluations. Although their study focused on disclosure labels rather than perceived visual attractiveness, its findings highlight the relevance of authenticity in consumer evaluation of AI-related advertising. Other research has also examined the relevance of authenticity and AI disclosure to consumer responses to marketing communications and advertisements (Kirk & Givi, 2025; Wortel et al., 2024). Based on this literature, the present paper proposes that consumers who perceived AI-generated promotional posters as more authentic may evaluate the advertisement more favourably. This provides a theoretical basis for Proposition 2

Proposition 2 (P2): Perceived authenticity is positively associated with consumers' attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters.

These propositions represent theoretically informed expectations rather than established empirical findings. Future research is needed to test whether perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity are independently associated with consumers' attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters and whether the strength of these relationships varies across advertising contexts.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this paper extends the discussion of AI-generated promotional posters by bringing perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity into a single conceptual framework. Applying the S-O-R perspective provides a structured way to consider how consumers' evaluations of AI-generated promotional posters may relate to their attitudes towards the advertisement.

For practitioners, the proposed framework suggests that the production of visually appealing AI-generated promotional posters should not be the sole criterion for evaluating advertising quality. Advertisers should also consider whether the resulting content represents the product accurately, maintains consistency with the brand's identity and appears appropriate for the intended audience. Human review may be particularly important when AI-generated visuals risk exaggerating product characteristics or creating unrealistic representations. The objective should not simply be to produce attractive content but to develop advertising that is both visually effective and perceived as genuine.

Future empirical research could test the proposed framework through an experiment in which participants evaluate AI-generated promotional posters that vary in perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity. Researchers could measure participants' perceptions of these two constructs and their attitudes towards the advertisement while keeping other features such as the product, advertising message and brand information as consistent as possible. A comparison with human-designed posters could further investigate whether consumer evaluations differ according to the method of content production. Such research would help determine whether the proposed relationships are supported and clarify the conditions under which perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity are most relevant to consumers' attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper examined consumer evaluations of AI-generated promotional posters in social media advertising, focusing on perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity. Although generative AI offers opportunities to produce visually appealing promotional materials, aesthetic appeal alone may not fully explain consumers' attitudes towards such advertising. Consumers may also evaluate whether the content appears genuine and consistent with the brand being promoted. These considerations highlight the importance of distinguishing perceived visual attractiveness from perceived authenticity when examining consumer responses to AI-generated promotional posters.

Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, this paper proposes a conceptual application in which AI-generated promotional posters represent the stimulus, perceived visual attractiveness and perceived authenticity constitute internal consumer evaluations and attitude towards the advertisement represents the response. The framework offers a basis for examining how these two perceptions may be associated with consumers' attitudes towards AI-generated promotional posters, while recognising that the proposed relationships require empirical validation.

Future research could extend this conceptual framework by examining its applicability across different product categories, social media platforms and consumer groups. Further exploration of these contexts could clarify whether the proposed relationships hold across different advertising conditions and provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer responses to AI-generated promotional posters. By addressing these questions, subsequent research could clarify how consumers evaluate AI-generated visual content in contemporary digital advertising.

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