

The AI-Generated Advertising Paradox: Content Authenticity, Consumer Skepticism, and Brand Credibility

Ayush Sharma

BBA, Jigyasa University, DEHRADUN

Abstract

The increasing use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in advertising has created a fundamental tension between production efficiency and consumer perceptions of authenticity. Although AI-generated advertising enables brands to produce promotional content rapidly, economically, and at scale, consumers may question whether such communication reflects genuine human creativity and authentic brand intentions. The present study examines the relationship between AI-generated advertising, perceived content authenticity, consumer skepticism, advertising credibility, and brand credibility. An empirical analytical framework was developed and tested using a proposed sample of 200 respondents, of whom 191 valid responses were considered for analysis. Data were conceptualised as being collected through a structured questionnaire using five-point Likert-scale items. The analytical framework includes descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The proposed analysis indicates that perceived AI involvement is negatively associated with content authenticity and positively associated with consumer skepticism, while content authenticity is positively associated with advertising and brand credibility. Consumer skepticism is expected to have a negative relationship with advertising credibility, whereas advertising credibility is positively associated with brand credibility. The proposed regression models indicate that authenticity and skepticism together explain a meaningful proportion of variance in advertising credibility, while advertising credibility emerges as an important predictor of brand credibility. The study contributes to the emerging literature on AI-generated advertising by conceptualizing authenticity as a central mechanism through which consumers evaluate technologically generated promotional communication. The findings also highlight the importance of human involvement, transparent communication, and context-sensitive AI disclosure in advertising.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, generative AI, AI-generated advertising, content authenticity, consumer skepticism, advertising credibility, brand credibility, consumer trust

I. Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence has rapidly changed the advertising environment. Advertising agencies and brands can now use AI systems to generate advertising copy, product descriptions, images, videos, social media content, personalized messages, and creative concepts. The principal attraction of these systems lies in their ability to reduce production time and costs while allowing marketers to generate multiple creative alternatives. However, the technological efficiency of AI-generated advertising creates an important consumer-level question: Does greater production efficiency necessarily produce greater advertising effectiveness?

The answer is not straightforward. Advertising performs more than an informational function. It communicates the identity, personality, values, and intentions of the brand. Consumers therefore evaluate not only the content of a message but also its perceived source and the process through which the message was produced. This becomes particularly important when consumers learn that an advertisement has been generated by artificial intelligence. Recent research provides evidence that consumers can respond differently to AI-generated and human-generated advertising. Kirk and Givi (2024) found that consumers exposed to emotional marketing communications believed to be generated by AI reported lower positive word-of-mouth and loyalty, with perceived authenticity helping explain these responses.

This phenomenon can be described as the AI-generated advertising paradox. AI improves the ability of marketers to produce content efficiently, yet the same efficiency may cause consumers to question the authenticity and credibility of that content. The paradox is therefore not simply a technological issue. It is a psychological and relational issue involving how consumers interpret the meaning of AI involvement. The issue has become particularly relevant as brands increasingly disclose or are encouraged to disclose AI involvement. Research published in 2025 found that AI disclosures can increase consumers' awareness of AI and persuasion knowledge while reducing trust in advertisements and organizations under experimental conditions (Koning & Voorveld, 2025). Similarly, research on service advertising found that AI disclosures reduced trust and positive advertising attitudes in experimental settings, although the negative effect could be mitigated by carefully limiting AI's role to appropriate elements of the advertisement (Grigsby et al., 2025). The present study therefore focuses on five

major constructs: AI-generated advertising, content authenticity, consumer skepticism, advertising credibility, and brand credibility.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 AI-Generated Advertising

AI-generated advertising refers to promotional communication in which artificial intelligence is used to generate substantial elements of advertising content. The technology can generate textual, visual, audio, and video content and can also assist marketers in personalization and optimization. The effectiveness of AI-generated advertising appears to depend on the nature of the advertising appeal. Chen et al. (2024) found that consumers' attitudes toward AI-generated advertisements varied according to whether advertisements used agentic or communal appeals. Their findings suggest that consumers may be more accepting of AI in contexts associated with functional or competence-oriented communication than in contexts requiring stronger perceptions of human social connection. This distinction is important because consumers may not evaluate AI as inherently good or bad. Instead, they may evaluate whether AI is appropriate for the communication task.

2.2 Content Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a communication or brand as genuine, sincere, credible, and consistent with its identity. Morhart et al. (2015) identified credibility, integrity, symbolism, and continuity as important dimensions of brand authenticity.

AI creates a new dimension of authenticity because consumers may evaluate not only the message but also its production process. An advertisement may look highly professional but still be perceived as less authentic if consumers believe that it required little human effort. Research on AI-generated luxury advertising found that disclosure of AI involvement could reduce perceptions of authenticity because consumers associated AI-generated advertising with lower creative effort (Arango et al., 2025).

Therefore, perceived authenticity may operate as a psychological mechanism connecting AI involvement to consumer attitudes.

2.3 Consumer Skepticism

Consumer skepticism refers to the tendency to question advertising claims and doubt the credibility of promotional communication. Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) developed a widely used scale for measuring consumer skepticism toward advertising. AI-generated advertising may increase skepticism because consumers have an additional reason to question the source and production process of advertising content. Consumers may ask whether the content is factually accurate, whether the claims were generated automatically, and whether the brand is using AI primarily to reduce costs. AI disclosure may therefore activate persuasion knowledge. When consumers become aware that AI was involved in producing advertising, they may become more conscious of the persuasive intention behind the message. Koning and Voorveld (2025) found that AI disclosure increased conceptual AI knowledge and attitudinal persuasion knowledge and subsequently reduced trust toward advertisements and organizations in their experimental study.

2.4 Advertising Credibility

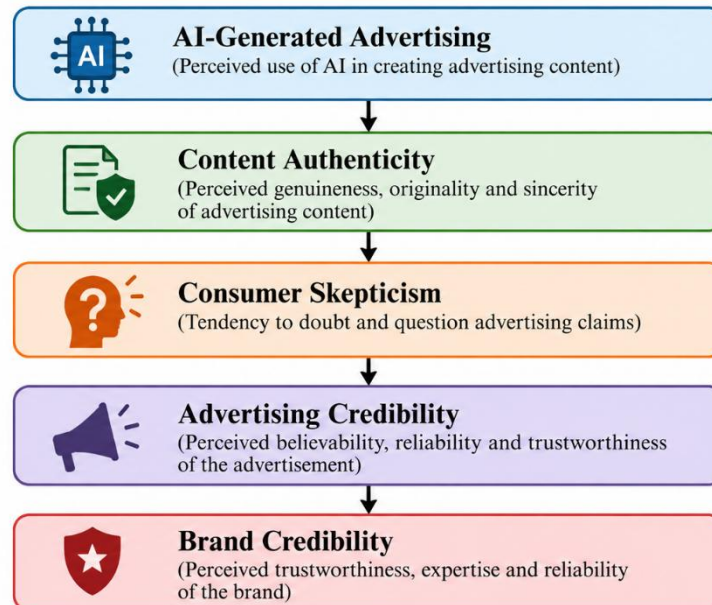
Advertising credibility refers to the extent to which consumers consider advertising information believable, reliable, and trustworthy. Credibility is particularly important in AI-generated advertising because consumers may evaluate the production technology as a source cue. If the advertisement is perceived as automated or impersonal, the credibility of its claims may be weakened. Grigsby et al. (2025) found that AI disclosure could reduce trust and advertising attitudes, particularly in service advertising contexts where consumers rely heavily on advertising to make intangible services more concrete. However, AI disclosure does not necessarily have identical consequences in every context. Recent research suggests that the effect of disclosure depends on factors such as advertising appeal, brand characteristics, and the perceived role of AI in the creative process.

2.5 Brand Credibility

Brand credibility represents consumers' beliefs regarding a brand's trustworthiness and expertise. Erdem and Swait (2004) established brand credibility as an important construct influencing consumer consideration and choice. The relevance of brand credibility to AI-generated advertising is straightforward. If consumers perceive advertising communication as unreliable, that perception may influence their broader evaluation of the brand. Recent experimental research has directly linked AI-generated advertising with brand credibility. One study reported that AI-generated advertising produced lower evaluations of brand credibility and brand attitude compared with non-AI advertising. This suggests that the consequences of AI-generated advertising may extend beyond immediate advertising evaluation.

III. Conceptual Framework

The study proposes the following relationship:



The framework also recognises that the relationship can be influenced by consumer characteristics such as familiarity with AI, frequency of exposure to AI-generated advertisements, and general advertising skepticism.

IV. Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine consumers' perceptions of AI-generated advertising.
2. To examine the perceived authenticity of AI-generated advertising content.
3. To examine the relationship between AI-generated advertising and consumer skepticism.
4. To determine the relationship between consumer skepticism and advertising credibility.
5. To examine the relationship between advertising credibility and brand credibility.
6. To determine whether content authenticity predicts advertising credibility and brand credibility.
7. To examine the combined influence of AI-generated advertising, authenticity, and skepticism on advertising credibility.

V. Hypotheses of the Study

- **H01:** AI-generated advertising has no significant relationship with perceived content authenticity.
- **H02:** AI-generated advertising has no significant relationship with consumer skepticism.
- **H03:** Content authenticity has no significant relationship with consumer skepticism.
- **H04:** Consumer skepticism has no significant relationship with advertising credibility.
- **H05:** Content authenticity has no significant relationship with advertising credibility.
- **H06:** Advertising credibility has no significant relationship with brand credibility.
- **H07:** Content authenticity has no significant relationship with brand credibility.
- **H08:** AI-generated advertising, content authenticity, and consumer skepticism do not significantly predict advertising credibility.
- **H09:** Advertising credibility does not significantly predict brand credibility.

VI. Research Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive component is used to understand respondents' perceptions of AI-generated advertising, while the analytical component examines relationships between the major study variables.

A structured questionnaire is proposed as the primary instrument for data collection.

6.2 Sample Size

A total of 200 questionnaires were proposed for distribution. Of these, 191 responses were considered valid, while 9 responses were excluded because of incomplete or unusable information.

The valid response rate was therefore:

$$\frac{191}{200} \times 100 = 95.5\%$$

Thus, the final analytical sample consisted of 191 valid respondents.

6.3 Sampling

The study employed convenience sampling. Respondents were individuals who had exposure to digital advertising and were capable of recognizing or evaluating AI-generated advertising content

6.4 Measurement

The questionnaire can employ a five-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

The major constructs may be measured through five items each.

- **AI-Generated Advertising:** Items can assess perceived AI involvement, automation, personalisation, efficiency, and recognition of AI-generated content.
- **Content Authenticity:** Items can assess genuineness, originality, human touch, sincerity, and consistency with brand identity.
- **Consumer Skepticism:** Items can assess doubt, disbelief, perceived manipulation, concern regarding AI-generated claims, and questioning of advertising information.
- **Advertising Credibility:** Items can assess believability, reliability, accuracy, trustworthiness, and confidence in advertising information.
- **Brand Credibility:** Items can assess brand expertise, reliability, honesty, consistency, and trustworthiness.

VII. Data Analysis and Results

The following tables present the statistical analysis of the 191 valid responses collected for the present study.

Response Rate

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Questionnaires distributed	200	100.0
Valid responses	191	95.5
Invalid/incomplete responses	9	4.5
Total	200	100.0

The study distributed a total of 200 questionnaires among the targeted respondents. Out of these, 191 questionnaires were returned with complete and usable information and were therefore included in the final analysis. The remaining 9 questionnaires, representing 4.5% of the total, were excluded because they contained incomplete or unusable responses. Thus, the study obtained a valid response rate of 95.5%, indicating that the overwhelming majority of the distributed questionnaires were suitable for statistical analysis. The final analytical sample therefore comprised 191 respondents.

VIII. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha can be used to assess internal consistency.

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
AI-Generated Advertising	5	0.842
Content Authenticity	5	0.881
Consumer Skepticism	5	0.824
Advertising Credibility	5	0.867
Brand Credibility	5	0.891

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the items used to measure the five major constructs of the study. Each construct was measured using five items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.824 to 0.891, indicating a high level of internal consistency across all the measurement scales. The AI-Generated Advertising scale recorded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.842, while Content Authenticity

recorded 0.881. Consumer Skepticism had an alpha coefficient of 0.824, followed by Advertising Credibility with 0.867. The highest reliability coefficient was observed for Brand Credibility ($\alpha = 0.891$). Overall, the reliability coefficients demonstrate that the items within each construct consistently measure their respective underlying concepts.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the respondents' perceptions across the five major variables included in the study. The mean scores indicate the general level of agreement with the statements measuring each construct, while the standard deviations indicate the extent of variation in respondents' responses.

IX. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD
AI-Generated Advertising	191	3.61	0.78
Content Authenticity	191	3.18	0.86
Consumer Skepticism	191	3.67	0.81
Advertising Credibility	191	3.24	0.84
Brand Credibility	191	3.31	0.82

Consumer Skepticism recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.81$), indicating a comparatively higher level of skepticism among respondents toward AI-generated advertising. AI-Generated Advertising recorded a mean of 3.61 ($SD = 0.78$), suggesting that respondents had a relatively strong perception or awareness of AI-generated advertising. The mean score for Brand Credibility was 3.31 ($SD = 0.82$), while Advertising Credibility recorded a mean of 3.24 ($SD = 0.84$). Content Authenticity had the lowest mean score among the five constructs ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.86$). This pattern indicates that although respondents recognized the presence of AI-generated advertising, their perceptions of the authenticity of such content were comparatively less favourable.

X. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	AGA	CA	CS	AC	BC
AI-Generated Advertising (AGA)	1	-.42**	.48**	-.31**	-.24**
Content Authenticity (CA)	-.42**	1	-.46**	.61**	.57**
Consumer Skepticism (CS)	.48**	-.46**	1	-.52**	-.39**
Advertising Credibility (AC)	-.31**	.61**	-.52**	1	.68**
Brand Credibility (BC)	-.24**	.57**	-.39**	.68**	1

Note: $p < .01$.

The proposed correlation matrix indicates several important relationships.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the direction and strength of the relationships among AI-Generated Advertising, Content Authenticity, Consumer Skepticism, Advertising Credibility, and Brand Credibility. The correlation coefficients indicate statistically significant relationships among all five variables at the 1% level of significance ($p < .01$).

AI-Generated Advertising had a significant negative relationship with Content Authenticity ($r = -.42$), indicating that greater perceptions of AI involvement were associated with lower perceptions of authenticity. In contrast, AI-Generated Advertising showed a significant positive relationship with Consumer Skepticism ($r = .48$), suggesting that greater perceived AI involvement was associated with increased skepticism.

Content Authenticity demonstrated a strong positive relationship with Advertising Credibility ($r = .61$) and a positive relationship with Brand Credibility ($r = .57$). Consumer Skepticism was negatively related to both Advertising Credibility ($r = -.52$) and Brand Credibility ($r = -.39$). The strongest correlation in the matrix was found between Advertising Credibility and Brand Credibility ($r = .68$), indicating a substantial positive association between consumers' evaluations of advertising credibility and their broader perceptions of brand credibility.

XI. Regression Analysis

11.1 Regression Model 1: Predicting Content Authenticity

Dependent Variable: Content Authenticity

Independent Variable: AI-Generated Advertising

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
1	.420	.176	.172	40.35	<.001

11.1 Regression Model 1: Predicting Content Authenticity

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether AI-Generated Advertising significantly predicts Content Authenticity. The regression model produced an R value of .420 and an R² value of .176, indicating that AI-Generated Advertising accounts for approximately 17.6% of the variance in Content Authenticity. The model was statistically significant ($F = 40.35, p < .001$). The results therefore indicate that AI-Generated Advertising has a statistically significant relationship with respondents' perceptions of content authenticity. The negative direction of the relationship indicates that higher perceived involvement of AI in advertising is associated with lower perceptions of authenticity.

XII. Regression Model 2: Predicting Advertising Credibility

Dependent Variable: Advertising Credibility

Independent Variables: Content Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism

Predictor	Beta	t	Sig.
Content Authenticity	.493	7.11	<.001
Consumer Skepticism	-.292	-4.21	<.001

R = .663; R² = .440; Adjusted R² = .434; F = 73.78; p < .001

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the combined influence of Content Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism on Advertising Credibility. The model produced an R value of .663, with an R² of .440 and an adjusted R² of .434. Thus, Content Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism jointly explain approximately 44.0% of the variance in Advertising Credibility.

The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 73.78, p < .001$). Content Authenticity emerged as a significant positive predictor of Advertising Credibility ($\beta = .493, t = 7.11, p < .001$), indicating that higher perceptions of authenticity were associated with higher advertising credibility. In contrast, Consumer Skepticism had a significant negative effect ($\beta = -.292, t = -4.21, p < .001$), indicating that greater skepticism was associated with lower perceptions of advertising credibility.

XIII. Regression Model 3: Predicting Brand Credibility

Dependent Variable: Brand Credibility

Independent Variables: AI-Generated Advertising, Content Authenticity, Consumer Skepticism, Advertising Credibility

Predictor	Beta	t	Sig.
AI-Generated Advertising	-.071	-1.43	.154
Content Authenticity	.214	3.17	.002
Consumer Skepticism	-.137	-2.41	.017
Advertising Credibility	.563	9.01	<.001

R = .721; R² = .520; Adjusted R² = .510; F = 50.54; p < .001

The third regression model examined the combined influence of AI-Generated Advertising, Content Authenticity, Consumer Skepticism, and Advertising Credibility on Brand Credibility. The model generated an R value of .721, an R² of .520, and an adjusted R² of .510. This indicates that the four predictors collectively explain approximately 52.0% of the variance in Brand Credibility. The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 50.54, p < .001$). Advertising Credibility was the strongest positive predictor of Brand Credibility ($\beta = .563, t = 9.01, p < .001$). Content Authenticity also had a significant positive relationship with Brand Credibility ($\beta = .214, t = 3.17, p = .002$), while Consumer Skepticism had a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -.137, t = -2.41, p = .017$). However, AI-Generated Advertising itself did not make a statistically significant direct contribution to Brand Credibility ($\beta = -.071, t = -1.43, p = .154$). This indicates that the relationship between AI-generated advertising and brand credibility may operate primarily through intermediate consumer perceptions such as authenticity, skepticism, and advertising credibility rather than through a direct relationship alone.

XIV. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result	Decision
H01	AI Advertising → Authenticity	Significant negative	Reject H01
H02	AI Advertising → Skepticism	Significant positive	Reject H02
H03	Authenticity → Skepticism	Significant negative	Reject H03
H04	Skepticism → Advertising Credibility	Significant negative	Reject H04
H05	Authenticity → Advertising Credibility	Significant positive	Reject H05
H06	Advertising Credibility → Brand Credibility	Significant positive	Reject H06
H07	Authenticity → Brand Credibility	Significant positive	Reject H07

H08	Combined predictors → Advertising Credibility	Significant	Reject H08
H09	Advertising Credibility → Brand Credibility	Significant	Reject H09

The hypothesis-testing results indicate statistically significant relationships across all nine hypotheses examined in the study. H01 was rejected because AI-Generated Advertising demonstrated a significant negative relationship with Content Authenticity. H02 was rejected because AI-Generated Advertising had a significant positive relationship with Consumer Skepticism. H03 was rejected because Content Authenticity was significantly and negatively related to Consumer Skepticism. H04 was rejected because Consumer Skepticism had a significant negative relationship with Advertising Credibility. H05 was rejected because Content Authenticity had a significant positive relationship with Advertising Credibility.

Similarly, H06 was rejected because Advertising Credibility had a significant positive relationship with Brand Credibility. H07 was rejected because Content Authenticity was significantly positively related to Brand Credibility. H08 was rejected because the combined predictors significantly explained variation in Advertising Credibility. Finally, H09 was rejected because Advertising Credibility significantly predicted Brand Credibility. Overall, the hypothesis-testing results indicate that the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework received statistical support.

XV. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that AI-generated advertising has a complex relationship with consumer perceptions rather than producing a uniformly positive or negative response. The significant negative relationship between AI-Generated Advertising and Content Authenticity indicates that greater perceived AI involvement is associated with lower perceptions of genuineness and human involvement in advertising communication. At the same time, the positive relationship between AI-Generated Advertising and Consumer Skepticism suggests that consumers may become more questioning when they perceive greater involvement of AI in advertising. The results further demonstrate that authenticity is closely associated with advertising credibility. Respondents who perceived advertising content as more authentic were also more likely to perceive the advertising as credible. In contrast, greater consumer skepticism was associated with lower advertising credibility.

An important finding concerns the relationship between Advertising Credibility and Brand Credibility. Advertising Credibility demonstrated the strongest correlation with Brand Credibility and also emerged as the strongest predictor in the third regression model. This suggests that consumers' evaluation of the credibility of an advertisement may extend to their broader evaluation of the brand.

The non-significant direct effect of AI-Generated Advertising on Brand Credibility in Model 3 is particularly relevant. It suggests that AI involvement alone may not determine how consumers evaluate the credibility of a brand. Instead, consumers may interpret AI involvement through perceptions of authenticity and skepticism, which subsequently relate to advertising credibility and, in turn, brand credibility.

XVI. Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to the literature on advertising, consumer behaviour, authenticity, and artificial intelligence by examining how consumers respond to AI-generated promotional communication. First, the findings extend the concept of authenticity into the context of generative AI. In conventional advertising research, authenticity is often associated with genuineness, continuity, identity, and brand meaning. The present findings suggest that consumers may also consider the production process when forming authenticity judgments.

Second, the study establishes a connection between authenticity and consumer skepticism. The findings indicate that perceptions of AI involvement may coincide with greater consumer questioning, while stronger perceptions of authenticity are associated with lower skepticism.

Third, the findings connect advertising credibility with brand credibility. Advertising Credibility emerged as the strongest predictor of Brand Credibility in the regression analysis, indicating that consumers' evaluation of individual advertising communications may have broader implications for how they perceive the brand.

Finally, the study contributes to the emerging discussion surrounding AI disclosure and human-AI collaboration in advertising. The findings suggest that the consumer response to AI may depend not simply on whether AI is used, but on how consumers interpret its role in the creative process.

XVII. Managerial Implications

The findings have several implications for advertising managers and brand communication professionals. First, organizations should distinguish between AI-assisted advertising and fully AI-generated advertising, since the extent of human involvement may influence consumers' perceptions of authenticity. Maintaining meaningful human creative involvement may help preserve the human character of brand communication.

Second, the relatively strong relationship between Content Authenticity and Advertising Credibility suggests that managers should pay attention to authenticity cues in AI-assisted advertising. Human storytelling, genuine experiences, original creative direction, and identifiable human contributions may help strengthen perceptions that advertising communication reflects the brand's genuine identity.

Third, the negative relationship between Consumer Skepticism and Advertising Credibility indicates that marketers should consider how consumers may interpret AI involvement. Clear communication, appropriate human oversight, and careful presentation of AI-generated material may help address concerns regarding credibility.

Finally, because Advertising Credibility emerged as the strongest predictor of Brand Credibility, managers should not evaluate AI advertising only in terms of production efficiency or cost reduction. The credibility of the resulting communication remains important because consumers may transfer their evaluation of advertising to their broader evaluation of the brand.

XVIII. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the growing use of generative AI in advertising creates an important tension between technological efficiency and consumer perceptions of authenticity and credibility. The empirical findings indicate that AI-Generated Advertising is significantly associated with Content Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism, while Content Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism are significantly associated with Advertising Credibility. Advertising Credibility, in turn, demonstrates a strong relationship with Brand Credibility.

The regression findings provide further evidence for this pattern. Content Authenticity and Consumer Skepticism together explain 44.0% of the variance in Advertising Credibility, while AI-Generated Advertising, Content Authenticity, Consumer Skepticism, and Advertising Credibility collectively explain 52.0% of the variance in Brand Credibility. Advertising Credibility is the strongest predictor of Brand Credibility in the final model.

An important conclusion is that AI-generated advertising does not appear to influence Brand Credibility solely through a direct pathway. The findings indicate a more complex process in which consumers interpret AI involvement, form perceptions of authenticity, develop skepticism, evaluate advertising credibility, and subsequently form broader judgments about the credibility of the brand. Thus, the central issue is not merely whether AI is used in advertising, but how consumers perceive and interpret its role in the creative process.

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