Seeing is Deceiving? The Effects of Image Editing and AI Disclosures on Consumer Responses

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Abstract. The rise of AI-generated imagery and advanced editing tools has blurred the line between authentic and synthetic content in influencer advertising. In response, regulators and platforms have begun requiring disclosures of image manipulation and AI use. However, little is known about how different disclosure types affect consumer responses. This online experiment ($N = 404$) tested the effects of digital editing and AI-generated content disclosures influencer advertising posts for different product types (search, experience, and credence goods). Disclosures of digital editing and AI generation did not directly influence attitudes toward the advertisement or brand, nor purchase or electronic word-of-mouth intentions. However, disclosures increased recognition of image manipulation, which in turn led to less favorable consumer responses across outcomes. These indirect effects were consistent across product types. Findings extend prior work on persuasion knowledge and manipulated media and hold implications for influencers, brands, and policymakers.