Absurd Advertising in the Age of AI: Consumer Responses to AI-Manipulated Absurd Ads on Short-Video Social Media

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used to generate advertising content, especially in short-video social media formats where novelty and shareability capture consumer attention. Absurd advertising, with its illogical and exaggerated elements, provides a creative approach to stand out in crowded media spaces. However, little is known about consumer responses when such ads are enhanced through AI manipulation. This study explores how the level of AI manipulation and absurdity impacts consumer perceptions and persuasion. Results from an online experiment with 398 U.S. social media users indicate that higher AI manipulation reduces perceived verisimilitude and increases perceived falsity, affecting ad attitudes and purchase intentions. Absurdity moderates the effect of AI manipulation on perceived verisimilitude, while effects on perceived creativity are not supported. Qualitative feedback suggests AI-driven absurd ads boost brand recall and evoke humor and surprise, despite varying reactions. These findings offer insights for designing effective AI-enabled advertising campaigns.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI) in advertising, absurd advertising, short-video advertising, advertising effectiveness