# What Should Be Disclosed? User Expectations Toward Image Manipulation and AI Transparency in Social Media Advertising

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## Abstract

The rapid proliferation of digital editing tools and generative artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed how human images are produced and used in social media advertising. This study qualitatively investigates how young social media users evaluate disclosure practices for (1) edited images of real individuals, (2) fully AI-generated human images, and (3) explicitly unedited ("authentic") images. Five focus groups were conducted and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings reveal that users differentiate disclosure expectations depending on production logic. Manipulation disclosures require granularity, with specificity about altered attributes seen as essential for credibility. AI disclosures are assessed through categorical clarity, with emphasis on clearly signaling ontological status and standardization. Authenticity disclosures are evaluated through a verification lens, with credibility contingent on perceived accountability and institutional backing. The findings provide conceptual groundwork for future experimental research and policy development on how manipulated and synthetic human images should be disclosed in social media advertising.

Keywords: disclosure, image manipulation, AI-generated advertising.