



CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF AI-GENERATED CONTENT VERSUS HUMAN CREATIVITY IN TOURISM MARKETING

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Abstract:

This research focuses on whether generative artificial intelligence (AI) can replace human creativity in creating tourism marketing content. Previous studies have highlighted the limitations of AI in this context, noting the lack of intuitive and emotional engagement that humans naturally incorporate. This study proposes an analysis of consumer perceptions towards the creativity and preferences of content created by AI compared to human creators. The methodology relies on a quantitative approach through surveys measuring attitudes and consumer preferences. Key results indicate that although AI can effectively create content, it cannot fully replace human creativity, and consumers generally prefer content created by humans. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of AI's role in creative industries and the possibilities for its further development.

Keywords:

generative artificial intelligence, human creativity, tourism marketing, consumer perceptions, content preferences.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) has revolutionised various industries, including marketing, by offering new ways to create content with speed and precision. As GAI technologies continue to progress, they are increasingly used to design marketing materials, particularly in sectors such as tourism, where engaging content is vital for attracting and retaining customers. Despite the efficiency and innovation that GAI offers, questions have arisen about its ability to replicate the nuanced creativity of human-generated content, which often draws on emotional intelligence, cultural understanding, and personal experience.

In tourism marketing, the quality of content plays a crucial role in influencing consumer behaviour. Marketers must not only provide information but also capture the essence of a destination, evoke emotions, and connect with potential travellers on a personal level. These elements of human creativity may pose a challenge for artificial intelligence (AI) in general, which typically relies on patterns and data rather than intuitive thinking. As AI continues to evolve, an important question emerges: Can AI-generated content compete with, or surpass, human-generated content's creativity in this highly competitive field?

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This study seeks to explore consumer perceptions of AI-generated content versus human-created content in the context of tourism marketing. Specifically, it aims to investigate whether consumers view GAI as a viable alternative to human creativity, and to what extent they prefer one over the other. Through quantitative research methods, this paper examines key factors influencing consumer preferences and attitudes, contributing to a broader understanding of the role AI can play in creative industries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Marr (2024), the term artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer algorithms that can efficiently simulate human cognitive processes such as learning, decision-making, and problem-solving. According to the same author, generative artificial intelligence (GAI) represents a revolutionary subdomain of artificial intelligence (AI) that is capable of creating new content based on patterns and structures it has learned from existing data. Generative AI models, often powered by deep learning architectures like Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) or transformer models, are designed to generate new, creative content, such as text, images, audio, or even videos, and music (Lv, 2023). They learn from large datasets and can produce content that mimics or builds upon the characteristics of the data they were trained on.

Therefore, generative artificial intelligence (GAI) does not simulate human cognitive processes like a traditional AI model but rather simulates human creativity. GAI should represent a balance between human creativity and machine intelligence, which emphasises the importance of collaboration between human creativity and generative artificial intelligence, instead of relying solely on generative artificial intelligence.

Marr (2024) draws a parallel between the GAI operations and the methods through which individuals learn to draw. Initially, learners observe numerous artworks and attempt to replicate them. After multiple replications, they are equipped to create original works, utilising their creativity informed by their prior experiences with existing images. GAI has developed from the domain of AI which mainly focuses on machine learning algorithms. Presently, the principles of machine learning underpin most of all implementations of artificial intelligence. Popular GAI tools include platforms for text generation such as ChatGPT, BingAI, and Bard, and for image creation such as DALL-E 2, Midjourney, and many others. These technologies are used in various fields such as content creation, design, and entertainment, as well as in complex problem-solving applications.

Zhou and Lee (2024) investigate the intersection of GAI and human creativity, focusing on text-to-image systems like DALL-E and Midjourney. Their research shows that GAI significantly increases creative productivity, with a 50% rise in output and more favourable evaluations from peers over time. However, the study also reveals a decline in average content novelty, suggesting that while AI improves productivity, it may lead to a more homogeneous creative output. Importantly, the study emphasises that GAI cannot fully replace human creativity; instead, humans must guide and filter AI-generated content to maintain originality. The concept of “generative synesthesia,” which blends human ideation with AI-generated productivity, underlines the importance of human control in the creative process.

In tourism marketing, where consumer perceptions of creativity and authenticity are critical, AI can assist with routine tasks while leaving more strategic and emotionally resonant content to human creators. AI’s ability to inspire and augment human creativity, by sharing ideas and facilitating the storytelling process, positions it not as a replacement for human ingenuity but as a tool for enhancing creative output. (Wu *et al.*, 2021).

When applied to marketing functions in the hospitality industry, GAI can use travel history, consumption preferences, and social media content to create personalised recommendations for travellers, generate descriptions of destinations and hotel properties, and even create virtual tours of hotels and attractions (Lalli, 2023), simultaneously creating value for firms and consumers.

GAI helps tourism businesses analyse big data to provide hyper-personalised content, improving customer engagement and loyalty. For example, companies can tailor travel recommendations based on previous purchases and preferences, offering a more personalised experience for travellers (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2024; Borji, 2022). Additionally, GAI is being used to optimize operations, reducing repetitive tasks like data entry, and allowing staff to focus on more creative and value-added activities, thereby boosting overall productivity (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2024). However, there are challenges, such as ethical concerns, the need for data privacy, and ensuring that these systems align with sustainable tourism goals (Frontiers Research, 2023).



Moreover, generative AI, particularly tools like ChatGPT, is seen as a disruptive force in the tourism and hospitality sectors. According to Gursoy *et al.* (2023), these AI tools can transform how customers search for information, make travel decisions, and interact with businesses. ChatGPT's ability to process natural language and provide personalised responses means it can significantly enhance customer service. However, this innovation also brings challenges, such as over-reliance on automated systems and the need for businesses to integrate these technologies thoughtfully to maintain a balance between automation and the human touch (Gursoy *et al.*, 2023).

GAI can assist in generating a first draft of marketing content or responses to customer feedback, while human employees can vet, enhance, and personalise this content, leading to a more synergistic output (Dogru *et al.*, 2023). ChatGPT can design a marketing strategy, including the creative part (e.g., logo, blog post), and all the aspects of the marketing mix. It selected the communication and distribution channels suited to a 5-star hotel in the centre of Lisbon. It presented suggestions for a price strategy and recommended a sales approach. Therefore, marketing managers might be able to use ChatGPT as a starting point in their search when developing marketing strategies. (Almeida & Ivanov, 2024).

Bakpayev *et al.* (2020) examine the role of AI in creating emotion-oriented versus cognitive-oriented advertisements. They conclude that while AI-generated content can be highly effective for rational or utilitarian appeals, it is less successful in creating emotional content. This finding suggests that while AI can handle certain aspects of tourism marketing, such as informational content, human creativity is crucial for producing content with emotional resonance.

One of the most impactful outcomes of GAI in the hospitality and tourism industry is expected to be hyper-personalization on the demand side. GAI can help businesses create personalised marketing content at scale to enhance booking experiences and marketing communication. (Dogru *et al.*, 2023) While GAI can offer personalised recommendations and real-time responses, there is a risk that the information put forth by GAI can be incorrect, outdated, or biased, which can result in value co-destruction for both the firm and the customer. (Dogru *et al.*, 2023). The participants agreed with the potential benefits of using GAI in hospitality and tourism marketing, with competitive advantage and innovation impact being the most agreed-upon statements. (Khan & Khan, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study investigates consumer perceptions of AI-generated versus human-created content in tourism and hospitality marketing, with a focus on creativity and content preferences. Research hypotheses are:

- H1. AI cannot completely replace human creativity in marketing content creation.
- H2. Consumers prefer marketing content created by humans over AI-generated content.

Study variables include socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, and education level, which are used to explore demographic differences in perceptions of AI- and human-generated content. Dispositional variables cover attitudes toward AI, measured through specific questions about respondents' views on AI-generated content. Content preference refers to consumers' choices between AI-generated and human-created content, collected via direct survey responses. Creativity perception is measured on a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

Variables and relationships are as follows: The independent variable is the content creation method (AI vs. human-generated). The dependent variables are the perception of creativity and content preference. Attitudes toward AI act as intervening variables that may influence consumer preferences. Control variables, such as demographics, are used to manage external influences on the findings.

A quantitative research approach was employed using an online survey distributed via Google Forms. The survey includes Likert scale questions, multiple-choice items, and open-ended questions. Respondents were shown examples of AI-generated and human-created marketing content to provide informed responses (Fig. 1). Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods will be applied to analyse the data. Data was collected using a standardised online questionnaire, allowing for efficient and accurate gathering of quantitative data.



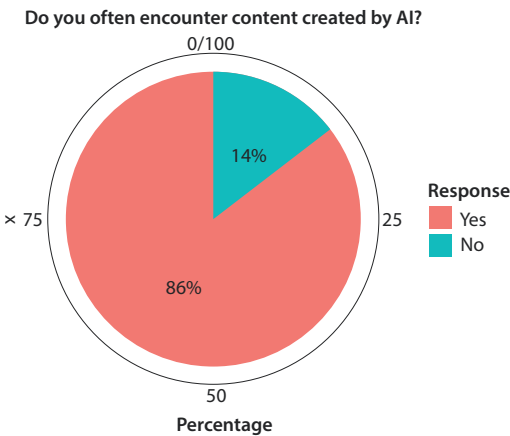
Figure 1. AI-generated content (left) and human-generated content (right)



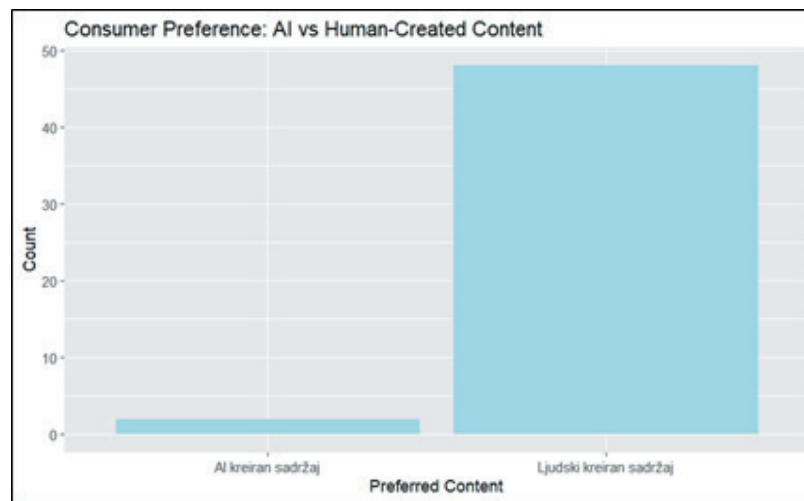
RESULTS ANALYSIS

The respondents were surveyed via Google Forms, which enabled easy distribution of the survey, quick response collection, and automated data processing. The survey was designed to be intuitive and easy to understand, with clear and concise questions to minimize the potential for confusion or misunderstanding. The respondents are adults who use the internet and have experience with online shopping, making them relevant for assessing marketing content. The respondents were chosen using a random stratified sample from an online user database, ensuring that the sample adequately reflects the population in terms of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and geographic location. Fig. 2. illustrates that 86% of respondents indicated they frequently encounter AI-generated content, while 14% do not. This shows that while AI-generated content is prevalent, it still does not seem to influence the preference for human creativity.

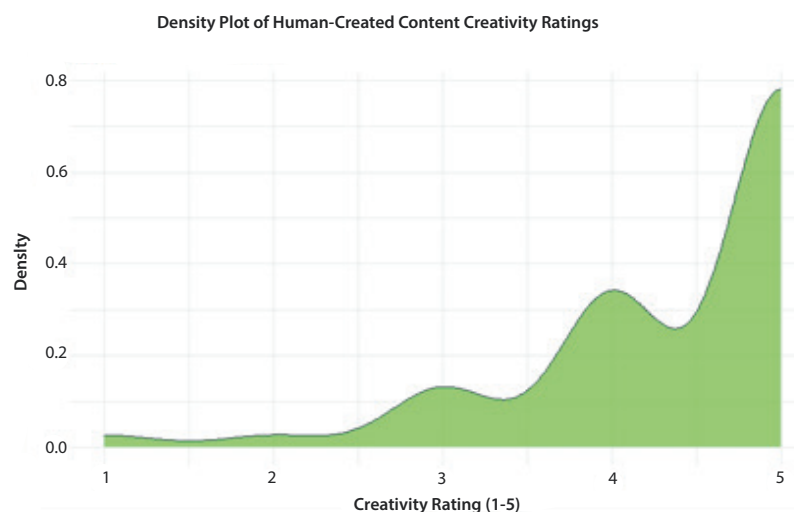
Figure 2. Encountering AI-Generated Content



The bar graph (Fig. 3) illustrates a clear consumer preference for human-created content over AI-generated content. Out of the respondents, the overwhelming majority preferred content created by humans, with nearly 50 consumers favouring human content compared to a very small number who chose AI-generated content. This finding supports the hypothesis that AI cannot fully replace human creativity, as most consumers show a strong preference for human-generated marketing content.

**Figure 3. Consumer Preference: AI vs Human-Created Content**

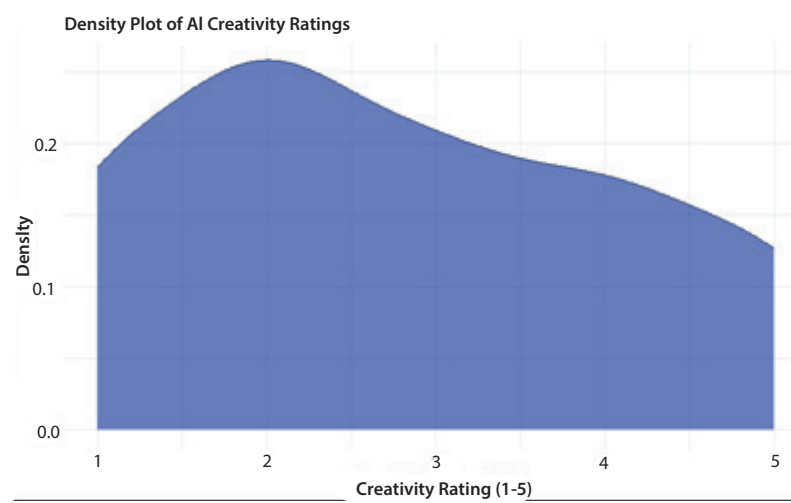
In contrast, the density plot of human-created content (Fig. 4) shows a peak at the highest creativity rating (5). This distribution suggests that consumers overwhelmingly view human-created content as highly creative, reinforcing the notion that human creativity is valued much more than AI in content creation.

Figure 4. Density Plot of Human-Created Content Creativity Ratings

The density plot of AI creativity ratings (Fig. 5) indicates that most respondents rated AI creativity in the mid to lower range. The highest density is seen at a rating of 3, suggesting a general perception of AI creativity as average, with relatively fewer people rating it as very creative (5) or not creative (1).

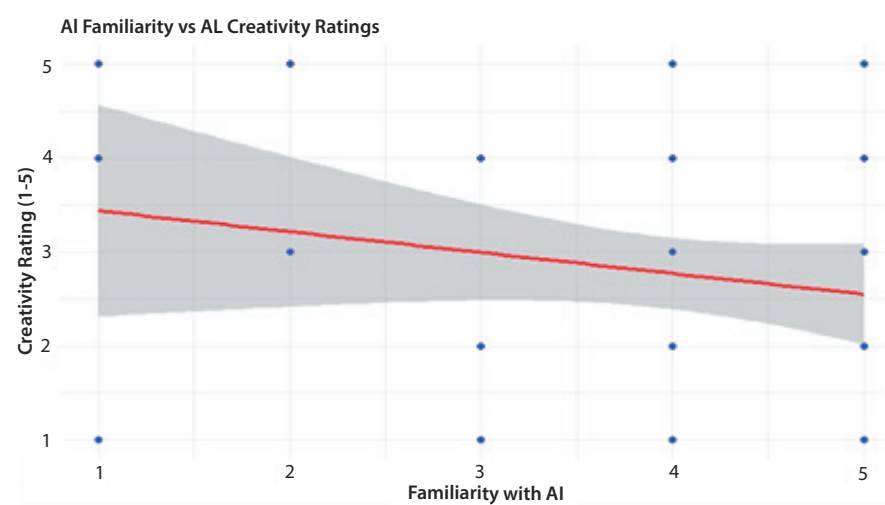


Figure 5. Density Plot of AI Creativity Ratings



The scatter plot (Fig. 6) with a trend line showing a negative correlation between familiarity with AI technologies and the creativity rating given to AI-generated content. As familiarity with AI increases, the perceived creativity of AI content tends to decrease slightly. This suggests that consumers who are more familiar with AI are more critical of its creative potential.

Figure 6. AI Familiarity vs AI Creativity Rating



The comments collected from consumers regarding their preferences between human and AI-generated content reveal several recurring themes, both in favour of human creativity and AI-driven designs. A majority of the comments reflect a strong preference for human-created content due to its perceived uniqueness and emotional depth. Respondents emphasized that human creativity has a certain “weight” and “warmth” that AI lacks. One respondent remarked that human-created content has weight, emotion, strength, and warmth. This sentiment is echoed by several others who pointed out that human-generated designs feel more personalised and emotional, while AI content can sometimes appear generic.

Many participants also believe that human creativity is inherently more innovative and less likely to rely on pre-existing patterns or plagiarism, as one comment highlights, “AI cannot create new things, it lacks creativity and only plagiarises”. Additionally, the quality and precision of human-generated content were often cited, with respondents praising how human content is better written and conveys the intended message more clearly. One user noted, “Human-created content conveys the message entirely”. This suggests that accuracy in communication and the ability to convey emotion are key reasons for the preference toward human-created content.



On the other hand, a smaller group of respondents praised AI-generated designs for their cleanliness and orderliness. Several comments pointed out that AI-created content tends to have a more polished aesthetic, with fonts and colour schemes being more harmonious. As one person noted, “AI is more organised, the fonts and colours are more harmonious”. Some participants also recognised the efficiency of AI, stating that while AI can quickly generate aesthetically pleasing content, it is best used as a tool to assist humans in the creative process. One user commented, “I believe AI should be used as a tool to assist in content creation”. This indicates that there is a place for AI in creative industries, but many believe it should complement human efforts rather than replace them entirely.

A few respondents discussed the potential for balance between human and AI-generated content, recognizing the strengths of both. While AI offers speed and precision in design, human content brings emotional engagement and creativity. One respondent summarised this by stating, “While AI can quickly create aesthetically pleasing and acceptable designs, a human can better convey emotion”. Some users also raised concerns about the implications of fully adopting AI for creative work, expressing that it might lead to a decline in human creativity and result in job losses. This aligns with the comment: “By accepting AI, jobs are lost”. The mean difference of -1.62 suggests that, on average, human-generated content was rated 1.62 points higher on a 5-point creativity scale compared to AI-generated content. The 95% confidence interval (-2.10, -1.14) further confirms that this difference is both statistically and practically significant, meaning consumers consistently perceive human-generated content as more creative than AI-generated content. Additionally, the correlation analysis between the familiarity with AI technologies and the perceived creativity of AI-generated content showed a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.18$). This suggests that as familiarity with AI increases, the perception of AI-generated content as creative slightly decreases, though this relationship is relatively weak and may not be of great practical importance.

The paired t-test (Table 1) shows a significant difference in creativity ratings, with human-generated content being consistently rated higher than AI-generated content. This suggests that, while AI can produce technically sophisticated content, it struggles to capture the intuitive and emotionally resonant aspects that humans inherently integrate into their creations. Interestingly, the weak negative correlation between familiarity with AI and the perceived creativity of AI-generated content implies that as individuals become more familiar with AI, they may start to recognise its limitations. This could suggest that consumers who are more aware of AI’s current capabilities tend to be more critical of its creative output, further emphasising the gap between human and AI creativity.

Table 1. Paired t-test results

Test	Paired t-test values	
	Value	p-value
Paired t-test (Creativity AI vs Human)	-6.73	1.712e-08

These results align with the hypothesis that AI, despite its technological capabilities, struggles to match the human touch when it comes to creativity in content creation, particularly in fields like tourism marketing, where emotional and intuitive engagement is crucial.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study contribute to the growing conversation on the role of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) in marketing, particularly within the tourism and hospitality industry. Despite the rapid advancements of AI technologies, the results indicate that human creativity still holds a distinct advantage when it comes to consumer perceptions of creativity. AI’s reliance on data and patterns restricts its ability to innovate beyond its programming, whereas human creators can draw from personal experiences, emotions, and cultural understanding—key elements in tourism marketing that resonate with consumers. According to research results, consumers show a clear preference for human-created content over AI-generated content.



This indicates that in industries like tourism and hospitality, where emotional connection and personal experience play key roles in influencing consumer behaviour, human creativity is still more valued. This preference may be due to the more personalised and less “mechanical” nature of human-generated content, which feels more authentic and less formulaic.

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