ISSN:2659-0778

AI-Generated Advertising in Nigeria: A Qualitative Exploration of Consumer Perceptions, Trust, and Engagement

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Abstract
This study explored how Nigerian consumers perceive, trust, and engage with AI-generated advertising, addressing a critical research gap in emerging markets. The primary aim is to understand how factors such as authenticity, relevance, data privacy, and cultural sensitivity influence responses to AI-driven advertisements within Nigeria's distinctive social and cultural context. Adopting an interpretivist approach, the research utilised semi-structured interviews with ten Nigerian consumers, selected to represent diverse ages, occupations, and levels of digital literacy. The findings reveal that while the personalisation and efficiency of AI advertisements can enhance engagement, concerns about authenticity, data privacy, and cultural relevance often diminish trust and interest. Trust emerged as a critical factor, shaped by the transparency and ethical handling of personal data. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in enabling AI advertisements to resonate effectively with Nigerian audiences. The revised conceptual framework integrates the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), illustrating how consumer motivations and processing methods shape their perceptions and trust, which, in turn, drive engagement. The study concludes that AI advertising in Nigeria must be culturally tailored and transparent to foster trust and successfully engage consumers.

Keywords: AI-generated advertising, Consumer perceptions, Trust, Engagement, Data Privacy

Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into advertising has revolutionised global marketing strategies, enabling highly personalised and efficient campaigns (Gao et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2024). Globally, the adoption of AI in marketing has grown significantly, with 65% of organisations expected to utilise AI tools across various business functions by 2024 (McKinsey, 2024). This trend is further underscored by the projected growth of the AI marketing sector to USD 72.1 billion by 2030 (Zion Market Research, 2023). In Nigeria, the digital landscape is rapidly expanding, with the number of internet users forecast to rise from 84 million in 2022 to 117 million by 2027 (Johnson, 2023). This growth creates a favourable environment for AI-driven advertising; however, Nigeria's unique socio-cultural and economic context presents distinct challenges and opportunities.

Despite global advancements, there is a scarcity of research focusing on AI-generated advertising within the Nigerian market. Existing studies predominantly examine AI in developed contexts, often overlooking the complex cultural settings and data privacy concerns prevalent in emerging markets like Nigeria (Hariguna & Ruangkanjanases, 2024). Nigeria's diverse cultural landscape plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and trust in technology-driven advertisements, necessitating localised insights (McKinsey, 2024). Moreover, while the capability of AI to personalise content is well established, its reception in markets with particular privacy concerns remains underexplored (Volodko et al., 2020).

Trust and engagement are pivotal to the success of advertising, especially in AI-generated contexts, where transparency and cultural relevance are essential (Gu et al., 2024; Hariguna & Ruangkanjanases, 2024). Nigerian consumers may exhibit varying levels of trust in AI advertisements based on factors such as data privacy, authenticity, and cultural alignment. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing AI advertising strategies that effectively resonate with Nigerian audiences. Despite the increasing adoption of AI in global advertising, there is limited knowledge about how Nigerian consumers perceive, trust, and engage with AI-generated advertisements. This lack of understanding hinders the creation of culturally tailored and trustworthy AI advertising strategies, which are critical for effectively reaching and influencing Nigeria's diverse market.

Several research gaps exist in the current understanding of AI-generated advertising in Nigeria. First, limited studies have examined how cultural nuances shape consumer perceptions of AI advertisements, particularly in a culturally diverse and complex market like Nigeria. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating how cultural misalignment impacts trust and engagement. Additionally, while global research has extensively highlighted the technical capabilities of AI in personalisation, little attention has been given to how these technologies are perceived in emerging markets with unique data privacy concerns. This research seeks to address these gaps by exploring the specific socio-cultural and trust-related factors that influence Nigerian consumer behaviour towards AI-generated advertisements.

Research Objectives

1. To explore Nigerian consumers' perceptions of AI-generated advertising, focusing on their views regarding authenticity, relevance, and overall appeal.
2. To identify the factors influencing trust in AI-generated advertisements among Nigerian consumers, with particular attention to elements such as transparency, personalisation, and data privacy concerns that shape trust or distrust.
3. To investigate the impact of AI-generated advertising on consumer engagement in Nigeria, examining behaviours such as interaction rates, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty.

Literature Review

An Overview of AI in Advertising

Gao et al. (2023) and Kumar et al. (2024) note that the evolution of AI in advertising has progressed from basic automation to sophisticated generative AI, where algorithms can now produce highly personalised content, including text, images, and video ads. This shift, driven by deep learning models, has enabled marketers to create more dynamic and contextually relevant advertising campaigns, addressing specific demographics with tailored content (Haleem et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2023). A significant development is the global adoption of AI in marketing. As of 2024, 65% of organisations are actively using AI tools in at least one business function, nearly double the proportion from the previous year (McKinsey, 2024). The

global AI in marketing market was valued at approximately USD 12.5 billion in 2022 and is projected to rise to around USD 72.1 billion by 2030, with an estimated compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 24.5% from 2023 to 2030 (Zion Market Research, 2023). Notably, generative AI's ability to engage consumers across multiple channels is already being utilised by 70% of U.S. marketers (Dencheva, 2024), highlighting its global relevance.

In 2022, Nigeria had approximately 84 million internet users, a figure expected to grow to 117 million by 2027 (Johnson, 2023). This expanding digital landscape offers a promising environment for AI-driven marketing. However, Nigeria's unique socio-economic and cultural context may influence how AI-generated advertising is received and integrated. In emerging markets like Nigeria, where consumer trust in technology differs from that in developed countries, understanding local perceptions is crucial (McKinsey, 2024). Consumer attitudes in these markets are critical to the successful implementation of AI in advertising. While AI can drive cost efficiencies (Yaiprasert & Hidayanto, 2024), factors such as trust and cultural relevance significantly influence its effectiveness (Hariguna & Ruangkanjanases, 2024). Exploring how Nigerian consumers interact with AI-generated content will aid the development of locally relevant and ethically responsible advertising strategies, ensuring this global trend resonates within the Nigerian context.

AI-Generated Advertising

Ford et al. (2023) describe AI-generated advertising as the process where artificial intelligence technologies are employed to create, optimise, and deliver ads. This involves using algorithms and machine learning models to analyse vast amounts of data and tailor marketing messages, formats, and delivery channels to specific audiences (Gao et al., 2023). AI-generated ads differ from traditional advertisements primarily in their dynamic nature. Traditional ads are often static and rely heavily on human creativity and intuition, whereas AI-generated ads are driven by data and algorithms that can predict audience preferences and behaviours (Campbell et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2024). This shift represents a fundamental change in the advertising landscape.

The technologies enabling AI in advertising are diverse but revolve around core fields such as machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), and data analytics (Ford et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2024). Machine learning allows algorithms to learn from vast datasets, optimising ads based on performance metrics and user feedback. For example, machine learning models can analyse consumer interactions and predict the most effective content for a particular audience (Gharibshah et al., 2020; Yu, 2022). NLP enables AI to generate and understand human language, creating personalised content that resonates with individual consumers (Kamal & Himel, 2023). This is especially critical in crafting engaging ad copy or tailoring responses in chatbot interactions (Kamal & Himel, 2023; Babatunde et al., 2024). Meanwhile, data analytics underpins these technologies by providing the raw material—vast datasets on user behaviours, preferences, and market trends—that feeds machine learning models and NLP algorithms.

The potential benefits of AI-generated advertising are significant. One primary advantage is efficiency. AI can automate many tasks traditionally performed by human marketers, such as audience segmentation, ad placement, and performance analysis, leading to faster decision-making and campaign adjustments (Ford et al., 2023). Another key benefit is personalisation. With AI, advertisers can create tailored messages for individual users based on their browsing history, social media activity, and purchase behaviours (Chen et al., 2024). This degree of personalisation can enhance user engagement and improve ad effectiveness (Campbell et al.,

2022). Furthermore, AI offers scalability. While human marketers are limited by time and resources, AI can manage and optimise thousands of campaigns simultaneously, significantly expanding a brand's reach (Campbell et al., 2022).

However, AI-generated advertising also faces notable challenges. While efficiency and personalisation are strengths, they can become problematic if overdone. For instance, overly targeted ads can lead to what is often termed the "creepiness factor", where consumers feel uncomfortable with how much the algorithm seems to know about them (Volodko et al., 2020). There are also ethical concerns regarding data privacy. AI relies on vast amounts of personal data, which creates potential risks around data misuse or breaches, raising questions about consumer consent and trust (Marotta et al., 2022). Moreover, Varsha (2023) and Nishant et al. (2024) argue that AI's reliance on algorithms introduces technical limitations, such as biases embedded in datasets. If not carefully monitored, these biases can result in discriminatory advertising practices that unfairly target or exclude certain demographic groups.

Consumer Perceptions of AI-Generated Advertising

Consumer perceptions of AI-generated advertising are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, primarily rooted in how consumers perceive the authenticity, relevance, and overall appeal of AI-created content. Consumer perception plays a pivotal role in consumer behaviour, influencing how they engage with advertisements and, ultimately, how they respond to AI-generated marketing efforts. Perception, being subjective, often varies depending on individual experiences, demographic factors, and broader socio-cultural contexts (Wu & Wen, 2021).

One key factor influencing consumer perception of AI-generated advertising is authenticity. Authenticity is crucial in consumer advertising as it contributes to the perceived trustworthiness and genuineness of the brand. AI-generated content, while often efficient and highly personalised, can sometimes lack the human touch, leading to a perception of "robotic" or overly calculated messaging, which may alienate certain consumer groups (Ford et al., 2023). Wu and Wen (2021) found that while consumers may appreciate the objectivity AI brings to ad creation, this is often undermined by the "eeriness" associated with machine-generated content, particularly when it crosses the line into overly invasive personalisation.

Relevance also plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions. AI's ability to generate highly personalised ads based on data-driven insights means it can deliver content that is contextually relevant to the consumer's preferences. This relevance often leads to positive consumer responses, as they perceive the ads as more aligned with their needs and interests (Gao et al., 2023). However, over-personalisation, as noted by Volodko et al. (2020), can lead to discomfort when consumers feel that their privacy is being compromised. This highlights the delicate balance between personalisation and privacy, which AI-generated advertising must navigate to maintain consumer trust.

The overall appeal of AI-generated advertising is similarly multifaceted. While consumers appreciate the efficiency and convenience AI offers, they often remain sceptical about the creative quality of AI-generated ads. Studies by Campbell et al. (2022) indicate that consumers are still more drawn to human-created content due to its perceived emotional resonance and creativity. Therefore, while AI excels in data-driven optimisation, it may fall short in delivering the emotional depth required to fully engage consumers on a meaningful level (Chen et al., 2024). Globally, consumer perceptions of AI-generated advertising are also shaped by regional and cultural contexts. For instance, McKinsey (2024) found that consumers in developed markets tend to embrace AI-driven personalisation more readily, whereas consumers in

emerging markets, such as Nigeria, are more cautious, particularly due to concerns about data privacy and the potential for cultural insensitivity in AI-generated content. In Nigeria, where internet usage is rapidly increasing, consumer trust in AI-generated content is crucial for its success (Johnson, 2023). The need for culturally relevant and ethically responsible AI applications is therefore essential to ensuring AI-driven advertising resonates with local consumers (Hariguna & Ruangkanjanases, 2024).

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo (Petty & Cacioppo, 2012), proposes two routes to persuasion: the central route, where consumers engage deeply with the content, and the peripheral route, where they rely on superficial cues. Historically applied to traditional advertising, ELM offers a useful framework for understanding how consumers process AI-generated ads. However, ELM could oversimplify consumer behaviour by assuming that individuals process persuasive messages through only two distinct routes, neglecting the complex, overlapping ways consumers may engage with content in real-world contexts. In the context of AI-generated advertising in Nigeria, ELM helps explain how consumers' level of involvement shapes their engagement. Consumers taking the central route are likely to engage deeply with AI ads if they perceive them as relevant or informative. However, for many Nigerian consumers, AI ads may be processed via the peripheral route, influenced more by the perceived novelty or aesthetics of the ad rather than its content (Okon et al., 2016). This raises concerns: while AI ads may engage superficially, the lack of emotional or cultural resonance could undermine trust and long-term engagement, limiting their persuasive power in Nigeria's culturally rich advertising landscape.

Trust in AI-Generated Advertisements

Trust in AI-generated advertisements is crucial to their effectiveness, as it directly impacts how consumers engage with and respond to marketing messages (Gu et al., 2024). Trust, in this context, refers to the belief that the advertisement is credible, reliable, and maintains integrity. Consumers must feel that the ad serves their interests without deception or manipulation (Ford et al., 2023). Credibility, or the perception that the ad is truthful and trustworthy, plays a central role in fostering trust. AI-generated ads, however, sometimes face challenges here due to the automated nature of their creation, leading to concerns about manipulation or hidden motives (Wu & Wen, 2021). Reliability, or the consistency of these ads in delivering on their promises, further shapes consumer confidence in AI advertisements. Integrity, or the moral soundness of AI-generated content, ensures that the ad does not deceive consumers with exaggerated claims, which is often a concern when algorithms prioritise engagement over accuracy (Chen et al., 2024).

Trust is vital for building strong consumer-advertiser relationships, particularly in an era where AI is increasingly responsible for creating ads. Without trust, consumers may become sceptical of the intentions behind highly targeted content, perceiving it as invasive or manipulative (Kumar et al., 2024). This is where transparency becomes a crucial factor. If advertisers openly communicate that AI is being used and clarify how it enhances personalisation, consumers are more likely to trust the content. However, a lack of openness can foster suspicion and reduce trust (Gao et al., 2023). Personalisation, while beneficial in engaging consumers, can be a double-edged sword. Tailored content increases relevance but, when poorly executed, may raise concerns about privacy and data exploitation (Volodko et al., 2020). The more personal data AI uses, the higher the risk of eroding trust, particularly if consumers feel that their information is being used without adequate consent (Marotta et al., 2022).

Consumer Engagement with AI-Generated Advertising

Understanding consumer engagement in digital advertising requires a multidimensional approach. Engagement is often defined through three interconnected dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement. Cognitive engagement involves the attention and thought a consumer invests in an ad, emotional engagement relates to the feelings it evokes, and behavioural engagement refers to actions such as clicking or sharing (Du et al., 2023). These dimensions are critical for assessing the effectiveness of digital advertising, as they offer a nuanced view beyond mere interaction rates. The advent of AI-generated advertising has added complexity to engagement metrics, particularly in digital contexts. Traditional methods, such as click-through rates, are now supplemented by more sophisticated metrics that measure the depth of interaction and the emotional impact of ads. AI-generated content has proven effective in increasing both cognitive and behavioural engagement, largely due to its ability to personalise ads dynamically (Ratta et al., 2024). AI's predictive analytics can create highly relevant content that resonates on an individual level, increasing user engagement and purchase intent (Bhattarai, 2023). However, while AI-generated ads may improve interaction rates, there is ongoing debate about their long-term impact on user experience. Some studies suggest that AI content can lack the emotional nuance that human-created ads often have, potentially diminishing emotional engagement (Ananthakrishnan & Arunachalam, 2022). This raises concerns about whether AI can replicate the emotional resonance critical to fostering brand loyalty. Relying too heavily on AI might risk a loss of authenticity, which is essential for deeper consumer connections (Wu & Wen, 2021).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), originating in the 1940s, posits that consumers actively seek media to satisfy specific needs, such as entertainment, information, or social integration (Blumler & Katz, 1974). However, UGT could overemphasise consumers' active agency in media consumption, overlooking the subtle ways in which media, including AI-generated content, can shape preferences and behaviours unconsciously. In applying UGT to AI-generated advertising in Nigeria, consumers' active engagement becomes central; they consciously select AI-driven content to fulfil personal or situational needs. However, while AI ads might offer personalisation and convenience, UGT critiques suggest that this focus on individual needs may neglect deeper cultural or emotional resonance, which is crucial in a diverse market like Nigeria. Consumers may engage with AI-driven ads because of their novelty or relevance, but if the content lacks emotional depth or fails to align with socio-cultural values, its long-term effectiveness is questionable (Olatunji, 2018). Thus, while AI can cater to immediate informational needs, it may struggle to foster deeper engagement or trust without addressing the broader gratifications sought by Nigerian consumers, particularly those related to cultural identity.

Cultural and Societal Context in Nigeria

The Nigerian advertising landscape has undergone significant transformation, shaped by historical development and contemporary trends. Early advertising in Nigeria was deeply embedded in indigenous oral traditions, such as the town crier system (Olatunji, 2018). The introduction of newspapers in the 19th century marked a shift towards formal advertising, with modern agencies emerging in the 20th century. Today, Nigeria's advertising industry blends global trends with local creativity, evidenced by the indigenisation of content in campaigns like "My Friend Udeme" for Guinness (Olatunji, 2018). Current trends reflect a move towards digital platforms, with increasing adoption of online advertising, although gaps in research persist, particularly in assessing its impact on consumer decision-making (Okon et al., 2016).

Nigeria's regulatory environment has also evolved, with the establishment of industry bodies such as the ARCON (Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria). However, regulatory enforcement has been inconsistent, raising concerns about ethical standards in advertising practices (Galadanchi et al., 2022). The industry faces challenges in maintaining standards, especially with the rise of digital platforms, where traditional regulatory frameworks often struggle to adapt.

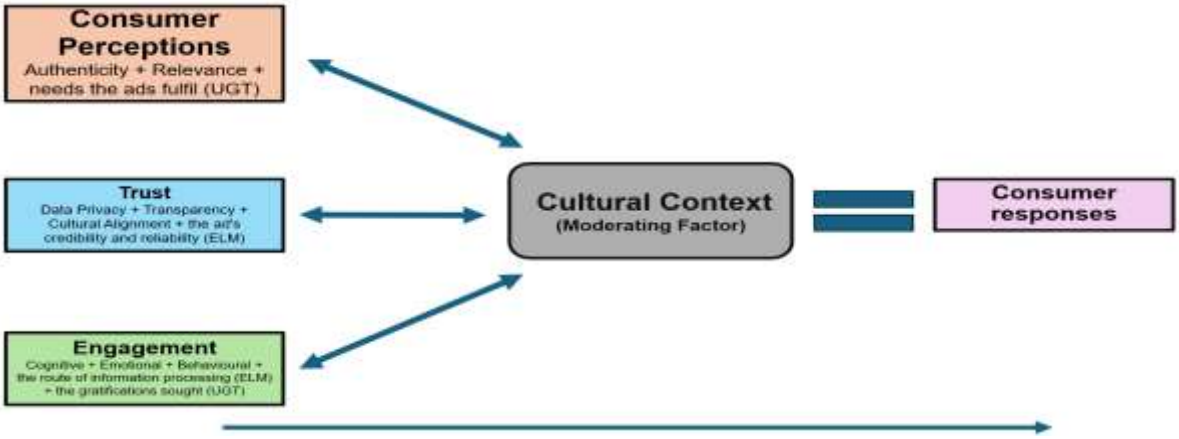
Cultural factors play a crucial role in how Nigerians perceive and respond to advertisements. Socio-cultural values, such as community orientation and respect for authority, deeply influence consumer behaviour. Advertisements that align with these values, often through the use of local languages or relatable cultural symbols, tend to resonate more effectively (Olatunji, 2018). However, cultural norms can also foster scepticism towards certain types of advertising, especially those perceived as overly commercial or disconnected from local realities. For instance, celebrity endorsements can either enhance trust or be seen as contrived, depending on the cultural relevance of the celebrity (Anyasor, 2018). Previous research on advertising effectiveness in Nigeria has highlighted these cultural nuances but remains limited in scope. For example, while studies have explored the general impact of digital advertising, there is little research on specific platforms like social media and their long-term effects on brand loyalty (Ivwighren et al., 2023). Furthermore, gaps exist in understanding how advertising strategies could be optimised for Nigeria's diverse cultural contexts. Therefore, more research is needed to assess the evolving impact of digital advertising and the cultural factors that continue to shape consumer perceptions.

Initial Conceptual Framework

From the literature reviewed, three main constructs emerge: Consumer Perceptions, Trust, and Engagement, which collectively influence consumer responses. Consumer Perceptions encompass the authenticity and relevance of AI ads (Ford et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2023). Trust is influenced by data privacy, transparency, and cultural alignment (Wu & Wen, 2021; Hariguna & Ruangkanjanases, 2024). Engagement is measured through cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses (Du et al., 2023).

These constructs are interrelated. Consumer Perceptions (authenticity and relevance) are shaped by the specific needs the ads fulfil (UGT). Trust is influenced by consumers' evaluation of the ad's credibility and reliability (ELM). Engagement—comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses—is driven by the route of information processing (ELM) and the gratifications sought (UGT). Additionally, the Cultural Context moderates these relationships, ensuring that AI advertising strategies are culturally resonant and ethically responsible (Olatunji, 2018). This framework explores how these factors collectively influence consumer trust and engagement with AI-generated advertisements in Nigeria. This framework is illustrated in Figure 2.9.

Figure 2.9: Initial Conceptual Framework (Illustrated by Researcher)



Research Methodology

This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, focusing on the subjective experiences of Nigerian consumers with AI-generated advertising. The research was guided by a subjectivist epistemology, where knowledge was derived from consumers' interpretations of their experiences, particularly concerning trust and engagement with these ads. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection method to explore participants' views on authenticity, trust, and personalisation in AI-generated ads. A sample of 10 participants was chosen to ensure theoretical saturation, capturing diverse perspectives across different demographics. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and interpret patterns in the interview data, following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework.

Table 1: Demographics of the Respondents

Participant ID	Gender	Age Range	Occupation	Level of Education	Exposure to AI-Generated Ads	Digital Literacy Level	Location
P1	Female	25-34	Marketing Professional	Bachelor's Degree	High	Advanced	Lagos
P2	Male	35-44	IT Specialist	Master's Degree	Medium	Advanced	Abuja
P3	Female	18-24	University Student	Undergraduate	Low	Intermediate	Ibadan
P4	Male	25-34	Entrepreneur (E-commerce)	Bachelor's Degree	High	Advanced	Lagos
P5	Female	45-54	Civil Servant	Master's Degree	Medium	Intermediate	Enugu
P6	Male	35-44	Journalist	Bachelor's Degree	Medium	Advanced	Port Harcourt
P7	Female	25-34	Graphic Designer	Diploma	High	Advanced	Lagos
P8	Male	18-24	Retail Worker	High School	Low	Basic	Kano
P9	Female	35-44	Teacher	Bachelor's Degree	Medium	Intermediate	Kaduna
P10	Male	45-54	Small Business Owner (Tech)	Bachelor's Degree	High	Advanced	Abuja

Data Presentation

Theme 1: Perceptions of Authenticity in AI-Generated Advertising

One of the major themes that emerged from the interviews was the perception of authenticity in AI-generated advertising. Several participants expressed concerns that AI-generated ads often felt less authentic compared to human-created content. P1, a marketing professional, noted, "Sometimes AI-generated ads seem too robotic, like they're trying too hard to connect. There's this lack of human touch that makes it feel more like a machine is speaking at you, not to you." This sense of disconnection was echoed by P4, an entrepreneur, who stated, "I often feel like AI-generated ads don't quite understand the nuances of culture or emotion, especially in a market as unique as Nigeria. It feels like they're missing the point sometimes."

However, not all participants viewed AI-generated advertisements negatively. P2, an IT specialist, pointed out that "AI-generated ads can still be very relevant and authentic if they are designed well. It depends on how much data the AI has about the audience. When done right, they can be just as authentic as anything a human can create." This perspective highlights that while the technology might sometimes struggle to emulate human creativity, it still has the potential to create relevant and meaningful content if personalised effectively. P6, a journalist, added, "Authenticity is about relevance too. If an ad speaks to my needs or interests, I don't mind if it's AI or human-generated." Thus, perceptions of authenticity varied across respondents, with some more focused on the emotional disconnect, while others recognised the potential for AI to deliver relevant, targeted advertising.

Theme 2: Trust and Data Privacy Concerns

The issue of trust, particularly in relation to data privacy, was a significant concern for many participants. Several respondents expressed wariness about how AI-generated ads collected and used personal data. P5, a civil servant, remarked, "I worry about how much data these systems are collecting on us. You start seeing ads for things you only talked about with a friend, and it's unsettling. Who is controlling this information?" This comment illustrates a broader fear of surveillance and data misuse, which affected the level of trust participants had in AI-generated advertising. Similarly, P7, a graphic designer, voiced concerns about transparency, stating, "The problem with AI ads is that they're not always clear about how they know so much about you. There's no transparency. It makes me feel like I'm being watched, and that makes me trust them less." This lack of clarity on data use and algorithmic decision-making was a recurring theme, with participants feeling uneasy about the opacity surrounding AI-driven personalisation. Even respondents like P2, who worked in IT and had a deeper understanding of AI systems, expressed caution. He mentioned, "Even though I know how these systems work, there's still an issue of trust. The AI may know a lot about me, but how it got that information isn't always obvious." However, not all respondents were equally concerned. P10, a small business owner, stated, "As long as the ads are helpful and relevant, I don't mind some level of data tracking. It's the way the internet works now, and we need to adapt." For some, the benefits of personalisation outweighed the privacy concerns, suggesting a nuanced relationship between trust and perceived value.

Theme 3: Consumer Engagement and AI-Generated Ads

In terms of consumer engagement, participants had mixed views on whether AI-generated ads enhanced their interaction with brands. Some, like P3, a university student, admitted, "I don't really engage with AI ads because they feel too automated, and it's not clear if the brand actually cares or if it's just an algorithm targeting me." This sense of detachment was common among younger respondents, who seemed more sceptical about the ability of AI to foster genuine connections with consumers. On the other hand, P9, a teacher, found AI-generated ads

to be more engaging, especially when the content was highly personalised. She noted, "Sometimes I do click on AI ads, especially when they show products I've been thinking about or that are related to my past purchases. It feels like the ad knows me." This positive response to personalisation shows how AI-generated ads can successfully engage consumers when they align with individual preferences or needs. Similarly, P4, an entrepreneur, said, "AI-generated ads work well for me as a business owner because they're efficient. They help me find products or services faster than if I were just browsing myself." While some participants appreciated the efficiency and relevance of AI-generated ads, others were less convinced. P6, the journalist, mentioned, "I find myself skipping past AI ads because they can feel repetitive. Even if they are personalised, seeing the same kind of ad over and over reduces my interest." This suggests that while AI can enhance engagement through personalisation, overexposure or poor targeting can have the opposite effect, leading to disengagement.

Theme 4: Perceived Relevance

Another theme that emerged was the perceived relevance of AI-generated advertising, with many participants highlighting both positive and negative experiences. For some, relevance was a key strength of AI-generated ads. P10, a small business owner, said, "I find AI ads very useful because they're usually related to things I'm already interested in. They don't waste my time with irrelevant stuff." This sentiment was echoed by P7, a graphic designer, who added, "AI has this ability to suggest exactly what I need. It's like the ads are tailored just for me." This ability to deliver personalised content was seen as a major advantage, particularly for those in fast-paced, tech-savvy professions, where efficiency is highly valued. However, others questioned whether this relevance came at a cost. P5, the civil servant, observed, "Even when an ad is relevant, I still wonder how it knows so much about me. It's like a stranger knowing what I like before I've said anything." This reflects a sense of unease, where the very effectiveness of AI in delivering personalised content can also raise concerns about privacy and data collection, as discussed earlier. P3, the university student, expressed frustration with irrelevant targeting, stating, "Sometimes the ads just miss the mark. I get ads for products I'd never buy, which makes me question how smart these AI systems really are." These responses highlight a tension between the perceived benefits of AI-generated relevance and the discomfort or distrust it sometimes provokes.

Theme 5: Personalisation

The theme of personalisation also featured prominently, especially in discussions about consumer trust and engagement. Several participants appreciated how AI could customise ads to their specific interests and needs. P9, the teacher, shared, "I like how personalisation helps me discover new products that are in line with my preferences. It saves time, and I feel like the brands know me better." For P4, an entrepreneur, personalisation was a crucial factor in keeping him engaged with ads, noting, "When ads are tailored to what I'm looking for, I'm more likely to interact with them. It's more efficient, and it feels less random." However, not everyone viewed personalisation as a purely positive development. P6, the journalist, voiced concerns about the ethical implications, stating, "I wonder how much of my personal data is being used to create these 'personalised' ads. It's a double-edged sword—you get relevant ads, but at the expense of your privacy." This feeling of intrusion was shared by P1, who remarked, "I enjoy the personalisation when it's done right, but when it's too specific, it feels like someone is watching me too closely. It makes me uncomfortable." These insights suggest that while personalisation can increase engagement, it can also undermine trust when it feels overly intrusive.

Theme 6: Cultural Sensitivity

Finally, cultural sensitivity emerged as a key theme in how participants perceived AI-generated ads. Several respondents felt that AI lacked the ability to capture the nuances of Nigerian culture, which affected how they related to these ads. P8, the retail worker, expressed, "AI ads don't always understand our local context. Sometimes they use language or images that don't really connect with people here." This was a sentiment shared by P4, who added, "When I see AI ads that are clearly made for a global audience, it just feels off. They're not speaking to me as a Nigerian, and that reduces my interest." For some participants, this cultural disconnect directly influenced their trust in AI-generated content. P2, the IT specialist, said, "AI is still evolving, and it's clear that it struggles with local culture. That's a big issue for me because I want ads that feel authentic and connected to where I'm from." In contrast, P10 argued that AI could improve with more data and better algorithms, stating, "I believe AI will get better at understanding different cultures as it evolves. Right now, it's not perfect, but I see potential." This optimism points to a possible future where AI-generated advertising becomes more culturally adept, though for now, many respondents feel that a lack of cultural sensitivity limits its effectiveness in the Nigerian context.

Discussion of Findings

The qualitative data reveals complex insights into Nigerian consumers' perceptions and engagement with AI-generated advertising, shedding light on key themes such as authenticity, trust, personalisation, and cultural sensitivity. These findings both align with and diverge from the existing literature on AI in advertising, with particular emphasis on unique local nuances in the Nigerian context. The issue of authenticity emerged as a central theme, with some participants feeling that AI-generated ads lacked the "human touch" necessary for emotional connection (P1 and P4). This observation echoes the concerns raised by Ford et al. (2023) and Wu & Wen (2021), who argue that AI content can appear overly calculated and inauthentic. However, other participants (P2 and P6) highlighted that personalised AI ads can be perceived as authentic as human-created content, particularly when the ads resonate with individual preferences. This aligns with Gao et al. (2023), who argue that dynamic personalisation can enhance AI's relevance. This divergence likely arises from the varying levels of sophistication in AI technology and differing consumer expectations about emotional resonance in advertising. Trust, particularly concerning data privacy, also played a significant role in the findings. Several participants, such as P5 and P7, expressed concerns about data collection and surveillance, consistent with global anxieties about AI-driven personalisation, as noted by Volodko et al. (2020). However, some participants (e.g., P10) showed a more pragmatic approach, accepting data tracking if it results in more relevant ads. This nuanced response reflects the findings of Marotta et al. (2022), who note that trust can be maintained when AI ads are transparent and provide clear benefits. The heightened scepticism in Nigeria, however, may stem from concerns over limited regulatory oversight and digital literacy, which exacerbate trust issues compared to more developed markets.

A critical divergence from the literature was found in the area of cultural sensitivity. Participants (such as P8 and P4) noted that AI-generated ads often miss the nuances of Nigerian culture, making them feel disconnected or ineffective. This contrasts with studies by Kumar et al. (2024) and Ford et al. (2023), who suggest that AI can effectively scale and personalise content across diverse demographics. In Nigeria, however, consumers' heightened awareness of cultural cues presents a challenge for AI, which is often trained on global datasets that may not fully capture local cultural contexts. This underscores the limitations of AI in engaging with culturally specific audiences and suggests that AI's scalability may be hindered in regions where cultural sensitivity is paramount.

The findings also reveal mixed reactions regarding consumer engagement with AI-generated ads. While some participants, particularly P9 and P4, appreciated the efficiency and personalisation of AI ads, others, like P3, felt disengaged due to the automated nature of the ads. This aligns with Bhattarai (2023), who notes that while AI can drive cognitive and behavioural engagement, emotional engagement may be compromised. Furthermore, the frustration expressed by some respondents (such as P6) about repetitive or poorly targeted AI ads mirrors concerns in the literature about over-targeting. AI ads can become monotonous or invasive, leading to consumer alienation (Volodko et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2024). This reflects a broader challenge in balancing personalisation with variety to sustain consumer interest.

Finally, personalisation emerged as both a strength and a challenge. Participants like P10 and P9 appreciated the relevance and efficiency of personalised ads, reinforcing findings by Gao et al. (2023) that highlight AI's ability to deliver tailored content. However, concerns about data usage and privacy were voiced by participants like P6 and P1, reflecting a broader global tension between the benefits of personalisation and the risks associated with data privacy (Marotta et al., 2022). In the Nigerian context, this tension is amplified by evolving digital infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, which contribute to heightened scepticism compared to more digitally mature markets. It is deduced that while AI-generated advertising holds significant potential in the Nigerian market, the findings suggest that for AI ads to resonate with Nigerian consumers, issues of authenticity, trust, cultural sensitivity, and consumer engagement need to be carefully addressed. The literature supports the notion that AI can be effective, but the Nigerian context introduces unique challenges.

Theoretical Implications

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) offer valuable frameworks for understanding Nigerian consumer engagement with AI-generated advertising. UGT suggests that consumers actively seek media to satisfy specific needs, such as information or entertainment, which aligns with how Nigerian consumers appreciate the convenience and relevance of AI-generated ads. For example, participants like P9 (a teacher) found AI personalisation helpful in meeting specific preferences. However, UGT might overestimate the active role of consumers, particularly given concerns around the unconscious influence of AI algorithms. Nigerian consumers may not always actively choose AI-generated content; instead, the AI shapes their preferences through data-driven personalisation, implying that engagement may be more passive than UGT assumes.

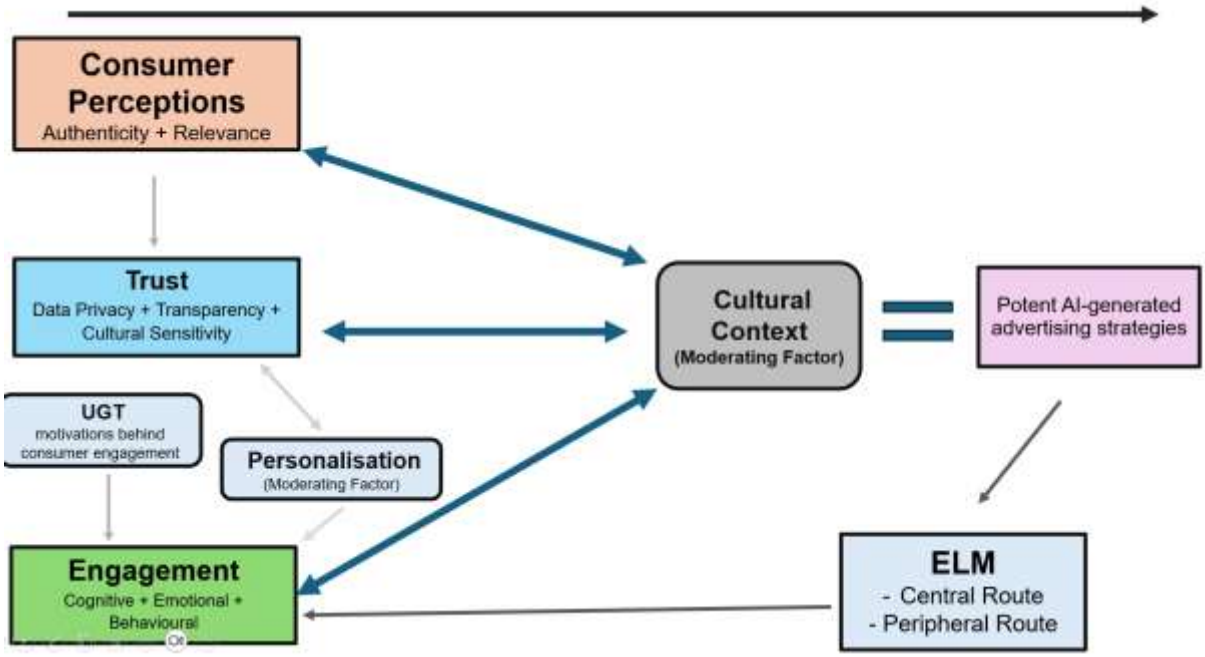
In contrast, ELM's central and peripheral routes to persuasion highlight contradictions in how Nigerian consumers process AI ads. Those who find AI-generated ads overly repetitive or lacking emotional depth (such as P6) may engage through the peripheral route, valuing superficial cues like novelty but ultimately remaining sceptical about the content's authenticity. This aligns with ELM's concept of peripheral processing but diverges in that many Nigerian consumers require deeper emotional and cultural resonance for long-term engagement—something AI currently struggles to provide. Therefore, AI ads may fail to foster trust or long-lasting connections, limiting their persuasive power in Nigeria's culturally nuanced market.

New Conceptual Framework

The new and revised conceptual framework (see Figure 4.5) provides a comprehensive understanding of Nigerian consumers' interactions with AI-generated advertising. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) explains the motivations behind consumer engagement, such as seeking information, entertainment, and social integration. The Elaboration Likelihood Model

(ELM) elucidates the processing routes—central (deep cognitive engagement) and peripheral (superficial engagement)—through which consumers interact with advertisements. The framework comprises three primary constructs: Consumer Perceptions (authenticity, relevance), Trust (data privacy, cultural sensitivity), and Engagement (cognitive, emotional, behavioural). Personalisation acts as a mediator between Trust and Engagement, enhancing or undermining consumer interactions. The overarching Cultural Context moderates all relationships, ensuring that AI advertising strategies are culturally resonant and ethically responsible. This integrated framework captures both the motivations and cognitive processes influencing trust and engagement with AI-generated ads in Nigeria.

Figure 4.5: New Conceptual Framework



The initial framework outlines three constructs—Consumer Perceptions, Trust, and Engagement—and their components influencing consumer responses to AI ads. The revised framework enhances this by integrating the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) directly into these constructs. It explains how UGT shapes Consumer Perceptions by fulfilling specific needs and how ELM influences Trust and Engagement through central and peripheral processing routes. Additionally, the revised framework introduces personalisation as a mediator between Trust and Engagement and emphasises the Cultural Context as a moderator for all relationships. This integration provides a more comprehensive, theory-driven understanding of Nigerian consumers' interactions with AI-generated advertisements.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study highlights the complex and often contradictory ways in which Nigerian consumers perceive and engage with AI-generated advertising. While the technology offers benefits such as personalisation and efficiency, these advantages are undermined by concerns regarding authenticity, trust, and cultural sensitivity. The divergence from global trends, where AI is celebrated for its scalability and data-driven optimisation, lies in the unique socio-cultural and regulatory context of Nigeria. Many consumers feel that AI-generated ads lack the emotional

depth and local cultural resonance necessary for long-term engagement. This suggests that while AI can meet immediate informational needs, its failure to incorporate the nuances of Nigerian culture limits its effectiveness in this market.

A major contribution to knowledge from this study is the identification of a significant gap between AI's potential for personalisation and its ability to build trust and emotional connection, especially in culturally diverse contexts like Nigeria. The scepticism surrounding data privacy, exacerbated by a lack of regulatory protections, further complicates consumer trust, contrasting with the more data-tolerant attitudes in developed markets. Additionally, while theories like UGT and ELM help explain some aspects of consumer behaviour, this study reveals that real-world engagement is more nuanced than these models suggest. The passive influence of AI-driven personalisation challenges UGT's assumption of active consumer agency, while ELM's peripheral route oversimplifies the deeper cultural engagement that many Nigerian consumers seek. This points to a need for more contextually sensitive applications of AI in advertising, especially in emerging markets where emotional and cultural alignment play crucial roles in consumer trust and engagement. To address the cultural disconnect, companies should invest in localised AI training datasets that incorporate Nigerian cultural nuances. By implementing this approach, brands can create more authentic, resonant ads, thereby improving trust and engagement. Also, improving transparency around data usage is essential. Concerns about data privacy, highlighted by many participants suggest a need for clearer communication on how personal data is collected and used.

Research Limitation

The primary limitation of this study lies in its small sample size and qualitative nature, which restrict the generalisability of the findings. With only 10 participants, the results may not fully capture the diverse perspectives of Nigerian consumers, particularly across different regions, socio-economic backgrounds, or levels of digital literacy. Additionally, the study focused on subjective perceptions, which may vary widely, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions that are applicable to the broader population. Future research could benefit from larger, more representative samples and quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of AI-generated advertising in Nigeria.

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