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Generative Artificial Intelligence in Advertising

Evaluating the Impact of Artificially Generated Content on Purchase
Intention

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Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in marketing has garnered significant attention due to its potential to revolutionize content creation and enhance advertising strategies. Despite the enthusiasm surrounding AI tools, concerns persist regarding their impact on brand authenticity and consumer perceptions. The present study aims to deepen the understanding of the influence of AI-generated content in online advertisements on behavioral intention and perception, particularly across different age groups. By examining the causal effect of AI-generated content on purchase intention, exploring age differences, and assessing the role of credibility perception, the research seeks to provide insights into the evolving strategies of marketers in the digital age. Ultimately, the study aims to address the research question: How does the use of AI-generated content in digital advertising affect consumer purchasing behavior? The study assumes that AI-generated content has a positive effect on purchase intention, with younger age groups possibly reinforcing this effect. Using an online survey with a sample of 282 participants, the study investigates the outlined research question. The findings revealed that there was no difference in the purchase intention between advertisements featuring AI-generated humans and the ones featuring real humans, suggesting that AI-generated content can be applied in advertising without causing lower levels of purchase intention. The analysis also showed that AI-generated humans were perceived as more credible in advertisements than real human beings and that credibility also had a mediating effect on purchase intention. Overall, the study offers first valuable insights into a young, quite unexplored field with high practical relevance for marketers who are integrating AI-generated content into online advertisements. Looking ahead, marketers are advised to remain adaptable and innovative in leveraging AI-generated content for impactful advertising campaigns as technology and consumer preferences continue to evolve.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Generative Artificial Intelligence, Purchase Intention, Credibility, Marketing, Content Creation, Theory of Planned Behavior

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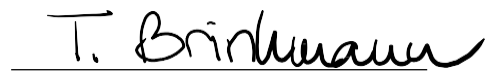
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List of Abbreviations

Ad - Advertisement

AI - Artificial Intelligence

B2B - Business to Business

CFA - Confirmatory Factor Analysis

e.g. - For Example

et al. - Et Aliae

GAI - Generative Artificial Intelligence

GANS - Generative Adversarial Networks

H - Hypothesis

KPMG - Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler

M - Mean

ML - Machine Learning

n - Sample Size

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

R - Correlation coefficient

R^2 - Coefficient of determination

ROI - Return on Investment

SD - Standard Deviation

TPB - Theory of Planned Behaviour

TRA - Theory of Reasoned Action

UTAUT - Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

1. Introduction

The term Artificial Intelligence (AI) has evolved from a mysterious concept to a widely known tool, especially in the field of marketing, where it has gained immense popularity. Marketers have discovered AI as their favored solution for working smarter and more efficiently. In the ever-evolving landscape of content creation, AI tools have proven to be indispensable aids. An impressive 71 % of social media marketers rely on AI tools to create content and strongly believe that content created with AI is better than content created without its help (HubSpot, 2024). Companies like Heinz have already tasted success through innovative campaigns such as the "AI Ketchup" initiative, which garnered over 850 million impressions worldwide (The One Club, 2023). A significant economic potential is anticipated for Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), estimated at \$463 billion solely in the marketing sector (Chui et al., 2023). Looking ahead, a remarkable 87 % of social media marketers view AI tools as indispensable for success in 2024, acknowledging their capacity to streamline processes, enhance targeting, and optimize engagement (HubSpot, 2024).

However, amidst the enthusiasm for the potential of AI, there are also concerns. A significant 64 % of marketers express concerns about the impact of using GAI in content creation. The fear that overuse of AI could jeopardize their brand reputation is evident and highlights the difficult balance between innovation and maintaining authenticity (HubSpot, 2024). Taken further, many companies still question how consumers will react to its use in advertising. A better understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of AI-generated marketing visuals is crucial, as visuals are a cornerstone of modern marketing communication in an increasingly media-rich environment (Dzyabura et al., 2023). Ultimately, the question persists whether GAI can revolutionize the creation of visual marketing content without sacrificing its appeal and effectiveness (Hartman et al., 2024).

1.1 Problematization

The digital revolution continues to advance and is changing almost every aspect of human's daily lives as well as the business world (Dwivedi et al., 2021). One of the most notable developments in this context is the increasing use of AI in companies, particularly in the area of marketing (Vlačić et al., 2021). Companies are using AI to increase their efficiency, create personalized customer experiences and optimize business processes (Chaitanya et al., 2023). In this context, GAI is becoming increasingly important. This special form of AI is able to create real texts, images and videos and is of great importance in content marketing for the creation of visuals (Anisin, 2023).

The use of AI in content creation offers a number of advantages, such as greater flexibility in terms of target group-specific content creation, cost and time savings, hyperpersonalization of marketing messages and greater reliability of marketing campaigns (Lucas et al., 2022). These advantages are promising for companies. Nevertheless, the use of AI-generated content in marketing is still very limited. This could be due to the downsides of AI, which already highlights the problem to be addressed in this study. In particular, ethical concerns regarding the use of AI are in the minds of society, which poses a risk of companies damaging their image and brand reputation (Anshari et al., 2021). Problems regarding privacy, transparency and discrimination are further issues that highlight the dark side of AI. Many companies still question how consumers will react to its use in advertising and therefore are cautious about the use of AI in advertising. This study should help to show that the use of AI in advertising can certainly create added value for companies.

The doubts about the use of AI and the uncertainties regarding consumer reactions may be due to the great lack of scientific research on the use of AI in the creation of content for marketing. Only a few studies have already examined the use of AI in marketing (Kshetri et al., 2024). However, only a few studies have yet investigated the impact of implementing AI-generated content on different forms of advertising, such as online advertisements. This research gap is particularly relevant as companies that integrate AI into their content strategies could potentially gain significant competitive advantages.

The current state of research shows that some studies have already analyzed AI-generated content and its effect on individuals, focusing primarily on the creation of real-looking people or faces. These studies have investigated whether individuals recognize the difference between an original person and an AI-generated person (Carlson et al., 2012; Fan et al., 2012). Here, research shows that the boundaries between the obvious distinctions are becoming increasingly blurred and differentiation is becoming more difficult (Lu et al., 2023). At the same time, AI tools are becoming increasingly sophisticated, making their use more relevant for companies. However, there has been little research to date that examines how this phenomenon affects the marketing business.

Taking this further, as visual elements are becoming increasingly important in the field of digital marketing, it is essential to consider the integration of Generative AI. Visuals are highly valuable for marketing as they leave a stronger impression than for instance a text and are therefore more memorable (Mayahi & Vidrih, 2022). This underlines the importance of addressing the outlined research problem. The overall goal of this research project is to close these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the impact of AI-generated content in advertising on consumer intention and perception.

For a better understanding of the study, it is important to note that the term "content" is multifaceted and can encompass various types of media, such as text, audio, video, and images. However, in the context of this work, "AI-generated content" exclusively refers to visual content, specifically images and graphics created using AI.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

This research project aims to deepen the understanding of the impact of the integration of AI in digital advertising on consumer intention and perception. The research project seeks to delve into the complex role and significance of AI within the realm of digital advertising, thereby shedding new light on the evolving landscape of AI. It aims to help companies adapt their advertising strategies to communicate effectively with different target audiences. Therefore, the study examines perceptions of AI-generated content in online advertisements to fill an existing research gap and improve the understanding of the modern advertising landscape, particularly in the regard of the use of AI. In this context, the study also aims to find out if the technical affinity of consumers plays a significant role by examining whether the existence of an affinity for technology encourages the perception of digital advertisements. Additionally, the research endeavors to explore the relationship between AI-generated content and credibility and seeks to discover differences between different age demographics. Moreover, the study aims to gain a general overview of how customers' individual attitudes influence their purchase intentions. Specifically, it analyzes how trust in online advertisements, attitudes towards online advertisements and the credibility of the advertising visual influence the purchasing intention.

Overall, the aim is to develop a comprehensive understanding of how individual differences influence consumers' reactions to digital advertising. This comprehensive approach aims to design advertising content in such a way that it fulfills the different needs of specific target groups. The following research aims to contribute to the expansion of the relatively underexplored domain of AI-based visual creation by providing valuable insights into the evolving strategies of marketers in the digital age and offer them the opportunity to increase their advertising effectiveness.

1.3 Research Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the use of AI in digital advertising that will enable marketers to develop more efficient advertising strategies tailored

to the demands of the digital age. Furthermore, this study aims to recognize and capture the potential of AI in content creation, with the overall goal of giving companies a competitive advantage and increasing the efficiency of the entire marketing process. The study should offer valuable considerations in the field of marketing research. In order to investigate this phenomenon, the following research question is posed:

Q1: How does the use of AI-generated content in digital advertising affect consumer purchasing behavior?

1.4 Delimitations

The study has several delimitations that are worth mentioning, as they limit the scope in terms of geographical region, target population, and advertising medium. First, the data collection through the online survey is confined to Germany and involves only German-speaking participants, thereby restricting the findings to the German population. Additionally, the study focuses exclusively on online advertisements, making the results less applicable to other mediums of advertising. Furthermore, the research is limited to the cosmetics sector, specifically analyzing only the perfume product category. These delimitations are essential for understanding the context and applicability of the study's findings, highlighting the need for caution when generalizing the results to broader contexts.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The paper is divided into several sections. While the first chapter includes the overall introduction, the second chapter starts with an explanation of the relevance of the topic, focusing on purchase intention as the central construct of this study and on the rapidly growing use of AI. Furthermore, the authors discuss how companies can use AI in marketing and the possible considerations this use may raise. Before the authors discuss the concept of technical affinity, the acceptance of new technologies, particularly within different age groups, is outlined. Subsequently, the authors delve into customer attitudes by introducing the concepts of attitude towards online advertisements, trust in online advertisements and credibility. Each section ends with a review of current research regarding their impact on purchase intention and the hypotheses derived from it. Additionally, chapter two covers the theoretical concepts and theories that provide the framework for this study. The chapter concludes with a detailed description and graphical illustration of the theoretical model framing the research project. The

third chapter begins with an introduction into research philosophy, followed by a detailed description of the study's methodology, including the research design, the survey, the description of variables and the data collection process. This chapter also involves an introduction to descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, which include all statistical tests. The chapter closes with a discussion of the study's quality and the ethical considerations. The fourth chapter presents as well as discusses the results of the study and verifies the hypotheses. For improved readability, only the key statistical figures are highlighted, with additional results provided in the appendix. Finally, chapter five concludes the paper with an overall summary of the findings, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the study, its validity, practical relevance, and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

The following chapter sets out the theoretical foundations on which the variables of the study are based. In this chapter, the current state of research on the research topic is examined by conducting a detailed analysis of the existing literature, from which the hypotheses of this study are derived. This comprehensive analysis aims to identify gaps, contradictions and areas of consensus within the academic discourse and thus contribute to a differentiated understanding of the research context. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the theoretical framework of the study.

2.1 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention serves as a construct that captures a person's behavioral intention to buy a specific quantity of a certain product. The attitude towards the product and factors relating to the purchase situation, such as the price or availability of the product, have an influence on a person's purchase intention. Purchase intention thus predicts the subjective probability that a certain behavior will be shown and is considered an indicator that can predict the behavior of individuals more reliably than the attitude towards the product (Kroeber-Riel et al., 2019; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, purchase intention is an important indicator of consumers' preferences to purchase a product or service after a thorough evaluation (Younus et al., 2015). Marketing managers use these insights to make strategic decisions for both new and existing products or services (Morwitz et al., 2007). By analyzing purchase intentions, practitioners can make accurate predictions about future demand and test as well as evaluate advertising measures in advance (Morrison, 1979; Bird & Ehrenberg, 1966). In addition, this data enables accurate sales forecasting and precise measurement of actual purchase behavior. Taking into account personal tendencies to act in relation to the brand is crucial, as it is a fundamental prerequisite for actually encouraging consumers to buy products or services (Ostrom, 1969; Zhuang et al., 2021). Generally, purchase intention constitutes “the person’s motivation in the sense of his or her conscious plan to exert effort to carry out a behavior” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 168). As purchase intention is a key indicator of consumer behavior and their willingness to purchase a particular product or service, it is important to investigate how this behavior performs in relation to AI-generated content.

As already mentioned, there are several factors whose influence on purchase intention is of great importance for its outcome. While factors such as price, quality, and availability have already been mentioned, purchase intention is further influenced by factors such as brand

image, perceived value, or opinions from family and acquaintances (Wang & Tsai, 2014). Taken further, it can be concluded that the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a solid theoretical basis for explaining this phenomenon. This well-known theory posits that the intention to perform a behavior, in this case, purchasing a product, is influenced by individual attitudes toward the behavior (e.g., brand image), subjective norms (e.g., opinions of family and friends), and perceived behavioral control (e.g., price, availability). In the present study, the focus is specifically on the perception of online advertisements. By focusing on how individual attitudes towards the content and information presented influence consumers' willingness to purchase a particular product or service, the Theory of Planned Behavior provides a solid framework. Consequently, this would imply that if consumers have a positive attitude towards the content presented, it might increase their intention to purchase the advertised product. Conversely, negative attitudes could decrease purchase intention.

2.2 Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, revolutionizing industries, economies, and societies on a global scale and ushering in transformative changes in our lifestyles, workplaces and interactions with technology (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The following definition of AI was provided by the OECD: “An AI system is a machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments. AI systems are designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy” (OECD, 2019, pp. 23–24). AI refers to the replication of human cognitive abilities within machines or computer systems, enabling them to think, respond and perform tasks in a manner similar to humans (Soni, 2020). Capable of these highly technical and specialized tasks such as robotics, speech and image recognition, natural language processing and problem solving, it is a collection of technologies able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence (Haleem et al., 2022).

The rapid advancement of AI implies that intelligent machines, driven by ongoing research and development, are poised to surpass human capabilities in various domains (Pannu & Student, 2015). AI leverages neural networks to simulate human thinking and problem-solving, making it unique in interpreting the environment and taking appropriate actions (Wisetsri et al., 2021). As noted by Flavian et al. (2022) and de Keyser et al. (2019), these AI systems often lead to the displacement of human roles.

In the creative industry, AI's invaluable applications are highlighted by Anantrasirichai and Bull (2021), who categorize its usage into five distinct categories: content creation, information

analysis, content enhancement and post-production workflows, information extraction and enhancement, and data compression. This extensive use of AI also extends to image generation, where neural networks use large data sets to synthesize high-quality visual content. Originally, Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) were used. Recent advances in techniques such as diffusion-based methods have significantly improved both the variety and quality of generation. Despite these advances, it is still difficult to reproduce a wide range of image styles, especially those that closely resemble real photographs (Lu et al., 2023).

According to a recent study conducted by Pfeiffer, a significant majority of creative professionals in the US, UK, Germany, and Japan are open to the idea of utilizing AI tools as aids, particularly in tasks like image searching and editing. This widespread openness underscores a general acceptance of AI as a valuable tool (Pfeiffer, 2018). Notably, most AI technologies have been designed to complement and support human efforts rather than replace them, operating within closed domains to enhance human productivity and creativity (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2021). Taken further, numerous studies have delved into the perceptions and responses to AI usage. For instance, Wu et al. (2020) discovered that American consumers exhibited a preference for human-generated creative content, while Chinese consumers favored AI-generated content. This discrepancy underscores the complex interplay between cultural contexts and individual perceptions.

While governments worldwide recognize the potential of AI as a crucial driver of economic growth and social progress (Hall & Pesenti, 2018), its ethical considerations are still in debate. These ethical considerations encompass issues of privacy, transparency, and discrimination, as highlighted by scholars such as Anshari et al. (2021). Especially with the recent surge in generating lifelike images, particularly realistic persons, our perception of reality is increasingly challenged. This advancement holds significant implications for cybersecurity, counterfeiting, fake news dissemination, and border security (Moshel et al., 2022). While observers historically excelled at distinguishing human faces from computer-generated ones, recent studies indicate a decline in this ability as image realism improves (Holmes et al., 2016). Given the growing prevalence of AI-generated content across various platforms and industries, it has become increasingly essential to comprehensively evaluate its impact on consumer perception and behavior.

2.2.1 Integration of AI in Marketing

The significance of AI in marketing is steadily growing (Vlačić et al., 2021) and has become an essential part for commercial entities worldwide (Verma et al., 2021), complementing their

content strategies and allowing marketers to meet their customer's needs in real time (Haleem et al., 2022). AI is facilitating greater levels of personalization and relevance in marketing endeavors (Shaik, 2023) and enables marketers to use extensive data resources and obtain valuable insights (Chaitanya et al., 2023). Moreover, AI plays a central role in improving user engagement and lead conversion rates by enhancing the overall customer experience. This is accomplished by employing intuitive AI chatbots, intelligent email marketing strategies, interactive web design features, and a range of other digital marketing services to offer real-time assistance. Ultimately this enhances customer satisfaction (Chaitanya et. al, 2023) and guides them towards actions that align with the organization's objectives (Haleem et. al, 2022).

The impact of AI on digital marketing is influenced by several factors, including machine learning (ML), a subset of AI that is capable of learning and improving on its own by collecting data from various sources, such as social media accounts, online reviews and websites, without the need for pre-existing codes (Siau & Yang, 2017). Through ML algorithms, companies are able to conduct comprehensive online analyses of their target audience and adapt their marketing strategies accordingly to optimize content delivery and reach potential customers at the right moment with targeted, compelling advertising, maximizing ROI (Chaitanya et. al, 2023). While ML is a broader term encompassing various techniques and algorithms for data analysis and automation or decision-making processes and can be used for content creation, GAI is specialized in creating content with human-like quality.

Generative Artificial Intelligence has initiated a wave of innovation in many industries, especially in marketing. Through the use of GAI, AI models can generate human-like texts, graphics, audios and videos by analyzing existing data patterns and creating new content (Anisin, 2023). This technology has proven to be one of the most important tools driving the adoption of AI in organizations (Dwivedi et al., 2023). In marketing in particular, GAI has a significant impact that extends even beyond previous generations of digital technologies (Kshetri, 2023). GAI's ability to generate personalized content in the form of texts, images and videos provides marketers with a wide range of powerful tools to optimize content creation processes (Anisin, 2023). The benefits of using GAI in marketing are numerous and go far beyond the role of a simple cost-cutting or time-saving tool. Brands can use GAI to take marketing and sales activities to a new level, delivering personalized, one-to-one experiences that cannot be delivered by humans alone. Through dynamic messaging and personalization, relevant messages can be sent to customers at the right time based on detailed and valuable data (Bernard, 2023). In addition, GAI can help improve content marketing by enabling the rapid generation of high-quality content (Kshetri et al., 2024). It is also a valuable way to come up with new ideas and work faster, creating effective marketing content more quickly and cost-effectively (Kshetri et al., 2024). GAI models can produce stunning visualizations that enhance

storytelling, create eye-catching social media posts, and support visually engaging presentations (Anisin, 2023). A particularly notable benefit of incorporating AI into marketing is hyperpersonalization, which is opening a new era of customer engagement. Through the integration of data and AI, marketers can now create tailored experiences that resonate with individual preferences and needs (Pukas, 2022). By analyzing real-time data, AI algorithms predict the next steps in a customer's journey, allowing marketers to deliver timely and relevant content that fit individual needs. With the final message being different for each customer in terms of content, timing and delivery channel, companies can build stronger relationships and foster lasting loyalty (Patnaik, 2022).

Integrating GAI into marketing practice presents a number of unique challenges that must be carefully addressed to ensure responsible and effective use. A key concern is the ethical responsibility associated with the use of GAI. Marketers need to ensure that transparency is promoted in the content generation pipeline, e.g. by adding disclaimers to AI-generated content to clarify potential ethical concerns and trust issues (Kshedi et al., 2024; Anisin, 2023). Another important challenge is potential bias in the training data of GAI models. Marketers need to ensure that the data used is diverse and representative to minimize the risk of bias in the content generated (Anisin, 2023). The security and privacy of user data is another pressing issue related to GAI. Marketers need to implement strong privacy procedures to ensure the protection of personal data, and ensure that data usage is communicated openly and transparently (Kshedi et al., 2024). In addition, successful use of GAI requires an investment in training and retraining for B2B professionals. Through training, employees can be empowered to work effectively with GAI and actively shape the future of content creation (Anisin, 2023). Furthermore, the implementation of GAI raises apprehensions regarding potential job displacements. Recent data from the consulting firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas revealed that GAI adoption within organizations led to approximately 4,000 job losses in May 2023 (Challenger, Gray & Christmas, 2023). Similarly, findings from a survey conducted by The Conference Board (2023) indicate a prevailing pessimism among respondents regarding the impact of GAI on job opportunities in marketing. Only 4 % of participants anticipated an increase in marketing positions due to GAI utilization, while a staggering 40 % anticipated a decline in such roles (The Conference Board, 2023).

As those GAI techniques continue to advance, AI-generated content, especially people, offer an attractive alternative to human models. In the long run, these AI beings may prove to be more cost-effective than their human counterparts. They can perform consistently without being influenced by personal circumstances such as mood or illness, which ensures the reliability of marketing campaigns. In addition, AI beings can be customized to specific roles or preferences, making them an extremely versatile tool for marketers. Moreover, the anonymity that AI beings

offer appeals to some consumers, adding to their allure in marketing strategies (Lucas et al., 2014; Lucini et al., 2017). As noted by Dawel et al. (2021) AI persons are becoming increasingly popular with marketers as they are easy to create and allow for more efficient alteration of relevant variables, such as facial expressions, compared to human photographs. This makes them invaluable tools for creating engaging and impactful visual content in marketing campaigns. Consequently, AI beings are progressively being employed as replacements for real human persons in marketing (Dawel et. al, 2021).

Given this increasing popularity and rapid advances in creating realistic human simulations for marketing, it is essential to investigate how recipients perceive and respond to such visual content. Limited research exists demonstrating that for example human faces are perceived as more positive, attractive, or trustworthy than AI-generated faces, or that recipients perceive such differences (Carlson et al., 2012; Fan et al., 2012). Conversely, there are studies that have examined computer-generated images to determine whether recipients can discern between human and computer-generated faces. This aspect closely aligns with the present study, as AI-generated images represent a significant technological advancement over computer-generated imagery. For instance, Carlson et al. (2012) identified differences in the processing and perception of computer-generated faces in comparison to real faces. Similarly, Fan et al. (2012) came to the same conclusion in their study. They argued that it is possible for the recipient to differentiate between original and computer-generated images. Nonetheless, as previously noted, recent advancements in AI technology have led to research into whether recipients can distinguish AI-generated faces from human faces. Lu et al. (2023) cited the progress of AI technology as one of the reasons why it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish AI-generated images from originals, emphasizing that differentiation is indeed a challenge. This is supported by the authors Miller et al. (2023), who found that AI faces are not only distinguishable from human faces, they are also perceived as more "human" than real human faces. In their study, Nightingale and Farid (2022) reached similar conclusions, demonstrating that the line between real and synthetically generated faces is becoming increasingly indistinct. This implies that synthetically generated faces are highly photorealistic and are therefore often perceived as more trustworthy than real faces. The authors attribute this to the fact that synthetically generated faces tend to appear average looking, which inherently makes them more trustworthy (Nightingale & Farid, 2022).

In summary, past research has demonstrated recipients' ability to differentiate between real and synthetically generated images. However, recent advancements in technology, as highlighted by Miller et al. (2023), have significantly improved AI-generated images, rendering previous studies less reliable as evidence. Moreover, previous findings suggest that the use of AI for image generation in particular makes this distinction much more difficult and that synthetically

generated images are perceived as even more trustworthy. Consequently, it is interesting to investigate whether the advertisements used in this study evoke different perceptions among recipients due to the integration of AI-generated content. The following hypothesis is therefore derived from the theoretical background:

H1: Advertisements that show AI-generated humans cause higher purchase intention compared to advertisements that show humans.

2.2.2 Acceptance of New Technologies

Since new technologies are constantly emerging, it is essential to explore their acceptance in society. Technology acceptance refers to the willingness of users to utilize the technology for its intended purpose (Teo, 2011). The acceptance of AI technologies among the public is influenced by a variety of factors, encompassing psychological and demographic factors, including the age of the user (Shao et al., 2024). While AI offers numerous benefits, it also introduces potential risks which are elaborated on in more detail in the previous subchapter. Public acceptance of new technologies depends on the level of risk they pose to society and whether these risks outweigh the benefits they provide (Gaskell et al., 2004). Perceived usefulness, performance expectancy, and effort expectancy have been consistently shown to play significant roles in shaping users' behavioral intentions and willingness to adopt and accept AI across diverse industries (Kelly et al., 2023). In addition, trust and attitudes emerge to be crucial determinants that span industry boundaries and demographic differences. It's worth noting that social influence significantly predicts intentions and the corresponding willingness to accept and adopt new technologies like AI. Moreover, numerous studies emphasize the influence of cultural implications on the acceptance or rejection of AI (Kelly et al., 2023). According to a survey conducted by KPMG (2022), which examined the acceptance and willingness to trust AI systems across various countries worldwide, Germany emerged with a relatively high rate of 35 % in both trust and acceptance metrics. This suggests a notable level of confidence and openness towards AI technologies within the German population.

Taken further, the adoption and acceptance of new technologies are often influenced by the stereotype that age differences exist among users, with older individuals perceived as being less receptive to new technologies (Mariano et al., 2020). Recent studies indicate that while older individuals may show limited interest in adopting new technologies and are less likely to adapt to them, they still maintain a positive attitude towards technology overall (Mitzner et al., 2010; Ryu et al., 2009; Steele et al., 2009). Arning and Ziefle (2007) emphasized the significant role age plays in technology adoption, noting that younger individuals tend to adopt technologies

more successfully due to their higher cognitive abilities. Similarly, Czaja et al. (2006) found that age's influence on technology use is mediated by factors such as computer anxiety and cognitive ability. They also concurred that older individuals face greater challenges in adapting to or accepting new technologies compared to younger individuals (Czaja et al., 2006). Thus, current research underscores the age-related disparities in technology use and acceptance. Taking into consideration that younger people in particular are referred to as "Digital Natives", which more or less require the use of new technologies and possess an excellent knowledge of how to use these technologies (Jones et al., 2010), it is interesting to investigate whether there are differences across age groups with regard to the use of AI to generate advertising visuals. Based on the theoretical foundation outlined above, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Younger individuals show higher purchase intentions for advertisements with AI-generated humans compared to older individuals.

2.2.3 Technical Affinity

Technical affinity is a person's general relationship with technology and measures the strength of their general attitude towards technology (Wirtz, n.d.). In contrast to technology acceptance, which refers to attitudes towards a specific technology, technical affinity characterizes certain personality traits of users that can be assessed even before the first use (Henrich et al., 2022). As Franke et al. (2019) explain, technical affinity can be defined as the extent to which individuals engage with technology. This engagement can be observed in the form of active interaction or avoidance. Individuals with a higher technical affinity are more likely to accept technology in a positive way and to actively interact with it (Jin & Divitini, 2020). Although the two terms are distinct, technical affinity and technology acceptance are two closely related constructs. Both are linked by the intention to use a technology (Yang et al., 2021). Edison and Geissler (2003) relate technical affinity to attitudes towards technology in general. They argue that a positive attitude towards technology is related to technical affinity. The description of technical affinity as an independent personality trait enables statements to be made independently of specific technologies (Henrich et al., 2022). Consequently, technical affinity can be considered a predictive characteristic for the successful use of technology.

In the context of digital marketing, the significance of technical affinity is increasing. A few studies have investigated the influence of technical affinity and consumer behavior. The authors Edison and Geissler (2003) highlighted that individuals with a higher affinity for technology tend to have a more positive attitude towards technology, which can influence the perception of online advertising. Furthermore, the findings of the study indicated that individuals who

exhibit a higher affinity for technology tend to exhibit a greater interest and acceptance of digital platforms (Edison & Geissler, 2003). However, the authors also noted that not every individual views the impact of technology on daily life in a positive light. Some are dissatisfied with new technologies and feel insecure in dealing with them (Edison & Geissler, 2003). The authors van der Heijden et al. (2003) found that technical affinity influences a person's attitude, interest and ability to use technology, which can affect their response to online advertising. Moreover, individuals who are technologically savvy may feel more comfortable viewing and interacting with digital advertising, which can in turn influence their attitude towards online advertising and ultimately their intention to purchase (Suki & Ramayah, 2010).

The aim of this study is to investigate whether technical affinity has a positive influence on purchase intention. Given the limited number of studies investigating the relationship described, this study will focus on examining the phenomenon by proposing the following hypothesis:

H3: Technical affinity has a positive influence on purchase intention.

2.3 Consumer Attitudes

The next section deals with the influence of consumer attitudes on purchase intentions. Consumer attitudes are divided into the three concepts of attitude towards online advertisements, trust in online advertisements and credibility. All three concepts have an important theoretical relationship to the purchase intention or behavioral intention of consumers. In the following, the concepts mentioned are defined and discussed in terms of their influence on purchase intention.

2.3.1 Attitude towards Online Advertisement

Attitude is a fundamental concept in consumer behavior that is based on an individual's internal evaluation of an object, person, topic or action (Sallam & Wahid, 2012). This evaluation, which is formed over time, serves as a relatively stable predisposition that guides consumer behavior, particularly towards products and services. Since the 1960s, attitudes have been the focus of marketing research (Sallam & Wahid, 2012). As defined by Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), attitude is understood as an evaluation of an object or person that is global and enduring. In the context of advertising, attitude is conceptualized as a pre-existing tendency to react positively or negatively to a particular advertising stimulus under specific exposure conditions (MacKenzie et al., 1986). The consumer's liking or disliking of advertising can ultimately be

transferred to the brand (Sallam & Wahid, 2012). This reaction is influenced by various factors, including emotional changes (Lee et al., 2017). According to MacKenzie et al. (1986), attitude towards advertising has a direct impact on purchase intention.

The relationship between attitudes towards advertising and its influence on consumers' purchasing decisions has only been studied to a limited extent. The authors Koththagoda and Herath (2018) and MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) found that attitude has a direct impact on purchase intention. In another study, it was found that individuals develop positive or negative reactions to advertisements based on their attitude, which is determined by various advertising factors such as emotional changes after viewing the advertisement. These reactions can influence the intention to purchase the advertised product (Lee et al., 2017). Given the limited number of studies investigating the relationship described above and the need to investigate the influence of attitudes towards advertising on consumers' purchase intention, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H4: Attitude towards online advertisements has a positive influence on purchase intention.

2.3.2 Trust in Online Advertisement

In general, trust is defined as a universal belief in the trustworthiness of another party, which does not depend on a specific behavior or aspect of trust. Rather, it reflects a comprehensive perception of the various dimensions of another person's trustworthiness (Chen & Dhillon, 2003). A further definition of trust was introduced by Rousseau et al. (1998). These authors defined trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another" (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395).

In the field of online advertising, trust is of paramount importance, as advertising effectiveness is significantly reduced when consumers are distrustful. Therefore, it is of importance to have a comprehensive understanding of the methods to promote consumer trust in online advertising in order to achieve significant advertising effectiveness (Leong et al., 2020). Consequently, trust plays a fundamental role in attracting and retaining consumers. Building trust in an online environment involves validating personal information and search results in the first phase and confirming information security in the second phase. Extrinsic and intrinsic trust are both based on this phase and are ultimately related to purchase intention (Cheskin, 1999, cited by Yoon, 2002).

The influence of trust on purchase intention in online advertising has been the subject of numerous studies. The study by Stewart (2003) identifies trust as a decisive factor in consumers' purchasing decisions. Stewart (2003) emphasizes that online advertisers can particularly benefit from a trustworthy website by transferring trust from the website to the advertisement. Furthermore, the study found that consumers generally assume that advertisements meet the standards required by the websites on which they are published. Consequently, consumers anticipate that the same level of reliability and safety will apply to advertising displayed on a website they trust (Stewart, 2003). Furthermore, the authors Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found that trust is an important predictor of positive responses to various marketing activities, including advertising. They also identify trust as a key determinant of consumer behavior, particularly in relation to purchase decisions.

Ba et al. (2003) emphasize the importance of trust in giving consumers the confidence they need to make purchase decisions. Trust is a key factor that shapes consumer behavior, with higher levels of trust increasing purchase intention (Orth et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2007). Similarly, the authors Orth et al. (2013) found that a high level of trust increases purchase intention and product evaluation. Another study demonstrated that trust is one of the most important factors on which consumers base their purchase decisions (Aguirre et al., 2015). Thus, trust provides consumers with a certain degree of security, while simultaneously enhancing the credibility and reliability of advertising (Ba et al., 2003). Therefore, this study examines how trust in an online advertisement behaves in relation to purchase intention. The following hypothesis can be derived from the presented theory:

H5: Trust in online advertisements has a positive influence on purchase intention.

2.3.3 Credibility

The term credibility lacks a standardized definition, making it challenging to provide a universal description (Wirth, 1999). In this section, various authors analyze the concept of credibility. Hovland and Weiss (1951) define credibility as having two dimensions: expertise and trust, with expertise defining the extent to which the sender of a message is perceived as a source of accurate information. Building on this, trust describes the intention of the communicator to pass on information correctly (Hovland et al., 1953). Therefore, a dishonest expert is just as untrustworthy as a clueless but honest person (Praxmarer, 2000).

Eisend (2003) discovered that the majority of studies on credibility focus on the recipient's perspective and defines credibility as follows:

„Credibility is a multidimensional concept for the assessment of a communication source by the recipient of information. This assessment is based on subjective perception and is context-specific. Credibility substitutes for a lack of objective evidence and therefore represents an information surrogate that determines the degree of willingness of the recipient to adopt the information received from the source as cognition into the self and to attribute a certain content to it in terms of its correspondence with reality“ (Eisend, 2003, p. 64, translated by Anna Tischendorf).

This passage reinforces the significance of the two dimensions mentioned above, which form the basis of credibility. Other authors who have studied this topic have found that credibility judgments depend on the recipient's perception as well as the situation and context of the message (Berlo et al., 1969). This finding complements the assessment of credibility by the recipient, which has been established in three different directions: behavior-oriented, content-oriented, and source- or context-oriented assessment (Köhnken, 1990). While the behavior-oriented assessment focuses on the non-verbal behavior of the sender, the content-oriented analysis looks at conspicuous details in the communicator's statement. The source- and context-oriented assessment emphasizes characteristics that influence the credibility of the communicator or his statements (Köhnken, 1990). This description underscores the significant role of the construct in advertising. Building on this, Soh et al. (2009) have highlighted credibility as a highly regarded topic in advertising research. According to Soh et al. (2009), credibility has different contexts, which are divided into source credibility, advertising credibility and ad content credibility. Ad content credibility describes the extent to which consumers perceive the claims made about a brand in an advertisement to be truthful and credible, which is considered a critical attribute for effective advertising. Advertising credibility, on the other hand, refers to consumers' perception of the truthfulness and credibility of advertising in general, not just a specific advertisement (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). However, this study will primarily focus on source credibility, which encompasses both endorser credibility and advertiser credibility. Endorser credibility, as previously mentioned, is based on the principle introduced by Hovland et al. (1953) of dividing credibility into expertise and trust. According to Hovland et al. (1953), the credibility of the communicator has a significant influence on the impact of the advertising message, whereby credibility arises when a source is seen as competent and trustworthy. By examining the extent to which AI-generated humans are perceived as credible, this study will focus on endorser credibility. Advertiser credibility, in contrast, defines the advertiser as the source of the communication (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989).

The study aims to explore additional factors beyond purchase intention that may be influenced by AI-generated content. Specifically, the researchers investigate the impact on credibility,

recognizing its significance within the realm of digital advertising. Credibility plays a pivotal role in consumer perception and decision-making processes, particularly in the context of advertisements where trustworthiness and authenticity are paramount. Advertising is commonly perceived as lacking credibility because of the perceived self-interest of advertisers, who may manipulate product information to serve their own interests, leading to skepticism among consumers. Consequently, it is important that advertisers pay close attention to the credibility of their advertising claims resulting in a more effective advertising (Bell et al., 2021). By examining credibility alongside purchase intention, the study seeks to uncover the broader effects of AI-generated content on consumer attitudes and behaviors. While numerous researchers have investigated the relationship between credibility and purchase intention, there have only been a few studies to date that have investigated the relationship between AI-generated content and credibility.

Source credibility plays a crucial role in influencing purchase intention as it has a significant impact on consumer persuasion, ultimately affecting purchase intention (Fanoberova & Kuczwska, 2016; Sharif et al., 2016). In particular, consumers' perception of the expertise and trustworthiness of endorsers can have a significant impact on the evaluation of the brand, either positively or negatively (Chin et al., 2020). Consequently, the resulting credibility can increase consumers' willingness to purchase, thereby enhancing a company's sales performance. If customers develop negative attitudes towards an endorser in an advertisement, they may tend to avoid the brand as there are numerous alternatives on the market (Chin et al., 2020). The evaluation of various sources of information varies among consumers. For instance, when consumers seek product information on a retail website, factors like accuracy and relevance influence their attitude towards utilizing this source, as well as their purchase intention. Conversely, their inclination to use information from fashion bloggers or professional stylists is often heavily influenced by the credibility of the source (Fanoberova & Kuczwska, 2016). For information to be considered credible and valuable by consumers, it therefore needs to be of high quality and credibility. A study conducted by Fanoberova and Kuczwska (2016) shows that consumers perceive fashion bloggers as credible if they demonstrate trustworthiness and have established expertise in their respective fields. Consequently, if consumers have no reason to doubt the trustworthiness and expertise of endorsers, they are more likely to follow their recommendations and make a purchase. This highlights the central role of the credibility of sources in the purchasing decision process (Fanoberova & Kuczwska, 2016).

Taken further, the human presence in images exerts an additional influence on the viewer's attention. As described by Wilkinson and Light (2011), the human element is often the most compelling aspect of advertisements, drawing attention and potentially fostering a more positive attitude and meaningful social context toward the promoted product (Kanungo & Pang,

1973; Delen & Ilter, 2021). This endorsement strategy has gained popularity in consumer advertising due to its ability to enhance overall advertisement effectiveness and credibility. Individuals depicted in advertisements increase message effectiveness as they signal credibility to the audience (Mannukka et al., 2016). Therefore, the perception of individuals in an advertisement is crucial, as they can significantly enhance message credibility and subsequent purchase intention (Friedman et al., 1976).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This chapter introduces the basic concepts and theories that provide the theoretical framework for this study. It discusses one theory and one model that serve as a framework for understanding and analyzing the research question. By examining these in depth, a solid foundation for exploring and interpreting the complex phenomena of the study will be established.

2.6.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behaviour, developed by Ajzen in the late 1980s, is an extension of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), his previous work in collaboration with Martin Fishbein. Both the TRA and TPB are cornerstones of social psychology and behavioral science, offering valuable insights into the complexities of human behavior. While TRA focuses primarily on the individual's attitude towards a behavior and on subjective norms, TPB addresses the limitations of TRA by including perceived behavioral control as an additional predictor of intentions and behavior (Madden et al., 1992). According to Ajzen (2011), the TPB has been developed to be one of the most commonly used social psychology theories.

At the core of the TPB lies the concept of individual intention towards a specific behavior. Intentions are regarded as reflections of the motivational forces driving behavior, indicating the level of effort and determination individuals are willing to invest in performing a particular action. In essence, the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the higher the likelihood of its execution. However, it's essential to note that behavioral intentions can only translate into action if the behavior is within the individual's volitional control, allowing them the freedom to choose whether to enact or abstain from the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Further on, the author suggests that individuals possess the autonomy to determine whether or not to engage in the behavior, based on their available opportunities and resources to carry it out. The ability to

engage in the behavior depends on the individual's motivation, which is reflected in their intention, and their ability to control their behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

According to the TPB, individuals' actions are influenced by three key considerations: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. Behavioral beliefs encompass individuals' perceptions of the likely outcomes or consequences associated with engaging in a particular behavior. Normative beliefs, on the other hand, revolve around individuals' beliefs regarding the social expectations or norms related to the behavior as perceived by others. Lastly, control beliefs pertain to individuals' beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or hinder the execution of the behavior. These beliefs play distinct roles within the TPB framework: behavioral beliefs contribute to the formation of attitudes toward the behavior, normative beliefs shape perceived social pressure or subjective norms, and control beliefs influence perceived behavioral control (Arafat & Ibrahim, 2018). Attitudes refer to an individual's overall evaluation of a particular behavior and represent the positive or negative feelings, beliefs, and perceptions associated with performing the behavior (Armitage & Christian, 2003). Typically, individuals are more likely to engage in a behavior if they hold positive attitudes towards it, meaning they perceive it favorably and believe it will lead to desirable outcomes or benefits. Conversely, negative attitudes towards a behavior are likely to decrease the individual's intention to perform it, as they perceive it unfavorably and anticipate undesirable consequences (Arafat & Ibrahim, 2018). Subjective norms encompass individuals' perceptions of the social pressure exerted on them to engage in or refrain from the behavior. Finally, perceived behavioral control refers to individuals' perceptions of the difficulty or ease associated with performing the behavior.

The TPB has been used extensively in research on consumer behavior and purchase intentions. George (2004) examined the relationship between perceived behavioral control and purchase intention and established a direct link between a person's perceived ability to control their behavior and their purchase intention. Furthermore, the study emphasized the relevance of theory in understanding consumers' purchase intentions in online shopping environments where personal beliefs, norms and values play a crucial role (George, 2004). Given the comprehensive framework provided by the Theory of Planned Behavior, it offers valuable insights into understanding consumer purchase behavior, particularly in the context of online advertising. In this study, which examines the influence of AI-generated content in online advertisements on consumer purchase intention, the theory's emphasis on behavioral intentions, attitudes and perceived behavioral control aligns closely with the research objectives. By applying this theory, it can be examined how consumers' purchase intentions are influenced by their attitudes towards online advertisements, their trust in online advertisements and their technical affinity. The latter may influence how individuals perceive their control over their online behavior.

Those with higher technical affinity might feel more in control, potentially leading to a more positive impact on purchase intention, compared to those with lower technical affinity. Trust in online advertisements and attitudes towards online advertisements can be assigned to behavioral beliefs, as they are based rather on individual assessments and personal experiences. Ultimately, the Theory of Planned Behavior serves as a solid theoretical framework to shed light on the complex dynamics underlying consumer responses to advertising stimuli, adding to the depth and rigor of the study.

2.6.2 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

In our rapidly advancing technological landscape, ensuring the widespread acceptance of emerging technologies is paramount. Technology, broadly defined as electronic or digital products and services, holds the potential to revolutionize various aspects of society. However, the adoption of certain technologies, particularly AI, faces significant scrutiny and challenges. Understanding the extent to which AI is accepted in society is essential for its successful integration (Venkatesh, 2021).

Over the years, researchers have explored the complexity of technology acceptance and developed various models to assess individual behavior towards information technology and information systems. Among these models are the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Surendran, 2012). Of these, UTAUT emerges as a robust theoretical framework for this study, distinguished by its comprehensive integration of social and external influences (Momani, 2020). Unlike its forerunners, UTAUT adopts a more nuanced approach, accounting for a wider array of factors that influence technology acceptance.

The UTAUT recognizes the limitations of previous models when it comes to capturing the complexity of technology acceptance, particularly when measuring societal attitudes towards new technologies. By integrating social and external factors, the UTAUT provides a nuanced approach to understanding the numerous influences on individual acceptance and adoption of technology. According to the UTAUT model, technology usage is primarily influenced by behavioral intention. This intention is shaped by four key constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. These predictors are additionally moderated by factors such as age, gender, experience and voluntariness of use (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

While performance expectancy is defined as the extent to which a technology benefits the user when performing a particular activity, effort expectancy refers to the degree of ease associated with the use of the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). After prolonged technology use, the impact of the latter construct diminishes and becomes insignificant (Gupta et al., 2008; Chauhan & Jaiswal, 2016). Social influence is defined by Venkatesh et al. (2003) as the degree to which individuals feel that significant people in their environment believe that they should use the new system. This construct reflects the adjustment of people's behavior based on others' perceptions of them. The impact of social influence is particularly pronounced when technology use is compulsory, leading individuals to adopt technology out of compliance rather than personal preference (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Venkatesh et al. (2003) characterize facilitating conditions to the degree to which an individual believes that an organization and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the system. Facilitating conditions initially exert a direct positive influence on intention to use. However, as usage becomes more established, this effect diminishes, suggesting that facilitating conditions continue to significantly impact actual usage behavior (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Age, gender, experience and voluntariness of use serve as moderators in determining how the predictors influence intention. Specifically, age moderates all four predictors, while gender influences the relationships between effort expectancy, performance expectancy, and social influence. Experience serves to moderate the influence of effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, thereby adjusting the strength of their relationships. Moreover, voluntariness of use only moderates the relationship between social influence and behavioral intention, as outlined by Venkatesh et al. (2003).

The UTAUT model represents a suitable framework for investigating the impact of AI-generated content in online advertisements on consumer purchasing behavior, particularly in relation to the age of recipients. Sohn and Kwon (2020) highlight its robustness and versatility, particularly in addressing AI-related topics and in providing insights into users' intentions and behavior in relation to technology use. The UTAUT model provides a suitable framework for investigating how various factors influence the acceptance of advertisements in which AI-generated content is presented and how this in turn influences purchase intention. While these factors do not directly affect the acceptance of technologies, they can significantly influence the acceptance of such advertisements. If individuals have trust in the advertisement, have a positive attitude towards the advertisement, have a higher technical affinity and find the content of the advertisement relevant, they are more likely to buy the advertised product. The UTAUT model helps to understand those relationships by showing how the factors indirectly influence buying behavior through the acceptance of advertising. In particular, the inclusion of age as an independent variable in the model is crucial for understanding how AI-generated content

influences consumer behavior and, in particular, purchase intention. Taking the participants' age into account allows for a nuanced examination of potential age-related differences in the effectiveness of advertising campaigns employing both real humans and AI-generated humans. While serving as a basic reference for theoretical understanding, the UTAUT model is applied to the theoretical model by integrating the direct effect of the participant's age, deepening the study's findings on the role of generations in shaping consumer responses to different advertising content.

2.7 Theoretical Model

The theoretical model presented in Figure 1 serves as a comprehensive framework illustrating the expected relationship between the various variables used in this study. While the model examines the influence of ad content on purchase intention, it also investigates various predictors of purchase intention in online advertising based on the structure of the Planned Behaviour Theory. Compared to traditional TPB models, which focus primarily on personal attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control, this study includes additional factors such as technical affinity, trust in online advertisement and attitudes towards online advertisement. These additions enable a deeper understanding of how technology preferences, trust and attitudes influence purchasing behavior. Elevated levels of technical affinity, increased trust in online advertisements and favorable attitudes towards online advertisements are expected to be associated with higher levels of purchase intention among participants. This integrated approach extends the model's scope, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how different factors influence purchase intention, particularly since the effectiveness of advertising depends on various factors. Therefore, the inclusion of these aspects is of great importance when assessing the suitability of AI-generated content in advertising.

Furthermore, the model is intended to investigate if the age of the participants has an influence on purchase intention. It is examined whether the impact on purchase intention varies across different age groups. By incorporating age, the research endeavors to uncover nuanced perspectives on how age-related disparities may shape responses to AI-generated content in online advertisements. To measure this effect, the UTAUT model is integrated into the theoretical framework by including age as an independent variable. While the TPB provides a solid foundation for predicting behavioral intentions, the integration of the UTAUT model offers additional insights into technology acceptance and usage.

Moreover, the illustrated theoretical model includes two demographic variables, gender and education level which act as control variables. The inclusion of the mentioned variables in the

theoretical model enables a more precise analysis of the relationship between the other variables. Since control variables are used to account for potential confounding variables and to control their potential effect on the dependent variable, it can thus be ensured that the observed effects are actually due to the independent variables and not to other factors.

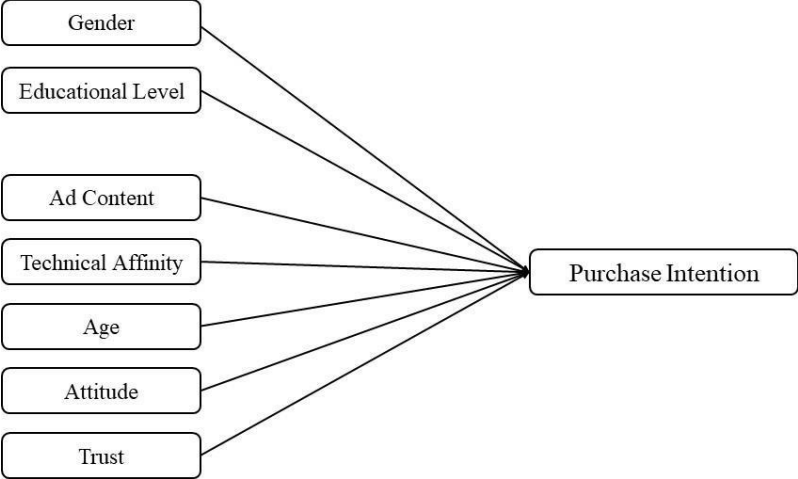


Figure 1: Visualization of the Theoretical Model

3. Methods

The following chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology undertaken in this study. The chapter begins with an introduction into the basic research philosophy, followed by an explanation of the research design and approach, setting out the underlying assumptions and principles. Subsequently, the survey design is explained with a detailed presentation of the variables and a description of the questionnaire construction. The data collection process is outlined, covering the planned sample and the duration of data collection. In addition, the descriptive statistics and the data analysis are presented. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of the measures taken to ensure quality and ethical compliance.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy includes fundamental beliefs and assumptions that guide the research process and consists mainly of two dimensions: Ontology and Epistemology. Research philosophy is a foundation for every research project. Philosophy not only helps researchers to ensure the quality of their research, but also to develop creative and practical research methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Due to the high relevance of research philosophy, this chapter will discuss ontology and epistemology and relate them to the research project.

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is a section of research philosophy and deals with the nature of reality and existence. Ontology examines what can be regarded as existing and real and is divided into four positions: Realism, Internal Realism, Relativism and Nominalism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The present study can be positioned in internal realism. This position is defined as follows: "The world is real and causally independent of the human mind but it is impossible to observe it directly as our understanding of its structure (types, kinds, categories, etc.) is a function of the human mind. Scientific laws, once discovered, are absolute" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p.73).

This categorization is based on the fact that the study examines how AI-generated content influences the purchase intention and thus the existence of AI-generated humans or real humans in advertisements represents an objective reality. At the same time, it is difficult to fully understand and comprehend the relationship presented, as such perceptions are not directly observable. Thus, while the advertisement content itself exists objectively, the reactions and

evaluations of the participants are subjective and are characterized by individual and social factors. In order to get closer to the truth, the phenomenon is observed in reality. Internal realism is therefore the most relevant ontological position for addressing the research question.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is also a section of research philosophy and is concerned with exploring the nature of the world. Epistemology comprises the study of knowledge and research methods. It examines how knowledge is acquired and how one can determine whether knowledge is true. Epistemology is divided into two positions: Positivism and Social Constructionism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The present study can be categorized as positivism, taking into account the ontological position. Positivism is defined as follows: "The key idea of positivism is that the social world exists externally, and that its properties should be measured through objective methods" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021, p.77).

This definition more or less justifies the categorization of the study within positivism. The study aims to investigate the phenomenon of truth from an objective perspective instead of drawing subjective conclusions through feeling and thinking, as would be the case with social constructionism. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2021), positivism also offers the best way to study human and social behavior. Since the study investigates the causal relationship between AI-generated content and purchase intention, and positivism has a predictable causal model, this philosophical approach is the most appropriate choice for this study. Additionally, positivism is measured with objective standards, in which a quantitative research design, as used in the study, can be classified.

3.2 Research Approach

In order to achieve the research objectives outlined in section 1.2, quantitative research is conducted. The current study employs an online experiment, which is an experimental research method used for cause-and-effect investigation. This approach largely meets the criteria for testing causal relationships by actively varying conditions while striving to maintain controlled experimental conditions. However, due to the nature of online experiments, controlling boundary conditions is somewhat limited. This research project involves a cross-sectional study, as the measurement only takes place at one point in time.

The aim of this study is to analyze the influence of AI-generated content in online advertisements on purchase intention. Moreover, this study aims to explore whether the recipient's age leads to a difference in perception within the target audience. Furthermore, the study seeks to establish if the type of the ad content influences other factors, like the credibility of the AI-generated content on the online advertisement. In addition, the study investigates whether the factors of technical affinity, trust in online advertisements and attitude towards online advertisements have a significant impact on purchase intention. Therefore, the influence of six independent variables on one dependent variable is measured, characterizing this research approach as a multivariate experimental design. Table 1 provides an overview of the variables and their characteristics. With one experimental independent variable featuring two levels, the study comprises one experimental group and one control group, establishing it as a multifactorial two-group design.

For the empirical data collection of the study, a quantitative online experiment is conducted, using an online survey that is created with the software LimeSurvey. For the investigation of the research topic, the authors deliberately opted for quantitative research, as this research approach, in contrast to qualitative approaches, enables a large sample to be recruited, whereby representative and generalizable results can be achieved. In addition, quantitative research enables robust and number-based findings to be obtained that are of high practical relevance for companies and advertisers. In contrast, qualitative research, which focuses on detailed, subjective insights, would provide deeper aspects of understanding, but would not offer the same generalizability and statistical significance needed to achieve the objectives and answer the research question. In order to examine the extent to which AI-generated content influences purchase intention, especially within different age demographics, a quantitative research method is more appropriate.

Compared to other quantitative data collection methods, the chosen method is particularly suitable as the study examines the effect of online advertisements and focuses on unconscious cognitive processes that are difficult to identify in a pure survey. While maintaining constant conditions, the experiment employs a stimulus to differentiate between the two experimental groups, facilitating causal inference and reducing potential confounding factors like social desirability (Atteslander, 2010). An additional key strength of an online survey is its significantly higher efficiency in terms of implementation and evaluation compared to for e.g. paper-and-pencil surveys. This allows a very broad target group to be reached, as the survey can be published on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Furthermore, the participants take part in the study within their familiar environment, avoiding the potential influence of artificial laboratory environments on their behavior. However, an online

experiment cannot be directly compared with the characteristics of a field experiment (Jäckle, 2015), thus presenting a limitation regarding the external validity.

Table 1: Overview Variables

Variable	Type	Scale	Level
Gender	Control Variable	Nominal	Male Female
Educational Level	Control Variable	Ordinal	High educational level Low educational level
Age	Independent Variable	Nominal	Younger people Older people
Ad Content	Independent Variable	Nominal	Ad with real humans Ad with AI-generated humans
Technical Affinity	Independent Variable	Continuous	/
Trust in Online Advertisement	Independent Variable	Continuous	/
Attitude towards Online Advertisement	Independent Variable	Continuous	/
Credibility	Independent Variable	Continuous	/
Purchase Intention	Dependent Variable	Continuous	/

3.3 Survey Design

This section involves the presentation of the dependent variable as well as the independent variables of the study. In this context, the measuring instrument is introduced, the items used are presented and the creation of the treatment is described. Furthermore the construction of the survey is explained in detail.

3.3.1 Dependent Variable

The study includes one dependent variable, which is the purchase intention. The variable purchase intention has an ordinal scale, but the authors will treat the scale as continuous. The authors justify this with the fact that no fixed assumption can be made about equal distances between the individual levels for the scale of this variable, but a metric scale is assumed for many static analyses, so that the scale of the dependent variable is regarded as quasi-metric according to Rohrmann (1978). As the purchase intention is a latent variable, its operationalization is achieved through questions that were specifically developed to measure the respondents' purchase intention. In the present study, the dependent variable is used to measure the intention to buy the fragrance of the brands Hugo Boss and Zadig & Voltaire shown in the advertisements.

There are numerous scales in the literature that can be employed to measure purchase intention. One frequently used scale for measuring this construct is the scale from the study by Shaouf et al. (2016). The authors identified three items to measure this construct. The first item measures whether the viewer has developed an interest in the product after viewing the advertisement, while the second item measures the viewer's willingness to purchase. The third item quantifies the level of engagement of the viewer to purchase the advertised product. These items have high construct reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .94 (Shaouf et al., 2016). However, the authors of the present study decided to remove the third item, as the second item and the third item are highly similar in their meaning. The results of a survey pre-test revealed that maintaining the third item could potentially lead to confusion among participants. The items to measure purchase intention are listed in Table 2.

The data is collected using a five-point Likert scale which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Rohrmann, 1978). This ensures that a numerical scale level is applied. The choice of an irregular number of levels is supported by several factors. Social validity is increased by minimizing non-response and the inclusion of a middle category reduces the number of survey dropouts. Additionally, the number of levels encourages completeness, as respondents can select the middle category if it matches their opinion, so responses do not have to be forced into other categories and honest feedback is encouraged.

Table 2: Items Purchase Intention

Nr.	Item	Reversed
1	After viewing the advertisement, I became interested in making a purchase.	No
2	After viewing the advertisement, I am willing to purchase the product.	No

3.3.2 Independent Variable

The study examines the effects of several independent variables. Table 3 provides an overview of these variables, indicating the scale, the levels, the type as well as the characteristics and lists the hypotheses in which the variables occur.

Table 3: Overview Independent Variables

IV	Scale	Levels	Type	Characteristics	Hypothesis
Ad Content	nominal	two	experimental	Ad wit AI-generated humans Ad with real humans	H1 H2
Age	nominal	two	not experimental	Younger people Older people	H2
Technical Affinity	continuous	/	not experimental	/	H3
Attitude towards Online Advertisement	continuous	/	not experimental	/	H4
Trust in Online Advertisement	continuous	/	not experimental	/	H5
Credibility	continuous	/	not experimental	/	/

The first independent variable is the ad content. This variable operates on a nominal scale and comprises two different levels: advertisements with AI-generated humans and advertisements with real humans. At this point, it's important to clarify that the variable differentiates between two versions of advertisements: the original advertisement and the one featuring AI-generated humans. Thus, when referencing AI-generated content in the study, it specifically relates to the inclusion of AI-generated humans in the advertisement. In addition, ad content serves as an experimental variable that is the focal point of manipulation within the experimental treatment. A detailed description of the treatment creation process follows in the subsequent section.

In this study, the online advertisements for the brands Hugo Boss and Zadig & Voltaire serve as the treatment. Since the product in the advertisement is a perfume, the cosmetic sector is chosen. This sector was deliberately selected because human models are often portrayed in connection with cosmetic products in advertisements, especially in close-up facial shots. In relation to various forms of visual marketing, this study focuses on the depiction of people, selecting advertisements where individuals are the focus. Within the cosmetic sector, a gender-neutral product was chosen to ensure that no participants have to be excluded from the sample. As the intention to purchase the product is measured, it is important that the product can be purchased by both men and women so as not to influence the accuracy of the measurement. The selection of two advertisements from distinct brands was deliberate, with the intention of creating an index of the participants' responses. This strategy ensures that the data are not solely linked to one advertisement or brand, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. By disassociating the results from specific brand features or characteristics, the study can offer broader insights that are applicable across a wider spectrum, thus strengthening the validity and relevance of the research outcomes.

In describing the treatment, the two advertisements feature representations of both a woman and a man, displaying the product and brand name alongside a slogan. The design elements remain consistent between the original and manipulated advertisement. The manipulation process was undertaken solely by the authors of the study, without external assistance. Utilizing Adobe Firefly software, AI-generated humans were created based on detailed image descriptions. Subsequently, these AI-generated humans were seamlessly integrated into the original advertisement using Photoshop. In total, the treatment comprises four distinct versions, with one example depicted in Figure 2. The complete set of treatment versions is outlined in Appendix B.



Figure 2: Ad Hugo Boss AI-Version

The second independent variable in this study is age. This variable is a latent variable and is measured by asking the participants for their age. This enables the variable to have a continuous scale level. In the analysis, the variable age is divided into two groups, reducing its scale level to a nominal scale. The authors delineated the two age groups by dividing the participants accordingly. The younger participants are defined as people aged between 17 and 45, while the older participants are aged between 46 and 77. Moreover, this variable is not used to manipulate the experiment.

The following part involves the description of three additional independent variables serving as predictors in this study. The third independent variable is technical affinity. This variable is treated as a continuous variable and is not used as an experimental variable to manipulate the study. Technical affinity captures the participants' relationship to technology in general. To measure the construct of technical affinity, the ATI-S scale by Wessel et al. (2019) was applied. This scale has been adapted from the original ATI scale, which has a total of nine items (Franke et al. 2017). The authors Wessel et al. (2019) developed a shorter version with only four items in order to achieve economic efficiency. For this reason, the short version of the ATI scale was used in the present study. The scale provides a reliable and valid assessment of technical affinity (Wessel et al., 2019). The items for measuring the construct are shown in Table 4 and are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Rohrmann, 1978).

Table 4: Items Technical Affinity

Nr.	Item	Reversed
1	I like to occupy myself in greater detail with technical systems.	No
2	I like testing the functions of new technical systems.	No
3	It is enough for me that a technical system works. I don't care how or why.	Yes
4	It is enough for me to know the basic functions of a technical system.	Yes

The fourth independent variable is the attitude towards online advertisements, which is considered as a predictor to determine the influence of the recipient's attitude on purchase intention. Likewise, this independent variable is treated as a continuous variable and is not being used as an experimental variable. To measure attitude, the scale developed by Bauer and Greyser is applied (Bauer & Greyser, 1968 cited by Soh et al., 2009). The scale consists of seven statements that record and evaluate consumer reactions to advertising. The questionnaire used in this study includes three out of these seven items. To identify the most suitable items for measuring attitude towards online advertisements, the authors carefully selected specific items, while others were excluded from consideration. The selected items are listed in Table 5. The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Rohrman, 1978).

Table 5: Items Attitude towards Online Advertisements

Nr.	Item	Reversed
1	Online advertisement is essential.	No
2	In general, online advertisements present a true picture of the product being advertised.	No
3	Online advertisements often persuade people to buy things they shouldn't buy.	Yes

Another independent variable is trust in online advertisements and serves as a predictor to examine the impact of recipient's trust on purchase intention. Similar to the other two independent variables, it is treated as a continuous variable and is not manipulated as an experimental factor in this study. The ADTRUST scale developed by Soh et al. (2009) is applied to measure trust. The scale is multidimensional, measuring cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. It consists of 20 items divided into four components: reliability,

usefulness, affect, and willingness to rely on. Soh et al.'s (2009) study measured the validity and reliability of the ADTRUST scale, establishing its appropriateness for measuring trust in marketing. To prevent survey dropouts due to length, the authors decided to shorten the scale. The selection of items was based on the most suitable fit for measuring trust in online advertisements. While two items were selected from each of the component reliability, usefulness, and affect, three items were chosen from the component willingness to rely on. The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Rohrman, 1978) and are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Items Trust in Online Advertisements

Nr.	Item	Reversed
1	Information conveyed in advertising is truthful.	No
2	Information conveyed in advertising is credible.	No
3	Information conveyed in advertising is valuable.	No
4	Information conveyed in advertising is useful.	No
5	Information conveyed in advertising is likeable.	No
6	Information conveyed in advertising is positive.	No
7	I am willing to rely on ad conveyed information when making purchase related decisions.	No
8	I am willing to consider the ad conveyed information when making purchase related decisions.	No
9	I am willing to recommend the product or service that I have seen in ads to my friends or family.	No

The last independent variable of this study is credibility. This independent variable is measured on a continuous scale. Credibility, being a latent variable, is operationalized through different items. In the present study, the variable is used to measure the credibility of the persons shown on the advertisements of the brands Hugo Boss and Zadig & Voltaire.

To measure this construct, the source credibility scale of Ohanian (1990) is used. Ohanian (1990) defined source credibility as a “term commonly used to imply a communicator’s positive characteristics that affect the receiver’s acceptance of a message” (p. 41). The source credibility is based on the three dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness, which are all described with five different adjectives (Ohanian, 1990). While an endorser's trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the audience views the endorsers’ message as valid, the attractiveness represents the ability for the endorser to be physically attractive. Last, an endorser's expertise represents the extent to which the audience perceives the endorser's advanced skills or knowledge in a particular area (Ohanian, 1990). The adjectives measuring trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness have been selected from previous research, which can also confirm Ohanian’s model as reliable (Appelbaum & Anatol, 1972; Bowers & Phillips, 1967; Friedman et al., 1979; Baker & Churchill, 1977; Maddux & Rogers, 1980; Hovland & Weiss, 1951) and are illustrated in the appendix in Table C1.

The items for this study were developed on the basis of the introduced scale. The credibility of sources is primarily determined by three components, with two elements consistently standing out and exerting a remarkably positive influence on the credibility of the source: trustworthiness and expertise. Given their predominant importance, this study focuses exclusively on these two dimensions. Although the dimension of attractiveness is valid in certain contexts, it has no theoretical relevance in the context of the study. Including this dimension in the survey would only lengthen it unnecessarily and possibly increase participant fatigue and the risk of dropouts. To measure credibility, participants are asked to rate the following statement based on the ten characteristics listed in Table 7: “The persons presented in the shown advertisement are...”. Credibility is measured using a five-point Likert scale with the levels: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree (Rohrmann, 1978). The selection of an odd number of levels was made for the same reasons as for the dependent variable.

Table 7: Items Credibility

Nr.	Item	Reversed
	The persons presented in the shown advertisement are...	No
1	Dependable	No
2	Honest	No
3	Reliable	No
4	Sincere	No

Nr.	Item	Reversed
5	Trustworthy	No
6	Expert	No
7	Experienced	No
8	Knowledgeable	No
9	Qualified	No
10	Skilled	No

3.3.3 Construction of Survey

In order to investigate the influence of AI-generated content in online advertisements on purchase intention, a web-based survey was created. Participants are provided with a link to access the survey and complete it individually. A multi-item approach to measure various aspects of the construct under investigation is applied in the survey. The used items were derived from pre-existing literature.

The survey begins with a welcome message introducing the study's authors and briefly outlining the purpose and topic of the survey. Neither the topic in specific nor the purpose are described in detail to avoid biasing participants' responses based on knowledge of the true research objectives. This approach ensures that participants do not align their answers based on the true focus of the study. Additionally, the message includes brief instructions for completing the questionnaire, aimed at minimizing response bias and mentions that there are no right or wrong answers, but that the focus is on answering the questions honestly to reduce possible inhibitions. Finally, the text ends with the instruction of the data protection regulation and makes participants consent with those by clicking on "Next" to start the survey.

There are three types of questions used in the survey for data collection, incorporating single-choice questions, one open question and Likert scale questions. The survey comprises a total of 31 questions, including several sub-questions. All questions are mandatory, meaning that each question must be answered. This ensures the gathering of complete data from all participants, which is essential for conducting thorough analyses and drawing accurate conclusions. The survey includes three questions about demographics. Additionally, it contains four items

assessing technical affinity, three items evaluating attitude toward online advertisements and nine items gauging trust in online advertisements. Lastly, each version of the treatment is accompanied by two items measuring purchase intention and ten items measuring credibility.

The first part begins with biographical questions, encompassing questions that have to be answered with single-choice answers. While respondents have to answer gender and highest level of education with single-choice answers, an open answer is required for the age. The second part of the survey encompasses questions that serve as predictors in the analysis. The construct of technical affinity, attitude, and trust are assessed using appropriate, reliable items. Each item is evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Following this part, the third and final part of the survey randomly assigns participants into either the experimental or the control group. This ensures that some participants are exposed to advertisements featuring AI-generated humans while others are exposed to advertisements featuring real humans. The treatment is accompanied by instructions for participants to carefully examine the shown advertisement.

After being shown the first online advertisement, participants are presented with questions to measure two constructs: purchase intention and credibility. Purchase intention is assessed using two items. Credibility is measured through a single question that takes the form of a statement accompanied by various related adjectives as items, prompting participants to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a Likert Scale based on whether they find the adjectives applicable to the persons on the advertisement. Finally, participants are presented with the second online advertisement, after which the aforementioned questions are repeated. The survey concludes by thanking the participants for their contribution and offering the opportunity to contact the researchers if any questions or comments have arisen.

Ensuring the quality of the survey is crucial to obtaining reliable and valid data for the research. To achieve this, several measures have been implemented. Firstly, randomization of the treatment conditions has been employed. This means that participants are assigned to the different groups randomly, reducing the likelihood of bias and ensuring that each participant has an equal chance of being exposed to each treatment condition. Additionally, the order in which the treatments are presented to participants has been carefully considered. To minimize potential order effects, the treatment conditions were presented in a random order, with some participants seeing the advertisement of Hugo Boss first and then the advertisement of Zadig & Voltaire, while for others it was the other way around. This randomization aims to prevent biases or differences in responses attributed to the order of the treatment.

Furthermore, the survey has undergone rigorous testing and piloting to identify and address any potential issues or ambiguities in the survey questions. This ensures that participants can understand and respond to the questions accurately, enhancing the reliability of the data collected. The collected data from the pilot survey were not included in the final analysis.

3.4 Data Collection

The following section shortly describes the process of collecting the data. A sample size of at least 250 participants is required for the planned sample, in order to have reliable results. The sample size calculation takes into account various factors such as the expected effect size, which falls within the range of 0.3 to 0.5. Additionally, the selected significance level, set at $\alpha = 0.05$, and the desired statistical power of 0.8 play crucial roles in determining the sample size. To ensure that significant differences between the groups can be identified, a slightly larger number of cases is defined, resulting in a planned sample size of 250 participants (Ritschl & Stamm, 2016).

The participants do not have to fulfill any participation requirements, which proves to be advantageous for the recruitment of test persons. Recruitment takes place via various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition, the survey link is shared with various friends and family members. As the authors of the study are German and the circle of contacts is mainly aware of the German language, the survey was conducted in German. The study was carried out in the period from the 17th of April to the 1st of May 2024. A convenience sample was used, since participants were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate, rather than a random selection from the general population. The sample consisted of individuals who became aware of the survey either through personal connections to the researchers (such as contacts on WhatsApp) or through interaction with the social media posts (on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn). Convenience sampling is advantageous in terms of cost and ease of implementation. However, it is essential to recognize that this type of sample may not be representative of the population as a whole, as it may favor certain groups and exclude others. To prevent this issue, the study was also published on the SurveyCircle platform. By additionally publishing the link on this portal, the sampling method is expanded, as it enables reaching people outside the researchers' personal network and thus increases the likelihood of obtaining a more diverse sample. Nevertheless, it is essential to consider the limitations associated with a convenience-based sample when interpreting the results and discussing possible biases.

3.5 Data Analysis

The following section presents the descriptive statistics of the study. The statistical analysis was conducted using Jamovi, and only fully completed questionnaires were included. The section starts with the descriptive statistics, including a discussion of the actual sample size. Following this, the assumptions for carrying out the regression analysis, the mediation analysis and the independent sample t-test are verified.

3.5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The survey was conducted in the period from the 17th of April to the 1st of May 2024. This period aligns with the planned survey period. A sample of $n = 250$ participants was planned for the study. The actual sample was $n = 357$ participants. A sample drop of 75 individuals was recorded, meaning that 282 participants fully completed the survey. For the evaluation of the data, only fully completed questionnaires were taken into account, resulting in 75 data records being removed from the data set using the iterative method. The dropout rate for the survey was 21 %.

The analysis of the descriptive statistics showed that the sample consisted of 186 females and 95 males. One participant identified with a diverse gender. Thus, the proportion of female participants was 66 %, while the proportion of male participants was 33.7 %. The sample was predominantly made up of individuals in the middle age group, with an average age of $M = 37.7$ years ($SD = 15.7$). In total, the age spanned from 17 to 77 years. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the participant's age separated by the two experimental groups. With regard to the educational level, the descriptive statistics showed that the majority of the participants have completed their A-Levels or High School Diploma (37.6 %), followed by a Bachelor's degree (30.1 %). While 19.1 % of the participants completed an Intermediate School Leaving Certificate, 7.1 % reached their Master's degree, and 3.2 % stated that they completed their PhD. A total of 2.8 % selected the category "other" and provided the following qualifications: 2nd state examination, vocational training and diploma. None of the participants indicated that they have no educational qualification. Overall, the sample had a high level of education. The analysis of the socio-demographic data confirmed the assumption that the sample surveyed was not representative of the population. Representativeness is given if the distribution of the characteristic in the sample corresponds to the distribution in the population. In the German population the distribution of gender, with 50.6 % women and 49.3 % men, is significantly more balanced than in the study sample (Statistisches Bundesamt, n.d.). Based on this, the

results of the inferential statistics should be taken with caution. Table D1 in the appendix shows the demographic data by test groups in detail.

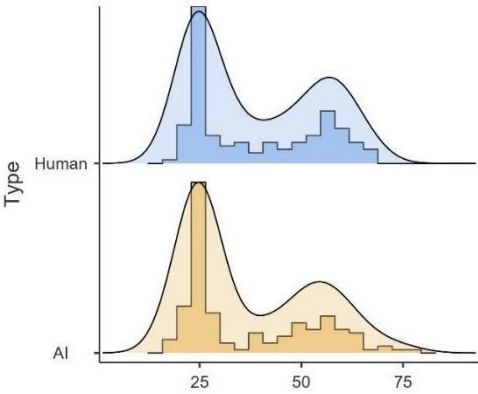


Figure 3: Histogram Age

Apart from the socio-demographic data, descriptive statistics of the independent variables and the dependent variable will be provided. The descriptive statistics showed that the independent variable technical affinity revealed a mean value of $M = 3.08$, suggesting moderate agreement with the items. The standard deviation of $SD = .83$ indicated a considerable dispersion in participants' responses, reflecting a diverse range of opinions. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the data for technical affinity.

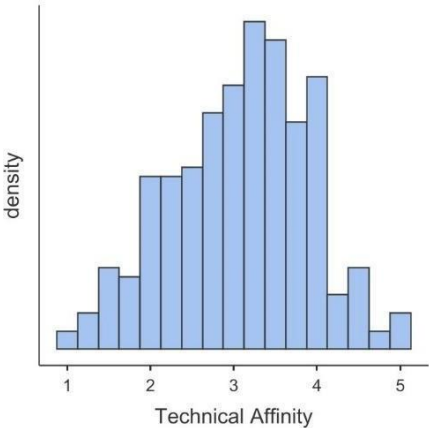


Figure 4: Histogram Technical Affinity

For the variable attitude, the mean value is $M = 3.22$, suggesting that on average the participants had a slightly neutral attitude towards online advertisements. The standard deviation of $SD = .82$ indicated that there was a moderate variance in the participants' responses. For the variable trust, the mean value of $M = 3.14$ suggested that participants hold a neutral level of trust in advertisements. The standard deviation of $SD = .61$ indicated that participants' responses

clustered closely around the mean, reflecting a degree of consistency in opinions. The distribution of the data for the variable credibility is shown in Figure 5. The mean value was $M = 3.07$, suggesting that the evaluation of credibility was rather neutral. The standard deviation of $SD = 0.56$ indicated that the participants' answers were grouped quite closely around the mean value, indicating a certain uniformity in the opinions.

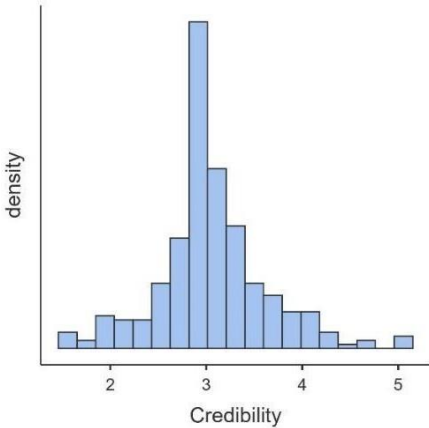


Figure 5: Histogram Credibility

Furthermore, the descriptive statistics for the dependent variable is presented. The variable purchase intention had a mean of $M = 3.72$, indicating a tendency among participants to express interest or a positive tendency towards making a purchase following the advertisement. With a standard deviation of $SD = .82$, the data suggested that participants' responses clustered closely around the mean, implying a degree of consensus in opinions. An overview of the descriptive statistics of the variables splitted by the test group are presented in Table D2 in the appendix.

3.5.2 Assumptions Statistical Tests

Before conducting a regression analysis to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, it's essential to verify the assumptions of a regression analysis. This statistical test requires the data to follow a normal distribution. This assumption was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. In this study, the test yielded a non-significant p-value of $p = .819$ indicating that the data can be considered normally distributed (see Table F1). Another assumption is the autocorrelation of the residuals, which was calculated using the Durbin-Watson test. The results of this test showed that the p-value was not significant ($p = .854$) and therefore no significant autocorrelation was found in the residuals (see Table F1). The assumption was therefore also fulfilled. The Goldfeld-Quandt test was used to test the heteroscedasticity of the residuals. This test showed a non-significant value ($p = .489$), which indicates that the variance of the residuals in the two groups was not significantly different (see

Table F1). In addition, multicollinearity was verified. The VIF values were interpreted for this purpose. These were all close to the value 1, suggesting that there was no significant multicollinearity (see Table F1). This means that there was no correlation between the independent variables. Therefore, all assumptions of the regression analysis were regarded as fulfilled and the analysis was carried out without restrictions.

Furthermore, the assumptions of a mediation analysis were verified. The assumptions for conducting a mediation analysis include a significant relationship between ad content and purchase intention as well as evidence of a significant relationship between purchase intention and credibility. Additionally, there should be a significant relationship between purchase intention and credibility as well as a mediating effect. While the regression analysis already verified some assumptions, the remaining assumptions were automatically evaluated by performing the mediation analysis in Jamovi. The results of the mediation analysis confirmed the assumptions. Since the assumptions of the mediation analysis are consistent with the results, these will be further elaborated on in the results section.

Moreover, the assumptions for the independent samples t-test were verified. The first assumption is that the data has a normal distribution. This was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results showed that the data was not normally distributed since $p < .050$ (see Table F2). However, the graphical inspection of the QQ plot showed that the data was nearly normally distributed, so that the assumption was met (see Figure F1). In addition, a t-test assumes that variance homogeneity is given. The Levene test to test variance homogeneity was significant ($p < 0.05$), which indicates that the variances of the two groups were not equal (see Table F3). This violated the requirement of variance homogeneity for the independent t-test. Although the Levene test was significant and thus the assumption of variance homogeneity was violated, the t-test was performed with an adjustment for unequal variances (Welch's t-test). This test is robust to differences in variance and provides reliable results under these conditions. Another assumption is the independence of the groups, i.e., the groups must be different. In this case, we can assume that the groups were different. Thus, it was possible to carry out an independent t-test.

3.6 Quality of The Study

To ensure the quality of quantitative research, two criteria are usually applied, validity and reliability. The implementation of research is often assessed according to how "good" the research process itself is, which is defined by the two mentioned criteria. While validity refers to how well the intended measurement is actually measured, reliability refers to the consistency

of the measurement instrument (Sallis et al., 2021). To assess the validity, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted for each of the constructs used in the study, as pre-specified measurement models were already provided for these constructs. First, the study verified the one-dimensionality of the independent variables, followed by an evaluation of the one-dimensionality of the dependent variable.

The results of the CFA for the construct of technical affinity indicated that all four items form one main component for the construct. This is evidenced by the fact that the p-values for all items were significant, and the standardized estimates for each item exceeded a value over .500. The results of the CFA for the construct of attitude indicated that only two of the three items could be used to form the main component for the construct. The third item had to be removed as the p-value ($p = .60$) was not significant and the standard estimate was $-.038$. The results of the CFA for the construct of trust showed that seven of the nine items could be used to form the main component for this construct. The fifth and sixth item had to be removed. Despite having significant p-values, their standardized estimates were below the value of .500 (see Table E1). Moreover, the results showed that one-dimensionality was confirmed for all three factors.

The results of the factor covariances for the factors attitude and trust showed a very high correlation between these two factors (see Table E1). The factors technical affinity and trust, as well as technical affinity and attitude had a very low correlation (see Table E1). At the end of this subchapter, the high correlation between the factors attitude and trust is examined further. The results of the X²-test to measure the model fit showed a significant model, since $p < .001$ (see Table E2). Moreover, the modification indices were taken into account. The results showed that item T1 had a remarkably high value and should therefore theoretically be added to the factor attitude. However, the authors decided against integrating the item into the other factor due to contextual interpretation.

The analysis continued with the CFA for the construct of credibility. The twenty items to measure credibility were combined into one factor, as they ultimately measure the same construct. The results showed that all items exhibited a significant p-value, with standardized estimates exceeded values over .500 (see Table E3). The one-dimensionality was also confirmed for this factor. The results of the X²-test to measure the model fit showed a significant model, since $p < .001$ (see Table E4).

Lastly, the CFA for the construct purchase intention was carried out. The four items to measure this construct were also combined into one factor. The results showed that all items had a significant p-value and a standard estimate over .500 (see Table E3), indicating that these four items were suitable for forming the main component for the construct purchase intention.

Consequently, this factor was also one-dimensional. The results of the X²-test to measure the model fit showed a significant model, since $p < .001$ (see Table E5).

To determine the internal consistency (reliability) of the constructs Cronbach's alpha was calculated using reliability analysis. The interpretation of the internal consistency results was based on the guidelines of Blanz (2015). Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .82$ was determined for the construct of technical affinity, while a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .49$ was determined for the construct of attitude. The results of the reliability analysis for the construct trust showed Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .81$. While purchase intention had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .91$, the results showed that credibility had a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .91$. Overall, the results showed that all constructs, with the exception of the construct attitude, had very high reliability and therefore very high internal consistency. Attitude had an unacceptable Cronbach's alpha. Due to its unsatisfactory internal consistency and its high correlation with the construct of trust, the authors decided to exclude the variable attitude from further statistical analyses. This decision was made to avoid potential confounding effects, as highly correlated variables can obscure the independent influences on the dependent variable.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The compliance of ethical principles is of considerable importance when conducting research. There are some official principles that must be followed for research to be scientifically valuable. These principles are divided into: Voluntary Participation, Informed Consent, Anonymity, Confidentiality, Potential for Harm, and Communication of Results (Bhandari, 2024).

Voluntary participation refers to the fact that participants are free to decide whether or not to take part in the study. They also have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time without giving a reason. This should avoid exerting pressure on the participants (Bhandari, 2024). This principle was followed in the present study, as the participants were able to take part in the online survey voluntarily and could stop at any time without being required to give a reason. The next principle relates to informed consent, which refers to providing participants with all the information they need. This is fulfilled in this research project, as an information text was provided at the beginning of the survey, which also requested the agreement of the participants. The introduction text also included information on anonymity in handling the data, which is another ethical principle in research. Anonymity means that the researchers cannot assign the data to a participant. Furthermore, the ethical principles require a certain degree of confidentiality in the handling of data, which primarily relates to when the data can be linked

to participants. This was not the case in the present study. In addition, the ethical principles prescribe that information and clarification be provided about possible sources of harm, such as psychological harm, physical or legal harm. In an online survey, it is extremely unlikely that this type of harm will occur, so this point was not considered further. The last important ethical principle to mention is the communication of results. This includes an honest, reliable and credible presentation of the research results (Bhandari, 2024). Through a very comprehensive presentation and discussion of the results in this study, this principle can also be regarded as fulfilled. In summary, it can be established that the present study complied with the ethical principles and can therefore be regarded as valuable for research.

4. Results

The following chapter presents the results of the study and tests the hypotheses presented in Table 8. To verify the hypotheses and relationships that have been derived, a regression analysis was carried out. Subsequently, a mediation analysis was implemented to further investigate the influence of AI-generated content. The mediation analysis is followed by an independent sample t-test to examine significant differences in the perception of credibility between the groups. The results are described in the order of the tested effects and are presented in tables to provide an initial overview. As the authors decided to exclude the variable attitude from the analysis, hypothesis *H4* was not tested. In total, the study dealt with directed and undirected hypotheses. The significance level of all statistical tests was 95 %.

Table 8: Overview Hypotheses

Nr.	Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Result
H1	Advertisements that show AI-generated humans cause higher purchase intention compared to advertisements that show humans.	Linear Regression	Rejected
H2	Younger people show higher purchase intentions for advertisements with AI-generated humans compared to older people.	Linear Regression	Rejected
H3	Technical affinity has a positive influence on the purchase intention.	Linear Regression	Rejected
H4	Attitude towards online advertisements has a positive influence on purchase intention.	Linear Regression	/
H5	Trust in online advertisements has a positive influence on purchase intention.	Linear Regression	Accepted

The present regression model was used to analyze the relationships between the control variables (gender, educational level), the independent variables (age, ad content, technical affinity, trust, credibility) and the dependent variable (purchase intention). The statistical measures used to assess the model fit of the measurement model showed the following results: The correlation coefficient was $R = .59$, indicating that there is a moderate positive linear relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination was $R^2 = .350$, which implicates that about 35 % of the variance of the purchase intention is explained by the predictors (gender, educational level, age, ad content, technical

affinity, trust and credibility) in the model. The root mean square error (RMSE) was .66. This represents the average deviation between the observed and predicted values of purchase intention. Thus, the average deviation between the observed and predicted values was approximately .66 units. In conclusion, the regression model has a moderate to acceptable fit, as a significant part of the variance of purchase intention is explained by the applied independent variables. The moderate size of the RMSE indicated that the model still has scope for enhancing the model's predictive accuracy.

Two control variables were included in the regression analysis to consider potential confounding factors and to isolate the specific effects of gender and educational level on purchase intention. The results showed that the control variables had significant and non-significant effects on purchase intention. Specifically, gender had a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($b = .19$, $SE = .23$, $t = 2.00$, $p < .050$), while educational level had no significant effect on purchase intention ($b = .09$, $SE = .11$, $t = 1.02$, $p = .310$). These findings indicate that gender plays an important role in explaining the variations in the dependent variable, while educational level makes no additional contribution in this analysis. Overall, the control variables did not demonstrate strong, significant influences on purchase intention. This may be attributed to the limited sample size, suggesting that further research is necessary to ascertain whether educational level especially serves as potential control variables when observing purchase intention. All results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Results Regression Analysis

Variable	Estimate	t	p	Stand. Estimate
Gender				
<i>2-1</i>	0.1859	2.044	0.046*	0.2272
Educational Level				
<i>1-0</i>	0.0896	1.017	0.310	0.1095
Ad Content				
<i>1-0</i>	0.0504	0.625	0.533	0.0617
Technical Affinity	0.0208	0.391	0.696	0.0212

Variable	Estimate	t	p	Stand. Estimate
Age Groups	-0.0288	-0.315	0.753	-0.0170
Trust	0.4134	5.595	< .001*	0.3067
Credibility	0.5355	6.772	< .001*	0.3700

* assuming $\alpha = 0.05$

4.1 Effects of Ad Content on Purchase Intention

The results of the regression analysis showed that ad content had no significant effect on purchase intention ($b = .05$, $SE = .06$, $t = .63$, $p = .533$). Therefore, Hypothesis *H1* had to be rejected. This hypothesis was based on the assumption that advertisements featuring AI-generated content cause higher levels of purchase intention than advertisements featuring content generated without AI. The results from the regression analysis showed that the type of advertisement, i.e., with AI-generated humans or with real humans, had no significant influence on the purchase intention. Although the results were therefore not significant and thus appear statistically less important, they are still relevant for the study by serving valuable insights. A rejection of the hypothesis that an advertisement with AI-generated content causes higher levels of purchase intention indicates that it is not relevant whether the content of the advertisement is generated synthetically or not. Furthermore, the data revealed that participants generally had a slightly positive intention to purchase the products featured. There was minimal difference in the mean values between the two groups, suggesting that it's not notably significant for marketing managers whether they use AI-generated content or content generated without the help of AI in their advertisements. These results are of high importance for marketing managers, as the use of AI-generated content is associated with several advantages, such as cost and time effectiveness, unaffectedness by personal circumstance of the endorsers and hyperpersonalization of marketing messages. However, as the results showed, marketing practitioners do not have to fear a decrease in consumer purchase intention through the use of AI-generated content. This promising use of AI is supported by the current state of research, as Miller et al. (2023), for example, concluded that AI-generated faces are perceived as more human than real human faces. In addition, since very few studies have previously dealt with the influence of AI-generated content in marketing (Kshetri et al., 2024), these results can significantly expand the current state of research. They emphasize that the use of AI-generated content does not differ from traditional content creation processes, which underlines the use of

AI in content marketing and offers potential for further research and the continuous improvement of such AI tools.

Furthermore, the results of the regression analysis showed that technical affinity had no significant effect on purchase intention ($b = .02$, $SE = .02$, $t = .39$, $p = .696$). The hypothesis $H3$ had to be rejected. Moreover, the data revealed that technical affinity demonstrates a moderate level of agreement with the items, suggesting that, on average, participants were moderately engaged with technical systems and their functions. However, there was notable variation in participants' responses, indicating that some individuals were more inclined to endorse the statements more strongly than others. The results of this study showed that technical affinity had no direct effect on purchase intention, leading to a rejection of the hypothesis that technical affinity positively influences purchase intention. Several reasons may explain this lack of direct effect. Firstly, the perceived relevance of technical affinity may be insufficient in the context of evaluating advertisements. Participants' technical inclination may not hold immediate significance for their perception of advertisements. This suggests a potential disparity between the importance of technical knowledge and its impact on consumer behavior. In contrast to previous research, the results of this study did not confirm the assumption that a higher affinity for technology positively influences the perception of digital advertising (Edison & Geissler, 2003). Furthermore, personal preferences could serve as additional influencing factors. Participants may lack interest in technological innovations and consequently show disinterest in associated online advertisements. This aligns with findings by van der Heijden et al. (2003), who observed that technical affinity influences individuals' attitudes, interests, and abilities to use technology, thereby affecting their response to online advertising. In addition, Suki and Ramayah (2010) stated that tech-savvy individuals may be more comfortable with digital advertising, which affects their attitudes towards online advertising and subsequently their purchase intention. This highlights the multifaceted nature of technical affinity and its potential impact on consumer responses to advertising. This statement also lacks empirical backing from the study results. Although the results relating to technical affinity hardly extend the current state of research, they underline the importance of considering technical affinity in further research.

4.2 Effects of Age on Purchase Intention

In addition, the regression analysis examined the relationship between age and purchase intention. The results showed that age had no significant effect on purchase intention when comparing younger participants with the older individuals ($b = -.03$, $SE = -.02$, $t = -.32$, $p = .753$), leading to the rejection of hypothesis $H2$. Thus, the results of the second hypothesis

showed no significant difference between younger and older age demographics. Consequently, the hypothesis that younger people have higher purchase intentions when exposed to advertisements featuring AI-generated humans than older people had to be rejected. The results of this study, which partly contradict existing research findings, indicated that age had no significant influence on purchase intention. Existing research suggests that younger individuals, due to their higher cognitive abilities, are more inclined to effectively utilize and accept technologies (Arning & Ziefle, 2007). Based on this existing research, one might have expected results indicating that younger individuals have a greater intention to purchase after viewing the advertisements compared to older individuals. However, the literature also suggests that older people generally have a positive attitude towards technology (Mitzner et al, 2010; Ryu et al., 2009; Steele et al., 2009), which may explain that there was no significant difference between age groups. This would expand the body of research to the extent that the stereotype of older people being less receptive to new technologies (Mariano et al., 2020) is no longer supported. Nevertheless, these interpretations need to be considered with caution as results regarding age can also be partly attributed to the limited sample size and the disproportionate number of young participants compared to older participants.

4.3 Effects of Consumer Attitudes on Purchase Intention

Furthermore, the regression analysis considered the causal effects of consumer attitudes, including trust and credibility, on purchase intention. The results showed that the variable trust had a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($b = .41$, $SE = .31$, $t = 5.60$, $p < .001$), leading to an acceptance of hypothesis *H5*. The data related to the construct of trust revealed that participants had a certain level of trust in online advertisements, although this perception was not particularly strong. Nonetheless, the majority of participants viewed online advertisements at least partially as trustworthy, indicating a degree of consensus in their opinions. In addition, this study confirms the existing research findings that trust has a significant positive effect on purchase intention. The acceptance of the hypothesis that trust in online advertisements has a positive influence on purchase intention is consistent with existing research that trust serves as a crucial predictor of positive responses to various marketing activities, including advertising (Holbrook, 2001). Similarly, Stewart (2003) also identified trust as a decisive factor in consumers' purchasing decisions, leading to positive responses in various marketing activities. These findings extend current research by demonstrating that even a moderate level of trust positively influences purchase intention. This advancement in knowledge is particularly significant as it sheds light on the nuanced relationship between trust and consumer behavior. By confirming and extending the findings of Orth et al. (2013), who emphasize the importance of trust in shaping consumer decisions, this study highlights the

central role of trust in shaping purchase intention. These findings affirm the existing body of research emphasizing the essential role of trust within advertisements, highlighting its significance in influencing consumer decision-making processes (Stewart, 2003; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Therefore, the ability to build trust in online advertisements is critical to the success of advertising campaigns.

In contrast to the theoretical model, the variable credibility was additionally included in the regression model. The results showed that credibility had a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($b = .54$, $SE = .37$, $t = 6.77$, $p < .001$). Even though the results of the regression analysis indicated a non-significant relationship between the variables ad content and purchase intention, the variable credibility yielded significant results. It is worth considering the possibility that the predictor may not have a direct significant impact on the dependent variable, as its influence could be mediated by another variable. To further analyze this possible relationship, a mediation analysis was conducted, to examine whether credibility mediates the relationship between ad content and purchase intention.

The results of the mediation analysis showed that there was no significant direct effect of ad content on purchase intention ($b = .05$, $SE = .08$, $z = .59$, $p = .558$). This means that there was no direct effect of ad content on purchase intention that is independent of the mediator. This is consistent with the results from the regression analysis. The results further showed that there was a significant positive effect of ad content on credibility ($b = .14$, $SE = .07$, $z = 2.16$, $p < .05$). Consequently, ad content had an influence on credibility. Besides that, the results of the mediation analysis showed a significant positive effect of credibility on purchase intention ($b = .73$, $SE = .07$, $z = 9.71$, $p < .001$), as well as a significant positive indirect effect of ad content on purchase intention ($b = .10$, $SE = .05$, $z = 2.11$, $p < .05$). This implies that the relationship between ad content and purchase intention was mediated by credibility. The total effect, on the other hand, was not significant ($b = .15$, $SE = .10$, $z = 1.59$, $p = .112$), which indicates that there was no direct correlation between ad content and the purchase intention, without taking into account the mediation by credibility. In sum, the results showed that there is a full positive mediation, as ad content had a significant positive indirect effect on purchase intention through credibility, while the direct effect and the overall effect were not significant. The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 10.

In order to interpret these results, it is important to analyze the data on credibility in more detail. The data revealed that the perceived credibility of AI-generated humans tended to be slightly higher than that of real human persons, suggesting that consumers may view AI-generated humans as more trustworthy or reliable in the context of advertisements. To determine significant differences between the groups, an independent sample t-test was carried out. The

results of the student’s t-test showed that online advertisements showing AI-generated humans (M = 3.14, SD = 0.60) were perceived as more credible than advertisements showing real humans (M = 3.00, SD = 0.52, $t(277) = -2.16, p < .050, d = -0.26$). The difference between the groups is shown in Figure 6.

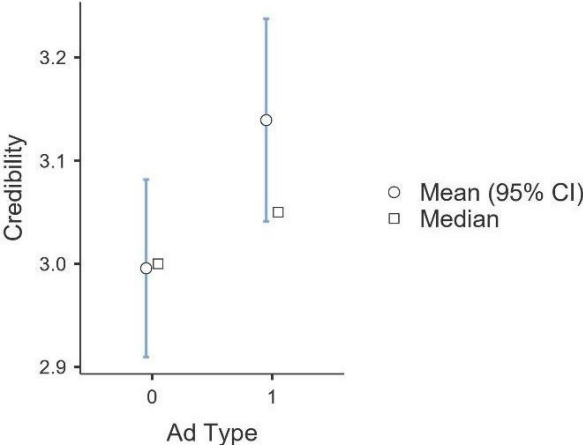


Figure 6: Group Difference Credibility

The results of the t-test thus showed that there is a significant difference in credibility. The participants perceived advertisements showing AI-generated humans as more credible than advertisements showing real humans. This observation is in line with previous research findings, which propose that the boundaries between real and synthetically generated faces are becoming blurred (Holmes et al., 2016). Synthetically generated faces, which are increasingly photorealistic, are often perceived as more trustworthy than real faces. This is attributed to the fact that they tend to look more average, which inherently increases their trustworthiness (Nightingale & Farid, 2022). In addition, recent research showed that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish AI-generated images from real images (Lu et al., 2023). Since this study consisted of a blind experiment in which the participants were unaware of the AI generation, the results could confirm this observation. However, further research is needed to investigate the results and their implications in more detail. Additionally, ad content had a significant positive effect on purchase intention, which was mediated by the credibility of the persons shown on the advertisement. This indicates that consumers are more likely to consider purchasing a product if they perceive the persons shown on the advertisement as credible. This finding is comparable with research indicating that consumers' perceptions of the expertise and trustworthiness of endorsers significantly influence their evaluation of purchase intention (Chin et al., 2020). This study, focusing on the dimensions of expertise and trustworthiness, further emphasizes the impact of these factors on consumer behavior.

Table 10: Results Mediation Analysis

Type	Effect	Estimate	z	p
Indirect	Ad Content → Credibility → Purchase Intention	0.1045	2.106	0.035*
Component	Ad Content → Credibility	0.1436	2.157	0.031*
	Credibility → Purchase Intention	0.7276	9.710	< .001*
Direct	Ad Content → Purchase Intention	0.0495	0.586	0.558
Total	Ad Content → Purchase Intention	0.1540	1.589	0.112

* assuming $\alpha = 0.05$

Generally, it is important to note that these interpretations should be treated with caution, as the study has some limitations, which are explained in detail in another chapter. While the statistical analysis did not yield significant results for most hypotheses, it is essential to recognize that the non-significant findings still hold relevance within the context of this study. It is essential to bear in mind that the experiment employed a blind test method, wherein participants were unaware that the content they viewed was generated by AI. This raises the possibility that the outcomes may differ if participants were informed about the AI-generated nature of the content. Hence, it would be prudent to further explore aspects such as acceptance, comprehension, and other relevant factors concerning AI.

5. Discussion

The following section provides a concise summary of the main findings of this study and answers the research question. Furthermore, the extent to which the aims and objectives formulated at the beginning have been met is analyzed. Subsequently, the strengths and weaknesses of the study are discussed, along with an analysis of the study's validity. Lastly, the theoretical and managerial implications of the topic are considered and implications for future research are outlined.

5.1 Main Findings

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the impact of AI-generated content in online advertisements on consumer intention and perception. The following research question was formulated for this purpose: How does the use of AI-generated content in digital advertising affect consumer purchasing behavior? This question could be answered with the main findings of the study. The extent to which the use of AI-generated content in digital advertising influences the purchasing behavior of consumers is briefly described in the following paragraph.

The study examined the effects of online advertisements with AI-generated content on purchase intention. The results revealed that there was no significant difference in purchase intention, regardless of whether the advertisement showed AI-generated humans or real humans. This suggests that the use of AI-generated content does not have a significant positive impact on purchase intention. While the results showed that neither the utilization of AI-generated content nor the original content appears to offer a significant advantage, the theory offers many advantages of using GAI in advertising. However, it is interesting to note that AI-generated humans in advertisements are perceived as slightly more credible than real humans, thus enhancing the attractiveness of integrating AI-generated content in online advertisements. In addition, trust in online advertisement was determined to have a positive influence on purchase intention, with even a moderate level of trust positively influencing purchase intention. This indicated that it is of great importance for marketers to build up trust in advertising to increase their customer's purchasing behavior. Moreover, the results showed that the participants' technical understanding had no direct influence on purchase intention, which contradicts previous assumptions that a higher affinity for technology positively influences the perception of online advertising. Another key finding of the study is that age does not play a relevant role in the relationship between AI-generated advertisements and purchase intention. No significant

difference was found in the purchase intention depending on the age. However, this result should be treated with caution as it could be caused by a sampling error.

With these results, the study achieves its goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of the integration of AI in advertising on consumers' purchase intentions. The results analyze the perception of AI-generated content in advertisements and thus fill the existing research gap in the use of AI in marketing. The study successfully achieved its objective of uncovering the relationship between credibility, AI-generated content and purchase intention. This was achieved by identifying credibility as a mediating factor in influencing purchase intention and finding a noteworthy disparity in credibility between AI-generated and non-AI-generated content. In addition, a further aim was to develop a comprehensive understanding of how individual differences influence consumer responses to advertising, e.g. by showing that trust in online advertisements plays a significant role regarding purchase intention. However, some objectives of the study were not achieved, mostly due to sampling errors. These included exploring age differences in purchase intention and the influence of technical affinity and attitude towards advertisements on purchase intention. At this point, it is important to mention that these should be included as objectives in further research. Overall, the study achieves its goal of expanding the relatively unexplored area of AI integration in marketing content creation, providing valuable insights for marketing professionals.

5.1 Strengths and Limitations

In the following, the study's strengths and weaknesses are outlined. First, the strengths are discussed, highlighting their significant contribution to the credibility and relevance of the research findings. Subsequently, the potential weaknesses of the study are addressed, acknowledging important limitations and challenges for result interpretation. Through a critical evaluation of these aspects, a comprehensive understanding of the study's validity and scope is achieved, facilitating the identification of future research avenues.

Generally with respect to theory, the topic of the study is of significant relevance to marketing practice, particularly in the context of today's advertising landscape where AI-generated content is becoming increasingly important. By examining the perception of AI-generated content in advertising and its influence on consumer behavior, the findings provide actionable insights for marketers. In addition, the study utilizes a comprehensive theoretical model that incorporates various factors such as trust, age and technical affinity. This holistic approach enriches the understanding of consumer behavior and provides valuable insights for future research efforts. Even in cases where no significant direct effects could be observed, the inclusion of different

variables contributes to the increase in knowledge in this area and creates the basis for further exploration and investigation.

In terms of the method and analysis used, the study has several strengths that underline its credibility and rigor. Firstly, a notable strength of the study lies in the simplicity of the experiment. This simplicity extends to the data collection, which is complemented by the large sample size of the study. With a sample of 282 participants, robust statistical analyses could be performed. The moderate sample size is made possible by the fact that the questionnaire was completed exclusively online and the treatment was designed to appeal to a broad and diverse sample. The online nature of the experiment not only eliminates the need for physical presence, thereby increasing participants' willingness and facilitating a higher sample size, it also enables the identification of causal relationships. This allows the actual cause-effect relationships between the variables to be determined and serves as a higher explanatory value than, e.g., associations. Additionally, the careful selection of a gender-neutral product within the cosmetics sector for the treatment ensures inclusivity and broad applicability of the results, minimizing potential biases associated with gender-specific products. Selecting a product that can be purchased by both men and women contributes to reducing dropout rates in the study. The deliberate selection of advertisements from two different brands aims to create a broader index of participant responses, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the results. This strategy allows for the decoupling of results from specific brand characteristics or attributes, enabling the provision of more comprehensive insights.

Compliance with the assumptions for regression and mediation analyses enhances its statistical power, minimizing the occurrence of error type II. A high statistical power also increases the reliability and credibility of the study results and strengthens the conclusions that were drawn from the data. Furthermore, the implementation of measures to address potential threats to internal validity emphasizes the careful approach of the research design of this study. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that certain effects may persist despite these efforts and remain beyond complete control. Lastly, the study demonstrates a notable strength in its high internal consistency and the quality of the measurement instruments utilized to assess purchase intention and credibility. This is attributed to the implementation of standardized measurement instruments, which include validated scales for specific variables. By employing such standardized instruments, the study not only enhanced its validity but also facilitated the comparability and reproducibility of the results.

Transitioning from strengths to limitations, it's important to acknowledge certain weaknesses in the study's methodology despite its notable strengths. While most scales demonstrate high validity, the use of shortened scales compromised the reliability and validity of the

measurement instrument for assessing the attitude construct, as it may have failed to capture all relevant aspects of this construct. Results from the CFA and reliability analysis indicated that the variable attitude was removed from the statistical analysis. This decision was based on the following reasons: firstly, the attitude construct exhibited a high correlation with the trust construct, making it difficult to attribute the effect of one variable on the dependent variable with certainty. Secondly, the attitude construct had a weak reliability with $\alpha = 0.49$, negatively impacting the accuracy of the results.

Another weakness of the study pertains to the self-reported survey data as this may have led to different kinds of biases, i.e., social desirability. This, in turn, compromises the validity and reliability of the results, thereby challenging the interpretation of the research findings. Furthermore, conducting the survey exclusively online introduces the possibility of uncontrolled confounding factors. It is plausible that not all potential confounders were identified and controlled for, potentially exerting a disruptive influence on the observed effect. Furthermore, the inability to verify whether participants paid adequate attention to the treatment raises concerns about the validity of the experimental manipulation. Another notable limitation of the study is the sequential order in which the constructs were conducted. In particular, the assessment of credibility followed the assessment of purchase intention. This order may have influenced participants' perceptions of purchase intention, which could potentially skewed the results. Assessing credibility before measuring purchase intention could have changed the way participants answered the questions regarding purchase intention and therefore probably lead to different results.

Despite conducting a robust statistical analysis with regard to sample size, it is important to acknowledge the potential impact of a larger sample size on the study's outcomes. With a larger sample size, the study might have uncovered different significant results, in particular with regard to the relationship between the type of ad content and the purchase intention. In this study, there is a selection bias due to a disproportionate representation of women, which could potentially distorted the findings. With a larger sample size, such distortion can be counteracted. Furthermore, the method of data collection inherently constrains the external validity of the findings. For example, the study focused exclusively on German-speaking participants. This limitation concerning external validity is further elaborated upon in the subsequent section. Another limitation of this study is the multifaceted nature of images, as used as a treatment, which encompass a range of features, including color, shape, size, texture, brightness, contrast, complexity, and emotionality. These diverse attributes complicate the isolation of the specific influence of any single feature on participants' behavior or response, as observed effects may be the result of the combined impact of multiple features. While controlling these features in a study is challenging, the authors endeavored to mitigate their influence by standardizing the

image features and only manipulate one feature in the image. The use of two real brands for the treatment represents another limitation. The measured purchase intention may have been influenced by the participants' existing attitude towards these brands. Consequently, the results may not be exclusively attributable to the effects of the variables analyzed, but also to the individual preferences and previous experience of the participants with the respective brands. This limits the generalizability of the results, as the participants' reactions could be due not only to the specific characteristics of the advertising, but also to their existing brand loyalty. Finally, it should be noted that, as with any study, general psychological tendencies such as socially desirable response behavior, the halo effect or the tendency towards the middle could occur.

The strengths of the study contribute to the robustness and significance of the results. In addition, the use of standardized measurement instruments underlines the quality of the study and facilitates comparison with other research projects. Despite some limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the research topic and highlights aspects that could be of interest for future research.

5.2 Internal and External Validity

This chapter discusses the internal and external validity of the study, which are crucial for assessing the general applicability of the results and the robustness of the research design. Internal validity refers to the extent to which the effects observed in the dependent variable can be clearly attributed to the manipulation of the independent variable without being influenced by external variables. The fewer external influences, the higher the internal validity (Campbell, 1957). In the present study, several factors must be taken into account that could potentially affect the internal validity.

While acknowledging the potential for experimenter effects, proactive measures were implemented to mitigate such concerns. Given the reliance on an online survey format, the absence of face-to-face interaction between experimenters and participants effectively eliminates direct experimenter influence. Moreover, the utilization of standardized questionnaires and evaluation protocols reduces the risk of experimenter effects. Additionally, study blinding further minimized the potential impact of experimenter bias. Another factor worth considering is the motivational impact, which, despite being improbable due to the brevity of the survey and the inclusion of instructive prompts, remains challenging to completely minimize the motivation effect. Besides that, the study is sensitive to concerns regarding the treatment's validity, as there was no assurance that participants had thoroughly examined the treatment and fully absorbed all relevant details. Although a brief instructional

prompt was included to enhance engagement, its efficacy in ensuring treatment awareness is not absolute.

The study is also susceptible to the measurement effect, wherein the measurement process itself may unintentionally influence the outcome. Efforts to reduce the measurement effect and instrumentation bias were facilitated through the utilization of high-quality measurement instruments. A good Cronbach's Alpha was computed for all constructs, except for the attitude construct. Due to the low reliability of the attitude construct, it was excluded from the statistical analysis. These results significantly reduce the occurrence of the measurement effect. As the study used a multi-group design with an experimental grouping variable, there is also the possibility of selection bias relating to pre-existing differences between the test groups. To mitigate this effect, subjects were randomized within the survey tool to randomly assign treatments to achieve approximate equivalence between test groups.

Interactive effects, which are highly likely to occur and jeopardize internal validity, arise from interactions between the grouping factor and other confounding variables. This implies that the study's effects may not solely be attributed to the grouping variable, but rather to a confounding variable. For instance, a person's preference for product alternatives or the income of participants could be identified as possible confounding factors in the present study. Moreover, interactive effects can occur due to boundary conditions, such as noise or a distracting environment. There is an increased risk of the aforementioned disruptive factors occurring in online experiments, as these cannot be controlled or eliminated. To increase internal validity, identified confounding factors can be converted into a control variable, maximizing the primary variance of the dependent variable and optimizing the internal validity. As the study is based on a random sample, stochastic effects may also occur, which cannot be avoided. In summary, while there are several effects that could potentially undermine the internal validity of the study, extensive measures were implemented to mitigate their impact.

External validity assesses the extent to which study results can be generalized to different individuals, situations and variables. To ensure the applicability of the study findings to the broader population, high external validity is essential. Regarding the generalization to other individuals, the results were not applicable to the entire German population due to the limited representativeness of the sample size. For instance, the overrepresentation of female subjects could be attributed to a sampling error inherent in random selection. Therefore, the transferability of the results to other demographic groups remains uncertain.

The extent to which the study results can be generalized to other situations is also uncertain. The limited transferability of the findings primarily stems from the study's design. Being an

online experiment, it fails to replicate real-life scenarios where advertisements are encountered, thus lacking ecological validity and restricting comparability of contextual conditions. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that contemporary advertising is frequently disseminated through social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok, which closely resemble the setting of an online experiment. However, it is of importance to acknowledge that individuals' behavior in real-world settings may deviate from that observed in experimental contexts. Lastly, it is questionable to what extent the results can be transferred to other sectors than the cosmetic sector or other product groups, also within the cosmetic sector. It is also unclear to what extent the results of the study can be applied to other variables, such as the recommendation of products based on perceived credible advertisements.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

The study includes some theoretical implications that are of importance for researchers. The results are particularly important for researchers working on the further development and improvement of AI tools. As the use of AI-generated content is promising and a significant increase in the use of such generative AI tools can be expected, the further development of AI tools is essential. Researchers should focus primarily on credibility so that AI tools can create more authentic and realistic-looking content. Since credibility is an important indicator for the effectiveness of advertising and the creation of brand image, a detailed examination of the credibility of AI-generated content is highly relevant. In particular, it should be investigated which specific characteristics contribute to increasing credibility.

In the context of the concept of credibility, the results of the study provide an important theoretical basis that enables a re-evaluation of the construct of human credibility. The findings raise questions about the importance of authenticity, identity and representation of humans. Specifically, the study results showed that certain characteristics or behaviors traditionally associated with credibility may no longer be as strongly associated with the perception of credibility. As such, the results of the study provide a stimulus for further research and discussion on how credibility is understood and valued, and how these findings can potentially be applied in different contexts to develop a more nuanced and realistic view of this important concept.

Additionally, the results provide a valuable theoretical basis for researchers working on the development of theories and models for the use of AI-generated content. The results offer a useful basis for conducting more in-depth analyses, for instance focusing on a different subject area or target group. For example, the results provide a valuable theoretical basis for the

expansion of marketing models to include the integration of AI and thus a better assessment of opportunities and risks. In particular, models based on consumer behavior and reactions should integrate this factor.

In the context of the theoretical model of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, understanding the influence of trust on purchase intention is crucial. Trust proves to be a crucial determinant that shows a remarkable positive relationship with purchase intention. This emphasizes how important it is for advertising to convey a sense of trustworthiness, as this directly contributes to strengthening consumers' purchase intentions. Therefore, researchers need to look more closely at the mechanisms by which trust is built and maintained in the advertising context, as this has a significant impact on consumer behavior and decision-making processes.

5.4 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the practical relevance of incorporating AI-generated content, particularly AI-generated humans, in online advertisements. As marketers navigate the ever-changing landscape of digital advertising, understanding the implications of utilizing GAI is essential for developing effective strategies that resonate with consumers and enhance business success. In this section, several key implications derived from the findings of this study are discussed and actionable recommendations for marketers to consider in their advertising endeavors are provided.

While AI-generated content provides numerous advantages, marketers should carefully consider its relevance for the creation of online advertisements. As the study suggested that whether an advertisement features AI-generated humans or real humans does not significantly impact consumers' purchase intention, marketers can create advertisements, regardless of whether they integrate AI-generated content or not. Consequently, marketers can leverage AI-generated content for its various benefits, providing them the flexibility and innovation in content creation without compromising consumer purchase intention. These findings hold particular relevance for companies operating with limited resources. By leveraging AI to accelerate the advertisement production process and reduce associated costs, smaller businesses can effectively compete in the market.

Coming back to the phenomenon of hyperpersonalization, companies are able to personalize advertising for customers on an individual basis by integrating GAI. To optimize this process and determine the most effective strategies for personalized marketing, companies should actively engage in A/B testing. This method allows them to compare different versions of their

marketing initiatives, enabling data-driven insights into what resonates best with a particular target audience. AI-generated content will allow digital advertisements to be tailored specifically to individual customers or customer groups more easily - and thus to hyperpersonalize marketing campaigns.

Given the significance of the perceived credibility of the content shown in advertisements in influencing purchase intention, marketers should focus on enhancing the credibility of such content in their advertisements. This implies that when creating AI-generated humans, special care must be taken to ensure that they are perceived as credible and trustworthy. AI-generated content can be designed to embody qualities such as reliability, expertise and authenticity that match those of human endorsers. By ensuring that AI-generated content project trustworthiness, marketers can effectively build consumer trust in their brand and products, which ultimately improves sales performances.

The practical implications of these findings are primarily relevant for marketing professionals involved in promoting perfumes. Therefore, the findings may not be directly applicable to other product categories or industries due to potential variations in the impact of AI-generated content on purchase intention. This impact could vary depending on factors such as product type and target audience. It is essential to exercise caution in interpreting the results and consider the specific conditions and requirements of each market segment. While the findings offer valuable insights into the use of AI-generated content, marketers should carefully evaluate their implementation and weigh potential risks before taking corresponding actions.

In summary, marketers should remain adaptable in their strategies in the face of changing consumer behavior and technological advancements. Continuous research and experimentation with new technologies, such as GAI, can provide valuable insights into consumer preferences and market trends, allowing marketers to stay ahead of the curve and deliver effective advertising campaigns. As it becomes increasingly clear that AI represents the future of technology, marketers and marketing organizations must begin to consider AI's integration with visual marketing, the core principle of modern effective marketing. By embracing innovation and adapting to new trends, marketers can effectively utilize AI-generated content to improve brand engagement and trigger positive consumer responses.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The following section highlights some implications for further research that emerge from the previous discussion of the methodology and results. A distinction is made between implications

that relate to the theory and those that relate to the methodology. Overall, the study yields promising results, albeit with relatively few significant findings, suggesting that further exploration of the investigated topic is warranted for researchers.

A first implication relates to the inclusion of the age of the participants. The theory shows that younger people are cognitively better equipped to understand and adopt new technologies and are usually more willing and interested in accepting them. However, the study results contradicted the theory, as they showed that there was no difference between the age groups. As this is probably due to the small sample size and the unequal age distribution, it is advisable to investigate the influence of age further, as possible results could provide important insights for marketing practitioners. It is important for marketers to be able to adapt specifically to different target groups and tailor their advertising strategies to them.

Further implications can be derived from the methodological approach of this study. It is advisable to choose other, alternative methodological approaches in order to find out whether the study results can be supported or whether different, new results can be achieved. For instance, a repeated measures experiment could be carried out in which the participants are shown advertisements with AI-generated content and advertisements with non-AI-generated content, on the basis of which they assess the constructs to be measured. This enables a direct comparison of the type of advertisements, which can generate additional insights that could expand the current understanding. In addition, repeated measures experiments can reduce the problem of surveys, that the groups in experiments can vary due to individual differences, which can distort the results. Repeated measures can mitigate this effect by testing the same participants over multiple points, allowing individual differences to remain constant and serve as a separate control group. This improves the internal validity of the study and reduces the likelihood of confounding. Another approach would be to inform survey participants explicitly about the use of AI-generated content in the advertisement they viewed. Unlike the blind test, participants would be made aware that the content they were shown was created using AI technology. In such a methodological approach, it is advisable to additionally measure the attitude towards AI as well as the acceptance of this. Both can have a significant impact on the perception of the authenticity and credibility of AI-generated content and are therefore highly relevant to consider.

It is also recommended that the study be conducted with other product categories and in other sectors in order to expand the general transferability of the results and make the findings and implications applicable to marketers from other sectors. In this context, it is also advisable to recruit a larger and heterogeneous sample in future research. This would make the sample more representative, avoid bias and thus increase external validity. Conducting the experiment with

a larger study is also advisable as this could lead to significant results regarding the influence of ad content on purchase intention. Significant results would support the use of AI-generated content in advertising. To reduce the effect discussed with real brands, further research could benefit from using fictitious or less well-known brands to minimize the influence of existing brand attitudes and allow a more accurate assessment of purchase intention in relation to the variables studied.

Another implication that emerges from this study and should definitely be considered is the modification of the scale used to measure the attitude construct. In the present study, the items used to measure attitude were found to have neither high validity nor high reliability. Thus, in future research, researchers should consider developing a scale that confidently measures attitudes towards advertising. A further implication of this study also concerns a construct. In the study, Ohanian's (1990) source credibility scale was used to measure the credibility of AI-generated humans and real humans. An existing method was thus used for a new application. This means that it must be investigated whether the scale is even suitable for adequately measuring the credibility of AI-generated humans. A final implication in relation to a concept used in this study is to expand the measurement of purchase intention by differentiating between purchase intention and online purchase intention. This distinction would allow for a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior, as it is recognized that factors influencing general purchase intention may differ from those influencing online purchase intention. Thus, companies can develop more targeted marketing strategies by understanding the specific drivers for online purchases.

5.6 Conclusion

In summary, this study contributes to the current state of research on the use of AI-generated content in advertising. Although AI-generated content does not significantly impact purchase intention, it remains advantageous for certain companies to use it. The benefits of AI, such as cost reduction, hyperpersonalization, and greater flexibility, enhance overall company effectiveness and contribute to improved long-term performance. The use of AI-generated content offers numerous advantages over traditional approaches to content generation in marketing, which justifies further research in this area. Another important finding, which is not only interesting for marketing practitioners but also for the use of AI-generated content in other areas, is that AI-generated humans are perceived as more credible than real people. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the study has some limitations that could restrict the interpretability of the results.

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Appendix

- A. Questionnaire
- B. Treatment
- C. Source Credibility
- D. Descriptive Statistics
- E. Confirmatory Factor Analysis
- F. Regression Analysis

Appendix A - Questionnaire

Introductory text:

Dear participant!

For our Master's thesis in International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund University in Sweden, we are conducting an online survey on the perception of advertisements. We would be pleased if you would take about 8-10 minutes to complete our survey. First, you will be asked some general questions. You will then be presented with two advertisements for which you will be asked to answer specific questions. Please read the questions carefully and answer them as conscientiously as possible. It is important for the success of the study that you fill out the questionnaire completely and truthfully and do not skip any of the questions. There is no right or wrong. All data is collected anonymously in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). By clicking on "Continue", you give your consent to data processing.

Thank you for your participation!

Anna Tischendorf & Tara Brinkmann

Demographics:

1. Which gender do you feel you belong to?

- female
- male
- non-binary

2. How old are you?

- open question (participants can only write numbers)

3. What is your highest school qualification?

- Intermediate School Leaving Certificate
- A-Levels/ High School Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate
- No school leaving certificate

Technological Affinity:

Hint: The term *technical systems* refers to Apps and other software applications as well as entire digital devices.

Please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I like to occupy myself in greater detail with technical systems.					
I like testing the functions of new technical systems.					
It is enough for me that a technical system works; I don't care how or why.					
It is enough for me to know the basic functions of a technical system.					

Attitude Online Advertisement:

Please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Online-Advertisement is essential.					
In general, online-advertisement presents a true picture of the product being advertised.					
Online-advertisement often persuade people to buy things they shouldn't buy.					

Trust in Online Advertisement:

Please rate the following statements:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Information conveyed in advertising is truthful.					
Information conveyed in advertising is credible.					
Information conveyed in advertising is valuable.					
Information conveyed in advertising is useful.					
Information conveyed in advertising is likable.					
Information conveyed in advertising is positive.					
I am willing to rely on ad conveyed information when making purchase related decisions.					
I am willing to consider the ad conveyed information when making purchase related decisions.					
I am willing to recommend the product or service that I have seen in ads to my friends or family.					

Treatment Nr.1:

Please take a moment to look at the advertisement carefully.

[Picture]

Purchase Intention:

After viewing the advertisement, I became interested in making a purchase.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

After viewing the advertisement, I am willing to purchase the product being advertised.

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Advertisement Credibility:

Please rate the following statements about the advertisement shown:

The persons depicted in the advertisement are...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
dependable					
honest					
reliable					
sincere					
trustworthy					

expert					
experienced					
knowledgeable					
qualified					
skilled					

Treatment Nr.2:

Please take a moment to look at the advertisement carefully.

[Picture]

Purchase Intention:

1. **After viewing the advertisement, I became interested in making a purchase.**
 - strongly agree
 - agree
 - neither agree or disagree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree

2. **After viewing the advertisement, I am willing to purchase the product being advertised.**
 - strongly agree
 - agree
 - neither agree or disagree
 - disagree
 - strongly disagree

Advertisement Credibility:

Please rate the following statements about the advertisement shown:

The persons depicted in the advertisement are...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
dependable					
honest					
reliable					
sincere					
trustworthy					
expert					
experienced					
knowledgeable					
qualified					
skilled					

Final message:

Thank you for taking part in the survey. The survey is now closed.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at the following e-mail address: an2282ti-s@student.lu.se.

Appendix B - Treatment



Figure B1: Advertisement Hugo Boss - Original Version



Figure B2: Advertisement Hugo Boss - AI Version



Figure B3: Advertisement Zadig & Voltaire - Original Version



Figure B4: Advertisement Zadig & Voltaire - AI Version

Appendix C - Source Credibility

Table C1: Adjectives to measure source credibility

Dimension	Adjectives	Sources
Trustworthiness	Dependable	Appelbaum & Anatol, 1972; Bowers & Phillips, 1967; Friedman et al., 1979
	Honest	
	Reliable	
	Sincere	
	Trustworthy	
Attractiveness	Attractive	Baker & Churchill, 1977; Maddux & Rogers, 1980
	Classy	
	Beautiful	
	Elegant	
	Sexy	
Expertise	Expert	Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Appelbaum & Anatol, 1972
	Experienced	
	Knowledgeable	
	Qualified	
	Skilled	

Appendix D - Descriptive Statistics

Table D1: Socio-demographic data

	AI	Human	Σ	
	n	n	n	%
<i>n</i>	144	138	282	
Gender				
<i>male</i>	49	46	95	33.69
<i>female</i>	94	92	186	65.96
<i>divers</i>	1	0	1	/
Age				
<i>17-28 Years</i>	78	63	141	50
<i>29-44 Years</i>	16	22	38	13.48
<i>45-59 Years</i>	34	36	70	24.82
<i>60-77 Years</i>	16	17	33	11.70
Educational Level				
<i>Intermediate School Leaving Certificate</i>	28	26	54	19.15
<i>A-Levels/High School Diploma</i>	58	48	106	37.59
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>	39	46	85	30.14
<i>Master's Degree</i>	12	8	20	7.09

<i>Doctor's Degree</i>	3	6	9	3.19
<i>Other educational qualification</i>	4	4	8	2.84
<i>No educational qualification</i>	0	0	0	0

Table D2: Predictors and dependent variable by test groups

	n	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Technical Affinity							
<i>AI</i>	144	3.09	3.00	3.00	0.845	1.25	5.00
<i>Human</i>	138	3.08	3.25	3.25	0.819	1.00	5.00
Attitude							
<i>AI</i>	144	3.33	3.50	3.50	0.809	1.00	4.57
<i>Human</i>	138	3.10	3.00	3.00	0.810	1.50	5.00
Trust							
<i>AI</i>	144	3.18	3.21	3.29	0.589	1.57	5.00
<i>Human</i>	138	3.10	3.07	2.71	0.623	1.86	4.57
Purchase Intention							
<i>AI</i>	144	3.79	3.05	3.00	0.601	2.00	5.00
<i>Human</i>	138	3.64	3.00	3.00	0.516	1.75	5.00
Credibility							
<i>AI</i>	144	3.14	4.00	4.00	0.862	1.50	5.00
<i>Human</i>	138	3.00	3.75	4.00	0.762	1.50	5.00

Appendix E - Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table E1: Results CFA

Factor Loadings					
	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Stand. Estimate
Technical Affinity					
TA1	0.90732	0.0546	16.6318	<.001	0.86742
TA2	0.83302	0.0538	15.4756	<.001	0.81533
R_TA3	0.60206	0.0599	10.0512	<.001	0.59559
R_TA4	0.62583	0.0621	10.0699	<.001	0.60031
Attitude					
A1	0.59876	0.0770	7.7778	<.001	0.54651
A2	0.54824	0.0650	8.4352	<.001	0.61279
A3	-0.00313	0.0607	-0.0515	0.959	-0.00367
Trust					
T1	0.43062	0.0455	9.4630	<.001	0.5446
T2	0.5745	0.0476	12.077	<.001	0.6840
T3	0.5383	0.0485	11.107	<.001	0.6403
T4	0.4987	0.0456	10.946	<.001	0.6329
T5	0.3373	0.0483	6.980	<.001	0.4331

T6	0.3465	0.0565	6.137	<.001	0.3849
T7	0.7050	0.0587	12.002	<.001	0.6788
T8	0.4893	0.0516	9.480	<.001	0.5619
T9	0.6040	0.0552	10.943	<.001	0.6315
Factor Covariances					
			<i>p</i>		Stand. Estimate
Technical Affinity					
	Attitude		0.168		0.12779
	Trust		0.930		-0.00628
Attitude					
	Trust		<.001		0.84285

Table E2: Model Fit

X²	<i>p</i>	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
196	<.001	0.885	0.856	0.0875

Table E3: Results CFA

Factor Loadings					
	Estimate	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	Stand. Estimate
Purchase Intention					

PI2_HB	0.820	0.0461	17.81	<.001	0.876
PI1_ZV	0.651	0.0606	10.75	<.001	0.638
PI1_HB	0.875	0.0474	18.47	<.001	0.901
PI2_ZV	0.628	0.0535	11.75	<.001	0.681
Credibility					
C1_HB	0.469	0.0492	9.52	<.001	0.539
C2_HB	0.447	0.0405	11.05	<.001	0.612
C3_HB	0.504	0.0397	12.71	<.001	0.682
C4_HB	0.487	0.0404	12.05	<.001	0.655
C5_HB	0.579	0.0449	12.90	<.001	0.689
C6_HB	0.500	0.0490	10.21	<.001	0.571
C7_HB	0.517	0.0449	11.51	<.001	0.629
C8_HB	0.526	0.0440	11.97	<.001	0.650
C9_HB	0.664	0.0459	4.48	<.001	0.748
C10_HB	0.669	0.0442	15.16	<.001	0.772
C1_ZV	0.476	0.0483	9.66	<.001	0.545
C2_ZV	0.496	0.0410	12.10	<.001	0.656
C3_ZV	0.491	0.0375	13.08	<.001	0.696
C4_ZV	0.486	0.0398	12.21	<.001	0.661
C5_ZV	0.623	0.0449	13.86	<.001	0.725

C6_ZV	0.581	0.0473	12.28	<.001	0.663
C7_ZV	0.583	0.0460	12.68	<.001	0.681
C8_ZV	0.568	0.0431	13.19	<.001	0.701
C9_ZV	0.634	0.0443	14.32	<.001	0.744
C10_ZV	0.647	0.0427	15.17	<.001	0.774

Table E4: Model Fit Credibility

X²	<i>p</i>	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1461	<.001	0.671	0.632	0.164

Table E5: Model Fit Purchase Intention

X²	<i>p</i>	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
270	<.001	0.672	0.0153	0.690

Appendix F - Regression analysis

Table F1: Verification of Assumptions

Test	Statistic	p
Normality Test		
Shapiro-Wilk	0.995	0.482
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.0377	0.819
Anderson-Darling	0.395	0.370
Heteroskedasticity Test		
Breusch-Pagan	6.17	0.520
Goldfeld-Quandt	1.00	0.489
Harrison-McCabe	0.499	0.506
Autocorrelation Test		
Durbin-Watson	1.98	0.854
Collinearity Statistics		
	VIF	Tolerance
Gender	1.21	0.825
Educational Level	1.20	0.835
Ad Content	1.03	0.975
Technical Affinity	1.23	0.813
Age	1.23	0.816

Trust	1.26	0.792
Credibility	1.25	0.798

Table F2: Homogeneity of Variances Test

	F	df	df2	p
Levene's	5.56	1	280	0.019

Table F3: Tests of Normality

	statistic	p
Shapiro-Wilk	0.960	<.001
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.107	0.003
Anderson-Darling	4.19	<.001

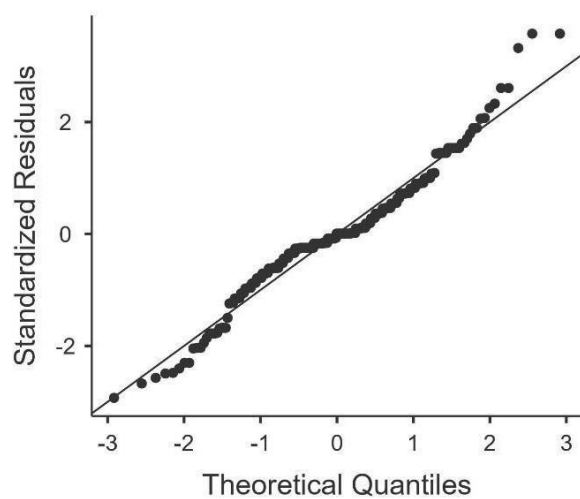


Figure F1: QQ Plot Credibility