How Consumer Lay Theories Shape Valuation of AI Creativity

Sara Caprioli
TU Munich
Armin Granulo
TU Munich
Noah Castelo
University of Alberta

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Abstract

Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have empowered algorithms to produce creative content across various domains. Yet, consumers remain skeptical about AI's role in creative tasks. This research proposes that consumers' aversion to use AI in creative tasks is rooted partly in misconceptions about the nature of creativity itself. According to the dual-path model of creativity, creativity involves two pathways: flexibility and persistence. We show that consumers often undervalue the persistence path (e.g., systematic exploration) compared to the flexibility path (e.g., distal associations). Since consumers believe that AI can excel at tasks requiring persistence but not flexibility, they undervalue AI-generated creative output. We show however that highlighting the persistence path increases consumer acceptance of AI in creative tasks. This research informs the consumer psychology of AI creativity, helping firms understand when AI use enhances or diminishes value in consumers' eyes.