

Seeing Is Believing? The Negative Effect of AI Disclosure in Environmental Appeals on Consumers' Climate Change Risk Perception and Support Behaviors

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Abstract:

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is reshaping content creation in advertising, offering unparalleled creativity and cost efficiency. For nonprofit environmental organizations with tight budgets, these advancements appear promising. However, our research uncovers unintended downsides of transparency in using AI-generated content. Across four studies, we demonstrate that AI disclosures in environmental appeals reduce consumers' perceived climate change risk and sharply diminish both financial and nonfinancial support for the cause. We further show that these adverse effects arise from consumers' inferences about the ad's authenticity, the organization's manipulative intent, and its commitment to the cause. Lastly, we introduce a strategy to alleviate these negative inferences, restoring consumers' climate risk perceptions. Our findings highlight the challenges of using AI in environmental ads and the need to balance transparency with strategies that sustain audience engagement.

Keywords: AI disclosure in advertising, environmental appeals, environmental charities

Track: Advertising and marketing communication