

Adoption of Generative AI in content creation: A case study from the advertising industry

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Abstract— This research examines the integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in content creation within the advertising industry, highlighting the balance between AI innovation and human creativity. Using the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), professionals from a global advertising agency were interviewed to understand their perspectives on AI adoption. The findings reveal that while AI enhances efficiency and content quality, its adoption requires content marketers to navigate a learning curve, influenced by industry competition and leadership support. The study emphasizes the importance of accessible, user-friendly support systems for successful AI integration, reflecting on how AI is reshaping the creative process in advertising.

Keywords—Artificial Intelligence, Content Marketing, Technology Acceptance, UTAUT.

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in advertising agencies marks a significant shift, blending human creativity with algorithmic efficiency. As AI increasingly assumes tasks like content generation and visual design, content marketers are facing new challenges and opportunities. This study investigates how AI is transforming the roles and practices of content marketers, focusing on the factors influencing their adoption of AI technologies. It also examines the broader impact on agency dynamics and the balance between AI collaboration and human creativity. Hence, this study addresses two research questions: 1) What factors influence content marketers' acceptance and utilization of generative AI? 2) How does the UTAUT model explain the adoption of generative AI technologies by content marketers in the advertising industry?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Central to the study of the research questions is the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT; Figure 1), a model that synthesizes four core constructs—*performance expectancy*, *effort expectancy*, *social influence*, and *facilitating conditions*—to comprehensively analyze technology acceptance behaviors [1]. The UTAUT model has explained mobile tech adoption in China, influenced by social factors and user demographics [2], and forecasted social media usage by Indonesian SMEs, explaining a majority of the variance in user intent [3]. Notably, Daka and Phiri [4] employed UTAUT to examine factors influencing the successful adoption of AI-powered e-banking services, demonstrating the model's applicability in AI-related fields.

Using the UTAUT framework, this study first examines how AI might improve work efficiency and the quality of creative content, with an expectation that AI will simplify routine tasks for those creating content (*performance expectancy*). It also considers how the user-friendliness and learning curve of AI tools affect their adoption (*effort*

expectancy). Additionally, the study looks at the impact of content marketers' views on AI within the advertising industry, which could influence whether marketers adopt these technologies (*social influence*). Lastly, factors like the availability of resources, access to training, and institutional backing are explored as essential elements that can foster a conducive environment for AI use in creative roles (*facilitating conditions*). These aspects inform the development of the interview process to understand both the intention to use AI and its actual usage.

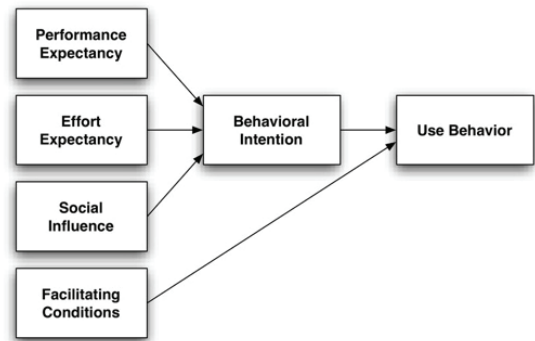


Figure 1. Simplified Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to collect the required data. The interviews, designed in line with UTAUT, aim to gather rich, nuanced insights into the motivations and experiences of the participants. The audio-recorded interviews will undergo thematic analysis to distill key findings. This method has been proven to be effective in similar research [5]. Altogether, six individuals from the content team of a multinational advertising firm in Singapore, spanning roles from executive to managing director are interviewed. The aim is to capture a range of insights within the study context, with junior staff providing operational viewpoints, mid-level managers discussing team dynamics, and senior leaders offering strategic perspectives.

IV. RESULTS

(For the sake of brevity and due to space limitation, only these antecedents are discussed in this abstract. The remaining antecedents will be explained in detailed during the conference presentation itself.)

A. Performance Expectancy

1) *Time Saving*. A content executive (R2) highlights AI's efficiency in reducing time spent on content ideation, stating that: "AI does help with reducing the amount of time that I spend just to come up with explanations for content ideas or campaign statements." In contrast, a senior content manager

(R6) emphasises strategic engagement over tactical execution, suggesting that while AI saves time, the value lies in the ability to focus on higher-level tasks: “Instead of spending hours on the laptop searching for relevant content..., AI enables us to use our time more efficiently in shaping better proposals for clients.”

2) *Quality Enhancement*. R2 acknowledges using AI to refine ideas, implying a collaborative approach where AI complements human creativity. Yet, R6 emphasises the irreplaceable nature of human judgement in idea refinement. This shows that while AI can assist in the creative process, human discernment remains crucial for nuanced decision-making.

B. Effort Expectancy

1) *Minimal Mental Effort*. A content intern (R1) emphasises the nuance in crafting prompts for AI, which involves a learning curve: “There is a little bit of a trick when it comes to how you phrase your prompts to get the ideas you want.” A Client Development Manager (R5), reinforces this sentiment, acknowledging the need for adaptation in phrasing questions to AI: “That took a little bit of adaptation like learning how to phrase your questions in a proper manner to get what you want.” These verbatims imply that while AI may reduce cognitive load, initial mental effort and skillful communication are essential for harnessing its capabilities effectively.

2) *Minimal Operating Effort*. Assistant Content Manager (R3) speaks to the ease of use of AI tools: “ChatGPT and Grammarly are renowned for their user-friendly interfaces...”. This suggests that these tools meet the minimal effort expectancy due to their seamless user experience. In contrast, R5 touches upon the deterrent effect of complex interfaces: “If the interface was hard to use, ...that will be an off-putting experience...” indicating that user-friendly design is crucial for AI tool adoption.

C. Facilitating Conditions

1) *Accessibility to Paid AI Features*. R2 mentioned that: “Having free access to (different AI tools)... would be great because it would give me a chance to try them out”; this highlighted the importance of financial barriers and organisational support in helping them adopt AI. However, R1 expresses concerns beyond mere accessibility: “Paid tools would be great... However, I am not sure if those would be easy to use.” This implies that beyond affordability, user-friendliness and training are key to facilitating AI adoption.

2) *Availability of Immediate Assistance*. R6 illustrates the value of having institutional technical support: “We have an immediate availability of technical support with our IT team...,” providing user assurance, while R1 values peer assistance: “Some of the teammates are very savvy in these AI technologies as well...,” ensuring confidence in AI use, illustrating that both formal and peer support are pivotal for adopting AI tools. This implies that both institutional technical support and peer expertise are integral to the

successful adoption and confidence in using AI within organizations.

V. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Firstly, the verbatims not only illustrate how AI helps save time and improve work quality in a workplace setting, but also emphasize the importance of human skills like critical thinking and emotional intelligence. While AI is efficient, it needs human insight to ensure high-quality final products that meet client needs. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into the workplace, this suggests a shift toward training employees in essential human-centric skills. Such training equips content marketers to effectively use AI, thereby enhancing their readiness to adopt these technologies strategically, which in turn bolsters their confidence in leveraging AI capabilities.

Secondly, the verbatims show that while content marketers are initially drawn to AI for its potential to reduce effort, they face a learning curve in mastering AI tools and interfaces. This presents a challenge for content marketers, which naturally steers them towards favoring AI tools that are user-friendly, as these require less effort to learn and can be more easily adopted into their existing workflows. Hence, the success of AI in content marketing hinges on tool design and initial user support. The implication is that this trend could widen the digital divide, with larger companies adopting AI faster than smaller ones. It may also influence hiring practices, with a growing preference for AI proficiency in candidates.

In conclusion, the adoption of generative AI by content marketers is driven by the technology's efficiency gains and its role in enhancing content quality. However, its successful integration is contingent upon content marketers' proficiency in human-centric skills and the availability of intuitive AI tools. The adoption is also shaped by broader industry trends and the organizational support provided, culminating in a collaborative human-AI synergy in the creative domain. Collectively, these insights highlight a transformation in the creative process, where human-AI collaboration is fostered by both technological advancement and supportive social dynamics in the advertising industry.

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