

Chapter 1

Playing With Words: The Use of GenAI by Advertising Copywriters

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a major driver of change in the advertising industry. Its impact has recently extended to the creative process within agencies through the implementation of Generative AI (GenAI) tools for producing images and texts. Advertising copywriters are beginning to incorporate GenAI tools into their daily work, but there are still few studies on how they use them. This research addresses this gap through an exploratory study of 20 questionnaires and in-depth interviews with professionals working in Spain. Results show that GenAI is currently viewed by copywriters as a complementary tool, particularly for searching for information and generating new ideas, but not as much for the writing process itself. The main perceived disadvantages are the lack of creativity and the lack of quality of the texts that GenAI is currently capable of producing. Moreover, advertising agencies often do not formally train their employees in the use of GenAI for copywriting, as they generally lack a strategic approach to leveraging these new technological advances.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout its history, advertising has been an industry or sector of activity particularly sensitive to technological changes. This is why the internet, the web, and social media revolutionized this profession (Knoll, 2016; Sánchez-Sánchez & Fernández-Cavia, 2018), and this is why Artificial Intelligence (AI) is currently a major driver of change (Martínez-Martínez, 2022; Ford et al., 2023; Iyer & Bright, 2024; Ercan et al., 2024). AI is already posing new challenges and opportunities for the advertising industry, in fields such as personalization, automatization, data processing, market research, media buying, content

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creation and so on (Ford et al., 2023). Yet, some experts consider that AI was left out of the creative process (Joshy, 2020).

In a recent article, Dimitrieska (2024) discusses the advantages and limitations of GenAI for the marketing and advertising industries and identifies reducing costs, improving customer's experience and increasing margins, efficiencies and productivity as the main expected benefits from the AI usage. Al Tawalbeh et al. (2025), investigating consumer attitudes towards the use of AI in digital advertising, consider that one important advantage of AI in digital advertising is the automation of content creation processes, facilitating the creation of "more relevant ads".

But the latest advancements and, in particular, Generative AI (GenAI) seem to be bound to transform the way advertising creatives conceive and develop advertising campaigns and messages. GenAI "expands the capabilities of previous AI technology" (Brüns & Meißner, 2024) and becomes especially convenient for social media content creation. It may prove particularly interesting for SMEs, typically lacking the resources of large companies (Wahid et al., 2023).

Copywriters and Art Directors now have extremely powerful text, image and video creation tools at their disposal. Whether these tools have come to help professionals do their work or even to replace some of these professionals is still unclear (Orr, 2024), but for the time being, GenAI has already made an impact in the way advertising creatives face their daily jobs.

GenAI is a specific kind of technology that provides tools capable of creating text and images in response to prompts, following the patterns and structures of existing texts and images available on the web. GenAI models have been developed by companies such as OpenAI, Google or Microsoft, including popular chatbots such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, or image and video generators such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, DALL-E or Sora. Their use can have a profound impact in the advertising business (Lisk, 2023), especially in the creative departments of agencies, so it is necessary to understand its mechanisms of adoption to anticipate future trends (Hajkowicz et al., 2023).

This is why this exploratory study wants to unveil how advertising copywriters apply GenAI in their professional tasks, what kind of tools they work with, how they use them and to what purpose, their advantages and disadvantages, the perceived usefulness and the foreseen limitations and pitfalls.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Following Schumpeter's categorization of industrial innovation (1934), GenAI could be considered a new method of production for advertising creatives, a new way to handle a commodity –creativity- that is considered the raw material in advertising agencies (Miliopoulou, 2024). This potential new method of production can also bring what the Austrian economist called 'creative destruction', meaning that the introduction of innovations triggers a process of replacement, in which new technological advancements displace the old methods and production systems.

Gen AI can also be categorized as a process innovation, following Hjalager (2002), in the sense that it is a technological advancement that has changed the way in which the textual and visual elements of a commercial advertisement can be conceived and produced. What still remains unclear is the pace at which advertising professionals are embracing GenAI, or, following Rogers' (2003) terminology on innovation, its rate of adoption.

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