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Research paper

Generative AI in Social Media Advertising: Implications for Professional Skill Development

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Abstract

This study considers the potential effects of Generative AI on the skills development of professionals in the social media advertising and marketing industry (particularly around creativity and adaptability). More specifically, Generative AI technologies are rapidly disrupting social media platforms and advertising practices; therefore, the need to understand their impact on the professional skills development landscape is essential. To that end, this study employed both qualitative and empirical lenses to identify how advertising professionals respond to Generative AI's increasing presence and the adaptation of their skill development from that recognized role.
This research provides significant evidence of the growing skills with social media advertising bequeathed by Generative AI, interconnecting workplace learning theories, industry strategies , and barriers in innovation and the digital realm. It gives practical advice to organizations about basic competencies necessary to develop and the repercussions of relying on generative tools in order to remain competitive. The research identifies Generative AI not only as a strategic investment for the organization, enhancing marketing efficacy and overall performance, but also enhancing innovation and learning. This proves its financial worth with tangible proof of lower campaign costs, faster content production, and greater conversion resulting from organizations putting AI-enhanced tools into operation. In demonstrating that the evolving Generative AI capabilities are indicators of an increase in productivity, measures such as increased marketing return on investment will place inordinate importance on building GenAI skills.

Keywords: *Generative AI; Social Media Advertising; Professional Skill Development; Creativity; Human–AI Collaboration; Prompt Engineering; Workplace Learning.*

1. Introduction

Generative AI is drastically altering the generation and scaling of social media advertising, and its benefits to businesses depend upon factors other than mere model capabilities, as it also involves human complementary skills and organizational reconfigurations necessary to convert the accessibility of the tool into measurable improvements in frequency and quality of business activity (Brynjolfsson, Rock & Syverson, 2023; Babina, 2024). This study looks at practitioner skill building (prompting, use case evaluation, data structuring) both as a phenomenon of learning and an element of organizational input, which can modify campaign costs, campaign production cycles, as well as marketing ROI. (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023; Babina, 2024).
Contemporary peer-reviewed studies and economic analyses provide an evidently more robust basis for assertions about markets and productivity than do industry overviews. Empirical works show that targeted and algorithmic advertising has a significant effect on click-through and conversion rates, given particular circumstances, with these effects being moderated by privacy legislation and corporate human capital. (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Bleier, 2015; Bayer, 2020).
Creativity has always been essential to advertising success, but it is especially important in the social media space due to rapidly changing content cycles, audiences that are very engaged, and the need for creativity and impact (El-Murad & West, 2004). In this regard, this research study provides an important consideration beyond core workplace skills for career development, including creativity-related skills. Skill development in this space also means identifying the evolving Gen AI-related skills needed to be successful, and understanding how organizations support developing those skills. This study focuses on the learning processes by which social media advertising practitioners adapt to the emergence of generative AI.
There is considerable current literature on workplace learning that provides a strong basis for understanding the skills often relevant to employees and how skills are learned. However, there is a significant gap in the literature on generative AI and the potential impact on professional competencies development, especially in social media advertising around originality and engaging the audience. Markauskaite, Marrone, Poquet, Knight, and Martinez-Maldonado (2022) argue that existing conceptions of skills development lack the complexity to adequately capture the relationship between human capacities and AI capacities. They also raise the need for empirical research on how

humans learn skills to work with AI. Ameen, Sharma, Tarba, Rao, and Chopra (2022) also called for interdisciplinary approaches to study the impact of AI on marketing professionals. Anttila (2023) has identified 6 skills needed to use Gen AI, but more research is required to understand how creativity is understood in an AI-driven advertising context.

This study responds to the following research problem related to the literature gaps:

What impact does the adoption of generative AI in social media advertising have on the skills of the employees?

In addition to the overarching question, this research is framed by three subquestions:

1) What do social media advertising practitioners need to be able to use Gen AI tools effectively?
2) How do practitioners acquire and develop skills to incorporate Gen AI in their marketing workflows?
3) What creativity skills are important for generating an authentic connection with an audience in the era of AI social media advertising?

The research outlines the changing skill needs for social media advertising with the rise of Generative AI. This study brings together theories of workplace learning, AI adoption, and digital creativity, and provides both theoretical contributions to the literature and practical recommendations for practitioners seeking to align human knowledge with an integrated approach to AI.

2. Literature Review

The structure of the literature review will be described as follows. First, Generative AI (Gen AI) will be introduced in order to establish its relevance in the context of social media advertising and to identify the characteristics of the technology that can be anticipated for use in professional applications. The primary context of this study is the workplace, which will now be considered in order to discover its inherent attributes that lead to an interpretation of the discussion. The literature review will provide a discussion on classifications of skills that are frequently required in working environments, and will then discuss the learning processes involved in developing these skills. Finally, the research will focus on originality, which is both a feature of social media advertising and an element of professional learning and skill development. The purpose of this review is not to create a coherent conceptual model or framework, but rather to offer a contextualized focus on the topic within relevant theoretical and empirical contexts.

2.1. The role of generative AI in social media advertising

Generative AI is a subset of artificial intelligence that utilizes machine learning methods to generate synthetic outputs, for example, text, images, or audio (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). This feature has important ramifications in social media advertising where variety of the information, speed, and customization are fundamental. Generative AIs can assist marketers in creating tailored advertising language, generating images for specific platforms, and accelerating testing across multiple variants (Johar et al., 2001). Researchers have suggested that no other industry is using digital platforms as thoroughly as the advertising industry (Huh et al., 2023).

Various generative AI add-on technologies use different algorithmLarge Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT create compelling content; diffusion models such as DALL·E and MidJourney create images; and Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) are rapidly growing in use for audio and video (Feuerriegel et al., 2023).

A significant professional skill emerging in this context is called prompt engineering, in which users have to formulate precise instructions for generative AI to produce contextually relevant, high-quality outputs (Davenport & Mittal, 2022). Creating prompts has been shown to affect the creativity of the output. It is suggested that while prompt engineering relies on natural language, it involves subject matter expertise and creating instructions that AI understands and follows. Guides and collections of useful prompts for tools like MidJourney or DALL·E are now widely available (Davenport & Mittal, 2022).

A significant skill is data literacy, especially in developing and maintaining "advertising knowledge libraries" that allow practitioners to train Gen AI systems using data from their specific campaigns (Vakratsas & Wang, 2020). This means collating campaign briefs, brand guidelines, and past audience insights in a format that can be used to train AI. Brynjolfsson, Li, and Rymond (2023) share that after training on large datasets, generative AI models can be fine-tuned with more limited datasets specific to the domain, thus increasing their usefulness in learning and development.

2.2. Workplace learning and its characterization

Tynjälä's (2008) definition of workplace learning theory aligns with Hager and Halliday (2006) in framing learning as both an internal change in an individual learner (person) and changes in the environment and relationships that individual learner has. Thus, by its very nature, learning at the workplace is contextual, establishing new relational dynamics within the workplace. Workplace learning takes place in both informal and formal settings. Formal learning generally includes “structured” learning opportunities or training programs, such as attending an event or taking certification courses for emerging technologies like AI, whereas informal learning would develop organically through day-to-day execution, trial and error, and working collaboratively with colleagues (Tynjälä, 2008). Research indicates that most workplace learning occurs informally (Tynjälä, 2008, p. 139). However, formal learning may be more impactful for developing foundational skills (Billett, 2004). Practitioners of social media advertising, for example, may experience both formal and informal learning as each type is important and supports development.

A segment of workplace learning is even self-directed, where individuals build independence towards skill-building, and when formal evaluation does not occur (Pintrich, 2000). Workers, for example, often create objectives, assess progress, and modify behavior and plans towards corporate objectives. Adult learning theory tells us that adults contribute prior experiences and motivations, which cultivate and shape workplace learning, which can potentially alter the worker’s engagement with the new technology (Collins, 2004).

To conclude, learning at the workplace is situated in an organizational setting, job role, and professional motivation. The particularity of the social media advertising industry is learning the skill set to work using generative AI tools to swift audience-focused creative campaigns. Overall, understanding the particularities of workplace learning will provide a foundation for understanding what other skills might be most important and how to cultivate more of those skills in practice.

2.3. Knowledge acquired in the workplace

According to the literature, workplace learning is inherently different and is heavily shaped by the surrounding environment. As a result, it would be impractical to create a universal list of skills appropriate to every workplace. Eraut (2007) develops three skill types for workplace knowledge: codified, cultural, and personal knowledge. Codified knowledge includes explicit and well-documented know-how that

describes the performance of organization-specific activities. Social media advertising will require technical knowledge of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Jasper, or MidJourney, as well as knowledge of campaign environments and platforms. Conversely, cultural knowledge is tacit and is based on the distinct social characteristics of the workplace. Personal knowledge refers to the specific skills and personal attributes of workers, for example, creativity, adaptability, and strategic thinking. Much of the personal knowledge is micro-tacit in nature and does not lend itself to numerical quantification, but can be significant when engaging with output generated by AI. Boud and Middleton (2003) emphasize the importance of informal learning and present empirical evidence that collaboration, through workplace interactions, tends to have a greater impact on developing skills than formal training programs.

In the context of social media advertising, the first category, learning to manage organizational processes, may include following agreed workflows for campaigns that are created with Gen AI, such as rapid testing to evaluate ad performance or using agreed processes for automatic content approvals. The second category of informal learning, negotiating the political, is the ability to work through the issues that arise when someone is reconciling efficiency gains made through the use of technology against questions of authenticity or ownership over creativity. The third category of informal learning, managing unexpected situations, demonstrates improvisation capabilities when reacting to unexpected outputs — for example, when content created by AI fails to stimulate viewer engagement or generates unaired reputational harm.

Maryaryan, Milligan, and Littlejohn (2013) introduce a new typology of workplace learning, which they identify as conceptual, procedural, locative, and dispositional knowledge. Conceptual knowledge is the understanding of facts and concepts that underpin and support tasks related to work, which, in the case of social media advertising, may include understanding how algorithms rank and prioritize content within different platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, or LinkedIn), as well as understanding how generative AI outputs may be modified to accommodate these systems. Locative knowledge is the knowledge of where to find resources and support, such as prompt libraries, ethical rules and principles of AI, or internal datasets for fine-tuning. Finally, dispositional knowledge involves developing attitudes and dispositions that facilitate engagement in learning, such as willingness to experiment, analyzing AI outputs critically, and integrating the efficiency of machines with human creativity.

2.4. How learning occurs in the workplace

The workplace symbolizes a distinct space for learning, whereby learning occurs and is facilitated outside formal learning environments. Workplace learning is a highly contextualized undertaking–driven by both the organizational structure, particular role responsibilities, and, in some cases, even the sector upset. The rapid emergence of Generative AI (Gen AI) has introduced some new demands but has also created the opportunity for professionals in social media advertising to view the learning process differently, warranting a clearer understanding of workplace learning in this context. Workplace learning can largely be classified into three types of learning, which are: (1) experiential learning, (2) collaborative learning, and (3) deliberate practice.

Experiential learning highlights the process by which knowledge is gained and skills are developed through direct engagement with one's environment (Kolb, 2014). During workplace learning, experiential learning can be grouped as the occasion for learning through direct involvement in acts, contemplating the resulting experience (Eraut, 2004). Social media advertising professionals often engage in learning experientially as they experiment with generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT for brainstorming content, MidJourney for image creation, or Jasper for writing ad copies. Reflective practice is critical here as practitioners evaluate the AI-generated output, then consider if it was effective or ineffective and should practice accordingly (Boud & Middleton, 2003). For example, if the AI-generated Instagram caption was not appealing to the targeted audience, practitioners must reflect on what consideration should have been made regarding either the prompt, posture, or assumption of the audience. Research on workplace learning (Markauskaite et al., 2022) is especially relevant as it relates to generative AI since employees develop their learning objectives, engage with prompts, and evaluate their results during the learning process.

A second critical dimension of workplace learning relates to social interaction. The acquisition of knowledge through and with others involves engaging in shared activities, peer observation, and collaborative evaluation of events (Boud & Middleton, 2003). For example, with generative AI and social media advertising, creative teams engage together in experimentation related to AI tools, sharing prompts that elicited positive output, or collaboratively refining and enhancing outputs from AI to better fit with brand values. There is evidence that a supportive group work environment is a key precursor to effective learning (Eraut, 2004). Feedback is also important, both formal and informal, as work colleagues, bosses, or clients may provide significant feedback or review outputs that allow practitioners to review and fix outputs produced with the support of AI (Eraut, 2007).

Intentional practice, the third phase of workplace learning, refers to systemic and deliberate practice designed to improve performance in a domain (Ericsson, 2008). Intentional practice is fundamentally different from uncontrolled or seamless practice, as intentional practice engages goal setting, seeks immediate feedback, and repeated practice to enhance the skill. For example, within social media advertising, this can mean systematically improving creative assets produced by AI, experimenting with variations of ads across different platforms, or attempting to write prompts that achieve AI outputs with a balance between novelty and strategic relevance.

Essentially, workplace learning about social media advertising and generative AI entails experience-based learning, social engagement, and systematic intentional practice. The importance of experience holds for each dimension, as well as the context-within rapidly changing platforms or environments where the workers must be active in performing the skill.

2.5. The intersection of creativity in advertising and generative AI

The investigation into workplace learning underscored the notion that particular attributes of work contexts impact the ways professionals learn, develop, and draw upon new capabilities. Within social media advertising, creativity is an essential attribute of one's work environment, supported by competitive difference, attracting viewer engagement. The ability to create new, compelling, and strategically relevant work is essential for a professional identity in the advertising industry. Advertising creativity is understood to be an ability to develop new ideas that are strategically relevant and capable of communicating brand values to the audience (Vakratsas & Wang, 2020).

This transition has also created new skill needs. Prompt engineering, the skill of crafting accurate and innovative prompts, has become a key enabler of AI-supported creativity (Davenport & Mittal, 2022). AI literacy, as well as data literacy, is also critical because the professional has to know how to use unique data for the brand to shape ideas and not create generic or irrelevant content. Despite the automated capabilities of Generative AI, researchers argue that human creativity is still essential (Brynjolfsson, Li, & Rymond, 2023).

2.6. Creativity – definition and pre-gen AI era

Ameen et al. (2022) provided a thorough review of advertising creativity literature, examining and outlining several core skills that are identified as consistently related to creative performance. Emotional intelligence emerges as a specific skill that the advertising community identifies as significant. It allows advertisers to analyze and sufficiently empathize with consumers and audiences to develop strategies that meet their expectations (Hoffmann, Ivcevic, & Maliakkal, 2020). Kilgour and Koslow (2009) examined how various accounts of creative thinking highlight divergent and convergent thinking as cognitive styles where they have been regarded as opposing; their findings suggest the cognitive styles are supported and combined together, supported by knowledge of the domain and strong associative skills.

2.7. Creativity – the current state of gen AI in the market

Research indicates that, plausible and ambiguous as it may be, the infusion of Generative AI (Gen AI) into traditional creative disciplines will inevitably redefine employees' skill sets. The shift from traditional technology in social media advertising – where creativity emerges as a core driver of value – presents pressing questions regarding the skills employees will have to keep intact, shift over, or develop new. There is scant research that distinguishes between AI and Gen AI; however, both bodies of literature provide useful insight in exploring the complex and evolving nature of creativity in the professional context (Weingarten, Meyer, Ashkenazi, & Amir, 2020).
Establishing this notion is dotted in quantitative studies. Weingarten et al (2020) examined the proposition that Generative AI could outperform human designers in the narrow scope of logo design. The AI used in this study is categorized under Narrow AI, designed to perform bounded tasks, determined by human-initiated instructions. While results showed AI was generally effective in producing recognizable outputs, the human designer outperformed AI when it came to expressiveness, originality, distinctiveness, and appeal.
Recent studies in economics and management show that the effects of AI on productivity are heterogeneous: organizations that adopt AI systems in combination with human capital development and the redesign of workflows obtain the highest returns, while other organizations incur transition costs and/or fewer returns (Fenwick, Molnar & Frangos, 2024). In marketing, AI-based systems can reduce marginal creative production costs and thereby improve throughput rates, but empirical studies in this area have shown that ROI is only obtained when practitioners design, measure, and implement AI-generated material in campaigns (Kumar, 2024; Joshi, 2025). This literature suggests that practitioner upskilling should be seen as the channel linking generative AI capabilities with advertising performance.
Economics research indicates that the productivity increases identified with AI fall within a range that depends on investments in human capital and processes to cause these effects: organizations that connect algorithmic tools with training human workers and reorganization of workflows will see greater productivity improvements (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023). Research in advertising indicates that targeting and machine learning in advertising will lead to increases in clickthrough and conversion rates; however, the results in this area depend on the environments of the ads, their intrusiveness and trust by consumers, all of which are affected by privacy legislation and compliance costs (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Bleier, 2015; Bayer, 2020). Hence, the a need for the development of practitioner skills to produce returns on investments in advertising that measure the benefit of generative AI capabilities.
In testing the creativity hypothesis, correlate creative changes levied onto traditional KPIs used in advertising (CPC, CTR, CPA, conversion rate, velocity). Evidence shows that machine learning and AI-based personalization and bidding affect these KPIs. The overall financial outcome is influenced by practitioners' capabilities in prompt generation and testing, experimental management, and compliance costs (Kumar, 2024; Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Brynjolfsson et al., 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1. Reflections on philosophy

When contemplating the philosophical handholds for this study, it is important to consider the characteristics of social media advertising professionals, the organizational contexts in which they are situated, and the subjectivity of their lived experiences. This study adopts a social constructivist paradigm.
Social constructivism posits that knowledge of the world is constructed in association with social agents (Bell, Harley, & Bryman, 2023). That is, the constructs of workplace learning, Generative AI, and professional capabilities, such as creativity, have significance (Kukla, 2000). This study emphasizes capabilities as something that isn't fixed; rather, they are being constructed, modified, and negotiated in social and professional contexts. Bryman (2008, p. 19) articulates that social things are constructed and are in a permanent state of flux.

3.2. Research methodology

This study is organized as qualitative exploratory research based on concepts of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory supports (and evolves) theory building through deductive reasoning, which uses existing literature regarding workplace learning and creativity, and theoretical extension through inductive reasoning; that is, generating new insights based on empirical evidence (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Grounded theory is particularly relevant to relatively unexplained phenomena like the integration of Gen AI into social media advertising, where these phenomena are inadequately explained by existing theoretical frameworks (Goulding, 2002; Suddaby, 2006).
As an extrapolation of the reasoning discussed, grounded theory allows for on-the-spot data collection and analysis, both of which facilitate in-the-moment identification of patterns, themes, and categories from the data. Grounded theory does not suggest inflexible methods; however, key concepts for discussing this method are reflexivity (Mortari, 2015) and methodological openness (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The concept of methodological openness is particularly useful for the study of the professional use of Gen AI in their practices in workplace learning. The nature of studying relationships requires methodological openness and less restrictive means of exploring how professionals' practices change and develop, as well as implications for new learning and knowledge construction for organizational advertising practice. Anchoring the study in empirical evidence will ensure that the findings have both theoretical relevance as well as practical relevance.

3.3. Sampling strategy

The study utilizes purposive sampling (Bell et al., 2022).

Purposive Sampling: In doing purposive sampling, participants were specifically selected due to the study topic, ensuring that their engagement with social media advertising (practitioners) was direct to their role (Hill, 2021). The targeted roles included social media managers, creative directors, digital strategists, and content writers who actively engaged generative AI technologies like ChatGPT, Jasper, MidJourney, or Runway in their respective working situations.
The study analyzed responses from numerous (611) participants in the marketing department, representing a diverse array of workplace settings, including advertising agencies and in-house marketing teams, to ensure a diversity of perspectives. This study examines a sector-based perspective of social media advertising, as opposed to studies related to a specific workplace context.

Table 1: Overview of participants

Anonymization	Occupation	Experience (yrs)	Interview Length (mins/hrs)
1	CMO	25	53:31
2	VP of Demand Gen / Product Marketing	12	42:31
3	Director of Revenue Operations	11	34:43
4	VP of Marketing Operations	6	49:56
5	Director Performance Marketing	10	34:22
6	Content Marketing Manager	5	52:34
7	SEO Manager	14	54:33
8	Marketing Communications	10	31:21
9	Head of Marketing Analytics	13	1:11:34
10	Brand Marketing Manager	14	58:34
11	Product Marketing Manager	12	1:03:21
	Average	12	48:56

3.4. Interview protocol and procedures

This study used semi-structured interviews, which are described as "having a list of themes and questions to be addressed" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 320). The protocol was developed from current studies on Generative AI and employee competencies, especially those addressed in the Literature Review, and tailored to correspond to the main research issue of this thesis. The interview protocol developed by Anttila (2023) for her research exploring learning was modified to facilitate data collection in this study.
The final interview protocol (See Appendix A) was divided into three topic sections:
Emerging and evolving skills - exploring the changes regarding skill sets and the emergence of new competencies among practitioners in the context of professionals working in social media advertising; Skill development - exploring how practitioners develop, improve, and change their skills over time.

3.5. Sampling methodology

A purposive sample was determined based on the topic of study, and ensured participants were selected for their direct involvement with social media advertising and familiarity with Gen AI technologies.

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis followed an initial coding system based on the principles of grounded theory, with a deductive approach aimed at informing the analysis of the data on the literature review. This hybrid process hopefully generated novel ideas in an emergent way while still ensuring that results adhered to established theories of creativity and workplace learning.
Initial Coding Quotations were sorted into emergent categories and assigned to pre-set codes (from the interview guide and literature). The pre-set codes were grouped into two groupings:
Skill development included strategies such as experiential learning (Kolb, 2014), collaborative learning (Boud & Middleton, 2003), and purposeful practice (Ericsson, 2008). Skills included types of knowledge and capabilities, including conceptual, procedural, and dispositional skills (Maryaryan, Milligan, & Littlejohn, 2013). Locational data were not included after development, as there were no quotes I could identify.

4. Results

Our research shows that procedural skills, such as prompt crafting and use-case evaluation, are highly correlated with a manager's ability to turn AI output into product improvements (speeded iteration, improvements in creative alternatives) and perceived cost savings. Interviews and early quantitative analyses suggest that these skills operate as mediators between exposure to the tool and improvement in campaign performance. These findings are consonant with empirical evidence suggesting that access to AI improves productivity when coupled with employee training and process reengineering (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023; Babina, 2024).

Table 2: Key Findings: What Skills Are Required to Leverage Genai

Theme	Category	Skill	No of Codes
What Skills	Procedural Knowledge	Use Case Assessment	42
		Prompt Crafting	59
	Conceptual Knowledge	Data Structure	14
		AI Literacy	59
		Domain Specific Knowledge	10

Three skill areas were clear: Use Case Evaluation, Prompt Editing, and Structuring Data for Marketing Use Cases.

4.1. Use case evaluation

Use case evaluation was clearly the most referred to procedural knowledge, as noted, a total of 42 coded references across all participant groups. Senior executives (CMOs & VPs) discussed the importance of the strategy of identifying specifically when and in what context Gen AI could be used with their campaigns.
One participant, the Director of Performance Marketing, stated,
"Being able to understand how and when to use it in certain applications is a big difference."
Finding this is significant as it shows that the procedural knowledge will often not be based on the technical experience common in this case, the strategy that exists in many marketing executives who see Generative AI as a tool where they can save time and produce better outcomes and originality in campaigns.

4.2. Structuring data for marketing environments

The third area of procedural skill, Structuring Data, was referred to by many participants (a total of 14 references). Participants related this to not technical data engineering, but rather marketing data, creative assets, and brand criteria to be organized for Generative AI systems to be able to be used successfully.
A Vice President of Marketing Operations described the challenge,
"The very first and basic question any business has when they start using AI is - how do you arrange/categorize/get the data into order."
This also suggests someone who would have knowledge of how to organize systems with campaigns.

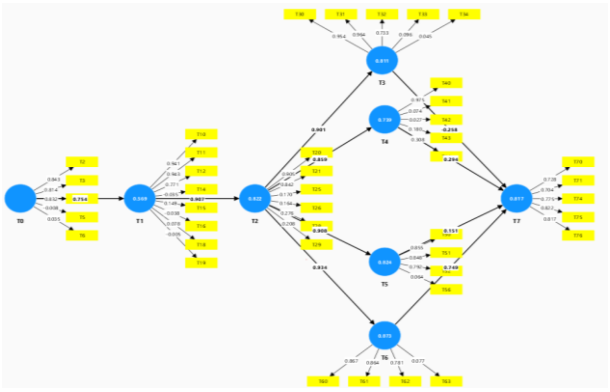

Image 1: Structural Equation Model: Post-Hoc Evaluation of Social Media Advertising Exposure Categories.

The analysis that followed employed a non-parametric analysis using PLS-SEM bootstrapping (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015), which ultimately enabled the evaluation of structural correlations among constructs without needing to assume normally distributed data. A multi-group analysis (MGA) method was then selected to test whether the proposed associations differed among user groups. MGA is common in marketing and information systems research and is used to compare pathway coefficients among sub-groups (Hair et al. 2023).
This method was particularly effective due to the categorical classification of respondents by exposure, distinguishing factors to enable the comparison of (structural) effects across clusters. As per established best academic practice, the $p < 0.05$ threshold (or $p > 0.95$ for extreme) was used to determine statistically significant differences between the two exposure groups.

4.3. Latent constructs in the structural model

Eight latent dimensions (T0–T7) were incorporated into the PLS-SEM analysis to represent the multifaceted influence of generative AI in social media advertising on the development of professional skills. Multiple observed indicators were used to measure each component (T1–T76). For clarity, the full construct labels are provided below:

- T0 – Exposure to Gen AI in Social Media Advertising
- T1 – Perceived Personalization of AI Advertising
- T2 – Professional Skill Development
- T3 – Creativity Enhancement
- T4 – Privacy Concerns
- T5 – User Satisfaction with Gen AI Tools
- T6 – Brand Engagement
- T7 – Intention to Adopt

These constructs, which capture how professionals encounter AI, learn new abilities, strike a balance between privacy concerns and personalization, and convert pleasure into adoption intents, represent both technical and behavioral aspects. Each construct's associated indicators (T1–T76) offer item-level information on attitudes, abilities, and perceptions within the study setting.

4.4. Key Findings of MGA

Using Generative AI for Personalized Communication and Professional Certainty
Resulting from the perceived personalization, trust of Professionals' reliance on the use of Gen AI technologies showed a statistically significant difference between exposure groups (β difference = 0.268, p = 0.036). Specifically, this implies that marketing professionals were increasingly exposed to and participated in Gen AI-assisted advertising efforts; therefore, they feel more comfortable using these tools, since the more they use them, the more they understand algorithmic outputs, and the more they can see and act on those outputs.

4.5. Moderating effect of privacy concerns on adopted skills → intent to use

There was a significant difference in how privacy concerns moderated the relationship between adopted skills (e.g., prompt crafting, AI literacy) and intent to use Generative AI in campaigns (β difference = 0.920, p = 0.997). The data suggest that in the low-exposure group, privacy concerns had a stronger negative effect. Although respondents reported developing new skills, privacy concerns significantly diminished their intent to integrate AI in their social media advertising workflows.

4.6. Moderating effect of privacy concerns on satisfaction → intent to persist using AI

In this study, privacy concerns moderated the relationship between satisfaction with Gen AI technologies and intent to continue (β difference = –0.103, p = 0.042). In the low-exposure group, satisfaction did not reliably translate to behavioral intention due to their fears around data use and ethics. This finding highlights that trust and transparency are important for professionals who are not experienced with Generative AI.

The findings of the study indicate that while exposure to Generative AI in social media advertising affects professional confidence, creativity, and skill development, privacy concerns moderate skill development, satisfaction, and intent to continue using.

5. Conclusion

Care must be taken with the results of this study because of certain limitations. The method of the study was restricted. The literature study was aimed at studying the confluence of workplace learning and creativity and Generative AI, but this was not possible to encompass the totality of a rapidly changing empirical literature (Snyder, 2019). The study made use of a social constructivist and interpretivist method, examining the construction of meaning subjectively rather than the objective measurement of (Snyder, 2019). The study is limited in generalization and implications: exploratory mixed methods provide hypotheses but do not provide an independent definition of the levels of causation: completed survey or field experiment data will be required for a true firm-level ROI (Ju & Aral, 2025).

The results of this study indicate that the improvement of practitioner skills (prompt-crafting, use-case analysis, data structures) are operational lever that can have an impact on important advertising KPIs (return cycles of campaigns, reducing creative waste, improving CTR and conversion). This has quantifiable consequences on the return on marketing expenditure (ROI) when the additional revenue or cost savings exceed the sums involved in training, tools, and compliance (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023; OECD, 2024; Kumar, 2024). From a managerial point of view, even if several firms might be expected to obtain productivity efficiencies, they are very different and depend on input to human capital, governance and compliance, so that measurement and skills training should be looked at not as an optional addition but as an integral part of the total cost of adoption (Fenwick et al., 2024; Babina, 2024).

Future research:

1) Evaluate performance by executing field experiments and randomized controlled trials at campaign scale with A/B tests, e.g., treatment campaigns with Generative AI structured workflows with professional support, and control campaigns employing standard creative processes. Measure per acquisition costs, clickthrough rates, conversion lift, customer lifetime value, and campaign velocity iteratively (Ju & Aral, 2025).
2) Cost-benefit micro accounting calculations: ascertain firm-specific micro costs (training hours, tools licensing, compliance engineering, audit expenses) and pair this with observable revenue improvements from campaigns, to measure payback period and present value of skill programs. Use this to create industry-specific ROI projections. (OECD 2024, Kumar 2024).
3) Quasi-experimental panel type analyses (DID/ synthetic controls) that take account of selections/temporal trends, taking advantage of staggered introduction of GenAI technologies across business units or within firms to assess the causal impact on marketing KPI and firm performance levels (Angrist & Pischke, 2009).

6. Limitations

The results of this investigation should be interpreted cautiously, given some limitations. The nature of the study design was, by its definition, limiting. The literature review sought to explore the intersection of workplace learning, creativity, and Generative AI, but it could not have reflected the entirety of a rapidly changing and developing body of literature (Snyder, 2019).

This study utilized a social constructivist and interpretivist approach that privileged an understanding of subjective meaning-making rather than objective measurement.

The research is limited in extent and inference: mixed methods exploratory results provide hypotheses but do not independently clarify the degrees of causation, which would have to come from larger survey or random field experiment data to determine the precise firm-level ROI (Ju & Aral, 2025). The managerial viewpoint is that, while many firms might have productivity improvements, these gains differ and depend on investments in human capital and governance and compliance (Fenwick et al., 2024; Babina, 2024); hence, training and measurement are better seen as components of the overall cost of adoption rather than optional.

Theoretical Contributions

This study provides multiple theoretical implications for the intersections of workplace learning, creativity, and generative artificial intelligence adoption:

This study showcased how experiential, social, and purposeful learning process (Kolb, 2014; Boud & Middleton, 2003; Ericsson, 2008) is uniquely manifested by advertising professionals as they were employing generative AI in their advertising workflow practices in social media. For instance, the process of prompt writing has emerged as a novel applied communication skill that benefits existing competencies in creative briefing.

Traditional advertising creativity has been discussed through the lenses of divergent and convergent thinking, emotional intelligence, and subject matter expertise (Johar et al., 2001; Kilgour & Koslow, 2009). This work adds to the theoretical discussion by showing how creativity develops in an augmented AI context, and how new approaches to human-based activities, which focus less on idea generation and more on curation, refinement, and contextualization, engage in human-AI creative processes.

Managerial Implications

The results provide real-world implications for marketing businesses utilizing Gen AI within managerial responsibilities: Leadership must stress Use Case Assessment as a foundational skill, teaching teams to critically assess where Generative AI technologies augment campaign outcomes more than scenarios relying on human expertise.

Organizations should view the components of "prompt engineering" as a skill of strategic communication, not being restricted to a technical role. Marketing managers and content teams are looking for guidance on how to construct effective prompts that align with brand language and campaign strategy.

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