

When the Brand Is No Longer Human: Generative AI, Perceived Human Agency and the Future of Consumer-Brand Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is moving rapidly from a backstage marketing technology to a visible creator of advertisements, social-media content, brand stories, synthetic models and conversational communication. This transition raises a fundamental branding question: what happens to consumer-brand relationships when consumers perceive that meaningful communicative agency has shifted from humans to machines? Existing research documents consumer responses to AI-authored messages, AI disclosures, virtual influencers and synthetic advertising, but these streams remain fragmented and frequently emphasise immediate outcomes such as advertising attitudes, purchase intentions or credibility. This conceptual study integrates consumer-brand relationship theory, anthropomorphism and mind-perception research, brand-authenticity scholarship and emerging GenAI-marketing evidence to explain the relational consequences of AI-generated brand communication. It introduces perceived human agency as a central mechanism and develops an AI-Humanity Paradox: GenAI can simultaneously increase perceived innovativeness, novelty and creative capability while weakening brand humanness, authenticity and emotional sincerity. Comparative evidence from Coca-Cola's GenAI-generated Holidays Are Coming campaign and Levi's collaboration with Lalaland.ai demonstrates how these tensions become particularly salient when AI enters communication domains associated with heritage, emotion, identity and human representation. The paper further distinguishes AI-assisted from AI-authored communication and proposes that perceived replacement of human intention, rather than AI use per se, determines relational risk. The resulting framework contributes to emerging research on GenAI and branding by repositioning artificial content generation as a problem of agency attribution, authenticity and relationship meaning.

Keywords- Generative artificial intelligence; consumer-brand relationships; perceived human agency; brand humanness; brand authenticity; AI-generated advertising; anthropomorphism; digital branding.

I. INTRODUCTION

Generative artificial intelligence is changing the creative architecture of marketing. Unlike earlier applications of artificial intelligence that primarily supported prediction, targeting, optimisation and recommendation, GenAI can directly produce the words, images, voices, videos and narratives through which brands communicate with consumers. Consequently, AI is moving from an invisible analytical infrastructure to the visible creative surface of branding (Hermann & Puntoni, 2024; Chan & Choi, 2025). This transition matters because marketing communication has historically been interpreted not simply as information but as an expression of organisational intention, personality, values and relationship orientation.

Branding scholarship has long established that consumers can treat brands as quasi-social actors. Brands acquire personalities, communicate intentions, become attached to consumers' identities and participate in relationships that consumers experience as psychologically meaningful (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). Anthropomorphism research further demonstrates that people routinely attribute human-like intentions, emotions and

mental states to non-human actors when such attribution helps them understand, predict or socially engage with those actors (Epley et al., 2007). Brand communication therefore derives part of its relational power from an often-implicit assumption that some form of meaningful human intention exists behind what the brand says and does.

Generative AI unsettles that assumption. A brand can now express sympathy without a person writing the expression, tell a nostalgic story using synthetically generated scenes, present human-looking models who never existed, or respond conversationally through systems capable of producing apparently empathic language at scale. Such communication can be polished, personalised and persuasive while simultaneously raising uncertainty about who - or what - is actually speaking. The core branding issue is therefore not simply technological adoption. It concerns the attribution of agency behind the brand's voice.

Emerging evidence suggests that this distinction has material consequences. Across seven preregistered experiments, Kirk and Givi (2025) found that emotional marketing communications believed to have been authored by AI produced lower positive word-of-mouth and loyalty than equivalent human-authored communications. Perceived authenticity and moral disgust helped explain this response, and the disadvantage weakened when the message was factual or when AI merely edited rather than authored the communication. Wu, Doodoo and Wen (2025) similarly demonstrate that consumers distinguish between AI involvement in advertising placement and AI involvement in creative production, indicating that reactions depend on the task delegated to the machine rather than on the mere presence of AI.

Yet the emerging literature remains fragmented. AI-advertising research often concentrates on advertising effectiveness, disclosure, novelty or purchase intention; virtual-influencer research investigates authenticity, trust, mind perception and parasocial interaction; and brand-authenticity research developed largely before GenAI became capable of large-scale creative authorship (Morhart et al., 2015; Koles et al., 2024; Joel-Edgar et al., 2025). What remains insufficiently explained is the relational process connecting perceived AI authorship to changes in the way consumers experience the brand itself.

This paper therefore seeks to explain how and why visible GenAI involvement in brand communication can reshape consumer-brand relationships by altering perceptions of human agency, brand humanness and authenticity. It does not assume that AI communication is inherently detrimental. Instead, it develops a dual-pathway argument: AI can enhance perceived innovativeness, novelty and creative capability while simultaneously weakening relational cues traditionally associated with human intention, sincerity and emotional presence. This tension is conceptualised as the AI-Humanity Paradox.

The paper addresses the following central research question: How does perceived GenAI authorship reshape consumer-brand relationships through changes in perceived human agency, brand humanness and authenticity, and under what communication conditions are these relational effects likely to be strongest? The study contributes in four ways. First, it shifts attention from the binary distinction between human- and AI-generated content toward perceived human agency. Second, it distinguishes AI-assisted from AI-authored communication. Third, it integrates brand-relationship, anthropomorphism, authenticity and GenAI-advertising literatures into a common conceptual framework. Finally, it grounds that framework in comparative case evidence involving Coca-Cola's GenAI holiday advertising and Levi's use of synthetic models.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Consumer-Brand Relationships and the Humanisation of Brands

The idea that consumers form relationships with brands is firmly established in marketing theory. Fournier (1998) demonstrated that consumers experience brands as meaningful relationship partners and introduced brand relationship quality as a way of understanding the strength and character of these bonds. Aaker's (1997) brand-personality framework similarly showed that consumers assign human personality characteristics - including sincerity, competence and excitement - to brands. Later work synthesised these traditions by demonstrating that consumers can perceive brands as possessing human-like forms, minds, personalities and relational roles (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017).

Anthropomorphism provides an important psychological foundation for these processes. Epley et al. (2007) define anthropomorphism as attributing human-like characteristics, motivations, intentions or emotions to non-human agents and identify sociality, effectance and accessible human knowledge as key drivers. In digital settings, human-like cues can consequently make technological agents feel more socially present and relationally accessible. Contemporary evidence demonstrates that anthropomorphic AI can enhance engagement and that perceived humanness, attractiveness, autonomy and trustworthiness influence relationships with virtual actors (Liu & Wang, 2025; Gomes et al., 2025).

However, anthropomorphism creates an important paradox for GenAI branding. Brands may increasingly sound human while being produced less directly by humans. The social cues become stronger while the perceived source of those cues becomes more artificial. This distinction directs attention away from surface-level anthropomorphism toward whether consumers believe genuine human intention remains behind the communication.

2.2. From AI as Marketing Tool to AI as Communicative Actor

AI in marketing has evolved from predictive applications toward systems capable of generating creative outputs. Hermann and Puntoni (2024) distinguish the emerging consumer implications of generative systems from earlier predictive AI, while Chan and Choi (2025) identify advertising, service, innovation and consumer adoption as major GenAI-marketing domains. The shift is consequential because creative communication has traditionally been interpreted as a domain involving judgement, imagination and intentional expression.

Existing studies suggest that consumers distinguish sharply among AI roles. Wu et al. (2025) found different responses when AI was described as placing an advertisement rather than creating it, implying that evaluations depend on whether the delegated task is perceived as appropriate for machines. Kirk and Givi (2025) similarly report that negative responses to AI authorship are attenuated when AI functions as an editor rather than as the principal author.

This paper defines perceived human agency as the extent to which consumers believe meaningful human intention, judgement, creativity and responsibility remain behind a brand's communication. This construct differs from humanness. Agency concerns the inferred origin and intentional control of communication; humanness concerns how human-like the brand appears. The former is proposed as an antecedent of the latter.

2.3. Perceived Humanness, Mind Perception and Brand Relationships

Research involving virtual influencers provides valuable evidence concerning agency attribution. Joel-Edgar et al. (2025) find that human virtual influencers receive greater mind perception than AI virtual influencers and that blame attribution subsequently affects brand trust. Importantly, brands do not escape relational consequences merely because an artificial actor is the immediate communicator.

The literature consequently suggests that artificiality and humanness are not opposites. A synthetic entity can appear highly human-like, while communication originating within a conventionally human brand can suddenly appear less human once AI authorship becomes salient. This makes perceived agency particularly important for understanding GenAI brand communication.

Proposition 1. Greater perceived AI authorship reduces perceived human agency when consumers believe that meaningful creative judgement or emotional expression has been transferred from humans to an artificial system.

Proposition 2. Reduced perceived human agency decreases perceived brand humanness, particularly when the communication contains strong social or emotional cues.

2.4. Brand Authenticity in an AI-Mediated Environment

Authenticity has historically been associated with sincerity, continuity, credibility, integrity and resistance to purely commercial motives (Beverland, 2005; Morhart et al., 2015). Beverland's research demonstrates that authenticity depends partly on consumers' interpretations of production methods, heritage and perceived sincerity, while Morhart et al. (2015) identify credibility, integrity, symbolism and continuity as key dimensions of perceived brand authenticity.

GenAI complicates these authenticity cues because communication can mimic emotional and creative expression without requiring corresponding subjective experience. Kirk and Givi's (2025) AI-authorship effect is especially important here: emotional messages attributed to AI were evaluated less favourably partly because they were perceived as less authentic, whereas factual messages produced weaker penalties. This implies that authenticity expectations vary according to communicative purpose.

Consequently, AI does not inevitably destroy authenticity. Rather, relational problems arise when there is a mismatch between what the communication symbolically claims to represent and what consumers believe its production process can authentically support.

Proposition 3. Lower perceived human agency reduces brand authenticity when consumers regard human intention or lived emotional experience as relevant to the meaning of the communication.

Proposition 4. The negative authenticity consequences of AI authorship are stronger for emotional, heritage-oriented, identity-related and socially symbolic communication than for factual or primarily functional communication.

2.5. The Positive Pathway: Innovation, Novelty and Artificial Creativity

A purely negative account would be inconsistent with the emerging evidence. GenAI can generate positive consumer responses when consumers value innovation, novelty, curiosity or efficiency. Jung et al. (2025) find that perceived artificial creativity enhances trust in AI and perceived humanness in luxury advertising, with informativeness and novelty contributing strongly to purchase intentions. Recent experimental evidence also indicates that AI involvement can increase curiosity and content engagement and that virtual influencers may benefit from perceived uniqueness despite lower trustworthiness relative to humans.

The effect of artificiality is therefore contingent rather than uniformly negative. Consumers may admire technical sophistication while questioning emotional sincerity. A brand may appear innovative yet impersonal, creative yet inauthentic, technologically advanced yet less relationally warm. This duality forms the basis of the proposed AI-Humanity Paradox.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts an integrative conceptual review combined with embedded comparative case analysis. An integrative approach is appropriate because the research problem spans several partially developed literatures - consumer-brand relationships, anthropomorphism, mind perception, authenticity, AI advertising, virtual influencers and GenAI disclosure - that have not yet converged around a common explanatory model.

The review prioritised peer-reviewed scholarship that either established the theoretical foundations of brand relationships, anthropomorphism and authenticity or directly examined consumer responses to AI-authored communication, AI-generated advertisements, AI disclosures, virtual influencers and synthetic representation. Particular attention was given to recent research published in journals including Journal of Business Research, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, and Journal of Product & Brand Management. The purpose was conceptual synthesis rather than exhaustive bibliometric enumeration.

Two cases were selected because they represent theoretically contrasting uses of visible GenAI and are directly documented in peer-reviewed scholarship. Coca-Cola represents AI intervention in emotionally embedded brand heritage, whereas Levi's x Lalaland.ai represents AI intervention in human representation and diversity. The cases are used analytically rather than statistically: their purpose is to illuminate how agency, authenticity and humanness concerns manifest in different symbolic contexts.

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS

4.1. Coca-Cola: When AI Enters Brand Heritage

Coca-Cola's Holidays Are Coming campaign represents a highly recognisable Christmas brand asset associated with nostalgia, tradition and emotional memory. Its GenAI-enabled recreation generated substantial consumer backlash. Heimstad et al. (2027) analyse 7,822 YouTube and Reddit comments concerning the campaign and identify content-related objections, psychological reactions involving authenticity, creativity and human connection, and socio-ethical concerns involving labour displacement, corporate motives and perceived greed.

The Coca-Cola case therefore illustrates heritage sensitivity: the relational cost of AI substitution may be particularly high when consumers regard human creativity as integral to an established emotional brand ritual.

Proposition 5. The negative relational effect of perceived AI authorship increases with the emotional and heritage significance of the brand communication being automated.

4.2. Levi's x Lalaland.ai: Synthetic Representation and Human Participation

Levi Strauss & Co.'s 2023 collaboration with Lalaland.ai involved plans to supplement conventional fashion imagery with AI-generated models representing varied body types, ages and skin tones. The initiative attracted criticism because stakeholders interpreted the diversity rationale as potentially substituting synthetic representation for employment and participation by real diverse models. Maiolo's (2024) peer-reviewed case study documents the controversy and Levi's subsequent clarification that the pilot was not intended to substitute for real diversity initiatives or human models.

The case suggests that AI-generated humans create relational risk when consumers interpret technological substitution as inconsistent with the social values communicated by the brand.

Proposition 6. AI-generated human representation weakens authenticity and relational legitimacy when consumers perceive synthetic representation as replacing rather than augmenting substantive human participation.

4.3. The AI-Humanity Paradox

The literature and cases together reveal two competing pathways. The innovation pathway links GenAI use with perceived novelty, creativity, responsiveness and technological sophistication, potentially improving innovation-related evaluations. The humanity pathway links perceived AI authorship with reduced human agency, lower humanness and authenticity, and weaker emotional connection or consumer-brand relationship quality.

The positive pathway is supported by findings concerning artificial creativity, curiosity and uniqueness (Jung et al., 2025; Volles et al., 2024), whereas the negative pathway is supported by work on AI authorship, disclosure, service-ad trust and virtual-endorser authenticity (Kirk & Givi, 2025; Grigsby et al., 2025; Song et al., 2024).

Proposition 7. GenAI-generated brand communication produces an AI-Humanity Paradox whereby perceived innovativeness can increase simultaneously with declining perceived human agency and relational authenticity.

The distinction between assistance and substitution provides an important boundary condition. Consumers appear more accepting when AI supplements rather than replaces tasks perceived as requiring human judgement. Kirk and Givi (2025) find weaker negative effects when AI acts as editor, while Grigsby et al. (2025) show that trust can be protected when AI generates tangible elements while real humans remain in intangible service representations.

Proposition 8. Negative relational responses to GenAI are weaker when consumers perceive AI as augmenting human creativity rather than substituting for human authorship, judgement or representation.

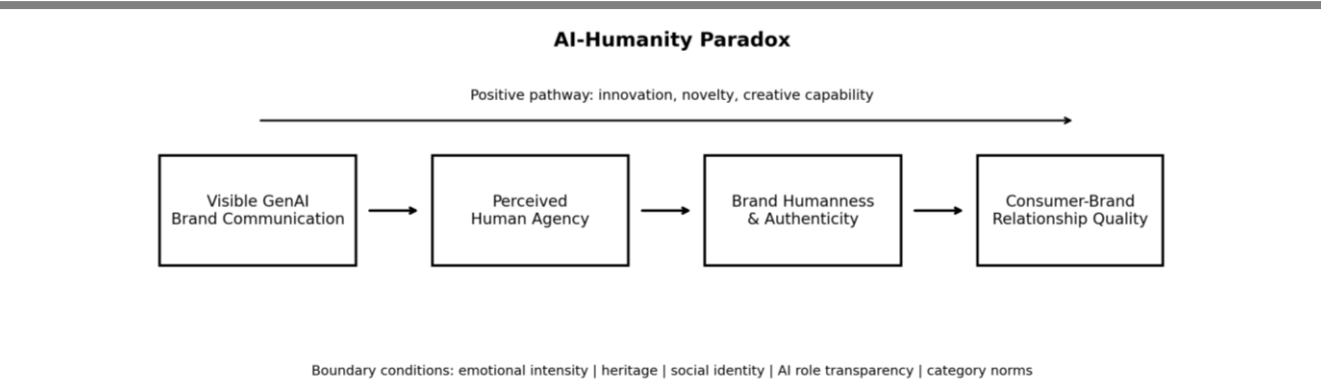


Figure 1. The AI-Humanity Paradox framework

Pathway	Mechanism	Likely outcome
Innovation pathway	GenAI use -> novelty, creativity, responsiveness, technological sophistication	Stronger innovation perceptions and positive brand evaluation
Humanity pathway	Perceived AI authorship -> reduced human agency -> reduced humanness/authenticity	Weaker emotional connection and consumer-brand relationship quality

V. DISCUSSION

5.1. Reframing the Problem: From AI Presence to Perceived Human Agency

The central argument emerging from this review is that the relational consequences of generative AI cannot be adequately explained through a simple distinction between human-generated and AI-generated communication. Such categorisation identifies the technical source of content but does not explain how consumers interpret the role of humans behind that content. The more theoretically consequential question concerns perceived human agency - whether consumers believe that meaningful human intention, judgement, creativity and responsibility remain embedded in the communication.

This distinction extends emerging AI-marketing research in an important way. Kirk and Givi (2025) demonstrate that consumers react less negatively when AI edits emotional communication rather than authors it, even though AI remains involved in both conditions. Their findings suggest that consumers distinguish between technological assistance and perceived replacement of human authorship. Similarly, Wu et al. (2025) show that consumers respond differently when AI is involved in creative production rather than in more technical or distributive functions. The implication is that consumer resistance is not directed toward AI per se; it depends partly on what kind of human role consumers believe has been delegated to the machine.

This interpretation also helps explain why AI disclosure can create negative responses even when the resulting content is technically competent. Wu (2026) finds that disclosure of AI-generated social-media content reduces behavioural intentions through diminished perceptions of brand authenticity and humanness. Importantly, brand personification protects perceived humanness to some degree but does not fully restore authenticity. This finding implies that making a brand appear more human cannot completely compensate for doubts about whether the communication originates from genuine human intention.

5.2 The AI-Humanity Paradox as a Dual-Pathway Branding Mechanism

A second major contribution is the development of the AI-Humanity Paradox. The emerging literature demonstrates that GenAI has neither uniformly positive nor uniformly negative branding effects. Instead, consumers can respond favourably to its novelty, sophistication and creative capabilities while simultaneously reacting negatively to its perceived lack of authenticity, humanness or emotional legitimacy.

The negative pathway becomes especially salient when communication asks consumers to infer human-like emotional or moral meaning. Kirk and Givi (2025) show that AI authorship is particularly damaging for emotional rather than factual marketing communication because authenticity becomes more important when the message implies emotion. Wu's (2026) results similarly indicate that AI disclosure reduces perceived authenticity and humanness in social-media communication.

The two pathways can therefore operate simultaneously: GenAI can increase perceived innovativeness, novelty and efficiency while perceived AI authorship can reduce human agency, humanness and authenticity. This dual-process interpretation represents an improvement over studies that treat consumer response to AI as a single attitudinal outcome. A consumer can simultaneously admire a campaign technologically and reject it relationally. A GenAI advertisement may be judged visually impressive but emotionally hollow; a synthetic model may increase visual diversity while decreasing perceived representational legitimacy; an AI chatbot may be regarded as efficient while still failing to communicate genuine concern.

The paradox is therefore not simply a contradiction in consumer attitudes. It reflects the fact that technological evaluation and relational evaluation constitute partially distinct judgement systems. This distinction also provides a theoretical explanation for apparently inconsistent findings in the AI-marketing literature. Studies reporting positive responses to artificial creativity and studies documenting authenticity penalties need not be understood as contradictory; they may be capturing different sides of the same underlying process.

5.3 Authenticity as a Context-Dependent Relational Judgement

The findings also advance authenticity research by suggesting that the authenticity penalty associated with AI is context dependent rather than universal. Brand authenticity has traditionally been associated with credibility, integrity, continuity and symbolism, while broader authenticity research emphasises perceived sincerity and congruence between an actor's claims and its underlying identity (Beverland, 2005; Morhart et al., 2015). In GenAI-mediated communication, authenticity becomes closely connected to consumers' beliefs concerning who had the capacity to mean what was communicated.

This helps explain why emotional communication is particularly sensitive to AI authorship. An informational statement does not necessarily require lived emotion from its author. Expressions of gratitude, sympathy, nostalgia or social concern are different because their meaning partially depends on the consumer believing that someone genuinely intended the sentiment. Kirk and Givi's (2025) results support precisely this asymmetry: AI authorship produced negative effects for emotional messages, whereas the effect diminished for factual communication.

This paper therefore proposes that the relevant boundary condition is not simply whether a communication is 'creative'. Instead, the key issue is its human-dependence intensity - the extent to which consumers believe legitimate production of that communication requires real human experience, judgement, identity or moral participation. Functional information has relatively low human-dependence intensity. Emotional apologies, heritage storytelling, expressions of gratitude, diversity representation and social-purpose communication have much higher human-dependence intensity.

The broader theoretical point is that AI authorship becomes most consequential when the meaning of the message depends on qualities consumers believe AI cannot genuinely possess or embody.

5.4 Boundary Conditions: When AI May Not Harm Consumer-Brand Relationships

A rigorous interpretation should also specify circumstances under which the proposed negative mechanism may weaken or disappear. First, task functionality matters. When communication is primarily informational, consumers have less reason to require genuine emotion from the source. Kirk and Givi's factual-message condition supports this interpretation.

Second, role transparency matters. AI used as an acknowledged assistant may preserve perceptions of human control more effectively than AI presented as the principal creative author. Third, consumer expectations matter. Consumers may evaluate explicitly artificial entities, such as virtual influencers, according to different standards from conventional brands. Research demonstrates that artificial influencers can still develop credibility and relational value despite authenticity deficits.

Fourth, category norms are likely to moderate the effect. Consumers may consider GenAI highly appropriate in technology, gaming or digitally native categories while regarding it as less appropriate in luxury craftsmanship, heritage branding or socially sensitive communication. Fifth, consumer AI orientation should matter. Consumers with favourable AI attitudes may interpret artificial creativity as innovation, while sceptical consumers may interpret the same practice as cost cutting, deception or displacement.

These boundary conditions reinforce the central argument: the relational effects of GenAI depend on perceived fit between technology, task, brand meaning and human involvement.

5.5 Theoretical Contributions

The paper makes four specific theoretical contributions. First, it introduces perceived human agency as an organising mechanism connecting AI authorship with brand humanness, authenticity and relationship outcomes. This moves AI-marketing research beyond technical source classification toward consumers' causal interpretation of brand communication.

Second, it develops the AI-Humanity Paradox, explaining how GenAI can improve technological brand evaluations while simultaneously weakening relational evaluations. This reconciles apparently inconsistent positive and negative findings across the emerging AI-branding literature.

Third, it extends anthropomorphism research by introducing agency congruence. Human-like communication should not automatically produce stronger relationships when consumers perceive a mismatch between the human qualities expressed and the agency believed to have generated them.

Fourth, it extends authenticity research by introducing human-dependence intensity as a boundary condition. AI authorship should matter most when the legitimacy of communication depends upon human emotion, lived experience, moral intention, heritage or substantive social participation. Taken together, these contributions reposition GenAI brand communication from a narrow question of technological adoption to a broader problem of relational meaning and agency attribution.

5.6 Managerial Implications: Managing Human Agency, Not Merely AI Disclosure

The framework has direct implications for managers deciding where and how to deploy GenAI. The first implication is that brands should develop an AI communication portfolio rather than apply GenAI uniformly across communication tasks. Low-human-dependence activities - translation, product information, variant generation, routine adaptation and internal ideation - represent relatively low relational risk. High-human-dependence communication - apologies, founder stories, heritage advertising, emotional gratitude, social-purpose campaigns and identity representation - requires substantially greater caution.

Second, firms should focus on preserving credible human authorship cues. Consumers do not necessarily need every word or image to be manually produced, but they may need reassurance that meaningful human judgement, responsibility and intention remain involved.

Third, disclosure should explain human-AI collaboration, not simply announce AI use. Current evidence suggests that disclosure can lower humanness, authenticity, credibility or behavioural intentions. A more useful disclosure strategy may therefore communicate what AI contributed and what humans retained responsibility for.

Fourth, brands should avoid assuming that better anthropomorphic simulation automatically resolves relational concerns. A highly human-like chatbot or synthetic spokesperson may increase interaction while simultaneously increasing scrutiny regarding whether its emotional expressions are genuine. Relationship quality depends on more than surface realism.

Finally, brand governance should treat human agency as an intangible brand asset. Just as firms manage visual identity, tone of voice and brand heritage, they may increasingly need to manage consumers' beliefs about where human creativity, accountability and emotional intention remain within AI-enabled branding.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study is conceptual and therefore does not empirically establish causal relationships among perceived AI authorship, human agency, humanness, authenticity and relationship quality. The proposed construct of perceived human agency requires formal scale development and discriminant validation against related concepts such as anthropomorphism, mind perception, perceived autonomy and perceived humanness.

The comparative cases are also concentrated in high-profile Western consumer brands. Cultural norms concerning automation, labour, authenticity, technology acceptance and human-machine boundaries may modify the proposed relationships. Future studies should therefore compare industries, cultures, AI modalities and consumer generations.

Longitudinal research is particularly important. Consumer reactions may change as AI-generated communication becomes more normalised. Novelty benefits may decline, while authenticity penalties could either weaken through habituation or become stronger as consumers develop greater ability to identify synthetic communication. Future research should also distinguish systematically between AI-assisted, AI-co-created and AI-authored communication and examine potential repair mechanisms such as visible human endorsement, co-creation disclosure, creative-director attribution and transparency regarding where human judgement remains involved.

VII. CONCLUSION

Generative AI is changing more than the economics of marketing communication. It is altering the perceived source of the brand's voice.

This paper argues that the central relational issue is not whether AI is used, but whether consumers believe meaningful human agency remains behind what the brand communicates. When AI augments human creativity, it can signal innovation, responsiveness and technological competence. When it appears to replace human intention in domains where sincerity, identity, heritage or representation matter, brand humanness and authenticity can deteriorate.

The proposed AI-Humanity Paradox therefore explains why the same technology can simultaneously strengthen technological evaluations while weakening relational evaluations. The Coca-Cola and Levi's cases demonstrate that these tensions are particularly acute when brands automate communication carrying substantial emotional or social meaning.

The future challenge for brands is consequently not to make machines indistinguishable from humans. It is to use machines without making the human intention behind the brand disappear.

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Data Availability: No primary dataset was generated. The study is based on published academic literature and publicly documented cases analysed conceptually.

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Consent to Participate: Not applicable.

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