

Audiences don't trust AI-made ads. Marketers think they do.

What 2026's trust research actually says about AI-generated marketing, and what closes the gap without giving up AI's production advantages.

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Gap between exec belief and audience reality on AI-made ads

82% of ad executives believe Gen Z and Millennial consumers feel positively about AI-made advertising. Only 45% of those consumers actually say they do. IAB, 2026.

31%

Say visible AI content makes them trust a brand less

Versus only 7% who say it makes them trust a brand more. Klaviyo / Datalily, 8,000 consumers across 8 markets, December 2025.

91%

Expect brands to disclose AI use in marketing

And 52% would stop buying from a brand entirely after one experience that felt inauthentic. Emplifi Digital Authenticity survey, April 2026.

Audiences are pricing the absence of a person who cared.

NIM's research showed identical ads rated as less natural and less appealing purely from an "AI-generated" label, with nothing else changed. The label isn't read as a courtesy. It's read as a confession.

"Audiences can't always tell what's AI-made. They can tell when nobody bothered to check."

On the gap between disclosure and trust

23%

Aerie's Q4 2025 comparable sales increase

Following its pledge to never use AI-generated people in marketing, paired with a 21% rise in brand awareness. American Eagle Outfitters investor reports.

- **Keep AI in the production layer**
Drafts, variations, resizes, a named person owning the final decision
- **Match the register to the category**
AI-forward creative reserved for tech and innovation-forward products
- **Disclose the process, not just the label**
Describe what a person actually did, not just that AI was involved
- **Make authenticity claims checkable**
A specific, defensible pledge beats a blanket "no AI" claim

The audience is pricing the absence of a person who cared.

Keep the human decision visible at the point the audience can see it, and the production advantages of AI don't cost you the trust.



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