

The Human Difference

A case for human made marketing in an artificial world.

As AI makes content creation and distribution easier than ever before, the *quantity* of content generated by machines is rising rapidly and may have already surpassed the *quantity* of content made by humans¹. The *quality* is rising too - from the contrived copy, nightmarish imagery, and synthetic style of years gone by to the more practical, polished, and powerful content filling feeds today.

This means many people no longer assume content is made by humans, but generated by machines and this assumption transforms how audiences attend to and respond to marketing that is unmistakably human. And, when machine made marketing becomes the default, human made marketing becomes a differentiator. It will be harder to find, but rarity and scarcity will make it more distinctive, more emotive, more trustworthy, more meaningful, and consequently more effective.

It will be distinctive because, even if algorithmic incentives and human preferences eradicate so-called slop, AI often tends towards the statistical middle and risks creating a “death spiral of homogenisation” if content generated by today’s AI is fed into tomorrow’s systems². And, even if we mitigate the risk of a death spiral, the democratisation of creativity and production will inevitably result in an abundance of *average* content. Thereby making the distinctly human, distinctively human.

Now, even if we choose tools designed for creativity, distinctiveness, or originality, human made marketing can carry a stronger emotional punch. AI can imitate our emotional lives, but it cannot experience them nor embody them and, as a result, often lacks emotional complexity, subtlety, and specificity. In other words, all those feels that are somewhat contradictory, somewhere inbetweenish, and somehow universally human.

A growing body of research also shows “how people perceive the process of creation including who or what is behind the output and how much care, creativity, or emotional investment is presumed to be involved” is increasingly as important as the output³. So, even when AI can convincingly imitate empathy or emotion, mimicry makes it meaningless, creating an “illusion of empathy” that collapses the moment your audience realise its source was a machine³.

We have an “anthropocentric bias”, a deep-seated tendency to value the human more than the non-human⁴. We're predisposed to value human creativity more than artificial creativity, not because it is objectively better, but because it is subjectively human. In fact, research shows people perceive the same artwork as being “less creative” and “less inspiring” when that art is attributed to AI versus attributed to humans⁴.

This human bias might explain why only a minority of people trust the technology, which matters because how much people trust the technology has a direct impact on how much people trust content created by it⁵. In fact, disclosing the use of AI in marketing currently incurs a “trust penalty” with decreased engagement and increased scepticism⁵. These seeds of distrust must be a critical consideration because trust is just as important as cost or quality⁶ when choosing a brand and is intrinsically tied to profitability⁷.

But, even if your audience come to trust the technology, human made marketing will come to mean more. As consumers demand disclosure, platforms promote transparency, and industry advocates for both, more brands will be open about if, when, and how they have used AI in marketing. Against this backdrop, human made is no longer an assumed background condition, but a conscious choice, a meaningful signal, and a powerful statement about your brand.

The statement itself is context dependent, but brands will leverage human made marketing to signal authenticity and intentionality, craftsmanship and exclusivity, rawness, realness, and so much more-ness. It's an unparalleled opportunity to become a champion of human creativity, a custodian of creative industry, a collaborator with artists, creators, and storytellers, and a contributor to - rather than of extractor of - culture.

The catch is human made marketing is only *valuable* when it is *visible*. That's why brands like Apple, Dove, and Porsche not only make human made marketing, but strive to make their human made credentials clear. In a world where content generated by AI is increasingly indistinguishable from marketing made by people, human input must not only be sensed, but unequivocally proven by crediting collaborators and contributors, shining a spotlight on the process, and/or using an independent verification such as The Human Made Mark.

The human difference, however, is *not* human only. It's not another false dichotomy, but rather a middle way. Far from rejecting AI, forward thinking brands will leverage the technology as a creative collaborator, efficiency engine, production partner, and marketing multiplier whilst resolutely defending the role for human hands, human heads, and human hearts throughout the process. For some, the difference will come from small but significant moments of human input and oversight whilst others will build their brand upon the increasing market value of humanity. Either way, as machines get better at being machines, marketers must get better at being human.

References:

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- 5: *Transparency Without Trust*, Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions, 2026
- 6: *Trust Barometer*, Edelman, 2025
- 7: *Trust Building Advertising Works*, IPA, 2026