

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Creative Communication: Adoption and Ethical Challenges among Branding Agencies in Nigeria

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Abstract

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is viewed as one of the most significant breakthroughs in creative communication, reshaping how branding agencies engage in ideation, content creation, graphic design, and customer engagement. This paper examines AI's growing role in creative communication and branding, and situates this role within the wider digital transformation reshaping business practice. It then turns to how these developments are unfolding among branding agencies in Nigeria specifically, where AI adoption is accelerating but remains uneven, constrained by infrastructural limitations and a scarcity of localised data. The paper further considers the ethical challenges this adoption raises, including questions of originality and authorship, copyright, algorithmic bias, transparency and accountability, and data privacy. Drawing on available literature, the paper argues that AI is best used as an auxiliary tool that complements rather than replaces human creativity, and it concludes with recommendations for developing industry-specific ethical guidelines to support the responsible adoption of AI by branding agencies in Nigeria.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Creative Communication, Branding Agencies, Digital Transformation, Ethics

Introduction

The fast advancement in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has dramatically impacted the field of creative communication in the domains of advertising, branding, journalism, public relations, print media, and digital marketing. There is an increased number of AI-enabled applications that help creative specialists to develop advertising texts, design visuals, edit multimedia materials, and analyze consumer behavior. Instead of serving as mere automation tools, AI technology has become a partner in the process of creating communication products, thus allowing branding agencies to produce innovative communication solutions more quickly (Anantrasirichai and Bull 2020).

In Nigeria, branding agencies feel pressure to adopt AI to keep pace in a digital market. Tools like ChatGPT, Adobe Firefly, Midjourney, Canva AI, and Whisk have cut production time and opened new creative options. Agencies use them to brainstorm

concepts, write copy, design logos, edit images, produce social media content, and interact with consumers. Recent Nigerian research confirms that this is not merely anecdotal: empirical studies have documented AI-driven customer relationship management significantly enhancing digital marketing transformation among Nigerian small and medium enterprises (Okigbo, Mbamalu, and Iruogu 2025), and AI-driven personalization measurably increasing consumer engagement and purchase intention among Nigerian online shoppers (Akisanmi et al. 2025). But the more agencies rely on AI, the more they face ethical questions around copyright, originality, transparency, misinformation, and the proper use of AI-generated content. While many studies have explored AI adoption in creative communication globally, there is still limited academic work on how Nigerian branding agencies actually use these tools. This paper tries to fill that gap by examining AI use in Nigeria's branding sector and the ethical challenges that come with it.

Branding has always depended on originality, innovation, and strong communication to build brand identity and connect with customers. AI has changed that workflow significantly. Agencies now automate routine tasks, analyse consumer preferences, and produce content at scale. These changes bring opportunities, but they also raise questions about ethics and professional integrity that the industry cannot ignore.

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Creative Communication

Creative thinking plays an important part in effective communication, which helps people and companies to generate messages that would catch the attention of the intended audiences and build a relationship with them. In the modern digital world, creative communication involves traditional methods as well as advanced technological solutions, which help to create more effective content and build relations with the target audience. Creative communicators combine ideas, emotions, and messaging in order to be effective communicators and create a lasting impact on their audience.

AI has affected creative communication in a major way. It now supports ideation, content creation, graphic design, video production, customer engagement, and marketing automation. Tools like ChatGPT, Canva AI, Adobe Firefly, Claude AI, and Whisk allow communication professionals to increase productivity without necessarily sacrificing creativity. Anantrasirichai and Bull (2020), in their review of AI across the creative industries, similarly conclude that AI's greatest value is realised where it augments rather than replaces human creativity. AI does not replace human creativity; it is a tool that helps improve communication processes.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Branding

Branding is the process through which branding companies create unique identities for organizations, products, or services to ensure that they can be distinguished from their competitors. The definition of the term includes visual identity, messaging, customer experience, and organisational values that define the perception of the brand in the minds of the target audience. Successful branding results in increased trust, customer loyalty and competitiveness in the market.

AI is now embedded in modern branding practice. Many agencies use AI to develop creative ideas, design logos, plan advertising campaigns, analyze customer behavior, and produce digital content. Okoye et al.'s (2025) scoping review of generative AI in marketing communications finds that AI-generated content can strengthen brand distinctiveness when it is well matched to a brand's category and voice, but that it can also weaken consumer trust and authenticity in categories, such as luxury branding, where authenticity is central to the brand promise. These innovations improve productivity and creativity, but they also raise serious ethical questions about originality, copyright, transparency, and professionalism. Branding professionals need to balance innovation with ethical responsibility.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Transformation

The digital transformation is the use of digital technologies in business in order to make fundamental changes in the way in which businesses function and serve their customers. It involves the use of innovative technologies to increase efficiency, make better decisions and offer personalised experience for customers.

In branding and creative communication, digital transformation shows up through rapid adoption of AI, cloud computing, automation, data analysis, and digital collaboration. These technologies have reshaped traditional workflows. Brands now produce more content, gain deeper customer insights, and develop better communication strategies. For Nigerian branding agencies, digital transformation offers a path to compete globally, expand services, and become more creative.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Adoption among Branding Agencies in Nigeria

The adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the context of Nigerian branding and digital agencies has been growing fast, with a substantial and growing share of Nigerian companies now applying AI technologies to business activities and marketing optimization. The use of AI technologies in agencies is quite extensive, ranging from market research to media buying, audience segmentation on data-driven basis, and creation of culturally localised content. Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation

and Digital Economy (2025) has itself acknowledged this momentum at the policy level, launching a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy for 2025–2029 intended to position Nigeria as a leader in ethical and inclusive AI innovation.

Despite all the progress that is being made, however, the application of AI remains somewhat uneven. While the awareness and intentionality of companies have become quite pronounced, the deep adoption of AI technologies is hindered by infrastructure problems (including poor connectivity), as well as the lack of localized training data sets.

Core Areas of AI Adoption

Content Generation and Copywriting: AI-powered platforms like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini are widely used by agencies for ad copy generation, campaign ideation, and writing scripts in several Nigerian languages to reach broader audiences.

Media Buying and Advertising: Programmatic AI platforms are replacing traditional media buying processes. Meta Advantage+, which automates testing and optimisation of campaigns to improve conversion rates, is becoming popular among Nigerian agencies.

Customer Segmentation and Predictive Analytics: AI algorithms analyse large amounts of local consumer data to enable personalised messaging and relevant product recommendations by fintech and e-commerce brands, among others. This is consistent with Akisanmi et al.'s (2025) survey of 400 Nigerian internet shoppers, which found that AI-driven personalization significantly increases consumer engagement and purchase intention when recommendations are perceived as timely and relevant, though this benefit is moderated by consumer privacy concerns.

Designing: AI-driven design tools like Midjourney, Adobe Firefly, and Canva AI help agencies create high-quality visuals, mock-ups, and presentations without massive production budgets.

Ethical Challenges of AI in Creative Communication

However, the growing integration of AI into creative communication has brought about a new way of developing content, building brands' visual identity, and interacting with their audience. Though AI offers many opportunities for innovation and increased productivity, it brings many complicated ethical questions that need to be answered. Besides, ethical issues related to the use of AI in communication are more complex than technical ones, being concerned not only with technical features but also with such aspects as authorship, intellectual property, transparency, accountability, data privacy, and social equity. Floridi and Cowls (2019) capture much of this complexity in their unified framework of five

principles for AI in society, beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, and explicability, which offers a useful vocabulary for the specific challenges discussed below.

Originality and authorship constitute one of the most significant ethical challenges associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence in creative communication. AI-generated content often results from an interaction between human input and machine-learning algorithms, making it difficult to determine who should be recognised as the legitimate author of the final output. Okoye et al. (2025) show that this ambiguity has direct commercial consequences in branding specifically: when audiences infer that a brand has concealed AI's role in producing content, this typically diminishes rather than enhances perceived credibility and trust. This ambiguity complicates issues of intellectual property, accountability, and ownership, particularly in branding and creative industries where originality is highly valued. As AI systems become increasingly integrated into content creation, existing legal and ethical frameworks continue to struggle with defining authorship, assigning responsibility, and protecting the rights of creators in AI-assisted works.

Copyright is another important ethical issue associated with AI-generated creative works. Many AI systems are trained on large datasets that include copyrighted texts, images, and other creative materials. Consequently, questions arise regarding the ownership of AI-generated outputs and whether copyright protection should belong to the developers of the AI system, the user who provided the prompts, or neither. Existing copyright and intellectual property laws in many countries have not evolved at the same pace as advances in generative AI, creating legal uncertainty for creators, branding agencies, and policymakers. As AI becomes more integrated into creative communication, there is an increasing need to update legal frameworks to balance innovation with the protection of intellectual property rights (Anantrasirichai and Bull 2020; UNESCO 2021).

Algorithmic bias is one of the most significant ethical challenges associated with Artificial Intelligence. AI systems are trained on large datasets that may contain historical and societal biases related to culture, race, gender, age, or socioeconomic status. Consequently, AI-generated outputs may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, exclude marginalised groups, or produce unfair representations. In the context of creative communication and branding, biased content can distort intended messages, weaken inclusivity, and damage an organization's reputation. Such outcomes may reduce public trust and negatively affect the credibility of branding agencies and the brands they represent. Therefore, human oversight and continuous evaluation of AI systems are essential to minimize bias and promote fairness in AI-assisted communication. It is also important to be transparent and accountable when using AI systems. These systems can be like closed boxes, making it

hard for people to understand how they come up with results — a concern closely related to what Floridi and Cowls (2019) term explicability, the principle that AI decisions should be intelligible to, and accountable before, the people they affect. This lack of transparency makes it difficult to hold anyone accountable when the content created by AI systems contains information, plagiarised work, or offensive material. Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena (2019), reviewing 84 AI ethics guidelines worldwide, found broad global convergence on principles such as transparency, fairness, and accountability, but significant divergence in how organisations actually interpret and apply them in practice, a gap that Mittelstadt (2019) and Hagendorff (2020) argue is structural, since AI development, unlike medicine, still lacks the shared professional norms and accountability mechanisms needed to translate stated principles into consistent practice. Therefore, branding companies need to review, verify, and approve the content created by AI systems before publishing it to make sure it meets standards and the values of their organisation.

Another issue with using AI is that it raises concerns about keeping data private and confidential. Many AI applications need access to user data, customer information, or secret business content to provide results. Akisanmi et al.'s (2025) Nigerian survey findings are instructive here: they found that privacy concerns actively moderate the commercial benefits of AI personalization, meaning that personalization perceived as excessive or intrusive can erode consumer trust even where it is technically effective. If there are no safeguards in place, organisations risk exposing information or breaking data protection rules. So it is essential to handle data in a way get consent from people before using their data and keeps their information safe.

In general, while AI has become a useful tool in modern communication, using it responsibly requires finding a balance between using new technology and doing the right thing. Companies that help with branding in Nigeria should use AI as a tool that works with creativity, not replaces it. At the same time, these companies should create guidelines for using AI in an ethical way, teach people about AI, be transparent when using AI, and follow the laws that govern copyright, privacy, and professional accountability. AI systems and branding agencies need to work to make sure AI-generated content is fair and respectful to all people, including those in marginalised communities.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is shaking things up in creative communication. It gives branding agencies fresh ways to boost creativity, work more efficiently, and create personalised communication strategies. With more agencies jumping on the AI bandwagon, they can speed up content creation, graphic design, branding, and customer engagement. But there

are some big ethical questions too, like who owns the work, data privacy issues, algorithm bias, and accountability.

In Nigeria, branding agencies have a huge chance to get ahead and tap into new creative possibilities thanks to AI. But to really make the most of these advantages, they need to use AI responsibly and ethically. It's crucial that human creativity, critical thinking, and professional judgment stay at the heart of the creative process. AI should be a helpful tool, not a replacement for what people bring to the table.

Recommendations

Arising from this study, the following are recommended:

- Government should develop industry-specific ethical guidelines for the responsible adoption and use of Artificial Intelligence by branding agencies in Nigeria.
- Organizations should promote AI and digital literacy among branding professionals, designers, and communication experts.
- Organizations should maintain transparency by disclosing the use of AI in the production of communication outputs where applicable.
- Government should develop and strengthen intellectual property and copyright laws to address issues around AI-generated works, authorship, ownership, and use.
- Organizations should promote the ethical use and adoption of AI while ensuring that human agency is not overridden in the creative processes of communication production.
- Government, professional bodies, academia, and industry stakeholders should collaborate to develop policies, regulations, and guidelines for achieving responsible AI adoption and usage in the Nigerian creative and branding sector.

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