

The Current State and Challenges of Generative AI Adoption in the Advertising Industry —Based on Interviews with Copywriters—

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Katsuno Seminar

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1. Background and Objectives of the Study

This report organizes the insights gained through a GPAI-related project at our university. GPAI (Global Partnership on AI) is an international framework promoting the responsible development and use of AI, addressing multifaceted policy issues such as ethics, labor, governance, and privacy.

The Katsuno Seminar, to which we belong, is part of the Department of Media Studies, and we conducted this research under the theme “The Transformation of Imagination and Creativity in the Age of Generative AI.” The purpose of this study was to gain insights into the actual state of generative AI utilization and shifts in perception within the contemporary creative industry through face-to-face interviews with a copywriter and creative director employed at a major advertising agency.

2. The Reality of Generative AI Use: Two Roles as an Auxiliary Tool

Based on the interviews, we found that the use of generative AI in the field can be categorized into the following two main roles.

First, it serves as a tool similar to a dictionary. Whereas in the past, people used paper dictionaries or internet searches to look up expressions, generative AI allows for word exploration through dialogue. For example, by asking, “Tell me a word to describe ‘red’ without using the word ‘red,’” the AI can suggest vocabulary appropriate to the context. This approach improves the efficiency of word selection in copywriting and broadens the range of possible expressions.

Second, it serves as a “brainstorming partner” to expand ideas. While there is a limit to the number of ideas a single person can generate, generative AI can quickly generate a large number of proposals. These ideas not only serve as material for organizing one’s own thoughts but also provide opportunities to gain new perspectives and insights.

Based on these practical applications, it has become clear that in the field, generative AI is used not as a replacement for creators, but rather as a tool to assist human thinking and creativity. AI plays the role of presenting a variety of ideas and expressive materials, while the process of selecting and refining them into the final copy—including the judgment and editing involved—remains firmly in human hands.

3. Concerns and Technical Limitations Regarding Adoption

On the other hand, there are several drawbacks and concerns associated with the use of generative AI. First, because AI generates content based on historical data, there is a risk that the novelty and originality essential to the advertising industry may be compromised. Second, while AI excels at logical and physical

explanations, it has limitations when it comes to emotional expressions such as “words that appeal to the senses” or “expressions that read between the lines.” For example, current AI is considered incapable of accurately capturing the nuanced difference between the Japanese phrases “I’m full” and “I ate my fill.” Third, it is important to note that AI-generated copy is merely a starting point (a hint) for ideas and is not a finished product ready to be released as-is. Copy is a tool for solving customer problems, and to elicit accurate output from AI, humans must first construct precise logic—such as target analysis and problem definition—before providing instructions.

Furthermore, nurturing the next generation is a critical challenge. The copywriter interviewed for this study is a veteran with over 30 years of experience, and the rules of thumb cultivated without AI form the core of their decision-making. However, how young creators who lack such a solid foundation will engage with and utilize AI is a critical challenge for the industry as a whole moving forward.

4. Discussion: Can AI Acquire “Individuality” and “Empathy”?

Through the interviews, it became clear that creating “empathic catchphrases”—those that particularly resonate with people—is difficult. For concise copy to evoke empathy and leave a lasting impression, timeless truths and empathy must be combined with the copywriter’s individuality. So, how is this copywriter’s individuality formed? And is it impossible for generative AI to achieve this?

The interviews revealed that by studying past copy and books, keeping an eye out for “viral phenomena” and everyday life, and “extracting the moments that move one’s own heart,” a copywriter’s core style is refined. In contrast, while AI excels at learning from vast amounts of data, it currently cannot extract those moments that move the heart.

In the future, it may become possible to use data analysis to identify “moments likely to move the heart” of a hypothetical target audience. However, even if this becomes a reality, can we truly say that generative AI has acquired a unique personality? Furthermore, will we find value in copywriting that targets emotions and empathy calculated based on data? The evolution of generative AI is forcing us to reexamine the essential value of creativity.



The image was created using AI.