

Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Brand Authority by AI: A Comparative Case Study Based on the Authenticity Dimension

Xuanxiao Wang*

Institute of Popular Music, Wuhan Conservatory of Music, Wuhan, 430000, China

Abstract. Against the background of the deep integration of AIGC (Artificial Intelligence Generated Content) technology into brand operations, artificial intelligence exhibits dual characteristics of deconstruction and reconstruction in its impact on corporate brand authority, and brand authenticity has become the core factor determining the effect of technological application. This paper adopts an exploratory comparative case study method, selecting the AI Christmas advertisement trust crisis of McDonald's Netherlands in 2025 as a negative case and the "Genuine AI Milk, Genuine AI Creativity" AIGC Video Ecological Innovation Competition of Yili Group in 2024 as a positive case, to systematically analyze the differentiated impacts of different AI application strategies on brand authority in the fast-moving consumer goods industry. The research shows that AI does not inherently deconstruct or reconstruct brand authority, and whether the technical application methods conform to the four dimensions of authenticity is the key to maintaining brand authority. This research extends the connotation of the traditional brand authenticity theory in the digital age, constructs an operable practical framework for the authenticity of AI brand communication, and provides practical references for fast-moving consumer goods enterprises to reshape brand authority with the help of AI technology in the AIGC era.

1 Introduction

The technological iteration and commercial application of generative AI have propelled brand marketing into a new stage of "AI-native", while also profoundly restructuring the logic of the construction and deconstruction of brand authority. Traditional brand authority is built on three foundations: information monopoly, professional barriers, and emotional trust. The popularization of AI has broken this traditional pattern, exposing brands to the inherent risk of authority deconstruction. Meanwhile, AI also provides new pathways for brands to reshape authority through technological empowerment, user co-creation, and value deepening.

In practice, brands in the same fast-moving consumer goods industry have achieved diametrically opposite results in their application of AI technology. Some brands abuse AI

* Corresponding author: wangxuanxiao1@outlook.com

in pursuit of short-term cost optimization, which impairs brand authenticity and undermines consumer trust crises and leading to the severe deconstruction of brand authority. In contrast, leading brands have rationally designed AI application strategies, leveraging technology as a tool for conveying brand values, strengthening consumer trust and emotional connections, and thus achieving the upgrading of brand authority. A core question has consequently emerged: in the AIGC era, the application of the same technology by brands in the same industry exerts a disruptive and differentiated impact on brand authority. When AI becomes the default tool for brand operations, will brands evolve into a new form of "hyper-reality", or fall into a trust crisis of "systematic deception".

Existing research indicates that brand authenticity constitutes the core foundation of consumer trust and the essential connotation of brand authority. In light of this, this paper takes the four-dimensional analytical framework of brand authenticity—encompassing transparency, consistency, controllability and resonance—as its theoretical basis, and selects two typical AI application cases in the fast-moving consumer goods industry from 2024 to 2025 to conduct a comparative study. It analyzes the internal mechanism through which AI exerts an impact on brand authority, and explores effective strategies for brands to reshape their authority with the aid of AI in the digital age. The research aims to provide references for enterprises in their AI-based brand operation practices, and meanwhile enrich the research findings in the field of AI and brand management.

2 Literature review

2.1 Theoretical association between brand authority and brand authenticity

Brand authority refers to consumers' sustained recognition and conviction of a brand in terms of professional capabilities, value propositions, emotional connections and other aspects. Its core connection lies in consumers' trust system in the brand, and brand authenticity is the key premise and internal support for the formation of trust [1]. Brand authenticity is not a one-dimensional concept, but encompasses multiple connotations such as the openness of brand information, the consistency of value propositions, the controllability of operational behaviors and the resonance of emotional expressions. It is a core characteristic continuously conveyed by brands in their interactions with consumers, and also an inseparable core essence of brand authority in the digital age.

2.2 Research on the impacts of AI on brand management and brand authority

The existing academic community has conducted multi-dimensional explorations on AI and brand management. Hou Lisong et al. pointed out that AI has improved the efficiency of brand management through efficient data processing and optimized resource allocation, and at the same time promoted the development of brand management towards human-machine collaboration and intelligent global integration, laying a technical foundation for the reconstruction of brand authority [2]. Zhao Xinli et al. argued that AI technology has dismantled the information monopoly advantage of traditional brands, reconstructed the power relationship between brands and consumers, and thus fundamentally changed the foundation for the formation of brand authority [3]. At the practical level, studies in different industries have confirmed that the application of AI in fields such as jewelry, clothing and agricultural products can build technology-driven brand authority, while the application of AI in the fast-moving consumer goods industry focuses more on the integration of emotional value and the brand's core propositions, and its impact on brand authority is more immediate [4, 5].

2.3 Research on brand authenticity risks in AI applications

Some scholars have paid attention to the multiple challenges that AI applications pose to brand authenticity. Tang Yingfei proposed that the "mechanical feeling" and "hollowness" of AI-generated content will lead to the lack of brand emotional expression, weaken the resonance between brands and consumers, and thus affect brand authority [6]. Huang Xiaoling's research found that the opacity and out-of-control risks of AI algorithms may cause distortion in the transmission of brand information, damage the transparency and controllability of brands, and trigger consumer trust crises [7]. Yi Ziyang et al. pointed out that over-reliance on AI will lead to a disconnect between brand value propositions and content output, result in a break in consistency, and ultimately deconstruct brand authority [8]. The latest research by Li Qianqian et al. in 2025 further indicated that the deconstruction of brand authenticity in the AIGC era presents the characteristics of "rapid diffusion and in-depth impact" [9]. As the fast-moving consumer goods industry is closely linked to consumers' daily experiences, it has become a high-frequency sector where authenticity risks break out.

2.4 Research gaps

Existing studies have confirmed the dual impact of AI on brand authority and initially linked brand authenticity with AI application effects. However, most relevant studies focus on single technology application scenarios or traditional industries, lacking targeted analysis of the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, a high-frequency field for AI applications. Meanwhile, few studies combine the latest practical cases from 2024 to 2025 to systematically reveal the internal relationship between AI application modes and the four dimensions of brand authenticity, nor have they analyzed the underlying reasons for differences in brands' AI application strategies from the perspective of decision-making logic [10]. Against this background, this paper takes the four dimensions of brand authenticity as its analytical framework and selects typical positive and negative cases in the FMCG industry from 2024 to 2025 for a comparative study. It also explores the logic of cost-driven and brand-building motives behind strategic differences, filling this research gap.

3 Case Analysis

Taking transparency, consistency, controllability and resonance of brand authenticity as the four-dimensional analytical framework, this paper systematically compares and analyzes the AI application strategies, implementation processes and impacts on brand authority of two FMCG industry cases. The core strategic differences are shown in Table 1.

3.1 Negative case: the trust crisis surrounding McDonald's Netherlands' 2025 AI Christmas campaign

As a leading global fast-food brand, McDonald's has long adopted "family gathering and warm companionship" as the core tone of its holiday advertisements. "Holiday emotional connection" has become an important part of its brand authority and is widely recognized by consumers worldwide. Christmas-season commercials, in particular, serve as the core carrier vehicle for the brand to convey warmth each year. In December 2025, to reduce advertising production costs and shorten the production cycle, McDonald's Netherlands launched a fully AI-generated Christmas-themed commercial [12]. The commercial depicted warm scenes of consumers sharing McDonald's burgers, fries and other products

during the holiday season. However, the brand did not label the advertisement as AI-generated on any channel, attempting to pass off AI content as manually created work.

Table 1. Comparison of Authenticity Dimensions in AI Application Strategies between the Two Cases [11].

Analysis Dimensions	Negative Case: McDonald's Netherlands (2025)	Positive Case: Yili Group (2024)
Transparency	Did not proactively label advertisements as AI-generated; only admitted passively after consumers detected technical traces, showing obvious information concealment.	Publicly disclosed cooperation with Alibaba Cloud and Xinhua net; clearly marked AI application scenarios and competition rules across all channels, with full transparency throughout the campaign.
Consistency	The brand's core value focuses on "festival gathering and emotional connection", but the AI-generated characters appeared stiff and the atmosphere negative, seriously contradicting its brand proposition.	With the theme of "Real AI Milk, Real AI Creativity", AI creation centered on the brand core of "genuine quality" and "health & nutrition", strengthening brand value narration.
Controllability	To reduce production costs, manual review was omitted; AI-generated content was launched directly, resulting in obvious technical flaws and poor user experience.	Established a "AI generation + manual review" human-AI collaboration mechanism; set up a professional review panel for multi-dimensional screening, strictly controlling content quality and brand tone.
Resonance	AI advertisements triggered the "uncanny valley effect": distorted facial expressions and lack of emotion failed to resonate with consumers' festive feelings, instead causing widespread aversion.	Invited consumers, university students, and tech-savvy creators to participate in co-creation; turned AI into a creative tool, deepening emotional connection and cultural resonance between the brand and consumers.

After the advertisement was launched, consumers quickly detected obvious traces of AI generation. The characters' facial expressions were stiff and unnatural, their body movements did not conform to human aesthetics, and the overall atmosphere of the picture was cold and negative. This completely deviated from the warm tone of Christmas and McDonald's festive brand proposition. Criticism on social media escalated rapidly, and the hashtag McDonald's AI Ad Fail topped the trending list on Twitter in the Netherlands. Consumers not only questioned the production quality of the advertisement but also expressed strong dissatisfaction with the brand for deliberately concealing the use of AI and ignoring consumers' emotional experience. In the face of public opinion, McDonald's Netherlands initially defended itself by claiming it was a "technological innovation attempt." Only after the public opinion had continued to ferment for a week did the company officially admit that the advertisement was AI-generated and urgently remove the work. This delayed response further intensified consumer resentment. This AI advertising crisis directly led to a 22% decline in sales of core products for McDonald's Netherlands during the Christmas season. The brand's local consumer favorability score dropped to a five-year low, and the brand authority based on festive emotional connection that had been built up was severely deconstructed.

3.2 Positive case: Yili Group's 2024 "AIGC Video Ecological innovation competition"

From October to December 2024, Yili Group, together with Alibaba Cloud and Xinhuanet, launched the "Real AI Milk, Real AI Creativity" AIGC Video Ecological Innovation Competition. As a core part of the "Digital-Intelligent Yili" Ecological Innovation Program, this event became a benchmark case of AI marketing in the FMCG industry in 2024. As a leading global dairy enterprise, Yili's brand authority has long been built on the core values of "genuine quality", "technological innovation" and "consumer co-creation". This AI application was not merely a technical trial, but a value-delivering act that precisely aligned with the brand's core positioning.

In terms of transparency, Yili fully publicized the competition information across all official channels including WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok, as well as authoritative platforms such as Xinhua. It clearly disclosed the partners, AI technology supporters, entry rules, judging criteria, and timeline. The application scenarios and technical boundaries of AI in the competition were completely open to consumers, eliminating any information concealment.

In terms of consistency, with the core theme "Genuine AI Milk, Genuine AI Creativity", the competition explicitly required all entries to focus on the genuine quality, health and nutrition concepts, and corporate social responsibility of Yili's products. This ensured from the source that AI-generated content was highly consistent with the brand's century-old value narrative.

In terms of controllability, Yili established a strict two-layer collaborative mechanism of "AI generation + manual review". It set up a professional review stage, where the jury panel consisted of food industry experts, media representatives, brand representatives, and AI technology specialists. Entries were evaluated from three dimensions — creativity, brand alignment, and content quality — to ensure that the award-winning works balanced creativity and brand tone.

In terms of resonance, Yili adopted a full-domain co-creation strategy. It not only invited consumers across the internet, technology and innovation enterprises, and content creators to participate, but also took the competition roadshow to classrooms at universities such as the Academy of Arts and Design at Tsinghua University, University of Science and Technology Beijing, and China Agricultural University.

It collaborated with young students to create works closely related to Yili products, not only interpreting the connotation of the brand and transforming consumers into co-creators of brand content, but also establishing deep emotional connections between the brand and different age groups and circles.

Incredibly, the activity related tags have been viewed more than 1 billion times on various social platforms, repeatedly appeared on the TikTok and Little Red Book hot topic rankings, successfully attracted tens of thousands of creators, and won more than 20000 high-quality entries generated by artificial intelligence. The majority of feedback from people from all walks of life is positive, with many praising Yili for "injecting warmth into artificial intelligence technology" and "demonstrating the brand's innovative vitality while maintaining its true core". The success of the AI co-creation program has elevated Yili's brand authority from a "leader in the dairy industry" to a "leader in innovative healthy lifestyles in the digital intelligence era," successfully reshaping and upgrading its brand authority.

4 Discussion and implications

4.1 Comparative analysis

This article compares two sensitive cases in the fast-moving consumer goods industry and finds that the ultimate impact of artificial intelligence on brand authority essentially depends on whether the brand's AI application methods conform to the four dimensions of brand authenticity: transparency, consistency, controllability, and resonance. People cannot simply use artificial intelligence as a tool to reduce costs and improve efficiency, while ignoring the core requirement of brand authenticity. Based on the close relationship between the fast-moving consumer goods industry and consumers' emotional experience, the deconstruction of brand authority occurs faster and has a greater impact compared to other industries. Enterprises should focus on their own positioning and long-term development, regard artificial intelligence as a tool for brand value dissemination and consumer interaction, and plan and implement AI strategies centered on authenticity. Only then can AI become the best means to reshape brand authority and achieve the integration of brand value and technological innovation.

Meanwhile, research has found that the four dimensions of brand authenticity are interrelated and indispensable. Transparency determines consumers' initial perception of brand artificial intelligence applications; Consistency ensures that technological applications do not deviate from the essence of the brand; Controllable performance prevents uncontrolled artificial intelligence technology from damaging authenticity. The connection between resonance performance technology and human emotions, while possessing these four dimensions, is necessary to ultimately enhance and reshape brand authority. It is obvious that the lack of any dimension will damage the authenticity of the brand, thereby affecting the continuation of brand authority.

4.2 Core practical strategies for reshaping brand authority in the AI Era

It first suggests that companies should have a long-term vision, establish their own long-term brand building direction, and position artificial intelligence technology as an empowering tool for brand value dissemination and consumer interaction, rather than just a means of reducing costs and improving efficiency.

Secondly, building an AI application system for human-machine collaboration and enhancing technological controllability. Enterprises should establish a sound AI content review mechanism, making manual review a necessary part of AI applications, clarifying the ultimate responsibility of brands for AI output content, and avoiding brand authenticity damage caused by technological loss of control.

Next, create an AI application model for consumer co creation and deepen emotional resonance. Enterprises should leverage AI technology to build a consumer co creation platform, allowing consumers to become creators and participants of brand content, transforming cold technology into an emotional connection between brands and consumers, and achieving continuous strengthening of brand authority.

Finally, adhere to the core values of the brand and make AI the enhancer of the brand core. All AI applications of enterprises should revolve around the core values of the brand, using technological means to amplify the brand's core proposition and value narrative, avoiding deviating from the brand positioning due to technological innovation and causing the brand's "persona collapse".

5 Conclusion

Through a comparative study of the AI advertising crisis of McDonald's Netherlands in 2025 and the AIGC competition of Yili Group in 2024, this article takes the transparency, consistency, controllability, and resonance of brand authenticity as the analytical framework, and systematically analyzes the mechanism of AI's deconstruction and reshaping of brand authority in the fast-moving consumer goods industry.

The study shows that brand authenticity is the core foundation for building brand authority in the FMCG industry in the AI era. The differentiated impact of AI on brand authority essentially results from the different degrees to which brands' various AI application strategies fit the dimensions of brand authenticity. The underlying reason for such strategic differences lies in the distinct decision-making logics: short-term cost-driven versus long-term brand-building motives.

Research has shown that brand authenticity is the core foundation for building brand authority in the fast-moving consumer goods industry in the AI era. The degree of fit between different AI application strategies of brands and the dimension of brand authenticity varies, leading to a differentiated impact of AI on brand authority. Looking at the essence through phenomena, the underlying reason for strategic differences lies in the different decision-making logic driven by short-term costs and long-term brand building. If enterprises want to reshape their brand authority with the help of AI, they must take brand authenticity as the fundamental principle, adhere to the four-dimensional principles of transparency, consistency, controllability, and resonance in technological applications, build a human-machine collaborative AI application system, and truly make AI an empowering tool for brand value transmission and consumer interaction, rather than a means of short-term cost optimization for enterprises.

This study adopts an exploratory double case comparative research method, which can deeply analyze the internal mechanism of AI and brand authority in the fast-moving consumer goods industry, but it still has certain limitations. The number of cases is relatively small, and they all focus on the fast-moving consumer goods industry. The universality of the research conclusions needs further verification. In future research, it is necessary to expand the scope of case studies, select the latest AI application cases from different industries, conduct in-depth cross industry research, and obtain more universal laws and theoretical frameworks.

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