

Does AI Really Work in Advertising?

Research Shows Emotion Is What Matters

Executive Summary

In recent months, the number of advertising campaigns created using generative AI has been rapidly increasing. In our research, we analyzed **AI-generated campaigns across multiple categories** and examined:

- Whether people recognized the use of AI
- The emotional response the campaign triggered
- Its impact on key brand metrics (positivity, memorability, understanding, trust)

The results lead to one clear conclusion:

There is no direct correlation between whether a campaign is AI-generated, openly AI-made, or undisclosed, and its effectiveness.

What truly determines success is **emotional performance (and branding)**.

Context: The Myth of the “AI Effect”

Public debate around AI advertising often swings between two extremes:

- *“AI campaigns are cold, generic, and people dislike them.”*
- *“AI campaigns are exciting by default and automatically stand out.”*

Our data shows that **neither assumption holds true universally**.

AI is neither a shortcut to success nor a guaranteed problem. It acts primarily as a **multiplier of creative quality**, amplifying both strong and weak ideas.

Campaign Backgrounds Included in the Research

To ensure diversity, we selected campaigns across telco, FMCG, finance, consumer electronics, and services — including both global brands and challengers.

Coca-Cola – “Masterpiece”

Coca-Cola combined live action, digital effects, and AI-assisted visual transitions in a [film](#) where a Coke bottle travels through famous artworks to reach a student. AI supported stylistic transformations between classical and contemporary art styles, blending traditional production with AI-enhanced VFX.

Heinz – “A.I. Ketchup”

Kraft Heinz and agency Rethink built an [entire campaign](#) using DALL·E 2 before the tool was publicly available. By prompting AI with variations of “ketchup,” the outputs consistently resembled Heinz bottles. The idea demonstrated the brand’s iconicity: even AI “thinks” ketchup looks like Heinz. The campaign expanded into social, packaging, and digital activations.

Liquid Death – AI Spec Ad

An [AI-generated spec ad](#) created using OpenArt’s Veo 3 video generator, produced for under \$1,000. It showcased how hyper-specific prompts can create cinematic video content at minimal cost. While not an official large-scale brand campaign, it became a reference point in discussions about AI video production quality and accessibility.

Amaysim – “The Escape Story”

An Australian telco challenger launched its first [fully AI-generated TV commercial](#), created in-house by a two-person team using Adobe Firefly and Runway. The ad, produced in under two weeks, dramatized consumer frustration with major telecom providers and positioned Amaysim as the “escape” alternative.

Invia – “Flip and Flop”

Online travel retailer Invia launched an [AI-produced campaign](#) featuring animated beach slipper characters to engage families and flexible travellers year-round.

Developed by Machine Berlin and director Christof Schroeter, the AI-generated visuals were designed to be easily adapted for TV, cinema, radio, OOH, digital, and social channels.

Motorola – “Styled With Moto”

Motorola promoted its new Razr smartphones with a 30-second [AI-generated fashion-inspired video](#). Virtual models wore outfits inspired by the phones' colors and brand design. French agency Heaven used multiple generative AI tools to create thousands of images that were refined into the final piece.

eToro – Paris 2024 Olympics Campaign

eToro launched its first [AI-produced campaign](#) during the Paris 2024 Olympics. Visuals were generated using LTX Studio instead of on-location filming, and the campaign ran across 45 markets in 19 languages. AI replaced traditional production logistics while maintaining global consistency.

ePojištění.cz – "Compare Smartly"

An insurance comparison site launched a [TV and digital campaign](#) fully produced with AI. Featuring the brand's signature monkeys, the 20- and 30-second spots are among the Czech Republic's first full-scale TV ads entirely rendered with AI.

Orea Hotels – “Óóómagical Summer”

In 2025, Orea Hotels & Resorts launched an [AI-generated, multi-channel campaign](#) across TV, online, print, and OOH. Created with Etnetera Motion, it highlighted direct bookings to appeal to both new and returning customers.

Methodology (Brief)

- 9 AI-generated advertising campaigns
- Multiple categories (FMCG, finance, services, telco, etc.)
- Key metrics measured:

- AI recognition
- Emotional response (“love it / it bothers me / I don’t care”)
- Positivity
- Distinctiveness
- Understanding
- Distrust

Based on the combination of these metrics, the campaigns naturally clustered into **four distinct groups**.

The Four Types of AI Campaigns

1. Openly AI + Emotionally Effective

(Coca-Cola)

- People recognized the use of AI
- **Strong positive emotional response**
- High memorability and distinctiveness
- Low levels of distrust

Here, AI becomes part of the **creative idea or narrative**, not just a production shortcut.

Key insight: When a campaign works emotionally, AI stops being an issue and can even become an advantage.



At building up emotion, Coca-Cola performed better than 87% of ads tested by Behavior.

2. Openly AI + Emotionally Ineffective

([ePojisteni](#), [Heinz](#), [Liquid Death](#))

- AI use was clearly recognized
- Weak or negative emotional response
- Higher irritation (“this annoys me”)
- AI becomes the **focus of criticism**

The problem is not AI itself. The problem is that **when emotion fails, people look for a reason, and AI is an easy target.**

Key insight: Transparency about AI does not compensate for weak creativity. It can actually amplify its shortcomings.

Negative emotion – during ad



At building up emotion, Liquid Death performed better than only 15% of ads tested by Behavior.

3. Undetected AI + Emotionally Effective

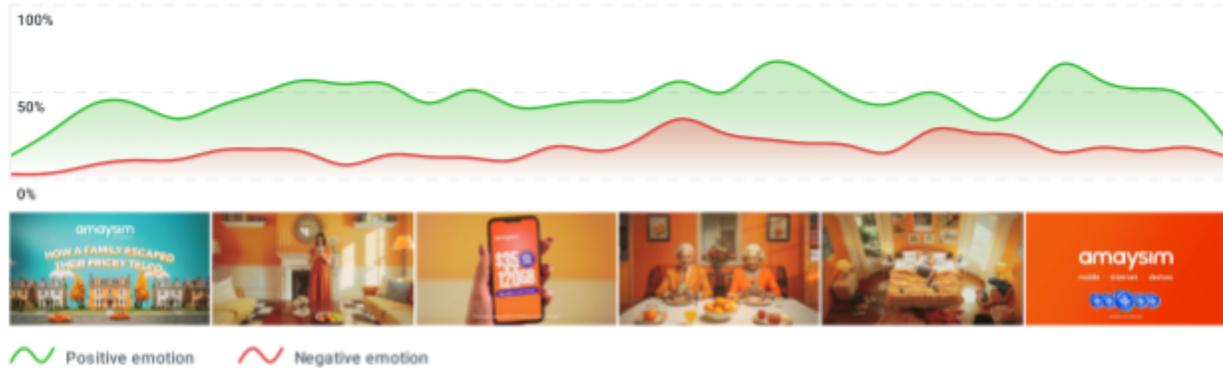
([Amaysim](#), [Invia](#))

- Most people did **not recognize** the use of AI
- Strong emotional performance
- High positivity and understanding
- Minimal distrust

From the audience's perspective, **the production method is irrelevant**. The campaign works because it feels human, clear, and emotionally resonant.

Key insight: When advertising works, nobody cares how it was made.

Positive vs Negative emotion



At building up emotion, Amaysim performed better than 92% of ads tested by Behavior.

4. Undetected AI + Emotionally Ineffective

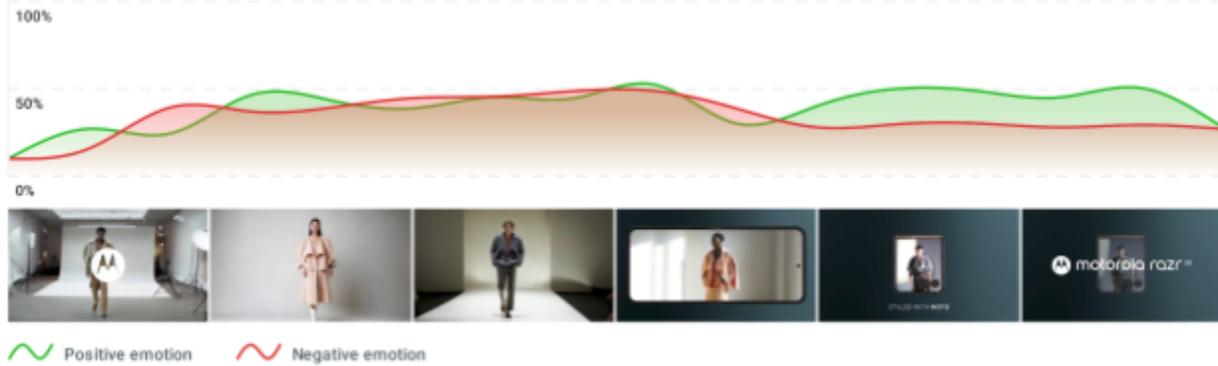
([Motorola](#), [eToro](#), [Orea](#))

- AI largely went unnoticed
- Emotional response was weak or indifferent
- Low distinctiveness
- Average to poor brand impact

This is the classic “grey average” scenario. AI neither helped nor was the core issue.

Key insight: AI does not save campaigns that lack a strong emotional foundation.

Positive vs Negative emotion

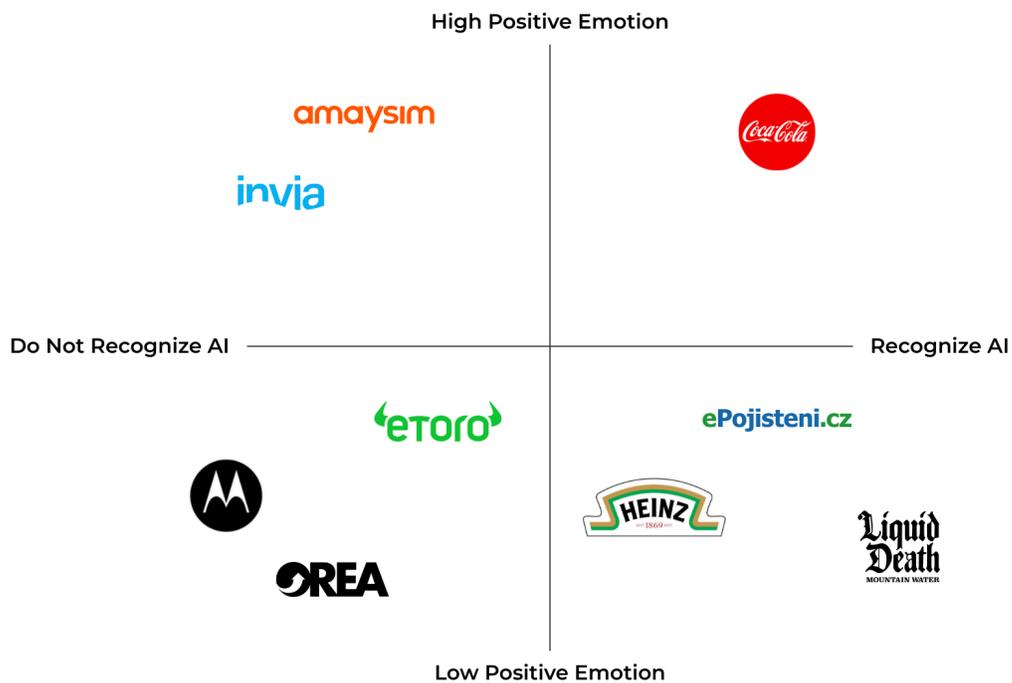


At building up emotion, Motorola performed better than only 20% of ads tested by Behavior.

The Core Conclusion

The key question is not: *“Is this AI?”*

The real question is: *“Does it work emotionally?”*



Our data shows that:

- AI disclosure vs. non-disclosure **does not determine success**
- AI recognition **does not directly correlate** with positive or negative reactions
- Emotion is the primary driver:
 - Strong emotion → AI does not matter (or helps)
 - Weak emotion → AI becomes a problem (but only because something else failed)

Practical Implications for Marketers

1. Don't start with AI. Start with emotion.

AI is a production tool, not a strategy.

2. If you disclose AI, the idea must justify its use creatively.

“Made with AI” is not a value proposition on its own.

3. Test emotion before debating technology or ethics.

Emotional pre-testing is more critical than ever.

4. AI amplifies outcomes — good and bad.

Just like cheaper production, it can scale a strong idea, but never fix a weak one.

About Behavio

Behavio is a technology company that helps marketers create and measure effective brand marketing using behavioral science. Its brand tracking, market tracking, and ad testing tools are trusted by over 400 global and challenger brands worldwide, including T-Mobile, LEGO, and Publicis.