



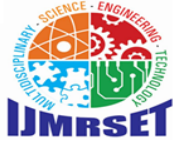
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## International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

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# Deepfake Marketing: Consumer Trust and Brand Reputation

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**ABSTRACT:** Deepfake technology, driven by advanced machine-learning models, has rapidly entered the mainstream of digital marketing, enabling brands to create hyper-realistic AI-generated advertisements, resurrect celebrities, and localise campaigns at scale. While these capabilities open new creative avenues, they simultaneously threaten the foundational pillars of consumer trust, transparency, and brand credibility. This study investigates the impact of deepfake marketing on consumer trust and brand reputation, drawing on primary data from 126 respondents predominantly from the 18–25 age group. Using percentage analysis and one-way ANOVA, the research finds that 78% of respondents raise ethical concerns about deepfake advertising, 75% feel misled when manipulated content is used without disclosure, and 60% believe deepfake marketing reduces their trust in a brand. Concurrently, 86% of respondents are aware of AI-generated content in marketing, and 80% demand mandatory ethical guidelines. The findings underscore a clear 'trust gap': consumers appreciate the innovation potential of deepfake technology but overwhelmingly expect transparency and responsible implementation. The study concludes that long-term brand loyalty in the AI era is contingent on a brand's commitment to honesty, ethical disclosure, and consumer-centric AI governance.

**KEYWORDS:** Deepfake Marketing, Consumer Trust, Brand Reputation, AI-Generated Content, Ethical Advertising, Digital Marketing, Transparency, Brand Credibility, Purchase Intention, Brand Loyalty.

## I. INTRODUCTION

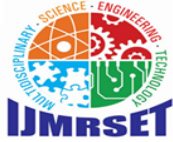
The rapid convergence of artificial intelligence and digital media has given rise to deepfake technology — a set of machine-learning-based techniques capable of generating or manipulating audio, images, and video with remarkable realism. Originally confined to research laboratories, deepfakes have migrated into the commercial arena, where marketers leverage them to resurrect deceased celebrities, localise campaigns across languages, and craft hyper-personalised advertisements at a fraction of traditional production costs.

However, the same realism that makes deepfakes commercially attractive also makes them ethically precarious. When consumers cannot distinguish genuine brand communication from AI-fabricated content, the psychological contract underpinning brand–consumer relationships — built on honesty, authenticity, and transparency — is placed at severe risk. Misuse or undisclosed use of deepfakes can trigger viral misinformation, public backlash, and long-term erosion of brand loyalty.

Beyond brand-created deepfakes, organisations must also defend against unauthorised synthetic content — fabricated videos of CEOs or brand ambassadors that spread rapidly on social media, causing financial or reputational harm. This dual threat makes it essential for brands to invest in detection tools, adopt protective policies, and educate consumers about the authenticity of digital media. The present study examines how the growing use of deepfake technology in marketing influences consumer trust and shapes brand reputation in the Indian digital context.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the role of deepfake technology in modern marketing campaigns and its influence on consumer perception.
2. To assess the level of consumer trust when exposed to AI-generated or manipulated brand content.



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3. To analyse the impact of deepfake marketing on overall brand reputation, credibility, and customer loyalty.
4. To identify the ethical challenges and potential risks associated with deepfake content in marketing communication.
5. To propose strategies and guidelines for brands to use deepfake technology responsibly while maintaining consumer trust.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on deepfake technology in marketing is nascent but growing rapidly. Whittaker, Letheren & Mulcahy (2021) provided the first conceptual framework for deepfake marketing, identifying consumer attitude, trust, and brand authenticity as critical variables. Their framework called for structured empirical investigation into how audiences respond to AI-fabricated brand content.

Huang and Maracic (2024) explored consumer perception through five qualitative focus groups and found that deepfakes simultaneously attract attention and generate authenticity concerns. They recommended that companies introduce an internal 'deepfake monitoring' role to oversee ethical implementation. Zafar et al. (2025) demonstrated that disclosure of AI-generated content significantly mediates the relationship between deepfake advertising and purchase intention, with trust acting as a key mediating variable.

Ismail and Johansson (2025) conducted a quantitative study comparing consumer responses to deepfake versus traditional advertisements and found that deepfake ads reduced trust and purchase intention. Nguyen and Truong (2025) confirmed that deepfakes significantly influence public trust in retail systems. Campbell et al. (2022) argued that deepfakes will fundamentally transform the advertising industry, urging brands to develop proactive response frameworks.

From an ethical governance perspective, Gupta et al. (2025) found that deepfakes contribute to misinformation and market manipulation, calling for regulatory safeguards, while Khalfallah and Keller (2025) highlighted that authenticity concerns profoundly affect trust in virtual influencer marketing. Collectively, existing literature establishes that transparency, ethical disclosure, and responsible AI governance are non-negotiable requirements for deepfake marketing to coexist with consumer trust.

**Table 1: Summary of Selected Literature Review**

S.No	Author(s)	Year	Objective	Key Findings	Suggestion
1	Dharti Nirwan (2023)	2023	Deepfake impact on influencer marketing & trust	Deepfake technology affects trust in influencer campaigns	Emphasise transparency in influencer campaigns
2	Huang & Maracic (2024)	2024	Consumer attitude, trust & brand authenticity with deepfakes	Deepfakes influence trust & authenticity perception	Introduce a 'deepfake monitoring' role in companies
3	Zafar et al. (2025)	2025	Deepfake advertising disclosure vs purchase intention	Disclosure significantly mediates trust & purchase intent	Emphasise ethical disclosure practices
4	Ismail & Johansson (2025)	2025	Consumer responses to AI-generated deepfake ads	Deepfake ads reduced trust & purchase intention vs traditional ads	Cautious, transparent implementation recommended
5	Gupta et al. (2025)	2025	Deepfake impact on business & market	Deepfakes contribute to misinformation & market risk	Regulatory & ethical safeguards are essential



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			manipulation			
6	Whittaker et al. (2021)	2021	Conceptual framework for deepfake marketing	for	First structured research framework for deepfake marketing	Detailed empirical research agenda proposed

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design. A descriptive design is used to describe consumer trust levels and brand reputation outcomes attributable to deepfake marketing, while an exploratory design provides new insights into this emerging phenomenon.

**Sample:** A total of 126 respondents were selected using convenience sampling from the Coimbatore district, comprising college students, working professionals, and social media users between the ages of 18 and 40. The majority (81%) belong to the 18–25 age group and are undergraduates, reflecting the demographic most exposed to AI-driven marketing content.

**Data Collection:** Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of 30 items: demographic items, five-point Likert-scale statements measuring trust, perception, ethical concern, brand credibility, and loyalty, and dichotomous yes/no awareness questions. Only fully completed questionnaires were included in the final analysis.

**Statistical Tools:** Data were analysed using percentage analysis and one-way ANOVA to identify patterns, group differences, and relationships between consumer demographics, deepfake awareness, and trust/reputation outcomes.

### V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis reveals a pronounced tension between the innovative appeal of deepfake marketing and consumers' fundamental need for transparency. Key findings from the percentage analysis are summarised in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Summary of Key Findings from Percentage Analysis**

No.	Key Finding	Statistic
1	Majority of respondents are aged 18–25 and are students	81%
2	Aware that brands use AI or deepfake technology in marketing	86%
3	Feel misled when manipulated content used without disclosure	75%
4	Believe deepfake marketing reduces their trust in a brand	60%
5	Agree deepfake advertising raises ethical concerns	78%
6	Believe misuse of deepfake can damage brand reputation	72%
7	Agree ethical AI usage improves brand image	72%
8	Would stop supporting a brand if deceived by deepfake ads	75%
9	Trust ranked as the #1 consumer priority factor	57% (Rank 1)
10	Support mandatory ethical guidelines for deepfake marketing	80%

**Awareness and Exposure:** An overwhelming 86% of respondents confirmed awareness that brands use AI or deepfake technology in marketing, indicating that AI-driven campaigns are now broadly recognised by digitally active



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consumers. A combined 68% of respondents reported frequent or very frequent exposure to digital advertisements, making them credible evaluators of AI-generated content.

**Trust and Deception:** A clear trust gap emerged from the data. Around 60% of respondents believe deepfake marketing reduces their trust in a brand, while 75% reported feeling misled when AI-generated content is used without explicit disclosure. Critically, 75% stated they would withdraw support from a brand if they felt deceived by deepfake advertisements — a finding with serious implications for long-term brand equity.

**Ethical Concerns:** The strongest consensus emerged around ethics: 78% of respondents agreed that ethical concerns arise when deepfake technology is used in advertising, and 80% demanded that mandatory ethical guidelines be established for deepfake marketing practices. Furthermore, 63% believe deepfake marketing should be strictly regulated, reflecting strong public support for oversight.

**Brand Credibility and Reputation:** Nearly 69% of respondents agreed that deepfake marketing affects a brand's credibility, and 72% concurred that misuse of deepfake technology can damage brand reputation. Conversely, 72% believed that ethical use of AI improves a brand's public image, underscoring that responsible implementation can be a competitive differentiator.

**Ranking Analysis:** When asked to rank factors influencing their brand relationship, respondents placed 'Trust in the Brand' at Rank 1 (57%), followed by 'Brand Reputation' and 'Long-term Brand Loyalty'. 'Ethical Responsibility' was rated moderately important, largely as a supportive rather than primary determinant.

**ANOVA Results:** The first one-way ANOVA ( $F = 3.09066$ ,  $p = 0.047$ ,  $F\text{-critical} = 3.032$ ) revealed a statistically significant difference between group means at the 5% level, indicating that awareness levels meaningfully differentiate consumer trust perceptions. The second ANOVA ( $F = 0.036$ ,  $p = 0.998$ ) confirmed no significant difference between demographic sub-groups in terms of purchase intention, suggesting ethical concerns around deepfake marketing are broadly shared across all consumer segments.

### VI. FINDINGS

- Young, digitally active consumers (18–25) form the primary audience for deepfake marketing, making digital literacy initiatives particularly impactful for this cohort.
- 86% of respondents are aware of AI/deepfake use in marketing; a significant neutral segment highlights room for greater consumer education.
- AI-generated advertisements are perceived as attention-grabbing and creative by around 52% of respondents, indicating genuine engagement potential.
- 75% feel misled by undisclosed AI-generated content — the most consequential finding for brand safety strategies.
- 60% believe deepfake marketing reduces brand trust, while 69% agree it affects brand credibility, highlighting substantial reputational risk.
- 78% of consumers raise ethical concerns about deepfake advertising, indicating deep moral sensitivity that brands cannot ignore.
- 72% believe ethical AI use improves brand image — transparency is not merely a compliance obligation but a trust-building opportunity.
- 75% would stop supporting a brand perceived to have used deceptive deepfake content, directly linking AI ethics to brand loyalty.
- Trust ranks as the paramount consumer priority, above brand reputation and ethical responsibility, in determining brand relationships.
- 80% of respondents support mandatory ethical guidelines for deepfake marketing — a clear signal for regulatory action.



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### VII. SUGGESTIONS

1. Brands must clearly label all AI-generated or deepfake content at the point of publication to prevent misleading consumers and protect brand trust.
2. Companies should develop internal AI ethics policies and designate a 'deepfake compliance officer' to oversee responsible implementation.
3. Transparency should be reframed as a strategic brand value rather than a regulatory burden — proactive disclosure differentiates brands positively.
4. Consumer awareness campaigns explaining how AI is responsibly used in advertising can convert scepticism into informed appreciation.
5. Investment in deepfake detection tools is essential to defend against unauthorised synthetic content targeting brand executives or ambassadors.
6. Deepfake marketing content should augment authentic storytelling and genuine brand values, not replace them.
7. Policymakers and industry bodies should establish clear, enforceable standards for AI content disclosure in advertising.
8. Before full-scale rollout, brands should conduct pilot deepfake campaigns with focus groups to gauge consumer sentiment and pre-empt backlash.
9. Since trust is the highest-ranked consumer priority, brands must treat credibility, honesty, and consistency as non-negotiable brand assets.
10. Ethical AI usage can serve as a meaningful competitive differentiator in an increasingly crowded digital marketplace.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

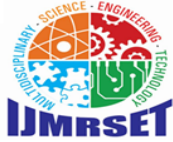
This study demonstrates that deepfake marketing occupies a paradoxical space in the digital advertising landscape: it simultaneously offers powerful tools for creativity, personalisation, and engagement while posing serious risks to consumer trust and brand reputation. The empirical evidence from 126 respondents paints a consistent picture — consumers are aware of, and broadly sceptical about, undisclosed AI-generated content. Trust emerges as the most critical determinant of brand relationships, and any misuse or deceptive deployment of deepfake technology can result in immediate withdrawal of consumer support and long-term reputational damage.

The study's central insight is that the future of deepfake marketing does not depend solely on technological advancement but on responsible implementation. Brands that adopt transparent, ethical, and consumer-focused AI practices are more likely to sustain long-term trust, credibility, and competitive advantage. Deepfake technology can be a powerful marketing tool — but only when innovation is balanced with integrity, and when the psychological contract between brand and consumer remains intact.

Future research should extend this investigation to broader and more demographically diverse samples, explore industry-specific applications of deepfake marketing, and examine the evolving regulatory landscape as policymakers respond to the rapid proliferation of AI-generated content in commercial communication.

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