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COLUMNS

## Generative AI's role in reshaping brands' audio marketing

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Generative artificial intelligence promises to upend longstanding practices across industries and has made content creators uneasy about what it all means for them.

The audio media industry is no exception, with on-air personalities, podcasters, ad agencies, advertisers and publishers all closely examining developments to understand generative AI's impact.

The reality, though, is that the near future of the audio industry will closely resemble the current state of play, only with industry players in every role equipped to be far more efficient, empowered and productive and, critically for both brands and audio media publishers, with audiences more engaged.

Spoken word at scale

Generative AI offers powerful voice synthesis capabilities. With this technology, on-air personalities, podcasters, ad voice actors and others can quickly train AI with recordings of their own voices, enabling it to then produce soundalike content.

In this way, generative AI enables content creators to rapidly deliver audio and marketing content on a huge scale without going through the trouble of saying all the words in that content out loud.

Creators can leverage text-to-speech, as well as templates and automation to tell the AI what voiced audio content to build out. Show hosts and ad agencies can therefore produce fresh, fully formed, and convincingly voiced episodes or advertisements simply by writing text.

From a production standpoint, generative AI can ensure high-quality audio by cleaning up inadvertent or background noise, and by providing automated audio editing that tightens up pauses, gaps and other anomalies in spoken content.

Creators using text-to-speech will naturally bypass such editing needs altogether, with AI generating clean audio from the beginning.

Creators may also see fit to reduce the overhead costs and limitations of audio and studio equipment, as generative AI renders them unnecessary.

Generative AI will benefit voice actors as well, by offering more potential for modernization. Actors can record a single high-quality voice reference that can then be applied across any number of ads.

In short, generative AI will allow content and ad creators to produce all the media they would like to if they had unlimited time and resources, and actually empowers them to publish it all.

Overcoming the engagement challenge

Listener engagement remains the challenge of the current audio marketing industry.

Getting target audiences engaged with audio marketing campaigns can be tough sledding for brands, which in turn leads to harder-to-fill inventory for audio media publishers such as digital radio houses and podcasters.

Brands succeed when their content reaches the right person and addresses the right customer need in the right context.

If it were easy to do, brands would personalize each ad to each individual person they reached, and only target listeners relevant to what they were marketing. But creating and managing unique ad content tailored to individual listeners would carry an impractical price tag, at least in a pre-generative-AI world.

For brands, advertisers and media publishers ready to harness it strategically, generative AI offers a unique, scalable, symbiotic answer to the engagement challenge.

For example, a podcast host could record a single version of a particular audio ad, and then enlist generative AI to produce countless ad variations in a soundalike voice.

Ad campaigns backed by generative AI can therefore deliver hyper-specific ads that speak to each consumer in context, multiplying ad efficacy and revenue.

Furthermore, brands will be able to break through the noise and engage individual listeners by using AI-generated ad campaigns created in real-time that specify the city they live in, the time of day, the current weather, or even the app or platform on which they are listening.

When it comes to solving the engagement challenge, speaking to listeners with an awareness of their specific context is everything.

Continuing with the example above, by using the podcast host's voice or adding specific appropriate context relevant to the listener, generative AI voice strategies can make any audio ad feel as targeted and engaging as a native ad.

Generative AI makes that contextual engagement scalable for the first time. It can upend the status quo, serving as a game-changer and competitive differentiator for players across the audio media industry.

MAKE NO MISTAKE about it: generative AI will enhance the quality and scalability of audio content and ad production like nothing that has come before.

Human workers in the industry will remain as busy as ever, while their efforts may become magnitudes more effective.

Given this potential, the most valid concern around generative AI likely lies in hesitating to modernize audio campaign strategies and getting left behind.

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