

Google's AI assistant ad sparks backlash during Olympics coverage

Article

The news: Google released a controversial commercial for its AI assistant, **Gemini**, during the Olympics. The ad depicts a father using Gemini to write a fan letter for his daughter to Olympic athlete **Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone**.

- Viewers and industry experts criticized the commercial for promoting AI use in personal, emotional tasks. Due to negative reactions, Google disabled comments on the **YouTube** version of the ad.
- Google, which is heavily involved in Olympics coverage through a partnership with **NBCUniversal** to use AI tools during broadcasts, created the ad in-house.

Why it matters: Critics argue that the commercial promotes an inappropriate use of AI, replacing meaningful human interaction and creativity.

- This backlash highlights fears about AI taking over human tasks and experiences, echoing sentiments from the outcry over [Apple's "Crush" iPad ad](#), which was perceived as dismissive of human creativity.
- The premise of the Google ad conflicts with the spirit of the Olympics, which celebrates human achievement and personal effort.
- **The controversy brings to light the broader issue of how AI is marketed to consumers.**

Trust issues: As of November 2023, 50% of North American consumers [had not used genAI tools](#) in the past year.

- Although a significant portion (47%) somewhat trust AI, [33% do not trust it at all](#).
- While another study found [more creative advertising](#) (33.5%) as a potential benefit to brands using AI tech, it's safe to say that they don't want brands to highlight their fears that AI could replace meaningful human connections and creativity.

Our take: Google's intention with the Gemini ad was to showcase the AI assistant as a creative aid, but the execution fell short by crossing a line that many consumers are not comfortable with.

- The incident shows tech companies need to be careful and deliberate in promoting AI products. Marketing mistakes can cause major public backlash, damaging both the product and the company's reputation. In this case, Google's limited response to criticism clearly worsened the situation.
- The backlash against the Gemini ad also points to a broader societal concern about the role of AI. As the tech evolves and becomes more prevalent, there will be increasing scrutiny over

how it is used and marketed. Companies need to ensure that their messaging aligns with public values, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics.

Extent to Which US Consumers Trust AI, Aug 2023

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+ who shop for groceries
Source: dunnhumby, "Consumer Trends Tracker: What Grocery Shoppers Want Most From AI," Nov 2, 2023