

# Toys R Us unveils ad made with Sora AI video tool, prompting criticism

Article

**The news:** Toys R Us debuted an ad at Cannes that was made almost entirely with OpenAI's text-to-video tool **Sora**. The 66-second spot depicts the company's founder as a child experiencing a dream that inspired the brand's giraffe mascot.

- Toys R Us CMO **Kim Miller Olko** told CNN that the ad was created primarily using text prompts, though it also included post-production editing and featured an original score.

**Critical reception:** The spot drew harsh criticism. Ad creatives ripped into Toys R Us on social media, assailing the ad's quality and the brand's refusal to hire creatives to make it. Toys R Us has stuck with the spot so far and said it is exploring advertising opportunities and could release a holiday-themed version.

- Quality is subjective—but the ad is undeniably unsettling. The child's appearance changes significantly between shots, and there is an uncanny, glossy veneer that is often characteristic of AI-generated media.
- But while a discerning eye might notice the spot's strange qualities, it is, at times, disconcertingly convincing. Other brands and CMOs looking to save on production costs might take a cue from Toys R Us and experiment with creating spots using Sora.

**AI in advertising:** The Toys R Us spot continues a recent trend of brands facing backlash for featuring AI in ads. **But it's also one of the first high-profile uses of Sora in marketing** and is likely to inspire wider use of the technology.

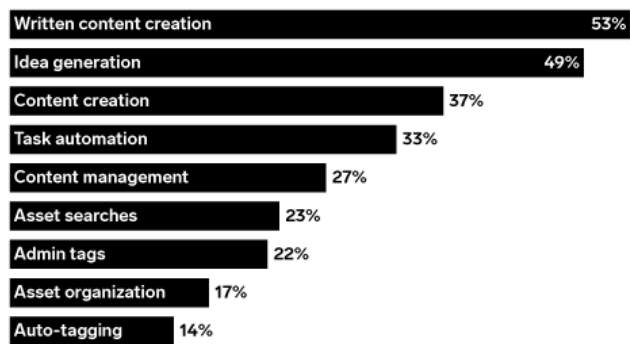
- OpenAI unveiled Sora earlier this year and **immediately made waves** in the media industry. The presentation's quality shook filmmaker **Tyler Perry** into **canceling a planned \$800 million expansion** of his Atlanta studio. Since then, content made with Sora has proliferated and even been **featured at film festivals**.
- Several brands, including **Lego** and **Under Armour**, have been criticized for releasing AI-generated marketing materials in recent months. Though generative AI may be unpopular with ad creatives and consumers, its ever-increasing fidelity and cost-saving potential means brands may eventually **opt not to disclose its use at all**.
- However, the copyright issues found with other generative AI products are just as present with Sora, which could hamper its adoption.

**Our take:** Companies that release AI-generated ad campaigns can boast of being ahead of the technological curve, but they tend to face negative feedback from both consumers and creatives. As AI-generated media's fidelity increases, brands may choose not to reveal their usage of the relatively unpopular tech.

- Despite the backlash, the Toys R Us spot could turn heads among CMOs looking to cut costs and experiment with AI.

### How US Marketers and Creative Professionals Are Using AI, Nov 2023

% of respondents



Source: PhotoShelter, "AI: Brand's Next Frontier Report," Jan 17, 2024

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