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The Impact of Generative AI Content Disclosure on Consumer Engagement and Visit Intentions in Tourism: A Content Analysis and Experimental Study

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Abstract

Purpose – The growing popularity of Generative AI (GenAI), together with its user-friendliness, is responsible for its extensive acceptance in various industries. Given the recent changes in legislation concerning the disclosure of genAI content, it is essential to investigate the impact of such disclosure on consumer behaviour. Hence, our study has two objectives; first, to compare the engagement level of posts generated using AI vs human generated content and second, to examine the differences in audience visit intention when they are informed about the use of genAI content versus when no such disclosure is made.

Method – First, this study conducted a content analysis by extracting 1001 posts from Instagram, of which 501 were genAI content and 500 were human-generated content with am aim to check the engagement on these posts. Second, this study experiments with genAI disclosure as an independent variable and visit intention as a dependent variable.

Findings – Our findings indicate that despite having economic benefits for the brands, the engagement for genAI content is lower when compared to that of human-generated content. Also, the intention to visit is lower for posts with disclosure of genAI content.

Originality – This paper explores how GenAI content disclosure affects the engagement and visit intention by using real world Instagram data and experiments.

Key Words: GenAI, Visit intention, Tourism, Generative AI

INTRODUCTION

The advent of Generative AI (genAI) is transforming how brands create content for their social media—renowned brands like Amazon and Levi's use genAI to create content (Amazon, 2023). GenAI is a form of artificial intelligence that helps create content (Dogru et al., 2023). GenAI gets its name from its feature of generating content, such as text, audio, image and video, based on supervised or unsupervised learning (True et al., 2023). Currently, the adoption of GenAI is widespread. It is being adopted across healthcare, entertainment, fashion, education, finance and tourism (Khan & Khan, 2024). GenAI helps the tourism sector by generating original, authentic, imaginative, and varied content. It is empowering tourism enterprises by enhancing their marketing strategies. Enterprises use genAI to create slogans, headlines, blog posts, summaries and product reviews (Wahid et al., 2023). GenAI enables tourism enterprises to generate personalised content for the users (Kshetri et al., 2023; Ooi et al., 2023). Given its advantage, the global AI market is estimated to reach $190 billion by 2025. Also, it is estimated that one-third of the brand's message will be generated using GenAI by 2025 (Gartner, 2023). This rapid shift towards GenAI content raises a crucial concern about how the visitors will react to the message generated by GenAI.

Currently, research on genAI content creation focuses on two major areas. The first is how genAI content can help brands save resources (Noy & Zhang, 2023). Second, how can genAI be incorporated to provide automated and personalised content (Matz et al., 2023). A very few studies in the domain of fashion (Sohn et al., 2020) and financial services (Yang & Lee, 2024) have been conducted to understand the impact of GenAI on consumer perceptions and intentions. No studies have been conducted to understand the impact of genAI content on consumer behaviour in tourism industry (Mariani et al., 2022; Vaid et al., 2023). Addressing this research gap is essential as the regulators demand transparency in genAI adoption. As per the order by The White House (2023), it is essential for brands to disclose the use of AI content in their communication clearly. This regulation aims to protect consumers, who can often not distinguish GenAI content from human content (Jakesch et al., 2023).

Using the user-gratification, social presence, and signalling theories, our study aims to address this research gap. This study has conducted two experiments to understand the impact of genAI content disclosure on visit intention.

In Study 1, we conducted a content analysis to compare the engagement levels of posts generated by genAI to those generated by humans. In Study 2, we performed a single-factor, between-subjects experiment to examine the differences in audience visit intention when informed about using genAI content versus when no such disclosure is made. This study also aimed to check the mediating role of perceived information quality on the visit intention.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Generative AI for Tourism sector

Generative AI, commonly known as GenAI, utilizes computational methods to generate original and meaningful content based on training data. With the proliferation of various GenAI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, and Midjourney, technology has become more accessible, user-friendly, and adaptable (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). The tourism and hospitality industry has significantly embraced GenAI, with travelers using it to gain insights into specific tourist destinations (Gursoy et al., 2023; Carvalho & Ivanov, 2023; Mich & Garigliano, 2023). ChatGPT, one of the most widely used GenAI technologies, has developed plugins like Expedia, providing tailored travel options, including flights, accommodations, and itinerary plans, to facilitate informed and personalized travel decision-making (Ali et al., 2023). Research by Mich and Garigliano (2023) explored its e-tourism applications, while Gursoy et al. (2023) discussed its advantages and challenges, and Wong et al. (2023) demonstrated its role in traveler decision-making. Moreover, the tourism industry benefits from AI in various settings such as sentiment analysis through Natural Language Processing, augmented reality, virtual reality, robotics in hospitality and service, and intelligent chatbots (Kirtil and Aşkun, 2021). GenAI not only caters to user inquiries but also produces coherent content, gaining popularity for streamlining routine tasks at reduced costs for businesses.

GenAI for content generation

Literature has predominantly focused on GenAI's content creation capabilities, illustrating how it can aid in content generation and complement human labor. Notably, one study revealed that content generated collaboratively by GenAI and humans outperformed human-generated content in search engine rankings (Reisenbichler et al., 2022). Such content finds application in social media marketing for brands. In content marketing, audiences demand informative, authentic, compelling, and relevant content (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Destinations employ rigorous processes, involving multiple layers of review and consultation with experts from various fields, to meet these standards (Tehro et al., 2022). This necessitates significant human resources and effort to align content with brand values and standards. However, recent advances in GenAI offer the potential to automate this process through simple commands to the system (Noy & Zhang, 2023). This automation could drastically reduce resource requirements while improving productivity and content quality, especially for marketing content creation. The content generated by GenAI cannot be distinguished from that of the content generated by human (Jakesch et al., 2023), but the disclosures reveal it to the audience. An order from The White house (2023) aims to enforce the disclosure of AI-generated content. Hence, it's imperative to investigate whether the disclosure of GenAI-generated content in social media marketing impacts the visit intention of the tourist places.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Generative AI content and engagement

Customer engagement is a psychological process in which a consumer initiates the action, which leads to value generation for a brand (Gluck, 2012; Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011). Customer engagement on social media platforms like Instagram, facebook and youtube is calculated using actions taken by the audience which includes likes, comments and shares on the post (Khan, 2017). This engagement level on the social media varies based on the content of the post (Hemsley et al., 2024). Hence, engagement might differ for the posts generated by AI and the posts generated by human.

As per the user-gratification theory, the audience seek for the content which satisfies their needs or desires and hence engage with the posts that have such content (Katz et al., 1973). Human generated content is rich in the elements that resonates with

the audience as it contains human emotions, experiences and creativity. Hence, we hypothesize that the human-generated posts will have higher engagement when compared to GenAI content.

H1: Human-generated content will have higher engagement than that of GenAI content.

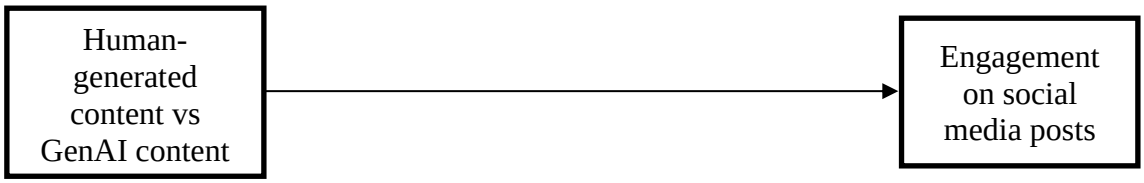

Fig 1: Engagement on social media posts

Generative AI content and visit intention

Psychological reactance theory suggests that the individuals react against threats when they perceive that their freedom is being restricted (Brehm, 1966). When the audience are made aware of the genAI content, they perceive it limiting and controlling and hence they experience psychological reactance. Hence, the visit intention will be higher for non-disclosure of genAI content.

Also, as per social presence theory, when content is perceived as originating from a human source, it tends to increase the perceived social presence (Short et al., 1976). It leads to higher levels of engagement, trust, and perceived informativeness. Individuals may perceive content posted by humans as more informative because they attribute greater credibility and trustworthiness to human sources compared to content generated by AI (Bruns & Meibner, 2024). This perception of higher informativeness can lead to higher visit intentions. Therefore, this study hypothesized that:

H2: Non-disclosure of GenAI content will lead to higher visit intention than that of disclosure of GenAI content.

Generative AI content and Perceived Information quality

Research in the domain of GenAI is still new and is gaining traction, but well before its popularity, studies have evaluated audience preferences toward algorithmic decisions. Research shows that people do not trust the algorithmic decisions (Overgoor

et al., 2019). When the use of genAI for content creation is not disclosed, audience perceive the content to be human-generated and hence perceive the information to the authentic and trustworthy (Mahmud et al., 2022). According to the Signalling Theory (Connelly et al., 2011), this perceived authenticity enhances the information quality. Conversely, when genAI content is disclosed, audience perceive the information as uncertain and less reliable. This results in decreased perceived information quality. Hence, we hypothesize-

H3: Non-disclosure of GenAI content will lead to higher perceived information quality than that of disclosure of GenAI content.

We hypothesize that the relationship between genAI content disclosure vs Non-disclosure and visit intention is mediated by perceived information quality. When the perceived information quality of the content is high, the visit intention to the destination will also be higher (Almahamid et al., 2005). Conversly, when the perceived information quality is low, the visit intention to the place also decreases.

H4: The relationship between GenAI content disclosure vs Non-disclosure and visit intention is mediated by perceived information quality.

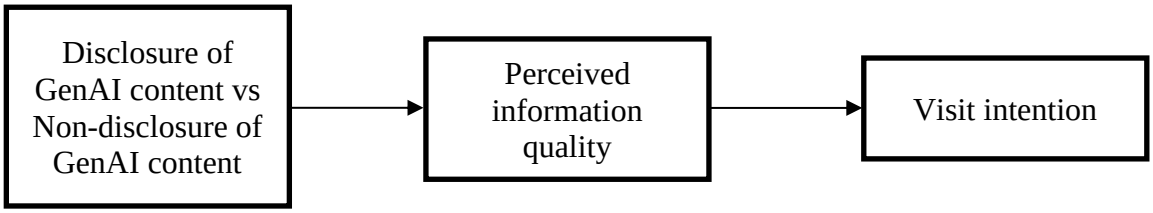

Fig 2: Study of GenAI content disclosure

Study 1: Content Analysis: Engagement levels of GenAI content vs Human-generated content

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The objective of this study was to investigate the engagement levels on GenAI generated posts and human-generated posts. To identify the engagement of the users with

these posts, a content analysis of 1001 social media posts were conducted over a course of one year. 501 posts were generated by AI, while 500 posts were generated by human. All the posts had similar content i.e., images of scenic beauty.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 1001 posts were retrieved from Instagram using instaloader module of Python for a period of one year i.e., from Jan 2023 to Jan 2024 (Appendix A). The AI posts were extracted from a social media page claiming to have AI-generated posts i.e., "digitalartsensei", while posts generated by human were extracted from the Instagram page "discoverearth". These pages were selected as they are relevant to the sustainable and tourism themes. Digitalartsensei is an instagram page that showcases a variety of AI-generated content focusing on the environment. On the other hand, discoverearth promotes eco-tourism and awareness of environmental concerns by posting human-generated content.

A text file for each post was retrieved which had information about the posts including the post, number of likes, and number of comments of each post. These text files were combined to form a csv file using python (Appendix B). The number of likes, number of comments and number of shares were added to get the engagement levels for each of these posts. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in the engagement levels of posts generated by humans and the posts generated by AI.

Table 1: Engagement on social media posts: Human generated vs GenAI generated

	codes	**Mean**	**s.d.**	**f value**	**sig.**
Engagement	Human-generated	43963.27	41724.935	207.705	0.001
	AI-generated	9456.41	33598.927		

RESULTS

The analysis revealed that there exists a significant difference ($p<0.05$, $F= 207.70$) in the engagement level of posts generated by AI and the posts generated by human (Table 1). Such that the posts generated by human had higher engagement ($M=43963.27$, s.d. =

41724.935) when compared to the posts generated by AI (M =9456.41, s.d. = 33598.927). Hence, it provides support to H1.

Study 2: Disclosure of GenAI content vs Non-disclosure of GenAI content

Design and Procedure

In April 2024, this study conducted a single-factor (GenAI content disclosure vs No disclosure) between-subject experiment. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: in one condition, we disclosed the use of GenAI content, while in the other, it was not disclosed (Appendix C).

In the disclosure condition, participants were first informed about GenAI and then told that the content they were about to see originated from a fictitious location called "Shermer" and was generated by GenAI. In the non-disclosure condition, participants were similarly informed about GenAI but were told that the content they were about to view was generated by humans. Subsequently, participants were asked to share their intention to visit the location.

SAMPLE

Participants for the study were recruited using Prolific Academic (www.prolific.co), a commercial platform. Each participant received compensation of 0.60 euros upon completing the survey. Data obtained from Prolific is considered more reliable compared to data collected from student samples. Screening criteria were applied to recruit participants, including US nationality, membership on Instagram, and a fondness for travel. On average, participants spent 2 minutes completing the survey. A total of 133 participants completed the survey, with 67 exposed to disclosure content and 66 exposed to non-disclosure content. The demographics of the respondents in both the conditions were not significantly different from each other. The demographics of the final respondent were 49.62% female, 47.36% male and 3% prefered not to say. The mean age of the participants was 33.90 years.

MEASURE

We measured each of the constructs using 7-point Likert scale (1- Strongly disagree, 7- strongly agree). Perceived information quality was measured used a 3- item

scale adopted from Forslund (2007) (Information provided in this post is accurate/reliable/trustworthy). The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale is 0.922 showing that the scale is reliable. Visit intention was measured used a 3- item scale adopted from Dodds et al. (1991) (The next time that I plan to travel, I will choose Shermer destination/ I will consider Shermer for my next travel location/It is very likely that I will visit Shermer in the future). The Cronbach's Alpha value for the scale is 0.896 showing that the scale is reliable.

RESULTS

To test H2, we conducted a One-way Anova, where disclosure type was independent variable, and the visit intention was a dependent variable. The results revealed that the disclosure type has a significant impact on the visit intention ($f = 29.0$, p-value <0.01) such that the visit intention of the destination is higher when there is no disclosure of GenAI content ($M = 4.01$; s.d. = 0.98) than that of disclosure ($M= 2.92$, s.d. = 1.32), therefore supporting the H2 (Table 3).

To test H3, we conducted a One-way Anova, with disclosure type as an independent variable and perceived information quality as a dependent variable. The results revealed that the disclosure type has a significant impact on the perceived information quality ($f = 10.12$, p-value <0.01) such that the perceived information quality is higher when there is no disclosure of GenAI content ($M = 4.56$; s.d. = 1.08) than that of disclosure ($M= 3.88$, s.d. = 1.36), therefore supporting the H3 (Table 2).

We conducted power analysis using G*Power which shows that the study have a power of 0.99. This means that this study has a 99.9% chance to detect the true effects if one exists and 133 participants are sufficient to identify the difference in the variables. Also, this means that there is a minimal risk of committing a type-II error and hence the findings of our study is reliable.

Table 2: One-way ANOVA for visit intention and perceived information quality

	codes	Mean	s.d.	f value	sig.
Visit intention	GenAI content no disclosure	4.01	0.98	29.0	0.001
	disclosure	2.92	1.32		
Perceived information quality	GenAI content no disclosure	4.56	1.08	10.12	0.002
	disclosure	3.88	1.36		

To test H4 i.e. the mediating role of perceived information quality in the relationship between disclosure and visit intention, we conducted a PROCESS-MACRO analysis (Model 4) in SPSS with 10,000 bootstrapped resamples (Hayes, 2018) with visit intention as dependent variable, perceived information quality as mediator and disclosure type as a independent variable. The findings supported for H4, as the 95% CI for the indirect effect did not include zero. (indirect = -0.2611, SE = 0.1046, 95% CI = 0.082 to 0.4893).

Also, we conducted a correlation analysis to explore the strength of relationship between perceived information quality and visit intention. The results indicated that there is a moderate to strong relationship between the two ($r= 0.503$, $p<0.01$).

DISCUSSION

The rise of genAI technology has made it easier for the marketers to create content to post on social media platforms (Feurriegel et al., 2023). As per the latest disclosure regulation guidelines of genAI content from The white house (2023), it is essential to understand the effect of disclosure on consumer behaviour (Peres et al., 2023). We aimed to check the difference in engagement level of consumers on or in genAI content vs human content (Study 1). Also, our study aimed to investigate the effect of GenAI content disclosure on intention to visit a destination (Study 2). Both the studies have showcased that the consumers value human generated content over genAI content. Our study revealed that the audience perceive the human content is more informative when

compared to that of genAI content and hence the visit intention to a destination is higher when the disclosure of genAI content is absent. Although the genAI content have several cost-related benefits to the marketer, it is essential that they limit the use of genAI content as it has a negative effect on the intentions of the consumer. Brands can utilize AI for background tasks such as data analysis, content ideation and personalizing human experience, while the final content should be curated and generated by human.

Theoretical implication

The main theoretical implication of our study is deepening the understanding of consumer's behaviour towards the genAI content. Numerous studies have explored how genAI can be used to enhance the content creation and reduce the resources required to create the content but not enough studies have explored how the consumers will react to the such content (Wahid et al., 2023; Peres et al., 2023). We contribute to the literature of GenAI in various ways.

First, grounding our research in the user-gratification theory, our study reveals that the engagement on genAI content is significantly less when compared to that of human-generated content. This indicates that the source of content is a critical factor in user gratification.

Second, our study reveals that the intention to visit a destination reduces if the audience is disclosed with the information that AIgenerates the content. This offers new insights to psychological reactance theory, wherein the consumers form a reactance towards the content when it is from an AI source.

Third, we identify the mediating role of percieved information quality, suggesting that the AI-generated content is perceived to be of lower quality when compared to human-generated content. This perception contributes to the reduced engagement and visit intention for genAI content, highlighting information quality is essential for consumer decision making.

Managerial Implication

The genAI technology is gaining popularity amongst the marketer as it is perceived to be highly efficient and creative for creating content (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). However, it is essential to understand the potential challenges relating to consumer

behaviour (Peres et al., 2023). Our paper aims to understand the impact of genAI content on the engagement levels of the audience and intentions to visit a destination.

The study revealed that engagement and visit intention decreases when people are made aware of the genAI content. Hence, our study highlights the necessity of human involvement in content creation.

Travel destinations should optimize the human-AI collaboration to achieve favourable outcomes. AI can be used to perform automated tasks, while human should handle the emotional aspects of the content creation which resonates with the audience. Furthermore, destinations can highlight that the AI is used to assist the humans rather than entirely creating the content. Also, disclosing strategy should be made in such a way that is is clear, positive and integrated with overall destinations' image.

AI should be used by travel destinations for data-driven personalization. AI-generated content can be customized with insights from user behavior patterns or social media analytics to appeal to particular audience segments. This makes it possible to create more individualized marketing efforts that speak to people's tastes without coming across as artificial or impersonal.

CONCLUSION

Our paper contributes to the literature by investigating the impact of genAI content on the consumer behaviour. While prior research has outlined how the usage of genAI can be useful for the brands and will reduce the resources required, not enough studies have been conducted to understand the consumer's reaction to the genAI content. The white house has informed about the disclosure regulations of the genAI content hence it is essential to understand whether or not the consumers will react favourably to the genAI content. Our findings reveal that the consumer reaction to genAI content is not favourable for the brands and hence the managers should be careful while using genAI content to interact with the consumers.

Limitations and future research directions

Although our study provides noteworthy contributions to the literature of tourism. It is not without limitations. First, for our content analysis, we have used only one social media platform i.e., Instagram. Future studies could explore different social

media platforms like facebook and youtube to check the engagement on genAI content and human-created content.

Second, our study considered two Instagram pages for retrieving the posts and analyzing the engagement of the audience. This may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should expand the dataset by incorporating posts from more Instagram pages.

Third, factors such as time of posting, hashtags used by the pages and other factors can contribute to the engagement which have not been considered. Future studies can consider these factors.

Fourth, our studies explore the impact of genAI content vs human created content on engagement and visit intention. Future studies can also explore the impact of hybrid content (i.e., mix of both AI and human) on engagement and visit intention. Finally, longitudinal studies can be performed to track changes in consumer behaviour towards the AI content.

Extended Abstract

The widespread acceptance of generative artificial intelligence (AI) across several academic fields can be attributed to its increasing popularity and ease of usage. Many different sectors utilize this technology to create content for their social media handles. Many studies have been conducted to examine how genAI can be used to improve the content creation and reduce the resources required to create it (Wahid et al., 2023; Peres et al., 2023), but no studies have been conducted to examine the role of disclosure in the consumer behavior. Due to its perceived great efficiency and creativity in content creation, genAI technology is becoming more and more popular among marketers (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). Nonetheless, it is critical to comprehend the possible difficulties associated with customer behavior (Peres et al., 2023), especially considering the latest legislative modifications pertaining to this matter.

Our work adds to the literature by analyzing consumer behavior towards genAI material, with a foundation in the user-gratification theory and psychological reactance theory.

Our research investigates how disclosure affects a person's intention to travel to a particular location. To do a content analysis, we first extracted 1001 posts from

Instagram, of which 500 were made by humans and 501 by genAI. Our goal is to monitor the interaction on these posts. In the second experiment, we intend to measure visit intention. Our research shows that, though genAI content benefits brands monetarily, user engagement with it is lower than that of content written by humans. Our research also indicates that when an audience is informed that artificial intelligence creates the content, their intention to travel there decreases.

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Appendix A

Code for retreiving data from Instagram -

```
import os

from datetime import datetime
from itertools import dropwhile, takewhile

from instaloader import Instaloader


# The input file contains ids of users to collect data from
# one instagram id per line

input_file = os.path.join('/Users','srishtibachwani','Desktop', 'softwares','Python code' 'id.txt')

with open(input_file, 'r') as f:
    ids_list = f.read()
    ids_list = ids_list.split('\n')

FIELD_SEPARATOR = "xxFLDxx"

META_DATA_PATTERN = (
    "{shortcode}" + FIELD_SEPARATOR +
    "{date_utc}" + FIELD_SEPARATOR +
    "{profile}" + FIELD_SEPARATOR +
    "{caption}" + FIELD_SEPARATOR +
    "{likes}" + FIELD_SEPARATOR +
    "{comments}"
)


L = Instaloader(dirname_pattern=os.path.join('/Users','srishtibachwani','Desktop', 'softwares','Python
code''{profile}'),
                filename_pattern="{shortcode}",
                download_pictures=False,
                download_videos=False,
                download_video_thumbnails=False,
                download_geotags=False,
                download_comments=False,
                save_metadata=False,
                compress_json=False,
                post_metadata_txt_pattern= META_DATA_PATTERN)


L.load_session_from_file(LOGIN_USER_NAME)


for username in ids_list:
    print("Downloading data for :", username)
    L.download_profile(username)
```

Appendix B

Code to combine the text files retreived –

```
import pandas as pd

from pathlib import Path

from tqdm import tqdm

FIELD_SEPARATOR = "xxFLDxx"

data_dir = Path('/Users','srishtibachwani','Desktop', 'softwares','Pythoncode')
output_file = Path('/Users','srishtibachwani','Desktop', 'softwares','Pythoncode','final.csv')

brand_dirs = [f for f in data_dir.iterdir() if f.is_dir()]

aggregated_brand_data = []

for brand_dir in tqdm(brand_dirs):

    metadata_files = brand_dir.glob("*.txt")

    for metadata_file in metadata_files:
        with open(metadata_file, 'r') as f:
            text = f.read()
            data = text.split(FIELD_SEPARATOR)
            aggregated_brand_data.append(data)

(pd.DataFrame(aggregated_brand_data,
              columns=["shortcode", "date_of_post", "profile", "caption","likes","Comments"])
  .to_csv(output_file, index=False))
```

Appendix C

The audience were exposed to the stimuli (Fig 3) along with the text below.

For no Disclosure -

Generative Artificial intelligence (GenAI) refers to advance computer programs that can create new content without human involvement. Example - ChatGPT

The content of this post has been written by the content writer of the destination without any involvement of AI.

For Disclosure –

Generative Artificial intelligence refers to advance computer programs that can create new content without human involvement. Example - ChatGPT

The content of this post has been written by GenAI.

Fig 3: Stimuli