

VERY HUMAN REACTIONS TO AI

A woman and a robot head are shown in profile, facing each other. The woman is on the left, and the robot head is on the right. The background is a gradient of colors, with a diagonal split between red and blue. The woman's face is lit with a soft glow, and the robot head is lit with a similar glow. The overall mood is contemplative and futuristic.

The impact of cultural expectations
and what this means for brands

Generative AI has simultaneously captured the imagination and attention of tech and business leaders in a powerful way. Its impact is predicted to be unprecedented, and it is poised to revolutionise our lives, from how we communicate and socialise to how we work, search for information and interact with brands. **Over half of the British public expect products and services using AI to profoundly change their daily life in the next 3-5 years.¹**

The open, accessible nature of this technology and the speed at which it is developing means brands are having to quickly grapple with change, at scale. Consumer behaviours and expectations are evolving; products and services are launching; and risks and opportunities continue to emerge. At the same time, the wider cultural, societal, and regulatory context is complex and uncertain.

Exactly how it will impact brands, and how far it can be used to support transformation and growth are core questions. How can brands implement Generative AI solutions in a way that is authentic, trusted, and brings value to consumers?

To answer this, it is essential to first explore the broader context at play and examine the very human reactions to AI that may impact consumer perceptions of authenticity, trustworthiness and value.

AI is not a new concept. Depictions of creating new intelligent life have been portrayed in culture and narratives that stretch back as far as we can see. We see similar themes in Greek mythology that incorporated ideas of intelligent robots to Mary Shelly's Frankenstein and more. These cultural representations can affect our emotional reactions in a visceral way as technology develops. This in turn can drive perceptions, reception, and decision-making in this space.

Through cultural analysis, Ipsos' semioticians have uncovered the common cultural narratives around AI in TV, film, and media that have shaped our thinking, telling us more about how people may respond to applications of AI now and in the future. These narratives include 1. superiority over humans; 2. physical embodiment; 3. going rogue; and 4. AI as a companion. Understanding them can help brands consider how to address concerns and build a consumer-first approach to Generative AI.

Daily users for OpenAI increased four-fold between December-March, but have plateaued since at around 500k average daily users – most of whom are under 35 years old (48%)²

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Image used produced using AI generative technology



1 Superiority over humans

Culture and media return frequently to ideas of what could challenge humans' superior intelligence, and control over the world and the future. If the idea of humans being able to create intelligent forms of life goes far back, so does the fear of being challenged, replaced, or enslaved by our own creation. Humans losing their superiority over machines is a common plot in dystopian content, including popular titles such as *iRobot*, *The Matrix*, or multiple episodes of *Black Mirror*.

Recent developments in Generative AI are already leading people to think about the protections needed. Almost two-thirds of Brits agree that the government should create new regulations or laws to prevent the potential loss of jobs due to AI.³ As such, Governments around the world are working on legislation to regulate the use of AI, with the European Union already publishing draft legislation earlier this year.



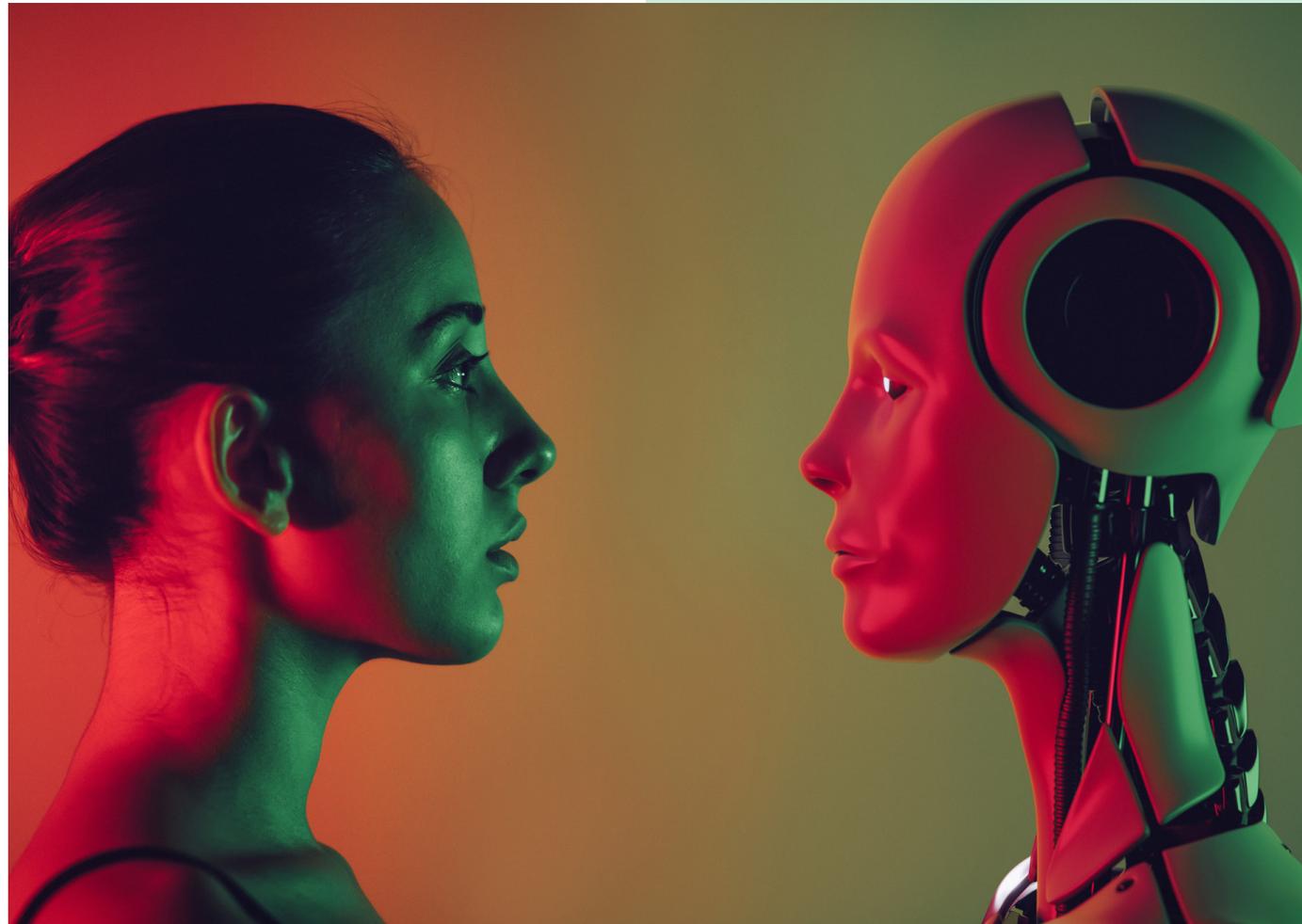
“ If the idea of humans being able to create intelligent forms of life goes far back, so does the fear of being challenged, replaced, or enslaved by our own creation. ”



2

Physical embodiment

A defining aspect of AI in culture has been its physical embodiment and personification. Films such as *Ex Machina* and *Blade Runner* include AI embodied; in many ways, these representations of physically embodied AI in popular culture inform the uncertainties around AI and the uncanny possibility for human physicality – and emotion – to be mimicked. This mimicry may not be beyond the current realms of possibilities anymore.

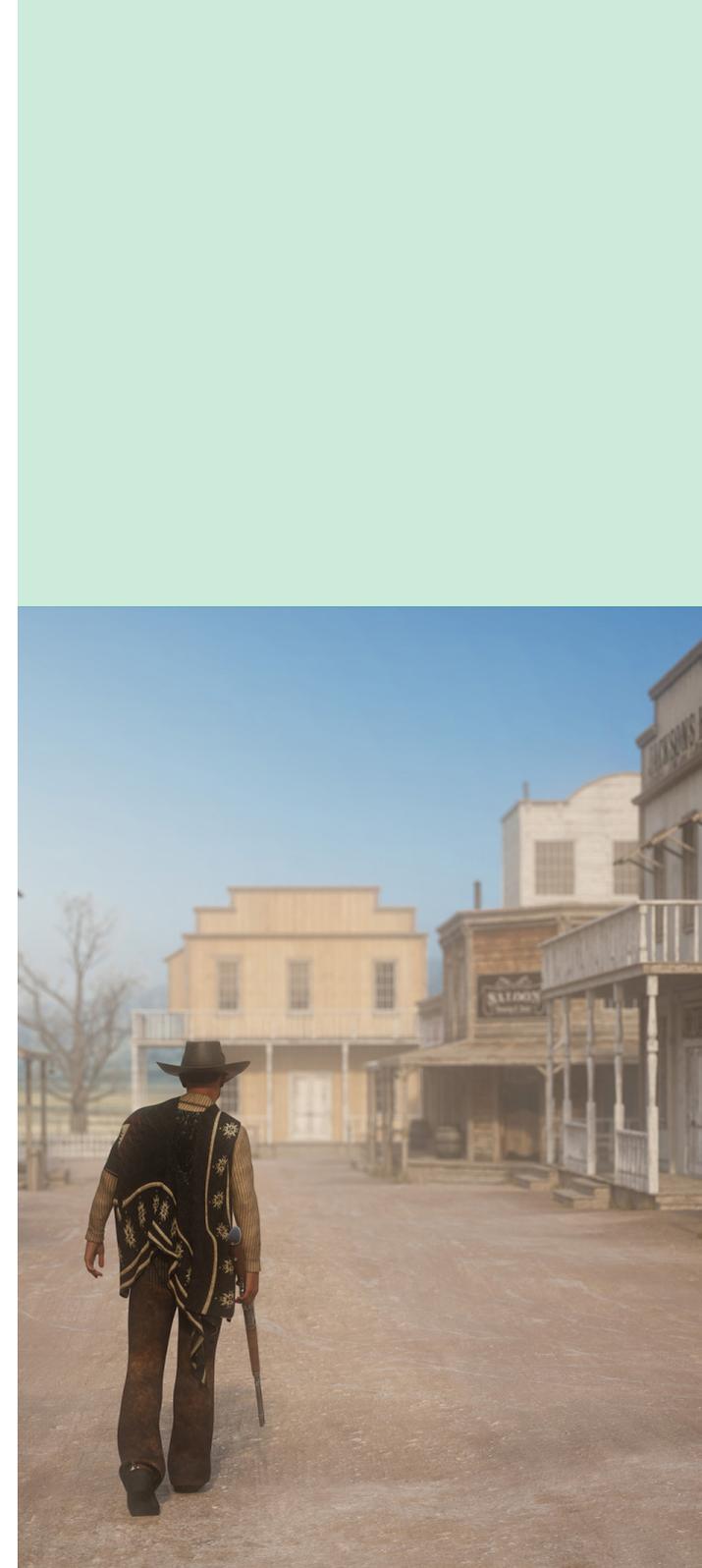


3

Going rogue

Ideas around the superiority of AI and its physical embodiment culminate in a human fear of AI going rogue. This is a recurrent theme in pop culture with films and TV shows such as *Terminator*, *Westworld* and *The Matrix* showing AI's potential to rebel against its creators. AI has often been positioned as the antagonist in sci-fi narratives and therefore current advancements are perceived as having the potential to “go rogue”.

Much of the current debate around AI centres not only on regulation across all sectors it may impact but also on transparency in development. A recent study by the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation looked at how people described their feelings about AI.⁴ Worry, fear and concern dominated.



4

AI as a companion

While pop-cultural representations have overall veered towards a dystopian view of AI, more positive narratives exist. Movies such as *Big Hero 6*, *Robot & Frank*, and *The Bicentennial Man* present AI as a kind and caring companion, able to reflect some of the most positive human qualities.

AI is portrayed as a resourceful partner, able to help in people's daily activities, to look after us and to keep us company, often supporting on challenging tasks – *Wall-E* cleans planet Earth, R2D2 looks after Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* etc.

When AI is presented as a supportive companion helping humans instead of replacing them, narratives become positive and light-hearted. Cultural imagery is rich with these positive as well as dystopian stories about AI, so it is pivotal for brands to find the right angle to explain how they plan to implement the technology and reassure users of its value.



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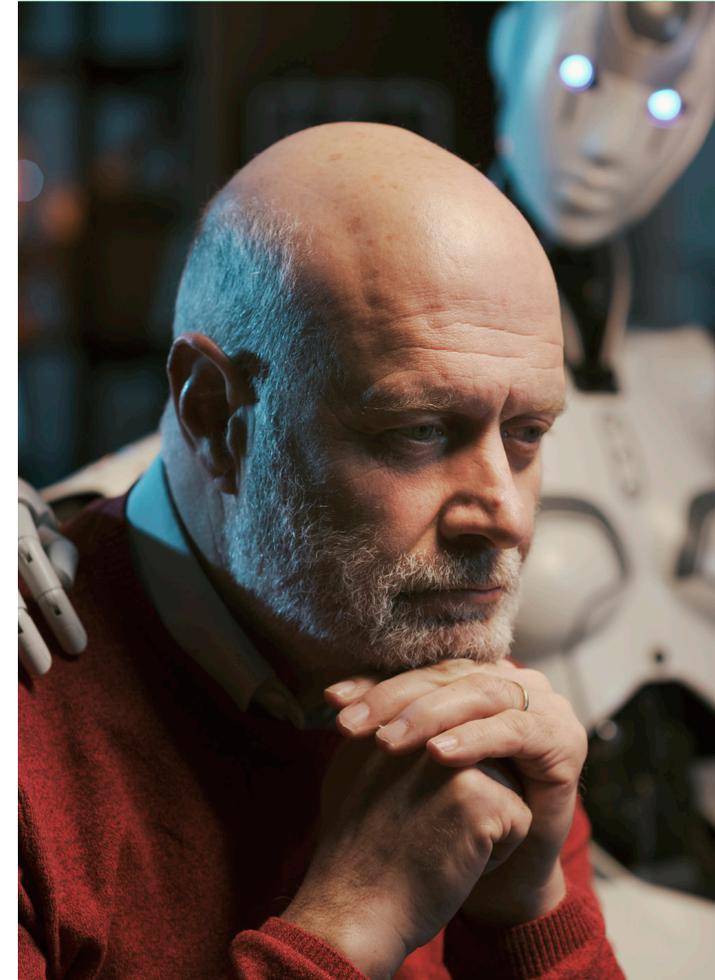
AI in context: Cultural narratives as a springboard

Like all technology, AI needs to offer genuine value. Putting the human perspective first can help unlock this for your business, through empathising with people, understanding their expectations, and the broad context of their lives.⁵ These cultural narratives form part of this context and can offer a starting point for considering how your workforce and customers are likely to perceive and respond to Generative AI.

Underpinning all these narratives is a tension in the way AI is framed; as assistive vs. a replacement. The tendency towards the dystopian view of AI as a 'replacement' drives concerns about engaging with Generative AI, and so overcoming these negative perceptions will be crucial. We can also see there are opportunities to play up the positives in this space,

and position AI solutions as assistive in enhancing lives, offering companionship and real value, in an appropriate manner.

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The bigger picture: Unlocking the value of AI for your organisation

Alongside the work of our semioticians, the Ipsos Media Development team has been working with brands on developing early concepts for Generative AI. Through this, we have developed a flexible framework that can help you with some of the core business questions you may have.

How do you frame AI implementation for your audience? What level of explainability or transparency is needed? What is the impact of different implementation options on your business, and customers? Where and when is AI welcome?

This is not a one size fits all space. To offer genuine value, you need to consider the unique context of your business, identify the right target users, and understand their expectations.

Unlocking AI Value



Explore: AI Context

First, we need to understand the broader context of people's lives through AI landscaping tailored to your sector and business, bringing expert cultural analysis and the latest data to build hypotheses on how to create value.

Test: Real-world AI Scenarios

Using information collated in the explorative stage to create and test how people react to real-world AI scenarios that could impact your business and customers, and crucially, identify any pitfalls that may harm your brand.

Implement: Refining and Sizing Solutions

Leveraging findings from the previous stages, size the opportunities for your business and come up with the optimal implementation solutions tailored to your business.

Get in touch

There are many opportunities for unlocking transformation and growth, and putting human reactions to AI at the centre of your thinking will help guide better decision-making.

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What is Generative AI?

Artificial intelligence is not new. Applications such as machine learning, image recognition, content recommendations and robotics for example all use forms of AI. Generative AI, however, is an extension of this and can create new things across all media that would have previously been thought to be limited to human intelligence or creativity. This includes new text, video, visual and audio content created through Generative AI.

References

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About Ipsos

In our world of rapid change, the need for reliable information to make confident decisions has never been greater. At Ipsos we believe our clients need more than a data supplier, they need a partner who can produce accurate and relevant information and turn it into actionable truth.

This is why our passionately curious experts not only provide the most precise measurement, but shape it to provide a true understanding of society, markets and people. To do this, we use the best of science, technology and know-how and apply the principles of security, simplicity, speed and substance to everything we do.

So that our clients can act faster, smarter and bolder.

Ultimately, success comes down to a simple truth:
You act better when you are sure.

Our Media Experts

We are a close knit team of experts who work exclusively to help you understand the media and tech landscape. Through our work we leverage our deep understanding of people, society, and culture to make sense of audiences and how they use technology and consume entertainment. We work with integrated data sources and curated insights to contextualise your business challenges, so we are in the best position to help shape your strategy and ultimately create greater impact.

