



Beyond Automation: Preserving Emotional Resonance in the Age of AI Content

The CyberPsych Institute (CPI) contributes cross-disciplinary behavioral insight to Canvas8's global report examining the widening gap between AI efficiency and audience trust

POTOMAC FALLS, Va. - February 9, 2026 — An exclusive, special report from leading behavioral insight practice, Canvas8, features multidisciplinary insights from The CyberPsych Institute (CPI) on how brands can protect their equity, connection, and trust with audiences in today's expanding automated content arena, where synthetic saturation is growing across industry.

Entitled "Why AI slop is losing its cool with audiences," report author Maksymilian Fus-Mickiewicz identifies a shift: while brands are drawn to the cost-efficiency and scale of generative systems, audiences are increasingly questioning authenticity, originality, and intent. Thus, the report highlights widespread discomfort with AI-generated media across formats and rising distrust of synthetic content in digital environments.

To delve deeper behind the factors influencing these trends, shifts, and challenges, Fus-Mickiewicz enlisted the expertise of CPI's Executive Director, Mayra Ruiz-McPherson, PhD(c), MA, MFA, to explain the psychology behind audience reactions and increasing distrust with "AI Slop" (a derogatory term often used to describe automated content distributed by brands).

"Our trend analysis piece looks at 'why audiences are pushing back against AI slop.' shares Fus-Mickiewicz. "On the one hand, we explore how people feel culturally, cognitively and emotionally overloaded by AI-generated content; on the other hand, we look at how human-made content is regaining value as a marker of intention, taste and truth. That's why we chose to collaborate with Mayra for this piece; her extensive research and understanding of cyberpsychology, as well as her advocacy for AI literacy, would offer insightful expertise to Canvas8's brand strategist readership."

The Behavioral Cost of Over-Automation

Ruiz-McPherson's contributions to the Canvas8 global report span three key domains:

Media psychology

Branding's impact to emotional connection as the driver of engagement is revisited with an automated content lens

Cyberpsychology

Ruiz-McPherson outlines important considerations of audience scrolling in hypervigilant states, where content consumers find themselves questioning what content "is real" and which messages are synthetic (or "fake")

AI psychology

The potential for content "sameness" poses challenges to brands and human neural mechanisms alike

"For global brands navigating AI integration, the implication is clear," explains Ruiz-McPherson. "Efficiency without emotional intelligence risks diminishing brand equity. Ruiz-McPherson encourages brands to view automation not as a replacement for creative authorship, but instead as a "vital enabler of the creative process and one that accommodates discernable human intent."

About The CyberPsych Institute (CPI)

The CyberPsych Institute is a nonprofit initiative focused on AI literacy, people-first technology, and the psychological impacts of emerging media systems. CPI works at the intersection of research, public education, and industry consultation to promote humane, ethical, and responsible AI integration. For more information, visit thecyberpsych.institute.

About Canvas8

With global offices spanning North America, Europe, and APAC, Canvas8 is a leading behavioral insight practice working across media, communication and product design. The practice harnesses a range of research methods to reveal practical insights into what audiences really think and do. Its member platform, housing more than 36,000 articles and resources on global consumer behavior, is available exclusively to members. For more information, visit the website at canvas8.com.