BRAND REPORT

Haircare Brand XMondo Uses AI-Generated Models For Its New Hair Color Campaign

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XMondo, a haircare brand for people not afraid to wear bold styles, is sure to turn heads with its new advertising campaign starring models generated by artificial intelligence.

In the campaign called "Discover The Colors Of Tomorrow," AI-born models sport XMondo's latest jewel-toned hair colors—amber, amethyst, garnet, rhodolite and sapphire—priced at $25 each. It will be seen in Google advertising, influencer marketing and the brand's social media accounts on Instagram and TikTok for a quarter.

While XMondo tapped AI tool Midjourney for the campaign, it was inspired by founder and CEO Brad Mondo's use of ChatGPT, the large language processing tool from AI research and development company OpenAI. "I was like, 'What else can we do with this? This is insane.' It has sped up so much of my work," says Mondo. "How else can we use AI in every aspect of the company?"

Before ChatGPT premiered in November 2022, XMondo attempted to develop a campaign with AI two years ago. Back then, XMondo considered hiring an outside expert to digitally produce four models. It would've cost roughly $20,000 to $30,000 for the project. "And it was months of work, so that project got dropped," says Mondo. "We were like that's out of our budget, and we just can't support this."

Brad Mondo, CEO and founder of XMondo

As AI advanced, Mondo decided to revisit the technology for XMondo's advertising. He sat down with the team at his brand to brainstorm ideas for incorporating AI. Initially, he dreamed up a campaign concept centered on AI-generated faces with real human hair, but that concept appeared strange. The campaign now has AI-generated models with AI-generated hair.

"People know our products work, people have experienced them, and there are so many reviews out there you can find that information," says Mondo. "But with this we want to go back to that fantasy feel. It's like, how can we push people's imagination through the form of artificial intelligence using this campaign to promote the products?"

XMondo experimented with a number of prompts to render models using Midjourney at a far cheaper cost than its previous AI effort. The brand declined to disclose the exact cost of the campaign. Midjourney offers a free trial to start, and its ongoing fees rise to $60 for a monthly subscription or $576 for an annual subscription.

Getting the tool to do XMondo's bidding wasn't instantaneous, and it was a process learning how to wield it successfully. Mondo says, "There was a lot of time being spent on just writing sentences and being like, 'This model should have blue hair and look like this.'"

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Still, the process was decidedly cheaper and less time-consuming than hiring an outside agency to spearhead a major campaign. The relatively easy process is illustrative of the concerns people have about AI eliminating jobs in fields such as copywriting, graphic design, illustration, journalism and more. In the face of those concerns, Mondo isn't worried about the criticism that might come XMondo's way.

He says, "Obviously people are going to say we're taking jobs away from models, and we're taking jobs away from various different industries, but when one opportunity sort of closes, if you will, I think new opportunities open, and I think there will be a lot of new opportunities when it comes to artificial intelligence and a lot of new jobs will open up from that."

He continues, "I think people are scared to harness the power of technology, and I'm definitely not afraid of it. I don't care if people have bad reactions to it. I want people to just have a reaction in general, and I think that's the power of art. I want open conversations."

Launched in 2019, XMondo has been driven by technology from the beginning. A hairstylist and social media sensation, Mondo has been popular on TikTok, where he has 9.4 million followers and 272.2 million likes, and YouTube, where he has 7.7 million subscribers. With his brand, Mondo's goal is to deliver salon-quality products and professional tips to average consumers. Through education, he enjoys empowering people to achieve their desired hairstyles at home.
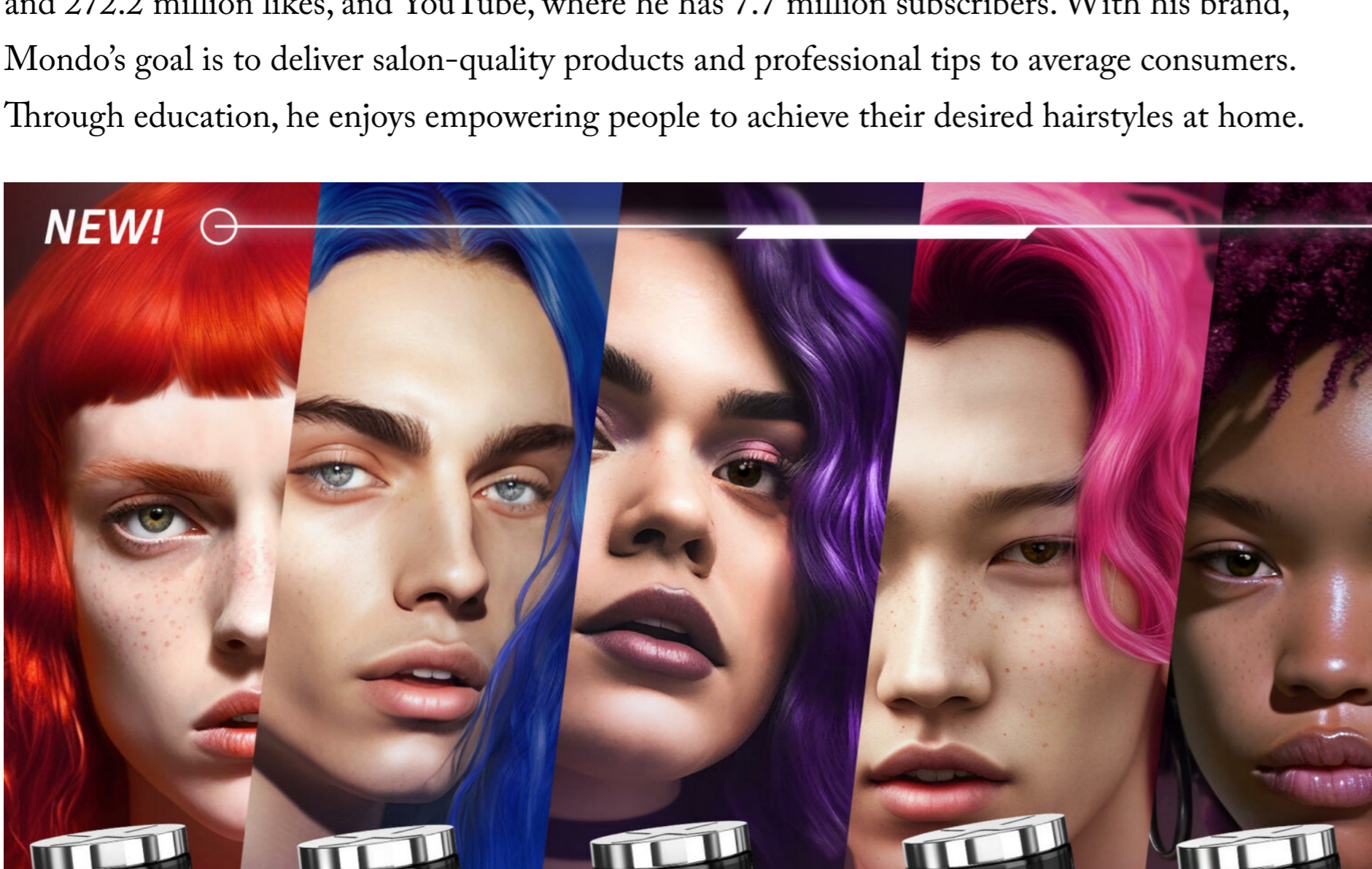
XMondo's new advertising campaign features five models generated using the artificial intelligence tool Midjourney.

Mondo also changed up the hair industry as a child. Both of his parents were in the business. His father was a hairstylist and owned a salon named Jesamondo Salon & Spa, which opened in 1980 in Wellesley, Mass., and later moved to nearby town Natick. It's no longer operated by the family, but Mondo had his formative hairstyling experiences at the salon. His mother had a job distributing a haircare brand.

Last year, Mondo told Beauty Independent, "I was hesitant to become a hairstylist because I grew up in the industry and tried to branch out, but, every time I tried to do that, I came back to doing hair."

Mondo poured $40,000 to $50,000 from his personal savings into bringing Mondo to market. Currently self-funded, the brand is exploring the investment landscape. "We've been in discussions before with investors, and it's just not the right timing yet," says Mondo. "In the future as we get a better grasp on what we are and what we're doing, that maybe be the time when we'll introduce some investors and take on some funding."

Today, XMondo is primarily focused on product innovation. The brand has over 35 products across haircare and hair color priced largely from $25 to $42. Mondo says, "We spent a long time just building the basics of the brand for the past three or four years, and now we're really getting into innovation that we're really passionate about."

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