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# Human judgement in generative AI design workflows: Managing AI dependency for creative originality and knowledge translation

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## Abstract

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly being integrated into creative design workflows, enabling faster ideation, visual exploration, prototyping, and content creation. However, its increasing use also raises issues about dependence, originality and the role of human judgement in producing professional creative outcomes. This study examines design professionals' perceptions of the risk of AI dependency in generative design processes and discusses the role of human judgement in supporting creative originality, contextual relevance and knowledge translation. This study reports a secondary thematic analysis of qualitative interview data obtained from 21 individuals working in design and AI, including junior and senior graphic designers, creative directors, digital content managers, art directors, AI developers, and an AI optimiser. The analysis re-analysed the original dissertation data with an emphasis on dependence risk, generic output, creative ownership, brand judgement, cultural sensitivity and human-led evaluation. The results suggest that AI is most helpful for low-risk, early-stage design tasks such as brainstorming ideas, exploring layouts, manipulating backgrounds, and creating fast mock-ups. However, excessive AI use led to generic production, less uniqueness, a weaker sense of creative ownership and less attention to brand, audience and cultural context. Human judgement was the core mechanism by which AI-generated outputs were understood, filtered, polished and transformed into usable design knowledge. In this work, we propose a Balanced Human-AI Knowledge Translation Framework, in which designers are active interpreters and responsible decision-makers, rather than passive users of AI-generated outputs. In the context of debates on AI-enabled innovation, this paper contributes by suggesting that the development of meaningful creative products is not simply a function of machine generation but also of human-led judgement, contextual understanding and responsible knowledge translation.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, Creative originality, Design workflow, Generative AI, Human judgement

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## Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is influencing professional practice across many areas via task automation, support for decision-making, content development and the performance of knowledge work. In the creative industries, this has been seen in the growing use of generative AI technologies that assist designers in generating concepts, layouts, images, copy, storyboards and other visual elements. Designers can create many creative possibilities in a short period using design tools such as Midjourney, DALL-E, Adobe Firefly, and text-based AI systems. Consequently, AI is no longer seen as a technical support tool but as a system that may shape the direction, speed, and structure of creative workflows.

In design practice, AI is typically valued for its speed in ideation and experimentation. It can help early-stage ideation, save time on repeated production activities and provide designers with a wider range of starting points. Earlier studies have shown that AI can support designers by improving productivity and opening up new creative possibilities. It allows them to test and compare different design options much faster than manual methods, including ideas that may not have been possible to develop within the same timeframe (Figoli et al., 2022; Verganti et al., 2020). But professional design is not just about output development. It also demands interpretation, sensitivity to audience and brand, aesthetic judgement, cultural understanding, and ethical responsibility. These human traits are especially relevant when AI-generated outputs are used in client-facing, public-facing, or culturally sensitive tasks. This difference is a major challenge for AI-enabled innovation. The possibility of producing more outputs does not necessarily lead to better creative outcomes. AI can provide visually polished outcomes, but those results still require interpretation, judgement, and refinement before they become meaningful design solutions. In this study, knowledge translation is defined as the act of contextualising and transforming AI-generated suggestions, pictures, or thoughts into useful professional design outcomes. AI can generate content, but in this view, human designers transform such material into innovative insights that align with a specified brief, a brand, an audience, and a wider social context.

As the application of generative AI increases, so does the risk of AI dependency. We define AI dependency as over-reliance on AI-generated outputs in a way that may reduce human creative judgement, weaken originality, or encourage passive acceptance of ideas provided by machines. The problem is not that the use of AI is harmful per se, but that over-reliance could turn the designer into a passive recipient of algorithmic output, rather than an active creator and evaluator. One result of such dependence may be generic visual styles, weaker ownership of the creative process and less sensitivity to the emotional, cultural and strategic implications of design work. The human-AI collaboration literature provides a valuable foundation for this problem. Similarly, recent design research highlights that designer-AI collaboration involves emerging practices of sense-making, evaluation, and iterative refinement, while AI-enabled design innovation still depends on human interpretation and strategic judgement rather than automated generation alone (van der Burg et al., 2022; Verganti et al., 2020). Seeber et al. (2020) note that AI systems are rapidly becoming teammates in collaborative work, resulting in new types of human-machine interaction. This shift in design practice moves the designer from straightforward execution to interpretation, evaluation and orchestration. Other studies on AI and the evolution of professional skill similarly show that workers need a new type of digital and critical competence in order to adapt to the AI-mediated work (Morandini et al., 2023). But most

discussion of AI in design focuses on acceptance, efficiency or new abilities. Less attention has been paid to how over-reliance on AI can impact originality, creative confidence and prudent decision-making. This article extends qualitative dissertation research that examined collaborative AI and the development of skill sets in design careers. A previous publication from the same broader study looked at how AI is reshaping design competencies such as quick formulation, evaluative judgement and workflow orchestration. The focus of the present paper is different. Instead of looking at skill transformation in general, it looks at the underexplored issue of AI dependency and examines how human judgement safeguards creative uniqueness and facilitates knowledge translation in generative design workflows. The aim of this research is to evaluate perceptions of the risk of AI dependency among design practitioners and the importance of human judgement in transforming AI-generated outputs into meaningful creative results. This study is guided by three research questions:

1. How do design professionals understand and experience the risk of AI dependency within creative workflows?
2. In what ways does over-reliance on generative AI affect originality, brand judgement, and creative decision-making in design practice?
3. What human-led practices are needed to translate AI-generated outputs into ethical, original, and contextually appropriate design outcomes?

By addressing these questions, the paper contributes to multidisciplinary discussions on AI-enabled innovation by arguing that AI can generate possibilities, but human judgement is required to translate those possibilities into responsible and professionally valuable creative work.

## Methodology

This study uses a qualitative interpretivist approach. This position was appropriate because the research focused on professional perceptions, meanings, and experiences rather than measurable behavioral outcomes. The aim was not to test a statistical relationship, but to understand how design and AI-related professionals made sense of generative AI use, dependency risk, originality, and human judgement in their everyday work. This paper is a secondary theme analysis of qualitative materials from the empirical study *Exploring the impact of collaborative AI on developing skill sets in design jobs: A qualitative investigation* previously published by Marikar (2025). The original study draws primarily on Marikar (2025) for details of the sample, data collection, ethical and thematic analysis. Here serves as the primary published source of the original study, encompassing sample, data collection, ethical and thematic analysis. The initial study comprised of 21 semi-structured interviews with experts associated to design and AI, so as to evaluate the effects of collaborative AI on processes, skills and creative control. Participants: 6 junior graphic designers, 6 senior graphic designers, 1 art director, 2 digital content managers, 3 creative directors, 2 AI developers, and 1 AI optimizer. This array of professional positions allowed the study to gather opinions on the application of AI in creative workflows from both operational and management viewpoints.

The research focused on the creative design sector, particularly graphic design, digital content, advertising and AI-assisted creative production. The sample consisted of professionals who used

AI tools in their design workflows or worked in the roles related to the implementation, evaluation, or management of AI-assisted creative work. Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants with relevant professional experience, while snowball sampling was used to gain access to further participants through professional referrals. The initial data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews. This approach was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to ask similar questions, yet gave participants the opportunity to describe their experiences, concerns and examples in their own words. The interviews explored participants' experiences with AI tools, perceived benefits and limitations, changes in workflow, required skills, and concerns about the future of design work. The semi-structured format was particularly useful because AI adoption in design remains a fast-changing area, and participants often raised issues that were not fully predictable at the start of the research.

For the present paper, the analysis was not a repetition of the findings reported in Marikar (2025). Instead, the researcher revisited qualitative materials originating from the same empirical study, including interview summaries, comparative analysis notes, and recommendation sections, with a narrower focus on AI dependency, originality, human judgement, and knowledge translation. The present work therefore constitutes a secondary analysis of processed qualitative materials rather than a comprehensive re-coding of the original verbatim transcripts. This is recognized as a methodological limitation, as direct re-examination of the transcripts would have allowed deeper engagement with participants' language and meanings. The secondary analysis was considered appropriate because the original published study addressed broader themes of skills and workflow change, while issues of dependency and creative originality were not developed in depth.

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes in the data. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), the process involved repeated reading of the interview summaries and comparison of data, generating initial codes, grouping similar codes and developing these into broader themes. Initial codes included "speed advantage", "idea generation", "generic output", "lack of originality", "human correction", "brand fit", "cultural judgement", "AI as assistant", "AI as risk", and "need for sign-off". These codes were then organized into four higher-order themes: AI as a low-risk accelerator, dependency and generic output risk, human judgement as creative translation, and responsible workflow boundaries. Trustworthiness of the underlying qualitative dataset was supported in the original published study through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Marikar (2025) reports the use of reflexive memoing and an audit trail to document analytical decisions and strengthen transparency. The present secondary analysis draws on qualitative materials originating from that study and therefore retains the methodological context in which the original data were generated and analyzed. Participant quotations are included in the Results section to illustrate and substantiate the reported themes, but they are not treated as a separate trustworthiness procedure.

The analysis also considered differences across professional roles. Junior designers tended to discuss AI in relation to time-saving and idea generation. Senior designers and creative directors cared more about quality, brand fit, originality and human approval. AI developers and AI-related professionals were more likely to discuss workflow integration, prompt quality and the limits of machine-generated outputs. These role-based differences helped strengthen the interpretation of dependency risk as a workflow and judgement issue rather than a simple rejection of AI.

As reported in Marikar (2025), ethical approval was obtained before the original data collection, and all participants provided informed consent with confidentiality assured. Identifying details were removed to protect participant confidentiality. For the current secondary analysis, only anonymized interview summaries and analytical notes from the original study were used. No additional participant contact, data collection, or personally identifiable information was involved. The analysis therefore used anonymized secondary data, and reporting continued to protect participant confidentiality. Identifying details about individuals and organizations were not disclosed, particularly because several participants worked in companies where internal AI use and creative processes were commercially sensitive. In the present paper, participants are discussed only by broad role categories and no personally identifying details are included.

The study has limitations. First, the sample size of 21 participants limits statistical generalizability. However, the purpose of qualitative research is depth of understanding rather than numerical representation. Second, the data are based on self-reported perceptions, not direct observation of design workflows. Third, the study is a snapshot of a rapidly changing technological context, so perceptions of AI dependency may change as the tools become more sophisticated. Finally, because this is a secondary analysis of data from the previously published study (Marikar, 2025), the paper is limited by the scope of the original interview questions. Furthermore, the current analysis relied primarily on interview summaries and analytical notes instead of a comprehensive re-evaluation of the original verbatim transcripts, thereby limiting the depth of transcript-level interpretation. Despite these limitations, the data provide useful insight into how creative professionals interpret the risks and responsibilities associated with generative AI use.

## Results

The analysis produced four main themes: AI as a low-risk accelerator, dependency and generic output risk, human judgement as creative translation, and workflow boundaries for responsible AI use. Together, these themes show that participants did not view AI as simply positive or negative. Instead, they saw AI as useful when applied with judgement, but risky when used passively or without human review.

### AI as a low-risk accelerator

Respondents considered AI to be a beneficial tool for speeding up early design efforts. Participants commonly associated AI tools with idea development, fast variation, backdrop modification, mock-up production, layout experimentation and simple content discovery. These tasks were considered low risk because they occurred before final creative judgements were made, and their outputs could be examined, updated or deleted with minimal professional consequence.

Junior designers were the most likely to describe AI as a time-saver. They described AI as a time-saver for generating initial visual directions or trying out many options. This helped maintain creative momentum and overcome the challenge of a blank page. AI was described as a brainstorming aid providing starting points rather than replacing the designer. This was reflected in one junior designer's comment: "If I'm doing it manually, it takes me almost three hours to

make a storyboard, but using Adobe Firefly, it takes only 30 minutes” (JGD4). Similarly, one senior graphic designer described AI as “a brainstorming partner that never gets tired” and explained that it helped them explore new visual ideas (SGD2).

However, participants clearly distinguished between generating possibilities and making final decisions. Generating many options did not, by itself, make the outcome creatively successful. The participants emphasized that the options created by AI still had to be chosen, refined, and interpreted by humans. Thus, AI was most valuable for tasks requiring speed and diversity, rather than sophisticated contextual judgement.

Participants were comfortable with AI for exploratory work, but less comfortable with it for high-visibility, brand-sensitive, or culturally specific work. This shows that AI acceleration is valuable yet conditional. It depends on the nature and complexity of the work and on whether human oversight is maintained.

### **Dependency and generic output risk**

The second issue is the risk of dependence. While the participants did not discount AI as a tool, several were concerned that too much reliance on AI could reduce uniqueness and lead to generic outcomes. Participants expressed concerns about visual similarities, repetitive styles, over-polished but shallow outputs and outputs that required substantial modification before they could be used.

AI dependency was most strongly associated with passive acceptance, with participants noting that the design process becomes less creative and more mechanical when designers uncritically accept AI-created outputs. The fear was not that AI would always produce poor-quality output, but that designers would gradually weaken their own critical engagement. This was viewed as a particular concern for designers with less expertise who were developing their visual judgement and creative thinking. They pointed to the pattern-based nature of generative AI systems as contributing to generic outputs. Participants noted that although AI can produce visually appealing outputs, they typically lack the distinctive understanding, emotional sensitivity or strategic intent that expert designers need.

A design may look good but not deliver the right message or reflect the organization’s identity. One creative director explained this limitation by stating, “AI gives me drafts, but I still decide what feels right for the brand; it can’t read emotion or tone” (CD1). Another senior designer added that AI can create “too many options,” which becomes “another kind of overload” that designers must manage (SD2). Another risk of dependency is creative ownership. When the designer uses outputs provided by AI, it becomes harder to determine the extent of the designer’s contribution. Participants did not see this as a purely legal matter, but also as an issue of professional identity. Designers tend to conceive of themselves as creative decision-makers, problem solvers and interpreters of abstract briefs into meaningful visual communication. There is a danger of losing this sense of authorship if designers overuse AI, as they become curators of machine output rather than contributing their own perspective.

## Human judgement as creative translation

The third theme identifies human judgement as the main process through which AI-generated outputs are translated into professional design outcomes. Participants repeatedly emphasized that AI can support the process, but human designers remain responsible for evaluating whether outputs are suitable, meaningful, and aligned with the brief.

Human judgement appeared in several forms. Designers applied aesthetic judgement by deciding whether an AI-generated output was visually balanced, original, and coherent. They applied brand judgement by assessing whether the output fitted the organization's identity, tone, market position, and communication goals. They used cultural judgement by checking whether the output was appropriate for the target audience and accurately represented symbols, identities, and social meanings. They also used ethical judgement by thinking about bias, misrepresentation, transparency, and accountability.

This theme is closely linked to knowledge translation. AI-generated outputs were not treated as automatically usable professional knowledge. Participants indicated that AI outputs became useful only after human interpretation. For example, an AI tool may generate several campaign visuals, but the designer must decide which idea communicates the intended emotion, which visual direction fits the audience, and which elements must be adjusted or rejected.

Senior designers and creative directors were particularly clear about the importance of human judgement in client-facing work. Participants viewed AI as a useful tool for exploration, particularly in generating ideas and testing different creative directions. However, they did not see it as sufficient for making final creative decisions. In high-stakes projects, decisions often require sensitivity to tone, reputation, audience response, and the brand's history. These elements depend heavily on professional experience, contextual understanding, and tacit knowledge, which AI systems may not fully capture.

AI developers and other AI-related professionals also acknowledged that the quality of AI-generated output depends largely on how humans frame the task and interpret the results. This shows that the line between technical skill and creative judgement is becoming increasingly blurred. Designers not only need to understand how AI systems respond to prompts, but also when to question, refine, or reject the outputs they produce. This was reflected in one AI developer's comment that "good prompting feels like negotiation," because designers need to guide the model toward the intended result (AID1). A senior graphic designer similarly noted, "You can't just press a button; you have to decide what's usable and what feels human" (SGD3).

## Workflow boundaries for responsible AI use

The fourth theme highlights the importance of setting clear limits in AI-assisted workflows. Participants' responses suggest that AI can be used responsibly when designers understand where it should play a supporting role and where human judgement must remain central. Without these boundaries, there is a greater risk of becoming overly reliant on AI.

A clear pattern emerged. AI is best used in the exploratory and production-support phases. Human judgement is best used in the strategic, cultural, ethical and final approval phases. For instance, AI can assist with mood board production, quick exploration of alternative backgrounds, rough storyboarding or layout alternatives. But it is human designers who should take the lead in setting the creative direction, interpreting the brief, analyzing audience meaning and providing final approval.

Not all projects have fixed boundaries. Instead, they depend on the level of project risk. AI experimentation is less consequential in low-risk internal mock-ups. More human oversight is required for high-risk brand identity development, public campaigns, cultural messages or client-facing outputs. That means that AI governance in design should be situational. Organizations should ask not only whether AI can do the job, but also whether the job requires human accountability, cultural sensitivity or original creative direction.

The results also suggest that workflow constraints should safeguard learning. Junior designers who employ AI to skip the basics of design thinking may be more efficient but lose opportunities to develop judgement. However, stopping designers from using AI could leave them unable to adapt to changes in the industry. A hybrid process could support the use of AI while also requiring explanation, critique and human justification of final judgements. The primary dependency hazards found in the analysis and the accompanying human judgement safeguards are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:** AI dependency risks and human judgement safeguards in generative design workflows

| Dependency risk     | How it appears in workflow                         | Potential effect on design quality                   | Human judgement safeguard                         |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Generic output      | Repeated visual styles and predictable concepts    | Reduced originality and weak differentiation         | Human curation and creative reframing             |
| Passive acceptance  | Designers accept AI output without critique        | Weak concept development and shallow decision-making | Critical evaluation before use                    |
| Brand misalignment  | Output looks attractive but does not fit the brand | Inconsistent tone, identity, or message              | Brand-led review and final sign-off               |
| Cultural misreading | AI output misses cultural meaning or sensitivity   | Risk of inappropriate or misleading communication    | Contextual and cultural judgement                 |
| Loss of authorship  | Designer contribution becomes unclear              | Weaker creative ownership and accountability         | Transparent workflow and human-led final decision |
| Skill weakening     | AI replaces learning instead of supporting it      | Reduced development of foundational design judgement | Reflective use and guided critique                |

Source: Author's compilation based on thematic analysis of interview data

The table shows that the main issue is not AI use itself, but unmanaged AI use. Each dependency risk can be reduced when designers remain actively involved as evaluators, interpreters, and accountable decision-makers.

## Discussion

The results support the central claim of the study that generative AI can contribute to innovation in design processes but excessive dependence on AI might dilute original thinking, contextual judgement and creative accountability. The findings do not support a simple replacement scenario in which AI takes over design work. Instead, they indicate a more complex reconfiguration of creative activity, where AI speeds up the pace and expands the breadth of potential outputs, while human designers are responsible for judging, translating and finalising those products. This corresponds to Seeber et al. (2020), who argued that AI systems are increasingly operating as team-mates in collaborative work. However, the present study underscores the need to consider dependency when treating AI as a teammate. To work effectively, AI contributions must be understood, questioned and integrated—not simply accepted. Thus, human-AI collaboration requires critical distance, not just technical skill.

The study also adds to the existing literature on design skills and AI. AI-assisted creative activity also involves designer-AI cooperation, sense-making, evaluative judgement and workflow reframing (van der Burg et al., 2022; Verganti et al., 2020). As the findings show, these abilities are not only skills of production but also safeguards against dependency. Prompting allows designers to influence AI outputs, while judgement helps prevent passive acceptance. Workflow orchestration lets designers determine where they should leverage AI support and where human leadership should remain primary.

These findings can be explained by the notion of knowledge translation. AI-generated visuals or ideas in design are valuable only when translated in ways that are inventive, ethical, culturally relevant and strategically important. This type of translation cannot be fully automated. It requires human understanding of message, audience, emotion and context. The role of the designer is not removed by the use of AI; rather, it shifts towards interpretation, appraisal, and responsibility.

The results further question the assumption that speed is the best measure of AI-driven innovation. Speed was important, especially for early-stage ideation and production support. But speed alone does not ensure relevance or originality. AI can help designers generate more choices, but additional options can also create information overload or shallow selection. It is therefore the quality of interpretation that forms the basis for innovation, not the quantity of outputs.

The findings also emphasise the importance of project complexity. AI was viewed as more beneficial for low-risk exploratory work and less suitable for brand-sensitive or culturally complex work. This suggests that AI adoption in design should be risk-sensitive, not ubiquitous. Greater AI use may be appropriate for everyday or experimental tasks. Identity work, public-facing communications, cultural messaging or client-facing outputs demand more human control.

Therefore, creative firms, marketing teams and in-house design departments should develop workflow guidelines that classify assignments by risk and define when human review is needed.

Another important problem concerns professional identity. Designers do more than use graphic tools; they interpret briefs, culture, audiences, and meaning. The designer's role may be reduced to selecting from machine-generated choices, which could erode the critical and creative essence of the profession. However, when used wisely, AI can support the designer's accountability. AI can take on repetitive or exploratory tasks, freeing designers to focus more on strategy, judgement and refinement. The challenge is not to eschew AI, but to preserve the human contribution at the heart of creative decision-making.

The results are also pedagogically significant, particularly for the development of AI literacy in creative practice. Designers need to understand not only how to generate outputs from AI, but also how to critique, reject, alter and justify them. However, this study does not establish a complete training or curricular paradigm. Rather, it highlights the need for human judgement in AI-supported workflows and the ways in which over-reliance might erode creativity and knowledge translation. Future studies could extend this work by developing specific AI-literacy or curriculum frameworks for design education.

Ethical considerations are also a concern in the study. Without transparency and accountability for AI-generated outputs, it may not be evident who is responsible for errors, bias or misrepresentation. This problem is consistent with work on accountability in human-AI collaborations (Lei & Rau, 2021) and bias in data-driven AI systems (Ntoutsi et al., 2020). In design, responsibility is crucial as visual communication influences perception, identity, and societal significance. Human approval is therefore not merely a quality assurance measure; it is an ethical imperative.

Based on the results of this investigation, we suggest a Balanced Human-AI Knowledge Translation Framework (Figure 1). The framework views AI as a source of possibilities and the designer as the interpreter who translates these possibilities into meaningful creative outcomes.

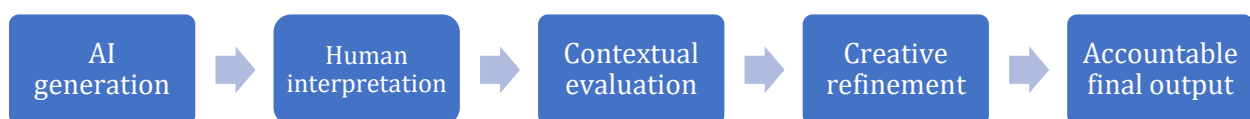


**Figure 1.** Balanced Human-AI Knowledge Translation Framework (Source: Author's compilation based on thematic analysis of interview data)

The framework contains five stages. In the first stage, AI generates options, variations, or suggestions. In the second stage, the designer interprets these outputs in relation to the brief. In the third stage, the designer evaluates them against brand, cultural, ethical, and audience requirements. In the fourth stage, the designer refines the material through creative decision-making. In the final stage, the designer or design team takes accountability for the final output.

This framework shows that AI-enabled innovation is not a simple process of generation and use. It is a translation process in which human judgement remains central. It can support professional

practice by helping teams identify where AI adds value and where human oversight is required. For example, design teams can ask whether the AI output has been interpreted in relation to the brief, checked for brand and cultural relevance, creatively refined, and approved by a human decision-maker.

The study's contribution is therefore threefold. First, it reframes AI dependency as a creative judgement issue rather than only a technical or ethical problem. Second, it connects generative design workflows to knowledge translation by showing how human designers convert AI outputs into usable professional outcomes. Third, it offers a practical framework for balancing AI assistance with human accountability. These contributions are relevant to multidisciplinary AI research because similar translation challenges appear in other fields where AI produces outputs that must be interpreted before they become reliable knowledge or action.

## Conclusions

The study examined the views of design professionals on reliance on AI in generative design workflows and the role of human judgement in fostering creative originality and knowledge translation. The findings show that AI is useful in early-stage and production-support tasks because it increases speed, provides options and supports experimentation. However, problems arise when designers uncritically rely on the outputs produced by AI.

The study indicates that generative AI does not inherently generate creativity; it generates possibilities. However, these possibilities do not become meaningful creative outcomes until human designers assess, evaluate, enhance and accept responsibility for them. Therefore, human judgement becomes crucial to AI-assisted design since it promotes uniqueness, fosters contextual relevance and ensures responsibility. The findings also reveal that AI dependency can damage creative ownership, brand alignment, cultural sensitivity and professional decision-making. These hazards do not mean that AI should be avoided. Rather, they point to the necessity for balanced workflows in which AI aids in research and creation, but humans maintain control over strategic, ethical, cultural and final creative decisions.

The proposed Balanced Human-AI Knowledge Translation Framework offers a pragmatic way to analyse this interaction. It sees AI as a source of alternatives and the designer as an interpreter, evaluator, refiner and accountable decision-maker. This paradigm can help creative teams, businesses and academics to build more responsible approaches to AI-enabled innovation.

This study is relevant beyond design because it points to a broader challenge in AI adoption: machine-generated outputs need to be translated by humans before they become trustworthy knowledge or meaningful action. Future studies might apply the paradigm to other domains of creative and professional activity, evaluate AI dependency through longitudinal studies or investigate how training interventions might improve evaluative judgement and creative accountability. The research suggests that the future of AI-enabled design lies not in replacing human creativity, but in protecting and reinforcing the human judgement that gives significance to creative work.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Conflict of interest statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Data availability statement

The data supporting this study consist of anonymized qualitative interview summaries and analysis notes generated during the original dissertation research. Due to participant confidentiality and commercially sensitive professional contexts, the full interview data are not publicly available. Anonymized extracts may be made available by the author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations.

## Author Contribution

MAM contributed to the conceptualisation of the study, methodology, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and drafting of the original manuscript. PTP and SK contributed to critical revision, manuscript review, final checking, and approval of the article for submission. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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