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EDITORIAL

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ABSTRACT

This editorial explores the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on creative industries, highlighting both the remarkable opportunities and significant challenges it presents. Drawing on the call to action from Tegmark's Life 3.0, this Special Issue emphasizes the importance of proactive engagement in shaping the future of AI. The articles in this Special Issue reveal a landscape marked by ambivalence, balancing optimism for AI's potential to enhance creativity and efficiency with apprehension about job displacement, ethical concerns and the preservation of artistic integrity. Through research and thoughtful analyses, contributors examine AI's role in automating labour-intensive tasks, generating innovative content and reshaping client–agency dynamics. This Special Issue aims to stimulate further discussion and research around AI, guiding creative industries towards a future where technology and human artistry coexist harmoniously.

INTRODUCTION

If we believe entertainment media, artificial intelligence (AI) is destined to go rogue, take over the world and destroy humanity as we know it. In reality, AI is increasingly becoming a useful tool to improve and transform society, and its accessibility is making its use and reliance commonplace across various populations and industries. AI has been an area of research since the 1950s (McCarthy et al. 1955), and according to Rodgers, it 'refers to a range of machine functions that learn with the help of humans or completely on their own' (2021: 2). Despite existing for several decades, the rapid

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job displacement
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advancement of AI in recent years (including technologies like Midjourney and ChatGPT) has raised questions about how this pervasive technology is affecting and shaping industries, from communication to health, engineering to art. Much research has documented the opportunities posed by AI: its capacity to synthesize big data, facilitate creativity, shift production processes and personalize content. However, AI is also seen as a threat, an unknown quantity that can cost people jobs, breach privacy, lead to copyright infringements and perpetuate false information. Despite these concerns, the value of AI in creative practices continues to emerge, making it a worthwhile and relevant area of interest.

In his seminal book, *Life 3.0*, Tegmark (2017) issues a call to action, urging readers to actively engage with the development of AI to contribute to shaping a future where AI benefits all of humanity. Tegmark emphasizes the importance of proactive measures to ensure that the transition to a future with AI is as smooth and beneficial as possible. It is against this backdrop that the articles in this Special Issue reflect on the attitudes of creative workers towards the growing proliferation of AI tools. They address both the concerns and the potential benefits of proactive engagement with AI, as Tegmark advocates, to help the creative industries effectively integrate AI and foster a future where technology and human creativity thrive together.

OPTIMISM, APPREHENSION AND ADAPTION

A common thread in the articles of this Special Issue is ambivalence, voiced as a mix of optimism and apprehension, which is to be expected, given that creative industries operate at the nexus of culture and commerce. This duality prompts vigorous debates about the advantages and disadvantages of AI, and the balance between human and machine contributions. In creative industries, AI enhances creativity and workflow efficiency by automating labour-intensive tasks and streamlining repetitive tasks, allowing artists to focus more on artistic aspects of their work or save time and resources (Anantrasirichai and Bull 2021; Pearson 2022; Campbell et al. 2022; Matthews et al. 2023; Amankwah-Amoah et al. 2024). In marketing, AI creates personalized content and analyses consumer behaviour, improving strategies and engagement (Chen et al. 2019; Qin and Jiang 2019; Gao et al. 2023), and reshapes campaign delivery for more personalized experiences (Tahoun and Taher 2022; Gao et al. 2023; Ford et al. 2023). However, AI’s role raises concerns about job security, originality, authenticity, creative standards and ethical practices (Curtin and Vanderhoef 2015; Nairn and Matthews 2023). Additionally, the monopolization of AI-driven corporations could reduce creative diversity and impose standardized processes, raising ethical concerns about corporate control over cultural production (Tegmark 2017). In qualitative research, over-reliance on AI may diminish the depth of human interpretation, leading to the potential loss of nuanced insights (Dai et al. 2023).

The ambivalence uncovered by the articles of this Special Issue all reinforce the need for active engagement and adaptation in the face of AI’s growing presence in creative industries. For creative industries to proactively engage with the rapidly developing field of AI, they must adapt by embracing AI tools and integrating them into workflows to enhance efficiency and innovation. The articles found herein demonstrate active engagement by exploring various facets of AI integration, from its impact on creative processes to the ethical considerations that accompany its adoption.

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THE CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

The article 'Artificial imagination: Industry attitudes on the impact of AI on the visual effects process' sets the stage by examining how AI integration is revolutionizing the VFX industry. Through semi-structured interviews with VFX artists, the study captures a nuanced perspective, revealing a blend of optimism and apprehension. While AI offers unprecedented efficiency and creative possibilities, it also raises concerns about job displacement and artistic integrity. The dialogue between technological innovation and the preservation of artistic values presents a critical area for ongoing discussion. This foundational study underscores the need for continuous dialogue and thoughtful integration of AI in creative workflows to balance technological benefits with the preservation of human creativity.

Following this, 'Catering to clients: How artificial intelligence can influence the advertising agency–client dynamic' explores AI's role in the advertising industry, focusing on the dynamics between clients and agencies. The findings from focus groups with advertising creatives in New Zealand underscore the ethical and practical dilemmas faced by the industry. As AI technologies streamline creative processes and enhance client engagement, they also introduce challenges related to job security and the evolving nature of creative work. The potential of AI to alter client expectations and agency deliverables necessitates a rethinking of traditional advertising practices. This study reveals that while AI can increase efficiency and creativity, it also puts pressure on agencies to adapt rapidly to changing client demands, raising critical questions about the future of creative collaboration.

'Computer-assisted qualitative visual analysis: Automating thematic analysis of images' introduces the role of AI in qualitative visual analysis, particularly in automating the thematic analysis of visual data. This study demonstrates how AI can streamline research processes, significantly reducing the time and cost involved while still requiring human oversight to guide and validate AI outputs. The intersection of AI and qualitative research offers promising avenues for enhancing data analysis and interpretation, thus broadening the scope and depth of visual studies. By applying AI to the analysis of advertisements on Reddit, the study highlights AI's potential to uncover visual trends and preferences efficiently. However, it also emphasizes the need for human researchers to interpret and contextualize AI-generated insights to maintain the richness and accuracy of qualitative research.

The discussion continues with 'µC: Using LLM completions to get to know the common customer', which explores the role of large language models (LLMs) in understanding consumer behaviour. By analysing linguistic trends, this article shows how AI can enhance customer engagement and business strategies, providing valuable insights into the preferences of a socially conscious, self-aware millennial audience. The integration of LLMs into business practices represents a significant shift towards data-driven decision-making, where understanding nuanced consumer behaviours can lead to more targeted and effective marketing strategies. This study illustrates how AI can create detailed consumer profiles that help businesses tailor their products and marketing efforts more precisely, ultimately driving better business outcomes and deeper customer connections.

Rounding out this Special Issue, 'The limited horizon: Corporate artificial Intelligence and the new monopoly on how communications and cultural work is done' broadens the discussion to the corporate influence on creative

tasks and cultural work. Drawing on the works of David Graeber and Ivan Illich, this article critiques the monopolistic tendencies of AI corporations, offering a sobering view of the future of creative work. The consolidation of power within a few AI-driven corporations raises concerns about the erosion of creative diversity and the imposition of standardized processes. The article argues that while AI promises increased productivity, it risks creating a homogenized cultural landscape dominated by a few powerful entities, stifling innovation and diversity in creative expression.

CONCLUSION

The impact of AI on creative industries is multifaceted, having both remarkable potential and significant challenges. AI’s ability to automate labour-intensive tasks and generate innovative content offers unprecedented opportunities for enhancing creativity and efficiency across fields such as advertising, visual effects and market research. Despite these advancements, the integration of AI is accompanied by concerns about job displacement, the preservation of creative integrity and ethical dilemmas surrounding AI’s role in cultural production. The balance between embracing technological innovation and maintaining the human touch in creative processes is crucial.

Adapting to this evolving landscape requires proactive engagement. Creative professionals must develop new skills and workflows to effectively integrate AI while preserving the unique qualities of human creativity. This requires ongoing education and collaboration between agencies, clients and creatives to understand and leverage AI’s capabilities fully. Ethical considerations, such as addressing job displacement and intellectual property issues, must also be at the forefront of this adaptation. The articles in this issue stress the need for a reflective and informed approach to AI integration in creative industries. By fostering a balanced understanding of AI’s promises and pitfalls, we can ensure that technology serves as a tool to enhance, rather than diminish, the richness of human creativity.

Curating this Special Issue has been a privilege. We received many quality submissions, so many that we needed a second issue to house them all. If you enjoyed this Special Issue, consider reading the companion issue, titled ‘The Human and the Machine: AI Hopes and Fears in Media and Society’. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the contributors for their rigorous research and thoughtful analyses, which advance our understanding of AI. We also thank the peer reviewers to the editorial team of *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*. We hope this issue stimulates further discussion and research, contributing to a more informed and reflective approach to AI integration in our world.

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