ANALYSING CREATIVE WORKER'S PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF AI IN ADVERTISING

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Abstract

In recent years, the creative industries, especially marketing, branding, and advertising, have undergone a transformative evolution driven by advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. This research focuses on how AI influences the perception of creative workers within the advertising industry on their professional future, while also indicating a deeper exploration of the balance between creative input and technological advancement. We have conducted quantitative research, through a questionnaire applied to 83 respondents, all working in advertising. Many professionals reported leveraging AI applications, such as ChatGPT, to streamline ideation, expedite brainstorming, and reduce repetitive tasks. However, the reliance on AI tools also raised critical questions about the preservation of human creativity and the potential displacement of traditional creative roles. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on AI's role in creative industries, offering a nuanced analysis of how these technologies reshape professional landscapes and influence job opportunities.

Keywords*: artificial intelligence, advertising, creativity, generative AI.*
JEL Classification*: O3, O330.*

Introduction

Post pandemic, we started to prepare businesses and workers for a transition towards a mass digitization of the models of production, operation etc. Customer needs have diversified and became more complex, and the amount of data available on the internet has grown. Tools such as ChatGPT and Midjourney have become widely used in various fields (Paananen et al., 2023). One of the most impacted industries, very connected to the business world, is advertising. The advertising services, as part of the creative economy, are an engine of transformation and value creation for the global economy.

Generative AI is evoking excitement and fear, especially in advertising, where it could have a significant disruptive effect (Osadchaya et al., 2024). Ford et al. (2023) propose an analysis of 72 studies on AI and advertising, observing the small number of works that suggest the infancy of the research on the topic. In this article, they observe that the most prominent keywords are big data, artificial intelligence, and advertising, which reveals the orientation of the field. Rodgers and Nguyen (2002) propose a series of

recommendations for advertisers, based on a system of ethical algorithmic routes that a client could take when purchasing a product, that could assist companies in predicting routines and exploring ad targeting with the use of AI. In their November 2024 report, Publicis, one of the most known creative agencies, highlighted the concept of RON or return on negligence, meaning that brands that will not innovate could lose their customers, who have higher and higher expectations and require personalized experiences. In their report, they state that 31% of marketing businesses already use AI to create short videos.

The adoption of AI leads to a change in the way people produce. While in the past creatives focused on the generation of original content, right now, with the implementation of generative AI in the creation process, they risk regurgitating the past and adopting the "salesy" aspect of the generative AI; to avoid this, creatives can use it as an anti-model and a benchmark to test idea novelty and innovativeness (Osadchaya et al., 2024). Creativity is not an elite privilege, but a systematic process that can benefit from the aid of data and computation (Vakratsas and Wang, 2021). The implementation of AI requires a change in mindset and skills. Taxonomies are proposed all over the world in order to keep up with the implementation of technology. Due to the growing concerns over the integration of AI tools in creative production in recent years, future research should aim to comprehensively grasp the evolving roles and skill sets of creative professionals in response to the increasing automation of select tasks within the creative industries. Further, this paper is inspired by the following research questions:

- Does the incorporation of AI technologies in the advertising industry enhance the creative process?
- Does it result in greater efficiency, innovation, and the emergence of new job opportunities that promote collaboration between human creativity and AI?
- Will the growing use of AI in advertising necessitate a substantial change in the skill sets expected of creative professionals, particularly regarding technical skills related to AI tools?

Background

Artificial intelligence can be defined in a myriad of ways and its definition has constantly changed since its emergence, from a breed of robots to a flexible form of intelligence that has the capacity to learn (Yu, 2022). This of course reflects the evolution of technology as well, especially that of generative AI. AI reflects human intelligence processes through algorithms. Through automation, data analytics, and machine learning, AI is transforming industries (Ramazan, Nadide and Aykac, 2024). AI is already a part of everybody's life, in its shape as spam filters, translation services, chatbots and others (Rodgers and Nguyen, 2022).

Generative AI is a tool that streamlines processes, enriches creative capabilities, and facilitates cost savings (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2024). A GAI can learn from previously gathered data and adapt to new situations, therefore changing the way in which

we work, communicate, and even create. The most common tool that seems to be used in the advertising field is ChatGPT, for example, to generate slogans, while other tools such as DALL-E are used to generate images. The output is determined by the input of the human – the prompt must best represent the intent of the creative behind it. Generative AI models can be seen both as not intelligent since they do not understand what they are doing or as creative (Haase and Hanel, 2023). The GAI is not capable of "actual" creativity and it misses connection to the real world since it lacks emotions and imagination. Generative AI is not likely to entirely replace human creativity given its limitations in intentionality, consistency, bias, and aesthetic sense (Routray, 2024). However, GAI also has a series of disadvantages, such as requiring constant oversight, lack of accuracy, challenges around liability and intellectual property, enormous environmental costs (Osadchaya et al., 2024, Ramirez and Ferreira, 2024).

In advertising, creativity manifests through novelty and value. Value represents the strategic side of creativity (respecting the brief, relevance), while novelty represents originality. In the context of AI use, although ideas are generated in a different manner, there seems to be no qualitative difference between AI and human creativity (Haase and Hanel, 2023). However, the relevance and integration into the context of these ideas are what differentiates human creativity from artificial creativity. The introduction of automation into creative processes brings efficiency gains but must be nuanced so that the human touch is still present and creativity is preserved (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2024).

Advertising could be defined as the art of persuasion (Iyer and Bright, 2024). In advertising, AI algorithms can assist in the enhancement of planning and strategy. AI systems can be adopted by marketers to better understand and reach customers in the various stages of their journey.

AI can help advertisers in different functions, such as ad optimization, automatic ad generation, and personalization, by employing Natural Language Processing, Image and Speech Recognition and Generation, Machine Learning, and Natural Language Generation. This can aid advertisers in developing targeted promotions, increasing performance and simplifying processes, and also to create tailored, targeted product recommendations and also to gather data and identify future prospects (Ramazan, Nadide and Aykac, 2024).

Creative service industries, including advertising, offer services that increase a region's capacity to generate and combine new ideas (Boix-Domenech and Soler-Marco, 2017). The materials that represent the output of creative services are produced for use in a client presentation and for the end-consumers and represent the end product of an interactive process, ultimately being representations of ideas. In advertising, these creative services are becoming more and more complex. With the introduction of AI, the entire process is being reorganized due to the implementation of a new set of process steps, meaning a new class of advertising activities is emerging, such as personalized advertising production based on consumer profiling with the aid of algorithms. The use of AI can assist people in increasing their performance and simplifying the process of

creating advertising campaigns. The use of AI in advertising, which is becoming more and more ubiquitous, can threaten the livelihoods of creatives in the field, representing a disruption (Routray, 2024). There is a circular effect of the impact of creative industries on productivity and growth that involves GDP per capita, the level of higher education, and ultimately the demand for creative services, which leads to an incremental increase in innovation and economic productivity (Boix-Domenech and Soler-Marco, 2017).

AI technologies are changing the work conditions and the competitive landscape and are creating and, at the same time, destroying business opportunities (Ramazan, Nadide and Aykac, 2024). The paradoxes of Generative AI show that generative AI hold promises and perils alike for the advertising industry, and only knowledge can aid the people in the industry in navigating them (Osadchaya et al., 2024). Although automation has advanced, work has been devalued rather than diminished. A way in which organizations can increase productivity by integrating AI is by increasing specialization in creative services (Boix-Domenech and Soler-Marco, 2017) and by staying up-to-date with the evolution of generative AI. The people who risk losing their jobs most are those relying solely on technical execution (Ramirez and Ferreira, 2024). The anxiety created by AI adoption can be mitigated by incentivizing performance outcomes, increasing collaboration and training, encouraging a futuristic trend, and highlighting efficiency and innovation as positive performance and outcomes (Iyer and Bright, 2024).

The main takeaways from the literature are as follows: most literature sources suggest that AI should be recognized as a creative partner; the creative industries must proactively prepare for effective and innovative collaborations with this technology; and creative professionals should gain a deep understanding of this technology, enabling them to make decisions regarding its use.

Methods

The study is a quantitative one. An online survey consisting of 30 questions was uploaded on the Typeform Platform and shared online via platforms and email, between August and September 2024. The survey was completed by people in the advertising industries, selected by the author through her personal contacts, with 93 entries being collected. After examining the data for relevance, 80 entries have remained. The survey included questions related to the interest, use, and perception of AI in the creative field, as well as the interest towards upskilling and the attitude regarding career pivoting, and also included demographic and economic data. The survey included scaled questions, multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions.

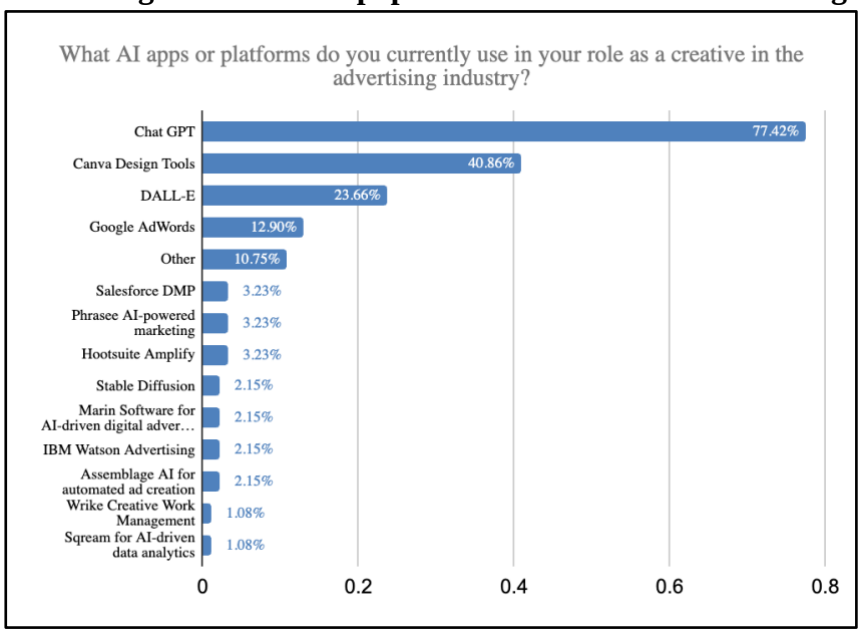
Of the respondents (N=80) the gender distribution was almost equally distributed between male and female, with 58% belonging to the 18-34 age range and 70% of respondents being from EU countries. 80% of respondents had a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, with the remaining being split between having a PhD or other education. The annual income of more than 50% of respondents fell under the $50.000 income range limit.

A similar quantitative study on advertising experts, with a similar number of respondents, was done by Iyer and Bright (2024), showing anxiety due to a fear of AI taking their jobs.

Results and discussions, including research limits and advantages

The respondents come from a variety of fields within the advertising industry, with the most working in strategic planning and branding/brand strategy (over 30%) and the fewest in 3D design and Interactive Design (less than 4%).

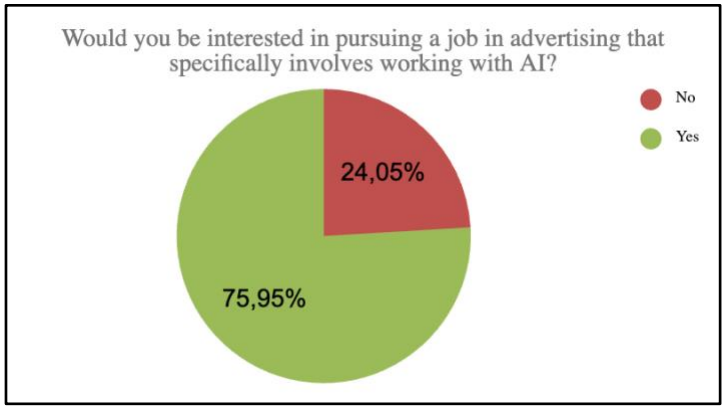
Figure No.1 Most popular AI tools used in advertising



Source: Author's research

While around 50% of respondents rarely or never use AI in their work, the other half reports a daily or weekly use of AI technology. With a large majority of more than 90%, ChatGPT is the most used AI app or system that is used by creatives in the advertising industry (Fig. No.1).

Figure No.2 Level of interest in pursuing a job in advertising that involves working with AI



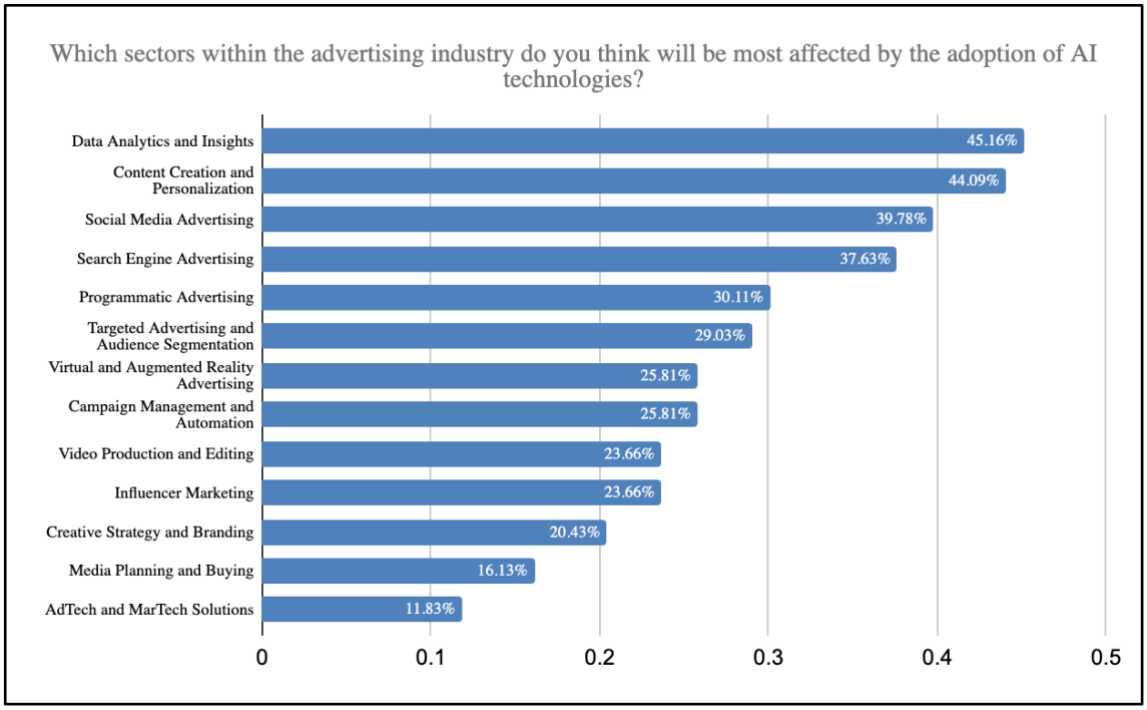
Source: Author's research

Half of the respondents consider that AI has the potential to replace traditional creative roles in advertising, while half do not. 42% believe that AI will impact the role of creatives in the next 5 years. Most participants belong to the 25-34 age bracket, with fewer and fewer people participating as the age interval grows. More than 70% of respondents would be interested in pursuing a job in advertising that specifically involves working with AI (Fig. No.2). Participants who answered yes list among their reasons that AI is interesting, exciting, fun, and inevitable in the future. Participants who answered no state that their reasons are due to AI being unregulated and unethical, do not want to change the status quo, or feel that they would just be training the AI to replace them in their jobs in the future.

More than half of the respondents stay up-to-date with advancements in task automation and AI in the advertising industry by continuously researching and experimenting with new AI tools and techniques. With percentages over 30%, respondents prefer individual study methods as opposed to training sessions of hackathons which came up last.

Over 50% of respondents consider that AI speeds up the brainstorming process and the ideation phase and that AI reduces manual labor and repetitive tasks. However, when asked which sectors within the advertising industry will be the most affected by AI technologies, over 50% agree that the impact will be felt on the way they analyse data and collect insights, which is part of the strategy department (Fig. No.3).

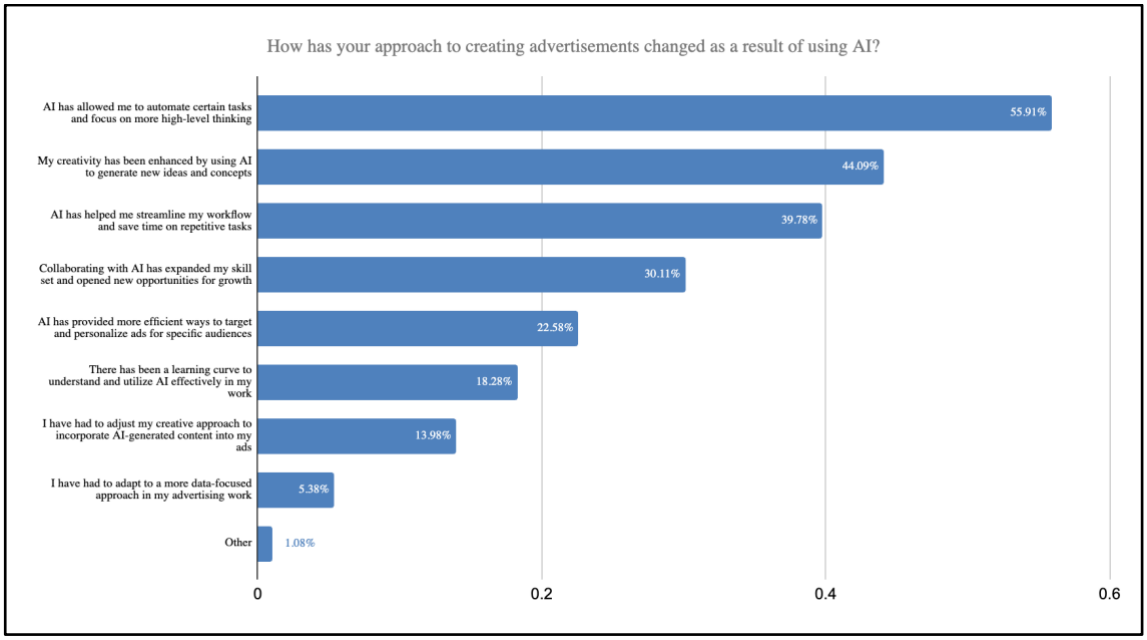
Figure No.3 Sectors of the advertising industry most affected by AI adoption



Source: Author's research

Half of the respondents declared that working with AI allowed them to automate certain tasks and focus more on high-level thinking. This insight might show a possible future for advertising, where AI tools can be used to draft ideas, sketch and design mock-ups for reference, and creative directors could upskill in soft skills to keep their focus on the quality of big ideas (Fig. No.4).

Figure No.4 Creative worker's perception on the impact of AI in their creative process



Source: Author's research

The study has several limitations: it involves a small sample size of creative workers using AI. Additionally, this technology is still in its early stages, and the absence of regulations hinders widespread adoption in creative agencies. Furthermore, the respondents are from various countries and cities, with 70% coming from the EU. While this diversity may be perceived as a weakness, the widespread popularity of AI tools means they are relevant to all types of workers, from freelancers to employees in creative agencies from all over the world.

Conclusions

Understanding the overall perception of creative workers in the advertising industry is challenging, as our analysis of the results reveals a generally neutral attitude, with a tendency to resist the widespread adoption of AI. The main challenge of working with AI is around the balance between human creativity and technology's capabilities. Data analytics for insights and content creation for personalization are thought to be the most vulnerable to AI adoption.

Despite their resistance to change, workers are aware of the future impact of AI and express a desire for jobs that involve this technology. This indicates that they recognize the potential benefits of working with AI. Many are self-taught, with fewer than 50% willing to pursue specialized AI courses, suggesting they primarily use the technology on an experimental basis within agencies, focusing more on internal projects than client work. It is typically employed for brainstorming ideas and reference materials to support further ideation and the generation of major concepts. However, the absence of regulations makes it challenging for AI to be widely adopted in creative work at a commercial level, largely due to clients' apprehensions about using AI-generated content.

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