

## Prompt Engineering as a New Design Paradigm: Redefining the Role of Graphic Designers in the Age of Generative AI

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### Abstract

The surge of generative artificial intelligence in creative workflows has sparked prompt engineering as a mechanism for visual production, raising questions about the graphic designer's future role: will they be replaced or evolve? Prompt engineering represents a new design paradigm that reshapes how designers visualise ideas conceptualise and execute. The study analyses how the traditional relationship between designers and their hands-on tasks like sketching, layout planning, and colour selection is shifting as designs are now generated by crafting descriptive prompts in AI tools, i.e. "making" to "prompting."

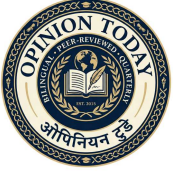
Now designers design with words, where brushstrokes or choosing colour is not primary labour, but crafting structured prompts and evaluating machine-generated outputs. The study explains that this transformative approach changes how we define creativity, where it comes from, who will get the authorship, and control the creative process, challenging the long-held assumption that humans are the sole creators.

This study proposes prompt engineering as a balanced perspective where AI acts as a collaborator rather than a replacement for human designers. While AI generates outputs, human-centred design principles and ethics remain central. It places prompt engineering as an evolution of the profession in the age of AI rather than its downfall.

Key Words: Prompt Engineering, Generative Artificial Intelligence, Design Paradigm Shift, Human-AI Collaboration, Text to Image Designs, Ethics of AI in Design, Designer Agency

### 1. Introduction

The field of graphic design is always in a state of evolution, adapting the new technologies, communication needs, the cultural shifts, and so on. Artificial intelligence design tools rapidly move from experimental curiosities to everyday effective tool within the graphic design industry. It has moved from physical print based media to digital media and more recently through the AI and so the designers. Because of the trends, platforms, tools that are constantly changing, designers must also behave as life long learners to keep up with industries rapid growth. It is not like you "set it" and "forget" about it later.



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This paper takes you through the prompt engineering, which is an emerging design paradigm that transformed the role of graphic designers in the era of generative AI, which basically generate creative content based on textual and precisely descriptive prompts rather than hands-on creation. For decades we are depend on hands-on creativity, the art of design was define by the technical proficiency. For example, how well we know our tools Like Photoshop, Illustrator, etc. or how quickly we can mask complex image in Photoshop but With this generative, AI the making part of the design has almost become instantaneous. Rather than creating confrontation between human's creativity and AI, which anyhow making the brand identity in seconds only based on text. So, the question arises what exactly the designers are doing? During this paradigm shift, we should take it as a reconfiguration of design "the language of new design". Designers this time not only learning the new interface but they are learning how to speak to systems that respond visually. Now, these widely used tools for many designers are promising speed, efficiency, and creative exploration but at the same time they introduce uncertainty regarding authorship and originality.

As for the current state design industry is going through a period of change which reflects growing opportunities and challenges for graphic designers. Designer are now expected to work faster, create content for multi-platforms and constantly producing new ideas. Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) seems to help designers by reducing time and effort, but at the same time it raises important questions about creativity and the role of designers. This study takes a balanced approach instead of focusing on fear and excitement about AI. It explores a key question: Is prompt engineering considered as a new design paradigm, and how does it change the role of the graphic designer?

"Does prompt engineering represent a new design paradigm, and if so, how does it redefine the role of the graphic designer?" Rather than approaching directly to this question from future point of view. The analysis is entirely based on secondary data..

The primary objectives of this research can be considered as:

- To study prompt engineering as a design-centered practice.
- To analyse how generative AI is changing design workflows and creativity.
- To explore designer's perceptions of AI, including opportunities, challenges, and ethical concerns.
- To identify the impact of AI on design education and future careers

By focusing on these objectives, the study aims to make meaningful contributions to applied art research and current discussions in design.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Technological evolution in Graphic Design

Historically, designers have not only changed what they create but also how they think by using their tools. Marshall McLuhan (1964) explained that tools work like extensions of the human body and mind. For example, software like Adobe Illustrator or InDesign extended the designer's hand and eye. They directly making visual element themselves. But, generative AI works differently, it extends the designer's words and ideas. They focus more on describing concepts, giving instructions and shaping ideas through language.



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Graphic design has continuously evolved with new technological change. From printing to digital software, each transformation has shaped and influence not only tools designers used but also design thinking. According to Kuhn's (1962) idea of paradigm shifts, major changes occur when existing methods can no longer explain or support emerging practices. Digital design tools such as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop allowed and preserved a direct control over their work while maintain the relationship between designer and output. These tools enhance and extended human skill and capabilities while ensuring clear input and predictable output. Generative AI, however, works with probability interpretation rather than fixed commands. As a result, altering the designer's role in fundamental ways from direct creator to guide and decision maker in the design process.

## 2.2 AI and Creativity in Design Practice

Researchers have debated and have different views on whether AI enhances or diminishes or weaken creativity. Manovich (2018) argues that AI shifts creative labour toward selection and curation, this idea is visible in design practice today. Instead of replacing creativity, AI redistributes creative efforts across different stages of the design process.

Benjamin (2019) further highlights that AI systems are not neutral. They reproduce biases present in their training data. This raises concerns about similar looking visual, limited representation, and cultural sensitivity. Therefore, designers have an important responsibility to recognize and address these issues in their work.

## 2.3 Prompt Engineering in Creative Work

Prompt engineering is often described as a technical method for improving system performances in computer science (Ramesh et al., 2022). However, within design practice, it works differently. It becomes a creative and interpretive activity. Designers repeatedly adjust prompts to guide AI outputs, balancing clarity with openness, and aligning outputs with brand values and audience expectations.

For instance, considering a branding team working on a sustainability focused start-up. So, instead of making bunch of logo samples or variations, a designer now simply write precisely descriptive prompts to get the desired output. The quality of the design outcome does not depends on the drawing ability, but on the designer's understanding of semiotics, cultural references and brand positing. The knowledge of design has not disappeared but it has been re-encoded linguistically.

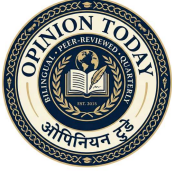
This process closely connects with Schon's (1983) idea of reflection-in-action, where thinking and doing occur simultaneously. Therefore, Prompt engineering becomes a space where design knowledge, ethics, and design intention come together.

## 2.4 Changing Professional Roles and Ethical Concerns

The rise off generative AI and prompt engineering repositions the graphic designer's role. Designers nor act as author of intent and curators of outcomes. AI can generates thousand and hundreds of visual samples in seconds, but they are lack of contextual judgements. Only the designer decide what aligns with brands values, audience expectations and ethical considerations.

In advertising, for example, global agencies increasingly rely on AI for rapid visual exploration, but campaign storytelling, tone, and cultural sensitivity remain human-led (Davis, 2023).

The graphic design role in market is already changing with introduction of AI tools. Employers now seek for designers who can work strategically with AI tools while maintaining human creativity and judgment. Bierut (2015) suggests that design authorship has always been distributed among tools, system and people and AI simply makes this collaboration more



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visible. At the same time, ethical issues such as transparency, bias, and accountability are further becoming more important. These concerns highlight the need for designers to remain actively involved and responsible when using AI in creative work.

### 3. Methodology

This study follows a qualitative approach totally based on secondary data, which relies on already published available sources. It is appropriate to understand emerging themes, theoretical debates, and professional practices relate to generative AI and prompt engineering in graphic Design.

#### 3.1. Sources of Data

Data were collected from a wide range of secondary sources and allows studying existing knowledge of:

- Peer- reviewed journal articles indexed in academic database.
- Conference papers related to generative AI.
- Books and book chapters on artificial intelligence, design theory, prompt engineering, ethical and unethical frameworks and digital creativity.
- Industry reports, credible online articles, blogs and interviews featuring professional graphic designers, creative directors and design educators.

The secondary data helped establish the theoretical foundation of the study and insight into real world design practices, professional opinion and academic discussion on the role of AI and prompt engineering in contemporary graphic design.

#### 3.2. Data Analysis

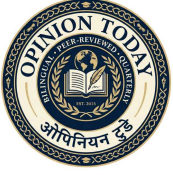
The secondary data which was collected and analyse using thematic analysis.

- The role of generative AI in design workflows
- Prompt engineering as a creative and cognitive skill
- Changes in the designer's role and creative process
- Skill development
- Ethical concerns such as originality, authorship, and bias

The themes were compared across academic studies and industry sources to observe common viewpoints, differences, and emerging patterns. This method helped in building an understanding of how generative AI is reshaping graphic design practice and design education.

### 4. Results and Findings

A complex and evolving relationship between graphic designers and generative AI technologies were analysed through secondary data. The existing academic literature and industry reports indicate that designers around the world now view generative AI as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for human creativity. This positive attitude towards Generative AI and prompt engineering is highlighted by many studies, especially the speeding process of ideation, generating multiple



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visual options, and less time spent on technical tasks. Prompt engineering often allows designers to experiment with ideas quickly and exploring wider rangel or creative possibilities in design process.

At the same time, designer also points several concerns according to reviewed literature. Commonly discussed concerns includes:

- Depend excessively on AI-generated visual style.
- The risk of visual similarity and loss of distinctive design identity
- Limited access to structured training in AI tools and prompt-based workflows

While comparing and discussing traditional design methods and prompt-driven processes it suggest that while generative AI is effective for idea generation and exploration, it lacks contextual understanding. On the other hand, human designers continue to play a crucial role in refinement, cultural sensitivity and emotional awareness, and strategic decision-making.

The study also identifies emerging skill gaps within the design profession. These include through language the ability to articulate ideas clearly, outputs generated by critically evaluating generative AI, and ethical judgments. It was predicted that future design roles will increasingly prioritize conceptual thinking, strategic planning, and the ability to manage and direct AI systems, rather than focusing primarily on manual execution alone.

## 5. Discussion

The findings suggest that the graphic designers now must develop new competencies to work effectively with generative AI. Prompt engineering, now changes the designer's role from being the sole creator of visual outcomes to a strategic guide and decision-maker and to someone frame problems, and evaluate outcomes.

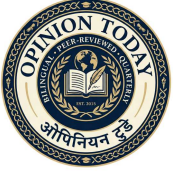
This shift has important implications for design education. Strong need for design curricula to expand beyond traditional visual and technical skills is emphasised by existing literature. Essential components such as AI literacy, prompt formulation, critical thinking, and ethical awareness of contemporary design education are increasingly seen in this area However, limitations in current research is also studied, particularly the lack of cross-cultural perspectives and diverse professional contexts. Most available literature focuses on specific regions or industries, highlighting the need for broader future research.

## 6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns widely discussed in the reviewed literature on generative AI and graphic design. Researchers highlight that AI systems are trained on large datasets that may include cultural biases, stereotypes representation, or uncredited creative work. As a result, ethical responsibility does not remove with the use of automation.

Although, prompt engineering increases the ethical role of designer. Language, framing, selection, and exclusion related choices directly influence AI-generated outcomes. As a result, designers function as cultural gatekeepers, responsible for maintaining fairness, originality, inclusivity, and ethical representation in visual communication.

The reviewed literature constantly emphasizes that ethical awareness must be treated as a core design skill, particularly when designers were engaged and working with powerful generative technologies.



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## 7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that prompt engineering represents an important shift in contemporary graphic design. The analysis of secondary data, it is evident that generative AI is reshaping and influencing how designers think, work, and define or understand their professional roles.

Rather than replacing designers, The continued importance of human judgment, creative intention, contextual understanding, and ethical decision-making are highlighted by generative Ai technologies .Therefore, Prompt engineering should not be understand as a technical skill, but as a new design paradigm that integrates creativity, strategic thinking, and critical thinking.

By positioning prompt engineering within the domains of applied art and visual communication, this research contributes to ongoing academic and professional discussions. It encourages designers, educators, and institutions to engage with AI thoughtfully, ensuring that graphic design balances technical innovations with human values.

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## Author Contribution:

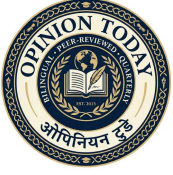
**SrishtiRawat:** Original draft, Writing, Drafting, Methodology, Ashish Kumar Mishra: Review & Editing.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this manuscript.

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