

Market & Income Shifts Impact of 2D-Digital Illustrators in the Generative AI Era in Social Media Peers

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to examine the impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on the income sustainability of digital illustrators, focusing on the challenges, adaptations, and market shifts within the digital art ecosystem. **Method:** A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, utilizing data triangulation through interviews with digital illustrators and their clients to capture both producer and consumer perspectives. **Results:** The findings indicate that generative AI has reshaped the digital illustration market by influencing demand patterns, client preferences, and competition. Illustrators face declining commissions and changing community dynamics but adopt adaptive strategies such as diversifying platforms, enhancing portfolios, and maintaining online visibility to sustain income. Meanwhile, clients balance efficiency and cost against the perceived authenticity of human-made art. **Novelty:** This research provides an integrated understanding of the dual perspectives of illustrators and clients, offering empirical evidence of how human creativity, authenticity, and relational trust continue to serve as key differentiators in the era of AI-driven creative production.

INTRODUCTION

Along development digital technology, opportunities exploration in the world of art become the more open. For artists who want to trying new media, digital technology offers access to larger audience wide. This is give opportunity for illustrators For build career in a way independent without depend on intermediaries or formal institutions. Requests to work digital illustration is estimated will Keep going increase in the future, driven by various factor like online market growth, diversity usage, as well as opportunity collaboration and partnership creative.

Transformation from illustration conventional to digital illustrations also bring implications to interaction social and visual communication, in particular through social media. Digital illustration of the moment This functioning as tool effective communication in convey information, building personal visual identity or brand, as well as strengthen Power deep visual appeal environment extensive interactive. In context this, digital illustration is not Again only functioning as element aesthetics, but has develop become strong visual language in dynamics modern communication.

Emergence various online platforms also strengthen existence digital illustrator in industry creative. Platforms like *DeviantArt* has long been room popular for illustrators For display work, offer service commission, following competition, as well as interact with global community. In addition that, other platforms like *ArtStation* , *Pixiv* , *Fiverr*,

Behance, and *Vgen* participate provide means for digital illustrator for build portfolio and selling service they in a way professional [1] .

In the journal *Applications of Generative AI in the Creative Sector* by Andrei McCall explains that generative AI has brought about a major transformation in the creative sector, not only accelerating the production process but also expanding the scope of ideas and artistic forms that can be realized. Technologies such as GANs, transformers, and diffusion models enable artists to produce visual works, music, and even architecture with high efficiency. However, this paper also emphasizes ethical risks such as data bias, the crisis of work authority, and threats to the authentic value of human work [2] .

On the side other, progress technology intelligence Artificial Intelligence (AI) has enter realm visual arts, giving rise to deviation among practitioners and academics. Research This motivated by the increasing concern to possibility of AI replacing role artist human phenomenon This sticking out after one of them award art annual, *Colorado State Fair*, won by the work produced through an AI named *Midjourney*. Events This trigger debate wide in community visual arts.

Various response appear related phenomenon said. Some party support use of AI as tools in the design process, while party other convey concern that AI can threaten sustainability profession creative. Controversy the more strengthen after circulation AI works on social media that are suspected is results plagiarism to work artist others. The supporters think AI can accelerate the creative process , while opponents evaluate that AI has the potential replace authority artist man as well as misused For objective commercial , considering the result can obtained in a way fast and instant [3] .

This phenomenon of anxiety is reinforced by the findings of a study by **Kunihiro Miyazaki et al. (2024)** who examined public perception of generative AI through Twitter analysis. They found that **illustrators were one of the groups with the most negative sentiments towards generative AI**, primarily due to concerns about the unauthorized misuse of their work in the AI training process. Fear of losing jobs, a decline in demand for manual illustration commissions, and the blurring of the gap between human and machine work were the main highlights. This research shows how the impact of AI is not only technological, but also touches the **emotional and economic aspects of creative actors** [4] .

Concerns about the impact of Generative AI on creative careers are growing, especially among professionals who have experienced its consequences firsthand. A number of writers, translators, and illustrators report job losses or a decline in the economic value of their work due to the emergence of this technology. Around 26% of illustrators and 36% of translators stated that they had lost their jobs due to the presence of generative AI. Furthermore, 37% of illustrators and 43% of translators reported that their income from their work had decreased in value. When asked about future prospects, around 65% of fiction writers and 57% of non-fiction writers believed that their future income would be negatively impacted by this technology. This concern was even higher among translators and illustrators, reaching 77% and 78%, respectively [5] .

In the middle development this is important For highlight aspect protection right riches intellectuals, especially in context digital illustration. Violation right creation Still often happened in Indonesia, and this This No only harm creator in a way economy but also morally. Therefore that , the effort protection to work digital illustrations must strengthened use ensure award to rights and authority creator still awake [6] .

Research journal This written For research how much big impact from the existence of AI in this era to eye livelihood mainstay of digital illustrators overall as threat main they. Research This hope in the future capable open outlook to audience lay For understand How work that digital art No immediately produce picture For they use, behind it There is Lots stages creative important that only can done man No machine. Besides Therefore, the results of this research are expected to provide benefits such as policy recommendations from AI companies regarding publication standards, solutions, procedures and knowledge to industrialize AI-generated works so that in the future there will be no problems or other plagiarized content in the world of illustration.

Problems main in study This is to what extent the emergence of Generative AI influences income of digital artists or illustrator two dimensions that promote service they through social media. With increasing the popularity of platforms such as Midjourney, DALL·E, and Stable Diffusion, many visual works that were once made manually now can produced with AI assistance in more fast and economical costs. Conditions This cause concerns among illustrators, especially those who rely on income from system commission or order illustration personal through social media networks.

For answer issue this, researcher will do analysis to comparison digital artist income before and after presence massive Generative AI, as well as explore perception social in community digital artists in the online realm. Analysis This aim For know does AI play a role? as just a tool or precisely become competitors direct for creator man in the digital illustration market.

Problem Formulation : The problem formulation in this research is:

1. How Generative AI developments influence digital illustrator two income dimensions ?
2. How perception community on social media towards work man compared with work AI -based ?
3. What just strategies used by digital illustrators to still compete in the AI era?

Research purposes : As for Objective study from studies This is :

1. Analysis to difference digital illustrator two income dimensions before and after the rise of Generative AI.
2. Identifying perception to the existence of Generative AI in digital illustration market scope.
3. Measure the impact of Generative AI on interest social media users to order illustration from illustrator man
4. Describe strategy adaptation of the illustrators in face competition with Generative AI

Research Questions : How does the emergence of Generative AI affect the income and job opportunities of two-dimensional digital artists/illustrators within the social media friendship sphere before and after the rise of this technology?

SDGs Category : This research aligns with *SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth*, which emphasizes the importance of decent work and inclusive economic growth. The emergence of *Generative AI* in the field of two-dimensional digital illustration has impacted the income of many digital artists who rely on commission systems through social media. This innovation, although accelerating visual production, also poses the risk of human roles being replaced by technology. This could threaten the economic sustainability of independent creative workers in the digital era. Therefore, this research contributes to evaluating the real impact of AI on the sustainability of decent work in the digital creative sector. These findings are important in the context of SDG targets 8.3 and 8.5, which support entrepreneurship and equal access to productive employment [7] .

Review Library

Term *illustrator two dimensions* refers to the artist who created visual works in the field flat (two dimensions), good through digital techniques and traditional. Works they generally used For various needs like illustration books, comics, designs characters, up to development games. According to definition from Big Red Illustration, illustration two dimensions is art the image created manually or digitally which displays visuals in two dimensions , namely height and width [8] .

Temporary that is, *Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI)* is branch from intelligence artificial that uses a learning model deep (*deep learning*) for produce content new, like text, images, and audio. IBM defines technology This as a capable deep learning model create content quality tall based on the training data that has been given [9] .

Social media platforms like *Behance*, *DeviantArt*, and *VGen* provide online ecosystem for digital artists to display work, receive order commission, as well as expand network professional they. Behance known as a major online platform For show off and discover work creative [10] , while DeviantArt plays a role as community online art that connects artist with the fans [11] . As for VGen in a way special facilitate digital commission between artist human and client creators – like VTubers and streamers – with policy explicitly rejecting use AI technology without permission from artist related [12] .

Study about influence technology to income digital artists have carried out by a number of academics , one of them Novaković . In his studies , he highlight that social media like Instagram becoming the main platform promotion at a time source income for Lots digital illustrators , especially through system commission and marketing direct to global audience . Novaković state that Lots artist consider Instagram as the main platform

For promote work they and as source income main Because its visual nature and scope wide user base [13] .

The emergence of Generative AI such as *Midjourney* and *DALL·E* has change digital illustration market landscape in general significant . Dejan Grba in his book explain that use of generative models in digital art also challenge draft traditional about authority creator , originality , and creativity in visual arts [14] . Development This cause concerns among illustrator related resilience position they in an increasingly digital job market competitive .

Report released by *UNCTAD* highlight importance management digital data flow and the use of AI to align with achievement *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)* , including in aspect decent work . UNCTAD affirms that how digital data is managed will impact big to global capabilities in reach objective development sustainable [15] .

Besides that , report from *International Labor Organization (ILO)* in a way firm linking the existence of a digital work platform with SDG 8, namely related decent work and growth economics . Report the state that digital work platforms have the potential give benefit for workers and actors business , as well as public in a way general . However , the potential positive the only can realized If opportunity available work own decent quality [16] . Therefore that , in context worker digital creativity , the need for regulation and protection law become the more it is important that they No trapped in condition detrimental work or lost source stable income .

RESEARCH METHOD

Literature Review

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Method

Study This use approach qualitative descriptive For dig and understand in a way deep impact the emergence of Generative AI towards digital artist/illustrator income two dimensions in scope social media friendship [17] . Approach This chosen Because capable give comprehensive overview about experiences , perceptions , and strategies of illustrators in face change technology [18] .

For get results adequate and appropriate research with level expected accuracy , used approach qualitative descriptive as method data collection . In context examine the influence of Generative AI on the digital illustration market sector globally , it is necessary findings functional start as foothold for studies continued . Findings This ideally obtained through the research process qualitative . Therefore that , the focus group technique was chosen as instrument main For get outlook about experiences , views , as well perception from group selected respondents in a way selective [19] .

Data collection was carried out through semi- structured interviews to active digital illustrator who uses social media as the main platform promotions and

transactions commission . In addition that , supporting data taken from observation content uploaded on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram , and ArtStation , to analyze trend interactions and engagement before and after AI became popular [20] .

Data obtained analyzed in a way thematic For identify patterns general in narrative respondents, especially related change income, strategy adaptation and perception against AI. Methods This expected capable give understanding contextual about AI disruption in industry digital illustrations , as well as provide input strategic for perpetrator industry creative and maker policy [21] .

Study This aim For identify opportunity as well as challenge future research related to this with connection between artists and Generative AI, through analysis to response subjective on a number of questions that have been formulated with the target of interviewing 5 illustrators who have get involved in the field This more from 5 years , and 5 consumers who frequently buy service illustration since before the rise of generative AI and still use service the until now [22] .

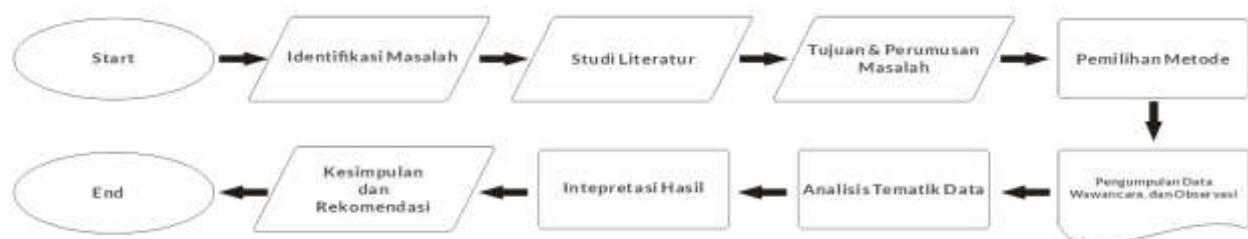


Figure 1. Design Study

Points The Interview Submitted For Illustrator:

Questions asked to the illustrator aims For dig background behind professional , strategy marketing , and level understanding towards generative AI, as well as How technology This influence work they . Some question beginning emphasizes experience , marketing platforms , and interactions they with AI, well as users and repellent technology said . Next , the question directed For identify change market and community trends since the emergence of generative AI, including its influence to demand and quantity orders . Questions also addressed the monetization model used , perceptions mark works , as well as steps precautions taken For anticipate decline income . Finally , the interview make an effort understand view they about the future industry digital illustration in context the development of generative AI .

Points raised For digital consumer / client illustration :

Question to consumer designed For reveal preferences , behavior purchases , and perceptions they to illustration artificial man compared to generative AI. Question beginning evaluate level familiarity and intensity consumption work illustration before and after the presence of AI. Focus next is understand motivation purchase , change phenomena in social media , and allocation available budget they take out . The questions also explore trend consumer For choose AI or man based on factor price , speed , and quality , as well as evaluate experience bad and positive in interact with illustrator.

Purpose Finally is catch view consumer about mark emotional and artistic from work illustration man compared to AI results .

Data Validity

For ensure validity of data in study this , researcher apply four criteria *trustworthiness* , namely credibility , transferability , dependability , and confirmability [23] . Credibility tested through triangulation source , with interview illustrator from background different back and platforms For get varying views [24] . Besides In addition , *a member check* is also carried out , namely the process of confirming return results interviews and interpretation researchers to source person For ensure that the data presented in accordance with Meaning actually . Transferability achieved through presentation *thick description* or in -depth description about context resource persons and practice digital illustrations that they run , so that results study can understood and applied in context similar by researchers others . For guard dependability , researcher documenting in a way comprehensive all over stages research , starting from data collection , transcription process interview , until data analysis , to enable the other party carries out an audit trail if required . While that , confirmability guarded with take notes reflection personal during the research process (*reflexivity*) , as well as keep evidence supporters like quote direct from sources and visual documentation of the work illustration , so that data interpretation can be accountable in a way objective .

Analysis Thematic

Take reference method study analysis thematic analysis thematic There is a number of necessary steps done namely [25] :

1. Familiarization (getting to know) data:
Researchers read or listen transcript interview repeatedly to understand content in a way in-depth . This process important For catch nuances , patterns , and meanings that emerge from answer respondents .
2. Make code initials :
Provide brief labels for relevant pieces of data . Codes This functioning breaking down raw data become a more unit of analysis managed .
3. Look for discussion theme beginning :
Similar codes or each other related grouped become category big .
4. Review theme :
Ensure consistency . At this stage this , researcher inspect whether the data is grouped Already support theme , as well as evaluate whether between theme clear different or need merged / split repeat .
5. Writing narrative thematic :
Themes found assembled in form story coherent research . Narrative This usually equipped with quote direct from interview For strengthen arguments , as well as associated with literature relevant so that the findings more meaningful .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

List of Respondents

A number of six willing respondents For interviewed in study this . Respondents is practitioners and clients who have get involved with topic This more from five years even there is more from ten year .

Table 1. Respondents interview

Code Respondents	Full Name / Initials	Role	Profile Short	Year Start Getting involved	Notes Special
A1	Nugroho	Artist / Illustrator	Founder of the Reverie Alternative circle , debut at Comic Frontier (Comifuro) Jakarta 2016, experience commercialize works on online platforms since 2012	2012	Experienced in online sales and offline events
A2	Yudi	Artist / Illustrator	Founder of the Nantoka Workshop circle , debut at Comic Frontier (Comifuro) Jakarta 2016, experience commercialize works on online platforms since 2012	2012	Creative studio owner , also collaborates with investors
A3	Karen	Artist / Live2D Specialist	Active Live2D artist in a way international since 2019, known as the “mother” of Lots Indie VTuber	2019	Focus on commissions and projects international
C1	Riza	Client / Game Developer	The founder of Platoment studio (listed on Steam), has publish a	2018	Focus in booking illustration For need <i>game assets</i>

			number of game title		
C2	Yasu	Client / Investor	Main investor Nantoka Workshop owned by Yudi	2016	Involved in financing project illustration commercial Order For personal and collection needs
C3	January	Client / Customer Still	Customer regular repeat <i>orders</i> use service digital illustration	2021	

Analysis Results Thematic

A. Familiarization (Getting to Know) Data

Stage beginning in analysis thematic is a familiarization process , in which researchers read , listen , and understand data comprehensive . In study this , the data analyzed originate from six interview deep with illustrators and clients who are active in the ecosystem digital illustration two dimensions . Respondents illustrator covers individual with background behind diverse , starting from founder of the creative circle at the Comic Frontier event until artist international company that focuses on Live2D services . Meanwhile that , respondents from side client covering developer *indie games* , investors, and customer regular loyalty do commission illustration .

Through reading repetitive to transcript , researcher find existence repeating patterns and nuances special from answer respondent . Illustrator tend emphasize the impact of Generative AI on the demand and exposure aspects of social media , as well as How platform algorithm strengthens domination content AI- based . On the other hand , the client more often highlight problem price , efficiency , and mark emotions attached to the work human . Familiarization this also shows existence variation experience : yes illustrator who experienced decline demand , there is a stable , as well there are some who actually see opportunity new For diversification .

B. Giving Code Beginning

From the transcript , a number of code frequent beginnings appear among others:

Table 2. Coding Beginning

Statement Frequent Interviews Appear	Respondents
" <i>decreased demand</i> "	A1, A2
" <i>algorithm social media dominates</i> "	A2, A3, C2
" <i>AI 's work is not alive</i> "	A1, C2, C3
" <i>AI only Good at a glance , but Lots disabled</i> "	A2, A3

"AI helps idea reference "

A1, A2, C1

" loyalty to the human touch"

C1, C2, C3

" price more cheap in AI"

C1, C2, C3

C. Theme Identification

From this initial code, several main themes were formed:

1. Market Pressure and Algorithms

AI is considered capable of producing work faster and cheaper, thus impacting traffic on social media algorithms that were previously based on *peer-to-peer sharing* . This reduces the visibility of human illustrators' work and potentially reduces orders. *" since existence TikTok system on the internet itself changed become very system fixated on the algorithm . Which is where previously is friend sharing system between Friend or mutuals . But since system algorithm This implemented to many social media , because of this Generative AI Far more fast from the artists/illustrators then in a way directly and massively influences the algorithm's traffic and monopolizes it ."* (A2), and supporting statements Again namely *" Some clients still choose a pure human illustrator without AI. But some who want chase time and budget efficiency because more cheap Finally choose using AI. So of course There is perceived decrease in demand "* (A1).

2. Quality and Emotional Value of the Work

While AI's results sometimes look good at first glance, illustrators and clients point to fundamental flaws: anatomy, storytelling, and even the "soul" of the work. Clients like Riza (C1) and Yasu (C2) assert that AI cannot convey *the soul* or emotional meaning inherent in human work. *" No yeah if I Possible Can it's called AI have no identity yourself . Even if now generate can with more style consistent But for me still no There is teak himself ."* (C1) , *" AI No Can fulfil what is the truth I Want to What another paid one . For example like 1 minus that AI image You No Can revision "* (C2) , *" When This I more choose use service human . Because this artist Can process what you want . When I dead end Can ask for artist's opinion for suggestions. Although in terms of cost it is more expensive for me more accept matter like that ."* (C3) .

3. The Pros and Cons Phenomenon in the Community

Some illustrators embrace AI as a tool to increase exposure (for example, the Japanese community), but most still oppose its commercial use, believing it will distort the market and flood social media with low-quality visuals. This creates a clear dividing line between the pros and cons in the art community. *" If I watch these people on Facebook on allergies with Generative AI phenomena such as This especially environment friendship I'm also a lot of creator of course just incident like That No pay attention . Moreover again Generative AI a lot take work illustration outside there For material learning (machine learning) without existence agreement*

owner work said . When Generative AI only made into as a help tool This Of course Still Can accepted No as results end .

If on Twitter(X) because the ones I follow are Japanese artists . Here they more welcome with my Generative AI see products sold on Fantia , DL- Site already Can free sell work AI results . It seems during things the clear labeled that That AI work people don't There is problem even There is own market share ." (C3) .

4. Adaptation and Diversification Strategy

Illustrators are trying to maintain relevance by increasing their upload routines, maintaining portfolio quality, and utilizing international donation and commission platforms. Clients are finding that combining AI for concept art and humans for final execution is a more balanced approach. " Go for it just Keep going while raise quality images , upload your portfolio frequently so people know our market where is the market who ." (A3) , " Trying increase traffic with more routine posting on social media and increasing engagement so that No displaced algorithm ." (A1) , " Still work in a way consistent if likened to like SpongeBob oppose Neptune making a Crabby Patty. In story the SpongeBob only make one Crabby Patty, while Neptune make thousands but the chosen one is owned by SpongeBob So Want to however AI is now the selected end is still work human ." (A2) . " AI Usually used For referencing and then the result thrown to Illustrator(human) for made works . And only limited to reference No as results end from results prompt ." (C1) .

5. Consumer Expectations and Loyalty

Despite AI's lower prices, customers still tend to be loyal to human illustrators due to the communication, flexibility in revisions, and added creativity that often exceeds client expectations. For example, Januar continues to use illustrators because they can provide feedback and receive feedback from artists. " Because if for artists who are indeed Already can trusted That the result Good once and can be directed . That's the important point ." (C2) . " From experience I There is frequent subscribers I rent For the works that I want . He very clever look for initiative background questions for the picture that I ask . I have when art message for repeat year I Then I ask for shock from it . Composition , background, etc. handed over fully to the artist . Even He give kind of a behind the scenes bonus how work the So from initial progress until end ." (C3) .

6. Review Theme

Pressure and Algorithms

Theme This Already consistent Because supported statement direct from illustrators (A1, A2) who are offended change system algorithms and impacts directly on request illustration . The narrative is also strengthened with quote the client stated existence shift to AI because factor speed and cost . Theme This clear different from " Quality and Emotional Value " because focus on market mechanisms and distribution work , not perception artistic .

Emotional Quality and Value Work

Theme This own strong foundation from client data (C1, C2, C3) which emphasizes soul, identity , revision , and interaction creative as factor differentiator work human . Consistency theme This Enough awake Because statements that appear each other complete . He No overlapping overlap with

theme “ Expectations and Loyalty Consumers ”, although There is connectedness : quality emotional be one of reason loyalty , but in a way conceptual still can separated .

Pros and Cons Phenomenon in Community

Theme This relevant and emerging strong from C3 statement about difference attitude community on Facebook (more reject) and Twitter/ Fantia (more accept). Data supports existence polarization , but amount quote Still limited . For guard consistency , theme This Can combined with “ Quality and Emotional Value ” when want to more concise , because both of them discuss aspect social and perception , although still Can stand Alone as dimensions community .

Strategy Adaptation and Diversification

Theme This consistent Because supported various quote from illustrator (A1, A2, A3) and client (C1). The data shows effort guard visibility , quality , and market diversification . Theme This very important Because become answer direct to question study related strategy survive in the AI era. He stand independent and complementary the theme of “ Market Pressure ”, so that should maintained as theme alone .

Expectations and Loyalty Consumer

Theme This clear consistent Because reinforced by clients (C2, C3) who emphasize satisfaction , flexibility , and value added given illustrator human . Theme This each other complete with “ Quality and Emotional Value ”, but the focus more on behavior consumers and relations business . Therefore that , both of them should still separated to make it visible dimensions quality work vs. market behavior.

Recommendation Review

In a way general , structure theme Already awake consistency . Market Pressure and Strategy Adaptation each other complete from side challenges and responses . Quality Work and Loyalty Consumer intersect , and will combined with reason second theme You're welcome highlight non- economic dimensions , namely perception quality work man as well as reason client still choose illustrator even though AI is more cheap .. Temporary That , the Pros and Cons Phenomenon Community should enriched with more lots of data, or considered For combined when proof or the amount of data is still limited .

The rest writer has provide table also for make things easier in interpretation from review themes that emerge . Table consists of from column Theme , Supporting Data , Potential Overlapping (overlapping) overlap), and the Decision to maintain theme or remove it , even combined from topic discussion in narrative analysis next .

Table 3. Review Theme

Theme	Supporting data	Potential Overlapping	Decision
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Pressure and Algorithms	Quote illustrator (A1, A2) about algorithm TikTok /Instagram more favor fast output ; statement client question efficiency cost with AI.	Intersecting with “ Strategy Adaptation ” because You're welcome discuss market impact .	Maintained as theme alone Because focus on the challenge structural (related) with foundation system economy and society).
Artistic Value and Loyalty Consumers (Combined Quality & Expectations)	Testimony clients (C1–C3) about “ teak self ” work , storytelling , flexibility revision , experience emotional , as well as reason still loyal to illustrator ; quote consumer about initiative artists who transcend expectation .	Previously intersecting between two theme , now combined to make it more concise and avoid repetition .	Maintained as theme single highlight mark emotional work man at a time behavior loyal consumers .
Pros and Cons Phenomenon in Community	Statement C3 regarding difference attitude communities on Facebook (reject) and Twitter/ Fantia (more accept).	Close together with Artistic Values and Loyalty theme Consumer Because You're welcome related perception , but focus community different .	Maintained , however recommended For enriched with additional data to make it more strong .
Strategy Adaptation and Diversification	Quote illustrator (A1–A3) regarding posting consistency , improvement quality portfolio , platform diversification ; statement client (C1) about AI combination for concepts and humans For execution end .	There is a connection with Market Pressure due to discuss response to market conditions .	Still become core theme because in a way direct answer formulation problem related strategy endure .

7. Narration Analysis Thematic

Narration Analysis The Impact of Generative AI on Income and Role of Illustrator

Interviews with three illustrators (*Karen, Nugroho, and Yudi*) identified varying impacts on their incomes from Generative AI technology. Some illustrators, like *Yudi* , reported experiencing a significant decline in illustration orders due to clients switching to faster and more affordable AI-art generator services. *Karen* and *Nugroho* , on the other hand, reported relatively stable incomes,

although both expressed concerns about a potential future decline if AI adoption becomes more widespread.

This finding is relevant to quantitative studies showing that while generative AI does not significantly reduce artists' incomes, there is a slowdown in the growth of employment opportunities for creative workers [26]. This indicates that the impact of AI on the creative economy tends to be indirect – not drastically reducing incomes, but hindering market expansion and the opening of new opportunities.

Besides the issue of income, illustrators also highlight aspects of their professional existence and identity. Nugroho and Yudi, for example, emphasize that although AI can produce works quickly, the work of human illustrators still has more value because of the stories, experiences, and craftsmanship that cannot be reduced to mere algorithms. This is in line with research that emphasizes the importance of the human touch in digital artwork as a differentiating factor and is still sought after by collectors and art lovers [27]. Thus, despite a decrease in the number of orders, they still maintain a differentiation strategy based on quality and personalization.

On the other hand, Karen added that AI actually opens up space for redefining the role of illustrators. As a Live2D artist who works extensively with international clients, she views AI not only as a threat but also as a tool to speed up certain processes, such as ideation or rough sketching. However, she believes its main advantages remain the detailed character expressions, fluid animation, and design consistency, which AI cannot fully match. This perspective suggests that there is a segment of professionals who are more adaptable to technological developments, while maintaining a bargaining position with specific, hard-to-replace skills.

Furthermore, mitigation efforts are also evident in the diversification of income sources. Some illustrators no longer rely solely on commissions, but also open subscription services such as Patreon, Pixiv Fanbox, and even sell asset packs that can be used by the indie creator community. This step is in line with the creative business strategy suggested in a recent study, namely diversifying monetization models to maintain sustainability amidst technological disruption [28]. Thus, illustrators who successfully adapt not only survive, but also expand their market through innovation in service and product offerings.

Narration Perspective Client to Use of Generative AI

Interviews with three clients (*Riza, Januar and Yasu*) revealed their primary reasons for maintaining or reducing their use of human illustrators. Clients who continued to use illustrators emphasized **artistic quality, originality, and creative communication, factors** that AI struggles to replace. Meanwhile, clients who partially switched to AI prioritized **speed and cost efficiency**.

These results are in line with findings that conclude that Generative AI can increase efficiency and accelerate the creative process, but poses challenges related to the authenticity of the work, copyright, and visual uniqueness [29]. In the context of creative businesses, clients tend to choose a hybrid solution – using AI

for the idea exploration stage (concept art) and human illustrators for the final execution that requires a personal artistic touch.

From the side consumers, one of the findings important is change expectation to price and speed production. Riza, for example, assessed that AI offers option cheap and fast For produce visual assets in game development. However, he still choose Work The same with illustrator man when need quality narrative, consistency style, and intensive communication. This confirm that decision use of AI or illustrator man very depends on the context need client, not just question cost solely.

Yasu as an investor more emphasizes efficiency and *return on investment*. According to him, AI can cut cost beginning in stage exploration of ideas, but For product end of the market, he still more believe in the work human beings. This is in line with research business creative that shows that work art man Still own Power sell more high in the premium market, while more AI work often positioned as alternative For need production mass matter This in harmony with study related with the impact of AI in market equilibrium. With thus, AI and illustrator man can each other complement, not fully compete in the digital illustration market.

On the side consumer individuals, such as January, there is factor emotional and relational in decide For still use service illustrator human. He emphasize that personal experience –starting from discussion of ideas, revision process, until satisfaction moment accept final work– is mark add the ones that don't Can provided by AI. Even experience bad even though, like delay or miscommunication, no reduce his tendency For still support artist man Because There is aspect perceived *human* engagement important. Findings This show that loyalty consumer No only determined by price, but also by attachment emotional formation in transaction creative.

Narration Strategy Illustrator Adaptation in Ecosystem New

Triangulation of interview data and business studies indicates that adaptation strategies are key to maintaining a position in the creative market. Illustrators who actively explore AI as **a supporting tool** tend to be more optimistic about change, while those who reject it completely tend to experience negative impacts more quickly.

This condition supports the approach of **technology integration** in the creative process: AI is used to speed up the visual research stage, initial idea generation, or *rough sketch creation*, while the final touches are still done manually to ensure quality and originality.

Besides maintain quality artistic and differentiation style, enrichment portfolio as well as routine social media posts proven become element important in guard visibility a illustrator in the middle competition with generative AI. Digital platform algorithms, such as Instagram, Twitter/X, and TikTok, very influenced by consistency activity upload content. Illustrator who is routine display results good work in daily sketch form, progress workmanship commission, or final portfolio, has opportunity more big For maintain attention

audience and generate engagement. Although speed production man Of course No can rival instant and massive generative AI output , sustainability existence in timeline users become a kind of “ resistance” passive ” for confirm existence creator humans in the increasingly digital space congested content automation .

More far , strategy platform diversification is also necessary become attention main . Every digital platform has a user base as well as behavior different algorithms , so that lean on marketing work only on one social media potential limit range . With utilise various channel such as Instagram, Twitter/X, Pixiv , DeviantArt, to Patreon or Pixiv Fanbox , illustrator can expand opportunity For netting client from diverse ecosystems . This at a time reduce risk when one platform is experiencing change algorithm or decreased engagement. Practice This No only increase resilience to market shocks due to the presence of AI, but also strengthens position illustrator as active , adaptive , and relevant entities in landscape industry increasingly creative dynamic .

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study concludes that the emergence of generative AI has produced a dual impact on the digital illustration industry. While AI has reduced demand and income stability for some illustrators due to faster and cheaper production processes, it has simultaneously encouraged innovation through adaptive strategies such as portfolio enrichment, consistent content publication, cross-platform market expansion, and artistic differentiation. From the client’s perspective, although AI is increasingly used for idea exploration because of its cost efficiency, human illustrators remain preferred for final products that demand creativity, narrative depth, and emotional value. **Implication:** These findings highlight that technological disruption does not eliminate human relevance; rather, it redefines competitiveness through authenticity, creative identity, and relationship-based value. The continued preference for human-created works underscores the irreplaceable role of emotion, originality, and social interaction in art consumption. **Limitation:** The study is limited by its qualitative and descriptive nature, relying on interviews without quantitative measures of income variation, and focusing solely on the Indonesian context. **Future Research:** Future studies could incorporate larger-scale surveys to obtain representative data, conduct cross-country comparisons to explore regulatory differences, investigate copyright and AI licensing frameworks, and examine emerging hybrid business models that integrate human-AI collaboration in creative production.

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