

Prompt, Click, Publish: Exploring Young Indonesian Copywriter's Perspective on Collaborating with Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

The presence of AI is changing the landscape of the creative industry, one of which is the copywriting profession. Generation Z copywriters face creative challenges when dealing with AI in carrying out their work. The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding the experiences and dynamics of collaboration between Generation Z copywriters in Indonesia and Artificial Intelligence (AI) amidst the transformation of the creative industry and digital communications that are increasingly driven by technological automation. This study aims to explore the subjective meaning of copywriters facing the presence of AI in the creative text writing process, the motivational structure of using AI in copywriting work, and interpret how copywriters professionalize AI-based creative work. This study uses a phenomenological approach by conducting in-depth interviews with 11 Generation Z copywriters. The results of this study show that Generation Z copywriters interpret AI as an efficient creative tool but still require intuition, empathy, originality, and human responsibility to maintain authenticity and trust in technology-based creative work practices. Future research is recommended to examine the experience of human-AI collaboration in other creative professions and explore the long-term impact of AI use on professional identity, creativity, and work ethics in digital communications industry.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Copywriter, Generation Z, Phenomenology, Prompt

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is shaping scientific understanding and practical applications across a wide range of fields. AI technology now enables machines to mimic human intelligence, performing tasks such as language comprehension, data analysis, and decision-making, and is serving as a foundation for innovation across a wide range of sectors (Joshi, 2024; Saxena et al., 2023; Shrivastava, 2024). AI as a dynamic interaction between humans and technology, where trust and context play key roles (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2024). AI can also be seen as a set of computational tools and sociotechnical phenomena that shape, and are shaped by, human activity (Baranov, 2023; Bearman & Ajjawi, 2024).

One of the areas most impacted by AI is the creative industry, such as copywriting. Copywriting is defined as the process of creating written content, particularly marketing or advertising text, designed to inform, persuade, or motivate a target audience to take a specific action, such as purchasing a product, engaging with a brand, or adopting an idea (Jesslyn & Agustiningsih, 2021; Pratama et al., 2023; Suleman, 2023). The person who performs this task is called a copywriter, whose role is to craft compelling, clear, and engaging messages tailored to the needs of a business,

organization, or campaign (Jesslyn & Agustiningsih, 2021; Mona & Pramulia, 2022; Wijaya et al., 2022).

Copywriters are tasked with attracting attention, arousing interest, creating desire, and encouraging action (Jesslyn & Agustiningsih, 2021; Pratama et al., 2023). Their work includes creating advertising copy, website content, social media posts, slogans, product descriptions, and more (Jesslyn & Agustiningsih, 2021; Suleman, 2023). In practice, they must understand marketing, psychology, and target audiences to produce effective content (Mona & Pramulia, 2022; Shtukareva, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2022). Thus, copywriting is the creation of persuasive and strategic written content for marketing and communications, while a copywriter is the professional responsible for this work. Both are essential in modern advertising, branding, and digital communications.

On the other hand, Generation Z is entering the workforce as digital natives, shaping and being shaped by the rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into organizational environments. Their unique perspectives influence how AI is adopted, the challenges they face, and the future of work. Generation Z generally has a positive attitude toward AI (Zolak Poljašević et al., 2024), and as employees they value flexibility, career development, meaningful work, and well-being (Sharma & Abraham, 2024).

Generation Z has grown up with AI as a fundamental part of their experiences (Mcdonald et al., 2023). They view AI as essential for work efficiency and productivity (Keindahan & Nasri, 2025). AI is not just a technological tool, but also part of a new culture in learning, working, communicating, and expressing creativity (Diab et al., 2025). On the other hand, AI culture also raises critical reflections on authenticity, ethics, technological dependency, and how human identity and creativity are negotiated in the era of digital automation (Beerends & Aydin, 2025).

Creative culture is defined as being dominantly stimulated by economic capital, transforming into cultural capital (Ekomadyo et al., 2023). Creative culture is also about the integration of cultural values (beliefs, traditions, social values) and creative strategies (new ideas, designs, messages) to create engaging digital content and connect with audiences (Hatwar & Gulhane, 2026). Study show that creative workers collaborating with GenAI in advertising, experiencing both powerful new ways of working and challenges in control, shifting from traditional artistic control to generative control (Retkowsky & Huysman, 2025). This phenomenon shows that creativity in the digital era is no longer understood solely as the result of individual work, but rather as an adaptive process that involves the ability to curate, modify, and interpret technological output.

As a profession closely linked to creativity and technology, a Generation Z copywriter cannot escape the use of AI. AI is rapidly transforming the copywriting field, reshaping the role of copywriters and the content creation process. The emergence of a “prompt, click, publish” culture refers to a reliance on generative AI that is impacting work rhythms, relationships with creativity, and the definition of writing

expertise. Prompting, or "speed engineering," is the skill of designing inputs that produce the desired outputs from an AI model. Effective prompting enables Generation Z copywriters to produce high-quality, customized content almost instantly, significantly reducing the time and effort required for traditional content creation (Kavgić, 2024; Liu & Rao, 2024). Copywriters are also increasingly focusing on high-level tasks, such as perfecting tone, message, and creative hooks, while AI handles the routine text composition (Kavgić, 2024; Liu & Rao, 2024).

On the other hand, studies show that AI-generated copy can match or even surpass human-written content in terms of quality and appeal, especially for standard marketing tasks (Kavgić, 2024; Liu & Rao, 2024). However, the most creative and meaningful writing must still be based on human supervision and editing (Liu & Rao, 2024). If writers receive AI-generated text too well, they may feel less ownership and involvement, leading to less incentive to revise or invest personal creativity (Kreminski, 2024; Zhou & Sterman, 2024). This dynamic can undermine the desire to make unique and original contributions (Doshi & Hauser, 2024). AI-generated content also blurs the boundaries of authorship, raising questions about who should be credited and compensated, the human messenger, the AI developer, or both (Schinello, 2025; Xu et al., 2025; Xue, 2024). Additionally, AI can perpetuate or reinforce existing biases, resulting in less diverse content or reinforcing stereotypes (Agboola, 2024; B. Gao et al., 2023; Xue, 2024).

Copywriting in Indonesia has become a crucial element in digital marketing and business growth, amidst the rapid growth of the digital economy. Amidst the opportunities and challenges of AI, Generation Z copywriters play a vital role by adapting their skills to local cultures, languages, and platforms. Therefore, this study seeks to explore their subjective meanings, motivations, and social and professional relationships within AI-based copywriting practices.

Previous studies have examined how AI impacts the copywriting profession (Larsson, 2025), highlighting social and gender inequalities, the pressures of technological acceleration, and the potential risks of over-reliance on AI. Another study highlighted the shifting paradigms and job expectations of copywriters and journalists with the rise of AI (Vicsek et al., 2025), which has implications for their experimentation with AI. Another study explored how copywriters use GenAI as a complementary tool for their copywriting work (Fernández-Cavia, 2025). However, most previous research has focused on aspects of technology, productivity, and professional transformation, leaving Generation Z copywriters with relatively limited insight into their subjective experiences, emotional dynamics, and creative identity negotiations in collaborating with AI. This research can serve as a reflection for vocational education, the creative industry, and policymakers on the ethical use of AI in digital work.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method, using phenomenology which attempts to uncover the essential meaning experienced by a group of individuals related to a concept or phenomenon in their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data for this study were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews over a 3-month period (November 2025 – January 2026) with 11 Gen Z informants, born between 1996 and 2010 (Van den Bergh et al., 2024), selected through purposive sampling. The criteria were Gen Z women and men aged 23-28 who worked as copywriters in creative companies or agencies or as freelancers, and used AI-based applications, software, or websites. Eleven copywriters were selected because this study used a qualitative approach focused on data depth. This number met the need for experiential exploration and reached data saturation, the point at which additional interviews no longer yield significant new information. The following research informant data is attached in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of research informants

Informan Code	Age	Gender	Work place Category	Length of work (years)
C01	25	Female	Private Company	1 – 3
C02	27	Male	Freelance	4-6
C03	26	Female	Creative Agency	1 - 3
C04	23	Female	Agency	> 1
C05	26	Male	Private Company	> 1
C06	27	Male	Private Company	1 – 3
C07	23	Female	Freelance	1 – 3
C08	28	Male	Creative Agency	4-6
C09	26	Female	Creative Agency	4-6
C10	27	Female	Freelance	1 - 3
C11	28	Male	Creative Agency	4-6

(Source: Author, 2026)

The data analysis conducted (Moustakas, 1994), included: initial recording and grouping, data reduction, discovery of invariant themes, and compilation of textural, structural, and essential descriptions of experiences to discover the meaning of experiences and collective narratives regarding human and AI collaboration in the copywriting profession. Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and methods by comparing interview results between informants and supported by documentation and literature studies related to the use of AI in the digital creative industry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This discussion section outlines the research findings obtained from in-depth interviews with eleven informants who work as digital copywriters. Using a phenomenological approach, this study seeks to explore how copywriters experience, interpret, and negotiate the presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in their creative work practices. The findings of this research can be seen in the mind map shown in Figure 1 below.

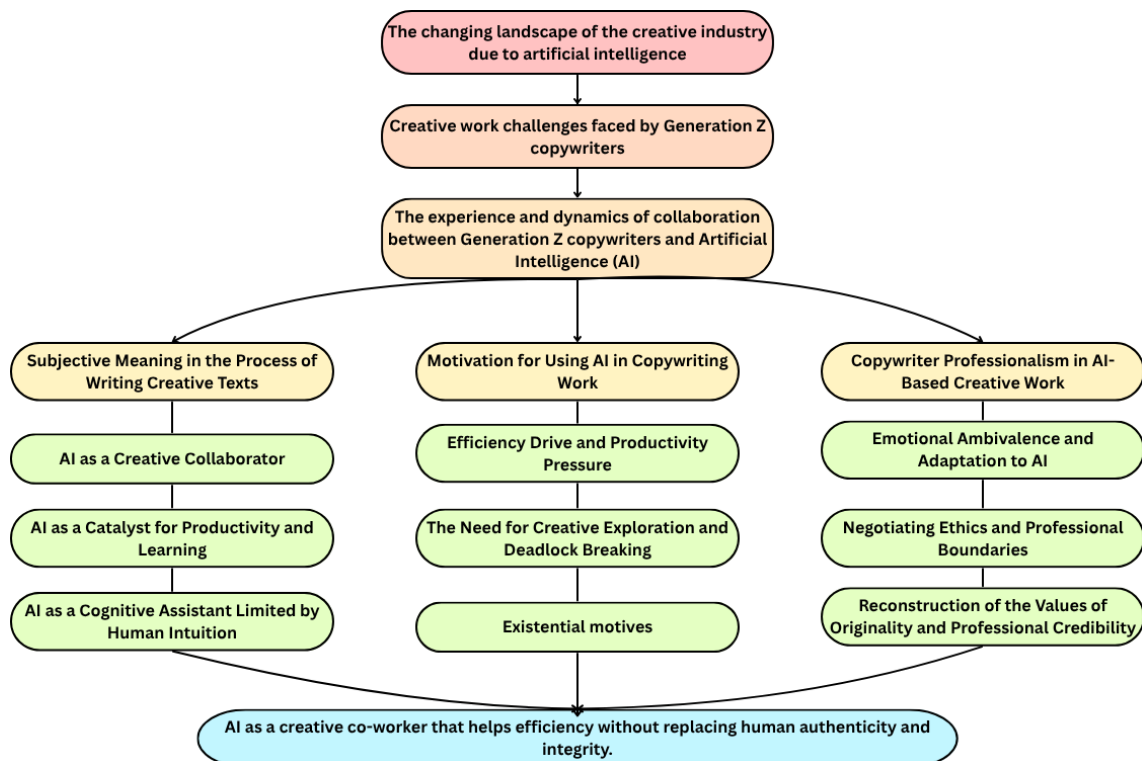


Figure 1. Generation Z Copywriter Experience Model in Collaborating with AI
(Source: Author, 2026)

Based on the research model, collaboration between Generation Z copywriters and AI is a dynamic process influenced by subjective meaning, efficiency motivation, and professionalism, which ultimately positions AI as a creative co-worker to increase productivity without replacing human authenticity and integrity. These results and discussion are compiled based on the formulation of research questions that focus on three main aspects, namely the subjective meaning of copywriters facing the presence of AI in the creative text writing process, motivation for using AI in copywriting work, and interpreting how copywriters' professionalism in AI-based creative work.

The Subjective Meaning of Copywriters Facing the Presence of AI in the Creative Text Writing Process

In the context of the fast-paced creative industry that demands continuous innovation, the presence of AI is an ambivalent phenomenon: on the one hand, it offers convenience and efficiency, but on the other, it challenges the concept of originality and

human intuition. Through the informants' direct experiences, we reveal how they negotiate the new relationship between human creativity and machine intelligence in their daily work practices, as described in the following typifications.

AI as a Creative Collaborator

For most informants, AI is interpreted as a digital partner that plays an active role in the creative process. Generation Z copywriters no longer view AI as a foreign entity or a threat, but as a reflective partner that helps broaden perspectives and enrich the exploration of ideas. They rely on AI in the early stages of writing, such as brainstorming, idea mapping, or seeking inspiration, but still maintain a human role as the final decision-maker. As C05 explained:

"For me, artificial intelligence is like a coworker who never sleeps. It can help speed up the idea-finding process, provide references, and check details that humans often overlook. But ultimately, it remains a tool, not a replacement for human thought and intuition." (C05, 2025)

In this context, collaborative experiences with AI evoke a sense of symbiosis: AI sparks ideas and accelerates thought processes, while humans maintain authenticity and sensitivity to cultural context. This collaboration reflects a paradigm shift from "automated tools" to "creative partners," where the boundaries between technology and humans become more fluid, yet maintained through intuition and ethical awareness. Research also shows that AI democratizes access to advanced creative tools, enabling more people to participate in the creative process (Ardeliya et al., 2024; Shukla, 2024).

AI as a Catalyst for Productivity and Learning

Many informants view the presence of AI as accelerating productivity and catalyzing professional learning. AI is used to research ideas, analyze trends, prepare initial drafts, and perfect grammar and writing style. Work processes that were previously repetitive and time-consuming can now be completed more efficiently, allowing them to focus on the conceptual and strategic aspects of copywriting. In addition, interaction with AI broadens horizons and enriches references, making AI not just a mechanical assistant, but a silent teacher who provides contextual learning stimuli.

"Artificial intelligence in my work is positioned as an 'assistant.' It helps increase productivity and is used as a tool to correct, provide ideas, and develop the ideas I provide. Its presence is quite crucial because it can solve some of the difficulties I experience." (C10, 2025)

This experience fosters a new sense of confidence, recognizing that creativity is no longer the result of isolated individual work, but rather the result of a continuous

dialogue between humans and algorithms. AI has become a symbol of efficiency and a means of self-actualization in a fast-paced and dynamic digital work ecosystem. Empirical studies show that AI-driven innovation can increase total factor productivity, particularly in large, state-owned, and labor-intensive companies, by reducing costs, optimizing workflows, and enabling digital transformation (Czarnitzki et al., 2022; X. Gao & Feng, 2023; Zhai & Liu, 2023).

AI as a Cognitive Assistant Limited by Human Intuition

While open to collaborating with AI as a cognitive aid, creative workers retain full control over intuition, emotions, and socio-cultural sensitivities that cannot be replicated by machines. This negotiation of role boundaries demonstrates a professional reflexivity that does not erase their identities but rather strengthens what it means to be a "creative human" in the era of artificial intelligence.

AI excels at handling complexity, pattern recognition, and data-driven analysis, extending human cognitive capacity in information-rich, structured environments. However, in situations characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity, or ethical nuance, human intuition rooted in experience, tacit knowledge, and holistic reasoning remains crucial. Numerous studies show that the most effective decision-making emerges from a symbiotic relationship where AI complements, but does not replace, human intuition, particularly in high-stakes or ambiguous contexts (Çakır, 2024; Jarrahi, 2018; Korteling et al., 2021; Steyvers & Kumar, 2024; Tasleem et al., 2024).

These three themes form a coherent understanding of AI as a collaborative partner, productivity accelerator, and cognitive assistant that defers to human intuition. Generation Z copywriters in Indonesia interpret this collaboration as a new balance between human creativity and technological intelligence. In their experience, AI is not just a technical tool, but a meaningful space for interaction that allows for reflection, learning, and exploration of ideas without losing their authenticity as creators.

Motivation for Using AI in Copywriting Work

This section outlines the motivational structure behind the use of AI in copywriting, revealing the underlying reasons behind Generation Z copywriters' decision to utilize AI in their creative processes. In a digital work environment that demands speed, adaptability, and instant results, AI exists not only as a technical tool but also as a response to the increasingly competitive structural pressures of the creative industry.

Efficiency Drive and Productivity Pressure

For informants, the use of AI stems from the demand for efficiency and the pressure of productivity. They live in a fast-paced work environment, characterized by tight deadlines, last-minute revisions, and expectations of instant results from clients or agencies. In this environment, AI is seen as a "time-saver" and "accelerator" that allows work to be completed more quickly without sacrificing basic quality. As informant C01

put it: “AI not only helps with time and energy efficiency, but also provides unlimited experience with broad coverage. Through AI, copywriters can easily research specific topics with the snap of a finger.”

As a work pacemaker, not a substitute for creativity, AI is being used to automate routine tasks and speed up workflows. This allows Gen Z copywriters to free up energy to focus on high-value, human aspects, such as crafting narratives, establishing tone, and infusing emotion into their writing. Similar research shows measurable improvements in operational efficiency, productivity and cost savings across a range of sectors (Bhima et al., 2023; Hemanth J, 2025; Murire, 2024). For example, AI integration in management information systems can reduce data processing time by up to 66% and operational costs by up to 20% (Susilo & Susanto, 2024).

This experience demonstrates a shift in professional orientation, where creativity is no longer understood as a purely artistic process but also as a survival strategy in a competitive workplace. They are integrating AI to “stay productive,” while still maintaining space for intuition and personal style.

The Need for Creative Exploration and Deadlock Breaking

AI is also seen as a spark for ideas when creativity stalls. Many informants described experiencing writer's block and found that AI helped them "spark an initial idea" or "discover diction they hadn't thought of." In this context, AI isn't just an efficiency tool, but a medium for creative exploration to increase productivity when deadlines are mounting. As C05 put it:

"The factor that drove me to start using AI was actually simple: time. The world of copywriting often grapples with tight deadlines, last-minute revisions, or client requests at unexpected hours. It's not because I'm lazy, but because I realize that creativity needs room to breathe. If AI can handle the basics, I can focus more on aspects that machines can't replicate, like human tone, humor, and the emotional details that bring copy to life." (C05, 2025)

For copywriters, AI is a thinking partner to broaden perspectives, but its role remains limited to providing a "framework" while the soul of the writing is entirely sourced from human sensitivity. Studies show that AI enables creators to explore ideas and designs that would be difficult or impossible for humans alone, overcoming cognitive limitations and inspiring new forms of art, design and problem-solving (Ali Elfa & Dawood, 2023; Bilgram & Laarmann, 2023; Grech et al., 2023; Sedkaoui & Benaichouba, 2024).

This phenomenon suggests that AI is fostering a new form of creative collaboration, where humans curate ideas and emotions, while AI provides alternatives and inspiration. AI creates a safe distance between algorithmic processes and creative intuition, creating the experience of “thinking with machines” without losing autonomy.

Existential Motives: Maintaining Human Authority and Creative Identity

The integration of AI triggers existential anxiety and encourages young copywriters to assert their identity by positioning AI as merely a controlled assistant, not a controller. Because AI output is deemed "empty" and "lifeless," they instead rediscover the essence of humanity—such as empathy, intuition, feeling, and emotional sensitivity—in the creative process. Through this form of self-affirmation, their work motivation shifts from merely functional (speed) to existential, reaffirming that true meaning and authenticity remain entirely human.

Human creativity is distinguished by embodied cognition, emotional depth, intentionality, and cultural context—qualities that current AI cannot replicate. The personal, relational, and meaning-making aspects of creativity, such as courage, emotional intelligence, and narrative reasoning, are deeply connected to human experience and identity (Lockhart, 2025; Tigre Moura, 2023; Wingström et al., 2024). The most effective creative outcomes emerge when AI complements human imagination, with humans acting as gatekeepers who evaluate, refine, and contextualize AI output (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2024; Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2022; Magni et al., 2024; Vinchon et al., 2023; Wingström et al., 2024).

From these three themes related to copywriter motivation, it can be concluded that Gen Z copywriters' motivational structure in using AI is dual: *pragmatic and reflective*. They are driven by the need for efficiency (due to work pressure), but also utilize AI to explore ideas and affirm their creative identity. In their eyes, AI is not a threat, but rather a medium for reflection and collaboration, a space where humans and machines complement each other without canceling each other out. Therefore, Gen Z's experience in copywriting with AI represents a transformation in creative work ethics: from simply "working fast" to "working consciously."

Copywriter Professionalism in AI-Based Creative Work

This section explores the professionalism of Gen Z copywriters in AI-based creative work, highlighting how these young practitioners navigate changing values, ethics, and professional standards amidst the integration of artificial intelligence technologies.

Emotional Ambivalence and Adaptation to AI

The research findings revealed emotional tension and ambivalence in copywriters' experiences working with AI technology. While AI is recognized as an efficient tool that accelerates work processes, its use also creates a sense of loss of human touch and authenticity of personal style. For some informants, interacting with AI creates an emotional distance between the "creative self" and the machine-generated writing. This is reflected in expressions such as, "Sometimes it's uncomfortable using AI; the results feel stiff and not 'very me'" (C05) and, "AI really helps me complete projects quickly, but I still re-edit to ensure the tone matches the client" (C02).

This phenomenon demonstrates that the relationship between humans and AI is not antagonistic, but rather adaptive. Copywriters don't reject the presence of technology, but rather seek to reimagine its role and boundaries within the creative space. This emotional adaptation represents a balance between technological efficiency and human autonomy, where AI is positioned not as a substitute for creativity, but as a catalyst for expanding the possibilities of thought.

Negotiating Ethics and Professional Boundaries

The second theme highlights the ongoing negotiation of ethics and professional boundaries in the use of AI. Copywriters demonstrated a reflective awareness of not fully surrendering creative authority to machines. AI was used selectively, particularly during the ideation phase or when experiencing writer's block. At this stage, AI was interpreted as a cognitive assistant that aids the thinking process, not a complete takeover of the writing process. As C10 stated, "I can't completely rely on AI. Good quality writing still requires a human-friendly touch that AI can't provide. So even though I use AI, I still need to refine the language to suit the client's needs."

This experience demonstrates that professional ethics is not only about honesty in one's work, but also about epistemic responsibility, namely, an awareness of the limits within which humans must remain the source of values, feelings, and final decisions. Creative professionals must embrace AI while maintaining the integrity, originality, and values that define their craft (Ching & Mothi, 2025). This phenomenon reinforces the view that AI only has technical competence, while true creativity is born from human intuition, empathy, and experience that cannot be reduced to algorithms.

Reconstruction of the Values of Originality and Professional Credibility

The emergence of AI in the creative world has also shifted the meaning of originality and professional credibility. While previously authenticity was understood as an individual's ability to produce work without the aid of technology, now a new meaning has emerged: originality is no longer about "who wrote it," but about "how human values are present in the text." For example, as C01 stated, "I add a touch of 'human being' to every piece of writing and work I produce, whether it's in every article I write, advertising copy, or simply strategic concepts." C11 also stated, "I never rely 100% on AI results. Usually, I still use data in my writing, conduct interviews with sources, and refer to book sources to strengthen the arguments or narratives I construct."

Copywriters are renegotiating norms of professionalism by emphasizing transparency, honesty, and process integrity. They maintain credibility not by rejecting AI, but by acknowledging the technology's involvement and ensuring that each product still represents their personal perspective and style. AI functions as a collaborative medium, while authenticity and credibility are built through critical reflection, editing, and ethical awareness of users. This phenomenon illustrates a shift in social values within the creative professional community, moving from ownership-based assessments of work to an appreciation for honest and responsible collaborative processes. AI is no

longer seen as a threat to authenticity, but rather as a new mirror challenging humans to redefine the meaning of creativity and honesty in the digital age.

Based on phenomenological findings and interpretations, Generation Z copywriters' experiences relating to AI create an ambivalent, reflective, and adaptive structure of meaning. They live in a workplace that demands speed and innovation, yet at the same time, they maintain the values of authenticity and professional integrity. AI exists as a symbolic partner that helps optimize the creative process, but does not replace the role of humans. In the process, copywriters experience an emotional tension between technological efficiency and the need for a human touch. This tension drives them to continually negotiate boundaries, determining how far technology can go without eroding the personal value of the work.

Ethically, there is a new awareness that creative authority must remain in human hands. Fears of job loss are tempered by the belief that human creativity and emotional intelligence remain irreplaceable (Malamin, 2024; Strebkov, 2024; Vicsek et al., 2025). Additionally, copywriters negotiate the ethics of AI use through principles of responsibility and selectivity, such as using the technology only at specific stages, double-checking the results, and ensuring that final decisions remain grounded in human intuition and empathy. Copywriters generally view AI as an opportunity, not a threat, and hope it can automate repetitive tasks while making creative work more meaningful and valuable (Malamin, 2024; Vicsek et al., 2025).

Essentially, the experiences of these copywriters demonstrate that human-AI collaboration in the creative world is not merely a technological practice, but rather an existential process that demands self-reflection. They not only write texts, but also rewrite their professional identities amidst the changing digital culture. From this phenomenological study, "Prompt, Click, Publish" becomes a metaphor for the existential journey of Generation Z copywriters, starting from the exploration of ideas, negotiation of control, to ethical reflection in the era of human-AI collaboration. This indicates that behind the speed and efficiency of technology, there is still room for humans to affirm creativity, intuition, and the meaning of humanity in every published text.

CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that Gen Z copywriters' experiences using AI are fraught with ambivalence and emotional adaptation. They view AI as an efficient tool, but it also creates an emotional distance from the creative process. While AI can accelerate ideas and expand references, copywriters still emphasize that intuition, empathy, and the human touch are indispensable elements in producing authentic and communicative work.

Furthermore, ethical and professional dynamics emerge in the role negotiations between humans and AI. Copywriters utilize AI selectively, especially when facing an idea impasse, while maintaining boundaries to prevent technology from dominating creative intuition. The value of originality is also being reconstructed; it no longer

simply means "without the aid of technology," but rather "having a human soul." Transparency and professional responsibility are crucial pillars for maintaining trust in AI-based work practices.

Limitations of this research include the limited number of informants and the specific professional context of digital copywriting, making the results insufficient to generalize to other creative fields. Future research is recommended to expand the subject matter to different creative sectors and examine the emotional aspects of work and professional identity in human-AI collaboration in more depth.

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