

AI Luddites: Consumers Penalize Creative Work Output Generated by Artificial Intelligence

Jaeyeon Chung (✉ jc134@rice.edu)
Rice University

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Abstract

Generative AI's expanding role extends beyond utilitarian tasks like coding, encompassing creative endeavors such as design and writing. Yet, this surge in adoption triggers resistance among creative professionals, who fear job displacement and societal disruption. This paper delves into consumer reactions when companies employ generative AI for creative tasks instead of humans. Five pre-registered experiments, involving brand posters, film scripts, and logos, unveil people's reactions against AI-generated creativity. People penalize artwork after they learn that the work is produced by AI; this tendency is most pronounced among those with Luddite leanings, reminiscent of 19th-century textile workers who distrusted machines. Process evidence indicates that these people perceive AI output as lacking the procedural human touch essential to artistic creation, penalizing AI-generated work despite its high quality. Social implications are discussed, raising questions about a company's 'appropriate' use of AI, and its impact on perceptions of ethics and brand image. The paper also opens discussion on whether businesses should disclose their use of generative AI in creative tasks and, if so, to what extent.

Introduction

The explosive interest in generative AI is evident in its limitless applications¹, spanning from exams and coding to even creative tasks. For example, Wunderman Thompson, a New York advertising agency, reports having used generative AI to design an ad for their client, which they say would have otherwise taken a whole day for their in-house human artist to create². Similarly, Ralph Lauren reports using AI to create graphic designs³, mirroring the trend of other fashion companies that are also experimenting with generative AI to manufacture better-selling designs⁴. Companies in the creative industry are utilizing generative AI, driven by the common belief that it can bring efficiency and productivity. However, this excitement also faces resistance from the creative workforce (Bhosale 2023). For example, a recent strike by Hollywood writers demanding job security⁵ reflects the voices of others who believe that it will lead to mass layoffs and disrupt human livelihoods⁶.

Despite the fast adoption of generative AI in the creative workforce, little attention has been given to how consumers react to this movement. Most industry reports have been limited to discussing how generative AI changes the industry operations⁷ including coding, solving complex problem sets, or enhancing operations and data sourcing. Prior academic research also has limited focus on the usage of AI in areas needing objective knowledge like medical exams⁸, diagnosis tools⁹, or contexts such as driving cars and legal services¹⁰. By contrast, no research has investigated the impact of generative AI on creative tasks, and consumers' reactions towards it. Unlike other industries, the creative industry has conventionally been viewed as a realm of human effort, where human experiences and emotions blend into the subjective form of creative work¹¹⁻¹³.

How is a *creative* work produced? Creative work often involves a "story" behind its creation. It involves the time and effort involved in forming narratives, leading to its appreciation^{12,14,15}. Creators consider

various aesthetic components and intentionally combine them to represent certain meanings and symbols¹⁵. The process of combining different elements contributes to its final value, apart from the outcome of the artwork itself¹⁴. The emphasis on both the process and the outcome in creative art evaluation aligns with prior research on process versus outcome-orientated evaluation. Depending on the focus of the evaluation, people are likely to evaluate the final work differently^{16,17}. In the context of art evaluation, people are also likely to differ in their evaluation, depending on whether they focus on the process involved in creating the work, or the final quality of the work.

Traditionally, creative work has been viewed as a distinctively human, shaped by an artist's emotions, history, and contemplation. However, generative AI, while skilled at intricate color and tone combinations, lacks such personal touch. Some argue that this absence disqualifies the AI-generated work from being considered true "art," a perspective that echoes the sentiment held by contemporary luddites. Luddites are people who oppose the idea of machines taking over human jobs. The term originates from 19th-century English textile workers who resisted the use of cost-saving machines that threatened their employment¹⁸. These people were trained artisans who had spent years learning their craft, and they feared unskilled machine operators taking their livelihood away¹⁹. This historical resistance finds relevance in the context of generative AI today¹⁸⁻²⁰. People's opinions about AI's potential to replace human activities vary, with some fearing significant unemployment and social detachment²⁰. This perspective aligns with the broader aversion to AI^{8,10}, but AI luddism centers more on the concern that AI-driven job displacement will trigger layoffs and societal disruption due to profit-driven shortcuts.

This research investigates consumer receptiveness to companies utilizing generative AI for creative tasks. Five experiments demonstrate that consumers, while initially satisfied with the product when unaware of its creator, strongly penalize the work upon learning that it was generated by AI. This effect is particularly pronounced among those who hold luddism beliefs—concerns about machines displacing human roles. Process evidence shows that these individuals believe AI lacks an appropriate artistic creation process, leading them to downgrade their evaluation of the final output.

All five experiments follow the common structure: Participants first report their preferences for creative work as a baseline. They then learn that that the work was created by AI (vs. humans). Their post-attitudes are measured again. The change in their attitude serves as the key dependent variable (= post – baseline attitudes), such that negative ratings would indicate a greater level of penalty. The paper also addresses alternative explanations, including state reactance (exp 2), desire for control (exp 2), agency (exp 3), uniqueness neglect (exp 4, 5), anthropomorphism (exp 4), and AI humanness perception (exp 5). Participants' usage of the brand or their awareness of the artist did not impact the findings (exp 1-5). Due to space constraints, analyses on all measures and the raw baseline and post-attitude measures are reported in the Supplementary Materials. All experiments were pre-registered on as.predicted.org. No participants were excluded from any of these experiments.

Experiment 1

Participants (N = 200) were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (condition 1: AI/human vs. Condition 2: human/AI). All participants examined two posters from Coca-Cola illustrating the pop culture of America: they were informed that Coca-Cola's logo was combined with the artwork by the famous pop artist, Andy Warhol (see Figure 1). All participants rated each poster. Importantly, after reporting their baseline ratings, participants in Condition 1 were informed that poster A was designed by generative AI, whereas poster B was designed by a group of in-house art content creators working at Coca-Cola. Participants in Condition 2 received information vice versa. This information is counter-balanced to demonstrate that the paper's hypothesis is not poster-specific. All participants provided post-evaluation after receiving this additional information. The difference between the post-attitude and the baseline attitude scores served as the key dependent variable. This experiment was pre-registered (AsPredicted: #139809).

When participants learned that poster A was created by generative AI, they penalized the poster by lowering their ratings, compared to when the same poster was created by humans ($M_{a: AI} = -.18$, $SD = .81$, $M_{a: human} = .28$, $SD = .81$, $t(198) = 4.04$, $p < .001$, $d = .57$). This pattern flipped when participants learned that poster B was created by generative AI than when it was created by human ($M_{b: human} = .08$, $SD = .56$ vs. $M_{b: AI} = -.48$, $SD = 1.15$, $t(198) = -4.39$, $p < .001$, $d = .62$). Detailed means for the baseline-, and the post-attitude are reported in Supplementary Text A due to space constraints.

The next experiment has two key changes to increase the generalizability of the finding of Experiment 1. First, experiment 2 uses another brand, Dove and another artist, Vincent Van Gogh. Second, the design of the two posters varies widely from each other, and these two posters are competing against each other in the context of a poster contest.

Experiment 2

All participants (N = 200, As.Predicted #139929) were informed that Dove is planning for an advertisement combining their logo with well-known artworks by Vincent van Gogh. On the next page, they read the campaign theme, "Embrace your true colors with Dove x Van Gogh," highlighting people's inner beauty that also celebrates the timelessness of artwork from Van Gogh. Subsequently two posters were shown, which were selected based on a pretest in terms of liking, and resemblance to both the Dove brand and Vincent Van Gogh's artwork (see Supplementary Text B: original work; Iris, Sunflowers). Participants again provided the baseline preferences, learned about the creator of each artwork (AI vs. human), then provided the post-attitude preferences score.

As expected, when participants learned that poster A was created by generative AI (vs. human), participants again lowered their ratings on poster A ($M_{a: AI} = -.35$, $SD = .96$ vs. $M_{a: human} = .12$, $SD = .82$, $t(198) = 3.80$, $p < .001$, $d = .54$). On the other hand, when they read that poster B was created by generative AI (vs. human), they rated it much more negatively ($M_{b: human} = .17$, $SD = .55$ vs. $M_{b: AI} = -.45$, $SD = 1.38$, $t(198) = -4.15$, $p < .001$, $d = .59$).

Experiment 3

Experiment 3 expands the finding in another creativity domain—script writing in the film industry. There recently has been an ongoing strike led by Hollywood writers demanding better job security, with part of their protest stemming from the imposed threat posed by the rise of generative AI (5, 20). Yet, no media or research has explored how consumers perceive scriptwriting performed by AI. This experiment addresses this societal issue.

All participants (N = 201; as.predicted: #140686) were informed that the survey was about “The Witcher” Netflix series, which is one of the most viewed TV series on a global list. The show is an adventure fiction based on fantasy and drama, and this experiment took place shortly after the release of the final episode of “The Witcher Season 3” in July, 2023. They were then shown two trailer scripts for the upcoming “The Witcher Season 4.” The trailers are available on Supplementary Text C.

Participants again penalized trailer A upon learning that it was written by generative AI (vs. human) ($M_{a: AI} = -.38$, SD = .89 vs. $M_{a: human} = .26$, SD = .64, $t(199) = 5.84$, $p < .001$, $d = .82$). Conversely, when informed that trailer B was written by generative AI (vs. human), they penalized trailer B ($M_{b: human} = .29$, SD = .77 vs. $M_{b: AI} = -.44$, SD = .85, $t(199) = -6.43$, $p < .001$, $d = .91$).

Building on the findings from Experiments 1 to 3, Experiment 4 posits that people’s perception of luddism varies, and those who hold stronger luddism beliefs are more likely to penalize AI-created output. Experiment 5 delves deeper into the underlying mechanism, and predict that these individuals place greater emphasis on the process (vs. outcome) of creating artwork; they value elements like time and effort infused into the final work. The absence of this procedural element prompts them to penalize the creative work done by AI.

Experiment 4

Experiment 4 employs a baseline condition to compare against the treatment condition. This differs from earlier experiments that compared product A and product B by simply switching the information about the creator (AI vs. human). Experiment 4 also directly tests the moderating role of luddism. Experiment 4 again utilized the two Netflix trailers.

This experiment employed a 2-condition (AI vs. Baseline) x Luddism continuous variable design (N = 283; as.predicted #141554). This experiment was divided into two phases. Phase 1 measured individual differences in luddism. Two or more days after completing phase 1, all participants were invited to take survey phase 2. The procedure followed the similar order; participants first reported their baseline attitudes towards the two trailers, then received additional information about the creator. Participants in the AI condition were informed that trailer A and trailer B were crafted by AI and humans, respectively. By contrast, participants in the Baseline condition instead read a brief description regarding The Witcher’ series’ popularity. They evaluated the two trailers again.

Confirming the pattern of results, participants penalized trailer A after they learned that it was written by AI, compared to those without such knowledge ($M_{a: AI} = -.51$, $SD = 1.01$ vs. $M_{a: baseline} = .10$, $SD = .51$, $t(282) = 6.40$, $p < .001$, $d = .70$). Interestingly, these participants rated trailer B more highly upon learning that it was written by human ($M_{b: human} = .30$, $SD = .79$ vs. $M_{b: baseline} = -.05$, $SD = .69$, $t(282) = -4.03$, $p < .001$, $d = .48$). This probably reflects their preference for human over AI, subsequently adjusting their evaluation scores.

The moderating role of luddism was also tested. Overall, the luddism score was high ($M = 5.01$ on a 7-point scale, $SD = 1.69$), indicating a prevalent luddite sentiment among participants. Next, a regression analysis was performed using Condition and Luddism score as two predictors. Results revealed a significant interaction of the two ($B = -.10$, $SE = .03$, $t(279) = -3.61$, $p = .0004$). There was a significant effect of the Luddism score ($B = -.06$, $SE = .03$, $t(279) = -2.22$, $p = .027$), and no effect of the Condition ($B = .20$, $SE = .15$, $t(278) = .70$, $p = .18$). A Johnson-Neyman flood light analysis revealed that penalizing AI-generated creative work was significant among participants who had the luddism scores of 3.28 (out of 7-point scale) or higher. This encompasses 83.75% of our participants.

Experiment 5

The last experiment further reveals the underlying process mechanism. One explanation is that people do not give credit to AI-generated creative output, because their evaluations are based not just on the final quality of the output but also on the process integral to the creation, including factors like time, effort and the detailed endeavor.

This experiment employed another well-known brand, Starbucks, and asked participants to evaluate two environment-themed logos for the upcoming Fall season. Participants ($N = 240$) were assigned to one of the two conditions in a 2-condition (AI vs. baseline) x luddism continuous variable survey design (As.Predicted #141444). Two logos were selected based on a pretest confirming their equal appeal in liking, consistent brand image, and the representation of the environment-theme campaign.

All participants reported their baseline attitudes toward the two logos, learned about source information, then provided post-evaluation again. Following the key dependent measure, all participants responded to the degree to which they considered the process- and the outcome- of designing a creative output, such as the amount of time and effort it probably took to make the product (process measure) and the finalized color, tone, ambiance and the overall impression (outcome measure).

Again, participants penalized logo A after they learned that it was created by generative AI (vs. no info) ($M_{a: AI} = -.29$, $SD = .85$ vs. $M_{a: no info} = .09$, $SD = .60$, $t(238) = -4.00$, $p < .001$; $d = .52$). The ratings for logo B increased after they learned that it was created by humans—a pattern replicating that in experiment 4 ($M_{b: team \#8} = .13$, $SD = .49$ vs. $M_{b: no info} = -.07$, $SD = .53$, $t(238) = 2.98$, $p = .003$; $d = .38$).

Luddism as a Moderator. The manipulation did not alter individual differences in luddism ($p = .448$), thereby allowing the two variables to be used as predictors in a regression analysis. There was a

significant interaction of the two predictors ($B = .22$, $SE = .05$, $t(236) = 3.95$, $p = .0001$). The main effect of Condition ($p = .144$) and Luddism ($p = .945$) were both insignificant. Johnson-Neyman floodlight analysis revealed a significant difference starting from a luddism score of 2.89 (out of a 7-point scale), representing 75.83% of our participant pool.

The mediating role of process-focused evaluation. When informed that the logo was created by AI, participants, especially those leaning towards luddism, were more focused on the creative process involved in making the creative output. This lack of appreciation for the AI's creative procedure subsequently diminished their final assessment of AI-generated output (PROCESS model 8: Index = $-.01$, $SE = .01$, $CI[-.0306, -.0006]$; see Figure 5). The outcome-focused evaluation did not mediate the relationship, suggesting that a greater emphasis on process-focused evaluation is responsible in explaining why participants penalized the creative work.

General Discussion

Five experiments demonstrate that people penalize creative outputs produced by generative AI. This pattern persisted across various creative domains, including the design of artistic posters, trailer scripts, and logos for well-known brands like Coca-Cola, Dove, Starbucks, and "The Witcher" series. The tendency was more pronounced among luddites, who placed greater emphasis on the effort and time in creative processes.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its focus on public responses to AI-generated creative tasks—tasks previously believed to be beyond machines' capability. Despite companies' assertions that generative AI can bring efficiency^{2,4}, consumer perceptions remain predominantly negative. This paper thereby raises questions about how a company's use of AI on creative tasks, and how it is perceived by its clientele, a discussion that touches on corporate ethics and brand image²². Moreover, it introduces a pressing issue of whether businesses should disclose their usage of generative AI in creative tasks, and if so, to what extent. Survey results (as detailed in exploratory analyses in SI.C-E) suggest that the majority of participants (57%-65%) expect such disclosure—a number that companies should consider.

As an exploratory investigation, several tests were conducted aiming to mitigate these negative consumer perceptions. These interventions included (1) educating participants about the collaborative role of generative AI, (2) enabling participants to co-create an artwork with AI to cultivate an appreciation for its capabilities, (3) sharing transparent company statements outlining the benefits of AI along with the promise of the job security of its current employees, and (4) adding a premium seal to "human" created artwork to boost perceptions of human work instead, rather than downgrading the AI-generated work. Unfortunately, none of these interventions were successful—a research domain I propose future researchers to explore further.

On a broader scale, this paper reflects the societal concern rooted in the early 19th century, about machines taking over workers' artisanship. It remains uncertain whether generative AI will completely

eliminate creative jobs in today's society— It's conceivable that, despite automation, a core of highly skilled experts will persist in overseeing and validating machine-generated outputs. The function of creative professionals may evolve from labor-intensive roles to more evaluative and supervisory capacities.

With AI technology advancing rapidly, companies and governments face challenges in formulating effective communication strategies. This paper aims to initiate informed discussions, encouraging business sectors and policymakers to proactively engage in shaping AI's integration in creative processes and beyond.

Declarations

Data and Code Availability

All data, code, and materials used in the analysis can be found in the Open Science Framework (OSF) at: https://osf.io/uj9af/?view_only=2523eac8efa640c7b347bbfef3906de9

Author Contributions

JC generated the idea, designed all experiments, conducted data analysis, and completed the writing.

Competing Interests Statement

The author declares no competing interest.

Additional Information

This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Rice University (IRB-FY2022-122). Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Supplementary Information is available for this paper. Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Jaeyeon (Jae) Chung (jc134@rice.edu).

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METHODS

Experiment 1

MTurk participants ($N = 200$; $M_{age} = 41.43$, 51.50% female) were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (condition 1: AI/human vs. Condition 2: human/AI). All participants rated each poster (3-items: e.g., very unfavorable/very favorable; 19) to indicate their baseline preferences. Importantly, after reporting their baseline ratings, participants in Condition 1 were informed that poster A was designed by generative AI, whereas poster B was designed by a group of in-house art content creators working at Coca-Cola. Participants in Condition 2 received information vice versa. All participants provided post-evaluation after receiving this additional information. The difference between the post-attitude and the baseline attitude scores served as the key dependent variable.

Experiment 2

This experiment employed the 2-level between-subjects survey design (condition 1 vs. 2). MTurk participants ($N = 200$, $M_{age} = 42.09$, 50.00% female) were recruited for the study. All participants were informed that Dove is planning for an advertisement combining their logo with well-known artworks by Vincent van Gogh who is renowned for using expressive and brilliant colors. All participants provided the baseline ratings using the same items in Experiment 1. Next, depending on their assigned condition, half of the participants were told that poster A was created by generative AI and poster B was created by in-house art content creators at Dove (condition 1), or vice versa (condition 2). Participants again rated the two posters. Just like in experiment 1, the difference in attitude change served as the dependent variable.

Experiment 3

Participants ($N = 201$, $M_{age} = 38.90$, 48.76% female) were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions, between-subjects condition (condition 1 vs. 2). All participants were informed that the survey was about “The Witcher” Netflix series, which is one of the most viewed TV series on a global list. The show is an adventure fiction based on fantasy and drama, and this experiment took place shortly after the release of the final episode of “The Witcher Season 3” in July, 2023. To familiarize all participants with the theme of “The Witcher,” the survey first presented them with an official trailer for Season 3. Next, participants learned that the production team was now preparing for Season 4. They were then shown two trailer scripts for “The Witcher Season 4” for evaluation. As in the earlier experiments, participants first provided their baseline preferences for Trailer A and Trailer B, later discovered the creator of each trailer—either AI or human. Participants then rated the two trailers again.

Experiment 4

This experiment employed a 2-condition (AI vs. Baseline) x Luddism continuous variable design. This experiment was divided into two phases. In phase 1, Prolific participants were recruited for a short social science survey measuring individual differences in luddism. Three items were asked ($\alpha = .91$; “I feel

aversive to the idea of delegating creative human tasks to generative AI,” “I do not like the idea of generative AI taking creative jobs from real people,” and “I do not support the use of generative AI to replace paid creative work”).

Upon successful completion of phase 1, all participants were invited to take phase 2 of the survey, accessible two or more days after the completion of phase 1. A total of 283 participants ($M_{age} = 39.93$, 47.18% male) completed survey part 2. The completion rate of both surveys was 68.43%. Participants in phase 2 were randomly assigned to either condition 1 (AI vs. human) or condition 2 (no source info).

Experiment 5

This experiment employed another well-known brand, Starbucks, and asked participants to evaluate two environment-themed logos that are considered for the upcoming Fall season. MTurk participants ($N = 240$, $M_{age} = 39.91$, 44.60% male) were assigned to one of the two conditions in a 2-condition (AI vs. baseline) x luddism continuous variable survey design. Two logos were shown, selected based on a pretest confirming their equal appeal in liking, consistent brand image, and the representation of the environment-theme campaign.

The procedure was highly similar to earlier experiments. All participants reported their baseline attitudes toward the two logos. Participants in Condition 1 were informed that logo A and logo B were respectively created by AI and a human team. Participants in condition 2 were not briefed about the creators, but read about the rising environmental consciousness. They provided post-evaluation again.

Following the key dependent measure, all participants responded to the degree to which they considered the process- and the outcome- of designing a creative output. Four items measured the degree to which they cared about the creative process ($\alpha = .91$; e.g., “The amount of time and effort it probably took to make the product,” “The detailed steps involved in correcting and improving the draft to make it better”). Four items measured how much they cared about the final outcome of the product ($\alpha = .78$; e.g., “The finalized color, tone, ambiance and the overall impression,” “The look and the feel of the final outcome that matches my personal taste”). Lastly, individual difference measures were asked, using the identical luddism scale from Experiment 4 ($\alpha = .92$).

Figures



	Poster A	Poster B
Condition 1	Created by AI	Created by human
Condition 2	Created by human	Created by AI

Fig. 1. Experiment 1 Condition (counter-balanced framing of AI vs. human)

Figure 1

See image above for figure legend.



Fig 2. Experiment 2 Condition (counter-balanced framing of AI vs. human)

Figure 2

See image above for figure legend.

	<Trailer> The Witcher: Season 4 (version A)	<Trailer> The Witcher: Season 4 (version B)
	Genre: Fantasy, Action, Adventure [INTENSE MUSIC BEGINS] [Opening shot: A dark, misty forest. The camera pans through the trees, revealing Geralt of Rivia (played by [Actor's name]), walking with purpose, his silver sword gleaming in the dim light.] NARRATOR (Voiceover): "In a world of monsters and magic, a hero rises once more." [Cut to a grand city with towering spires, showing Yennefer (played by [Actor's name]) in the middle of a powerful spell, her eyes glowing with arcane energy.] NARRATOR (Voiceover): "An ancient darkness threatens to engulf the Northern Kingdoms." ...	Genre: Fantasy, Action, Adventure [INTRO: Soft, haunting instrumental music fades in. The screen is black, then a close-up of a sword dripping with a mysterious liquid.] NARRATOR (Voiceover): In a world consumed by darkness and chaos... [Cut to a montage of various landscapes across the Continent, ranging from serene to menacing.] NARRATOR (VOICEOVER): Where destiny intertwines with magic, danger, and betrayal... [Cut to a brief, intense flash of battle scenes, magical confrontations, and monstrous creatures.] ...
	Trailer A	Trailer B
Condition 1	Created by AI	Created by human
Condition 2	Created by human	Created by AI

Fig 3. Experiment 3 Conditions (counter-balanced framing of AI vs. human). The full-scripts for version A and B are available on Supplemental Materials..

Figure 3

See image above for figure legend.

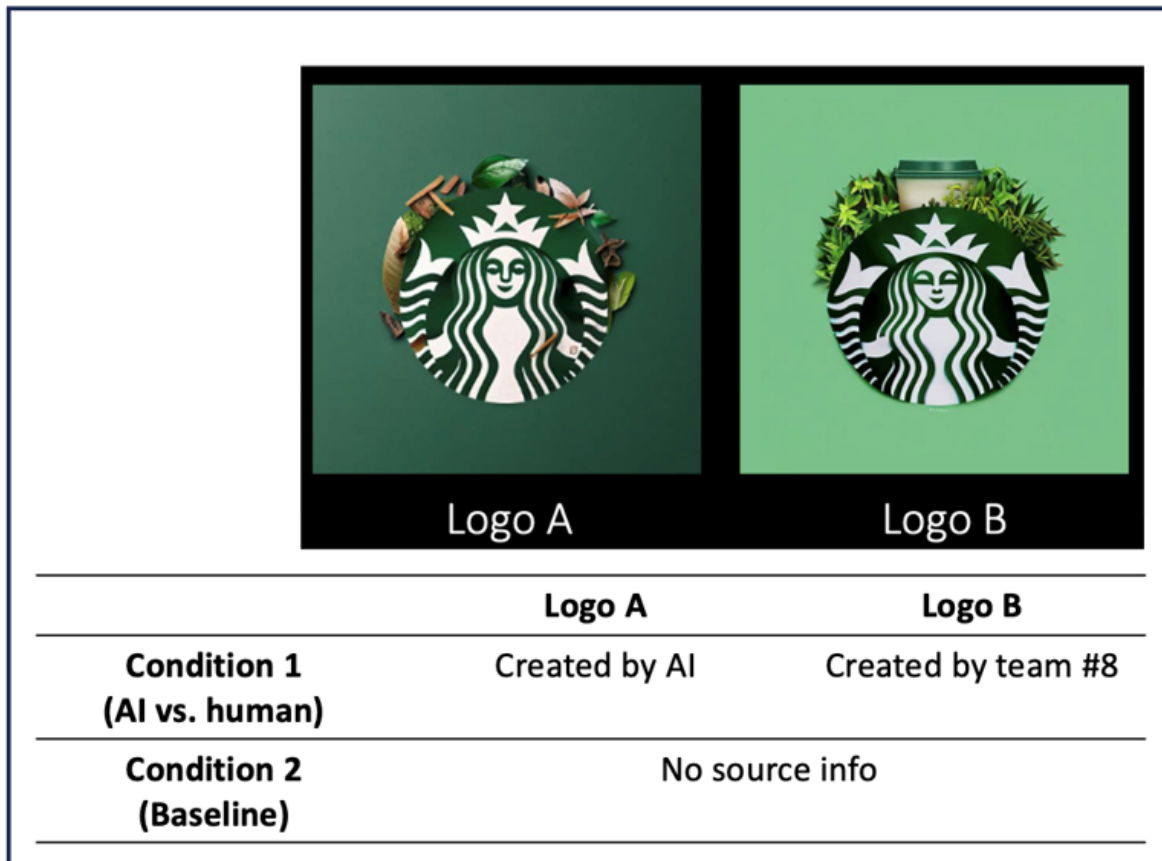


Fig 4. Experiment 5 Conditions

Figure 4

See image above for figure legend.

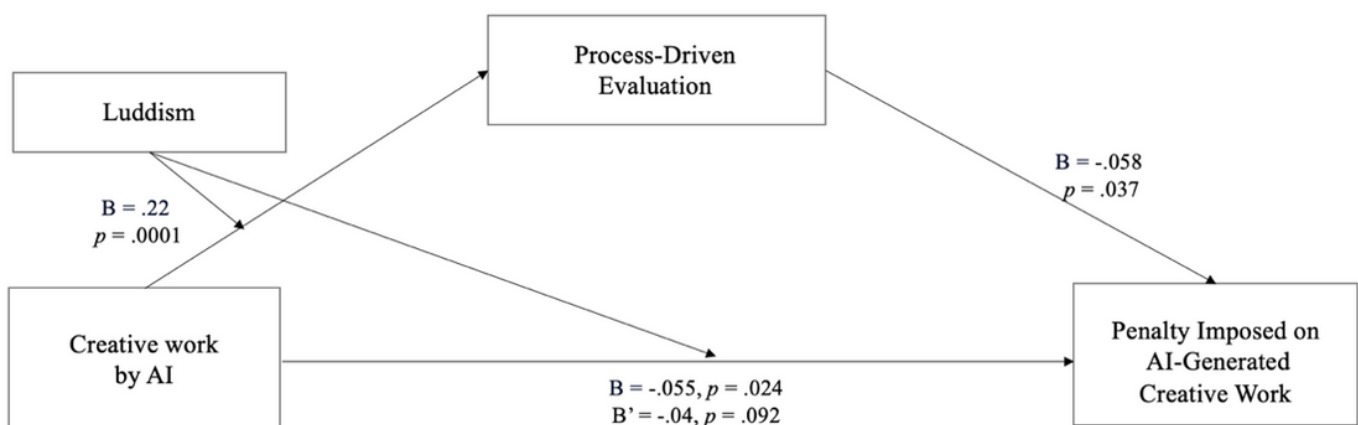


Fig 5. Experiment 5. Moderated Mediation.

Figure 5

See image above for figure legend.

Supplementary Files

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