DOI: 10.71317/jgst.2.11.2026.1042
Journal of Global Social Transformation
Journal homepage: https://rjsaonline.org/index.php/JGST

AI, Social Media, and Visual Innovation: Exploring the Digital Transformation of Emerging Pakistani Designers

Muhammad Abu Bakar[1], Tuba Shahid[2]
[1] MS Art & Design, School of Art and Design, Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan.
Email: bakar45757@gmail.com
[2] Lecturer, Department of Textile Design; Internal Examiner and Supervisor, MS Art and Design, School of Art and Design, Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan.
Email: tubashahid.chk86@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Submission:
October 12, 2026
Revised:
October 31, 2026
Accepted:
November 05, 2026
Available Online:
November 14, 2026

Keywords:
Pakistani designers, artificial intelligence, social media, visual design, digital transformation, creative careers

Corresponding author:
Muhammad Abu Bakar
Email:
bakar45757@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pakistan has a young and creative population. Every year, thousands of students leave art and design schools in Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and other cities with talent and big dreams. In the past, a young designer needed an office job, a famous teacher or a strong family name to be seen. Today, a phone, an internet connection and a good idea can be enough to start. This paper looks at how artificial intelligence and social media are changing the way new Pakistani designers learn, work, find clients and build their name. It also looks at the problems that come with this change, such as weak internet, copied work, unfair pay, and the fear that machines may take the place of human thinking. The paper is based on a careful reading of public reports, known industry trends and common patterns seen in the design field. It does not claim to give exact numbers from a new survey. Its main finding is simple. Digital tools give young designers a real chance to grow, but the benefit is not equal for everyone, and the designers who do best are those who use the tools to support their own ideas, not to replace them.

Introduction

Design is not only about making things look nice. It is a way of solving problems with shapes, colour, words and images. A logo tells people who a company is. A poster tells people what to feel. A mobile app tells people where to tap. Behind each of these things is a designer who made many small choices.

In Pakistan, design has a long and rich past. Truck art, calligraphy, block printing, miniature painting, textile patterns and wedding card design are all part of daily life. These forms were learned slowly, often from an elder, in a workshop or a family trade. The new generation of designers has inherited this love of colour and pattern, but they work in a very different world.

Three changes have shaped this world. The first is cheap smartphones and mobile internet, which reached even small towns. The second is social media, which turned every person into a possible publisher. The third is artificial intelligence, which can now make

images, suggest layouts, write text and fix photographs in seconds. Together these changes have shaken the old way of becoming a designer.

This paper asks a few simple questions. How are new Pakistani designers using social media to be seen and to find work. How are they using AI tools in their daily practice. What new chances have appeared. What new dangers have appeared. And what can schools, companies and the designers themselves do to make the most of this moment.

Why This Topic Matters

Pakistan has one of the largest youth populations in the world, and many young people are looking for work that does not depend on a traditional job market. Jobs in factories and government offices are limited. Creative work that can be done from home and sold to people anywhere in the world offers another road.

Design is also important for the economy. Strong design helps small businesses sell better. A clothing brand with a clear look, a bakery with a neat package or a school with a clean website will often win more trust. When young designers grow in skill, local businesses grow with them.

There is also a cultural reason. If Pakistani designers learn only from foreign trends, our own visual language may fade. If they learn to use new tools while keeping our own stories, we may see a fresh style that belongs to this land. So the question is not only about jobs. It is also about identity.

Method of This Study

This paper is a discussion paper built on secondary study. That means it draws on what is already known and written about design education, digital work, social media use and AI tools, and it connects these with common patterns that are widely seen in the Pakistani design scene. No new interviews or surveys were done for this paper, and no made up figures are given. Where the paper speaks about general trends, it speaks in careful words such as often, many and in most cases.

This choice has limits. A real field survey of designers in different cities would give stronger proof. For that reason, the last part of this paper suggests how such a study could be done in the future. Readers should treat the findings here as a careful starting point and not as final proof.

The Background of Design in Pakistan

Formal design teaching in Pakistan grew around a small number of well known art and design schools. Their graduates became art directors, fashion designers, architects, illustrators and teachers. For many years, the path was narrow. A student finished school, joined an agency or a fashion house at a low salary, and slowly moved up.

The agency world had its own problems. Salaries were often low. Long hours were common. Ideas were controlled by senior people. A young designer with a fresh style could wait years before the public saw their name.

Outside the big cities the situation was harder. A talented girl in a small town might never have a chance to join a studio because her family would not allow her to travel. A boy with a gift for drawing might leave it for a safer job. The talent existed, but the doors were few.

The Role of Social Media

A free shop window

The biggest change for new designers is that they no longer need permission to be seen. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Behance, LinkedIn, TikTok, Pinterest and YouTube allow a person to show their work to the world without paying for a gallery or a shop. A young designer can post a poster, a short video of how they made it, and a few words about the idea. If people like it, it spreads.

For a designer in a small city, this is a very big thing. Their address no longer decides how far their work can travel. A logo made in a small room can be seen by a client in Dubai, London or Toronto.

Building a name

In the past, a designer built a name through years of work inside a company. Today, many build a name through a steady habit of posting. Some share finished work. Some share their process, such as sketches, mistakes and small lessons. People enjoy seeing how things are made, and this builds trust. A designer who shares honestly often gets more attention than one who only shows perfect results.

A personal brand has become a part of the job. A designer is now also a small media person. They must think about how their page looks, how they write about their work and how they talk to followers. For some, this is exciting. For others, it is tiring, because making good work and promoting it are two different jobs.

Finding clients

Social media has become a main road to clients. Many small businesses in Pakistan, such as home bakeries, clothing sellers, beauty shops and online stores, look for designers through Instagram or Facebook. A direct message can turn into a first job within a day. Freelance sites add another route, and many young Pakistani designers sell their services to foreign buyers and earn in foreign money, which is valuable in a country where the rupee has often been under pressure.

Learning from each other

Social media is also a school. Free video lessons, community groups and online challenges allow designers to learn skills that were once only taught in costly classes. Designers share templates, tips and feedback. A student with no money for an expensive course can still learn a great deal if they are patient and disciplined.

The dark side

Social media is not only a gift. Algorithms decide who is seen, and these rules change often. A designer who builds a large following on one platform can lose reach overnight. There is also pressure to follow trends, which can push designers to copy each other instead of finding their own voice.

Copying is a serious problem. Work posted online can be taken by others very easily, and many young designers have seen their ideas used by someone else without credit. Because laws on creative ownership are weakly enforced, it is hard to get justice.

There is also the matter of mental health. Counting likes and comparing oneself with others can make a young person feel small. Many designers speak of burnout, because they feel they must always post and always perform.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence

What AI tools do for designers

AI tools can now do many things that once took hours. They can create a first image from a few written words. They can remove a background, improve an old photograph, suggest colour choices, build a simple layout, turn a sketch into a clean drawing, write a caption, or translate text from one language to another. Some tools help with video, music and voice. For a designer working alone, these tools feel like a small team.

Speed and cost

The first and most clear benefit is speed. A task that took a whole afternoon may now take twenty minutes. This allows a designer to show a client more ideas in less time, and to take more jobs. For a freelancer, more jobs can mean more income.

The second benefit is cost. In the past, good software, stock images and fonts could cost a lot of money. Many AI tools are free or cheap, which lowers the cost of starting. A student with a basic laptop can try things that once needed a full studio.

Help with ideas

Many designers use AI as a partner for thinking. When they feel stuck, they ask a tool for a hundred rough ideas and then choose the few that spark something. Used in this way, AI does not replace the designer. It acts like a sketchbook that answers back. The final choice, the feeling and the meaning still come from the human.

Language and reach

A special benefit for Pakistani designers is help with language. Many young designers are strong in visual thinking but less confident in English. AI tools can help them write a clear message to a foreign client, prepare a short description of their work or reply politely and quickly. This removes a quiet barrier that has stopped many talented people from reaching global buyers.

AI can also help with Urdu and other local languages, though this support is still uneven. Tools often do better in English than in Urdu script, and they may make mistakes with style, spelling and shape of letters. This is an area where local designers and developers still have much to do.

The worry about replacement

Many designers feel afraid. If a machine can make a poster in half a minute, what will happen to people who earn their living by making posters. This fear is real and should not be waved away.

The truth seems to be in the middle. Simple, repeated tasks such as basic social media posts, quick edits and standard templates are the most at risk, and some clients have already started to choose a cheap machine result over a human designer. But work that needs deep understanding of a client, culture and feeling is much harder for a machine to do. A wedding invitation that carries the history of a family, or a brand that must speak to a local community, needs a person who understands people.

Fairness and ownership

There are also hard questions about ownership. Many AI image tools learned from huge numbers of existing images, and the artists who made those images were often not asked or paid. This raises a moral question for designers who want to be honest in their work. Using such tools without thought may harm the very community they belong to.

There is also the question of who owns an AI made image, and the answer is not clear in many countries. Pakistani designers should be careful when they sell AI assisted work and should be honest with clients about how it was made.

Sameness

One more danger is that many designs start to look the same. When thousands of people use the same tools and ask for similar things, the results begin to share one style. A designer who wants to stand out must bring something that the tool cannot give, such as their own memories, their own city, their own hand drawn lines and their own point of view.

Visual Innovation and the Pakistani Identity

Some of the most exciting work by young Pakistani designers comes from mixing old and new. Truck art patterns appear in modern posters. Calligraphy is turned into digital lettering. Traditional embroidery shapes become icons and logos. Folk stories become animated videos. Designers are showing that being modern does not mean leaving one's roots.

AI can help this mixing, but it can also work against it. If a designer relies only on a tool trained mostly on foreign images, the result may look foreign. But if the designer feeds the tool with their own sketches, patterns and ideas, and uses it to try new variations, the result can be both new and local.

This is perhaps the biggest chance for Pakistani design. The world is full of generic images. What it lacks is honest and fresh work from places that are not often seen. A designer who brings real local knowledge has something no machine can easily copy.

Challenges Faced by Emerging Designers

Internet and power problems. In many areas the internet is slow and electricity goes off often. This makes it hard to upload large files, join video calls or use tools that need a strong connection.

Payment problems. Receiving money from foreign clients has been difficult at times because of rules, fees and limited choice of payment services. Many freelancers depend on friends, relatives or middlemen, which adds cost and risk.

Low pay and unfair deals. Because so many young designers are looking for work, some clients push prices very low or ask for free samples. Some do not pay at all after receiving the work.

Gaps in education. Many design programmes are slow to change. Students may learn strong basics but little about digital marketing, AI tools, client dealing or pricing. They often finish study without knowing how to run their own small business.

Gender and social limits. Women designers often face extra barriers, such as limits on travel and fewer chances to work outside the home. Digital work can help them, yet they may also face online harassment and pressure.

Lack of guidance. Many new designers learn alone, with no teacher to give honest advice. Without it they may copy trends, undersell themselves or lose confidence.

What Successful Emerging Designers Tend to Do

From the patterns seen across the field, a few habits appear again and again among designers who grow well in this new setting.

They treat the tools as helpers and keep the thinking for themselves. They build a clear and honest portfolio, with a small number of strong pieces rather than a large number of weak ones. They share their process and not only the result. They learn a little about business, such as how to set a price, write a simple agreement and ask for part payment before starting. They keep learning, because tools change fast. They build friendships with other designers, because a community gives support and shares jobs. And they stay true to a personal style that comes from their own life.

Suggestions

For design schools

Schools should teach AI tools and social media skills alongside the basics of drawing, colour and layout. They should also teach honesty in the use of AI, client dealing, pricing and basic law about copying. Inviting working designers to speak to students would help close the gap between study and real life.

For emerging designers

Designers should learn the tools without fear, but they should not give up their own taste. They should save their original files and keep records of their work to protect themselves. They should be open with clients about how they use AI. And they should look after their health, remembering that their worth is not the same as their number of followers.

For businesses and clients

Clients should understand that good design is more than a fast picture. They should pay fairly and on time, give credit, and see designers as partners and not as cheap labour.

For government and institutions

Better internet, simple payment routes for freelancers, training programmes and clear rules on creative ownership would help the whole field. Support for women designers and for those outside big cities would help unlock talent that is now hidden.

For researchers

More studies are needed that speak directly to designers in different cities and different income groups. These studies should ask about income, tool use, fears, training needs and the effect of digital work on mental health.

Limits of This Paper and Future Work

This paper is based on existing knowledge and general patterns, not on a new survey. It does not give exact numbers about how many designers use AI or how much they earn. The design field is also changing very quickly, so some points may become old in a short time. A future study could interview a mix of designers, teachers and clients in cities such as Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta, and also in smaller towns. It could compare those who use AI heavily with those who use it little, and follow their careers over several years.

Conclusion

The story of emerging Pakistani designers is a story of hope with some worry mixed in. Social media has opened a door that was closed for many years, and anyone with talent and patience can now show their work to the world. AI has added a powerful set of tools that can save time, lower cost and spark new ideas.

But tools are not talent. A machine can make a picture, but it cannot know what a picture means to a mother in Multan or a shopkeeper in Peshawar. That understanding comes from living among people, and Pakistani designers have plenty of it.

The designers who will do best are not those who use the most tools, nor those who avoid them. They are those who stay curious, work honestly, protect their own voice and use technology to carry that voice further. If schools, clients and institutions give them fair support, Pakistan can grow a generation of designers who are proud of where they come from and ready for where the world is going.

References and Reading Suggestions

The following kinds of sources are suggested for readers who wish to study this topic further. Please check the latest editions and reports before citing them.

Reports on digital freelancing and the creative economy from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication and the Pakistan Software Export Board

Reports by international bodies such as UNESCO and the World Bank on creative industries and youth employment

Publications from national design and art schools on curriculum and graduate careers

Studies on social media use and small business growth in South Asia

Research and policy papers on AI and copyright from bodies such as the World Intellectual Property Organization

Writings and interviews by working Pakistani designers, illustrators and brand builders



2026 by the authors; Journal of Global Social Transformation (JGST). This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).