

Are UX roles still relevant in AI era?

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As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms human-technology interactions, User Experience (UX) research and design are facing new challenges. With these advancements, one question consistently surfaces: **Is UX in its traditional form still relevant, or is it being edged out by AI?**

To better understand this dynamic, we spoke with professionals in UX-related roles, gaining diverse insights. Many agree that AI is transforming the UX process, but its impact on the field warrants further exploration.

To begin with, how does AI even fit into UX? A product manager at Enverus Inc., Austin, Texas, shared an interesting perspective: “AI helps reduce the time taken to complete long tasks and generates a large number of responses and ideas for me. It’s a huge time-saver!” This sentiment echoes across the industry, as AI’s ability to predict user behavior, analyze data, and generate designs is increasingly utilized to enhance workflows and increase productivity. AI has undeniably revolutionized many aspects of design and user interaction. Looking at this, we couldn’t help but think, **is AI taking over the process of UX design?** It sure looks like it at the first glance.

From our analysis of literature and conversations on this, we gather that while AI is great at number-crunching and pattern-spotting, it’s still missing a key ingredient: context- the specific circumstance or general environment that serves as a social framework for an individual’s behavior, when interacting with a product. AI can’t grasp the cultural, emotional, and situational contexts that drive user behavior (Purdy et al., 2019). In case of the context, it needs to be provided to AI by the user. In fact, when the context is not provided or contextual data is missing, the AI tends to assume a scenario and generate data that might not be relevant. AI operates within the boundaries of logic and data, lacking the human touch that is critical to UX. For example, AI can optimize a site’s layout based on data, but **can it understand why users emotionally connect with a certain design?** A colleague of ours, UX Designer at Viamagus Technologies, Bangalore, India elaborated on this, saying “even if AI can give templates, every use case, every product, every user calls for something customized, something unique. And to generate that, a human is required. Because AI can generate 1000 use cases and scenarios, but to understand the ‘why’ behind every decision, to prioritize one thing over other, a human is needed to make the decision. When I was working on a project, I needed to give input of the entire scenario, hierarchy and priority to ChatGPT to generate a JTBD (Job to be done). Even then, it didn’t come close to what we needed, and we had to use our discretion to check if the responses were valid in case of our scenario. Even when it comes to cards and lists. It will give me responses for the usage of both cards and lists. But based on the exact scenario, use case, a human has to take the decision of whether to use a card or a list based on the reason that goes behind it.” That made us realize—**UX professionals are evolving into ‘experience architects.’** Their job is less about the nuts and bolts of design and more about understanding the broader human experience.

Acting as 'experience architects,' UX professionals channel creativity into crafting unique user experiences. AI might be able to suggest layout ideas or color schemes, but they are just the starting points. Designers bring imagination, empathy, and a deep understanding of human needs to their work—qualities that AI, in its current state, cannot replicate. “AI-generated designs are references, not final products,” a UI designer at Viamagus pointed out. “The output isn’t something you can sell. It’s not polished enough.” So, **AI is more like a creative partner**—one that still needs human supervision to make designs market-ready. While AI has begun to impact UX design through tools that can generate layout suggestions, color schemes, and even entire interface mock-ups, these outputs are not the end products.

That got us thinking, maybe it’s not about AI replacing UX roles **but shifting what UX professionals need to focus on**. A conversation with a learning design engineer at Human Logic, Dubai, UAE revealed: “AI won’t entirely replace UX, at least not yet. It may change the number of people needed for a task—what once needed four people might now need only one, thanks to AI assistance.” Seeing how AI has come in as a smart assistant that doesn’t need to be trained from the basics, UX professionals can shift focus from routine design tasks to higher-level challenges of empathy driven design, strategic prioritization that balances functionality, usability, and aesthetics, as well as cultural sensitivity and ethical design judgments. Yet, although AI acts as a smart assistant, different AI tools function as independent partners. Despite their individual capabilities, they operate in isolation from one another. A UX designer from my team pointed out, “I could work on ChatGPT to do some market research, then use another AI to run user interviews, later use another AI for emotional findings in my user research. They are not interconnected, except for me who’s task they help to do.” So, it cannot be relied on entirely. For instance, if you use ChatGPT for research, it can provide valuable insights and information. However, when you want to work on say Uizard to design based on your research findings, it starts with a blank slate, and you have to re-enter all the relevant data.

The role of the human as an ethical gatekeeper remains crucial in ensuring that AI-driven designs align with core values like respect, inclusivity, and accessibility. AI, while powerful, can overlook these aspects, generating content or designs that may unintentionally exclude certain groups or use inappropriate language (Xu & Rachal, 2024). In addition, humans also play a key role in training AI, guiding it to better understand ethical considerations over time. As another UX designer colleague of ours added, “I can’t fully trust AI output; I need to recheck it before making decisions.” This sparked an important thought—**AI needs human oversight to ensure designs are ethical and serve people** (Sharma & Gherbaz, 2024). While AI is fantastic at optimizing designs based on data, humans are still needed to validate those outputs and make sure they align with the complex needs of users. For example, AI might overlook the need for gender-neutral language in product descriptions unless a human explicitly guides it to adjust the content for inclusivity.

So where does that leave UX? It’s not about humans vs. AI, but rather humans + AI. We’re entering a new era where UX professionals work with AI to produce solutions that are not only efficient but also ethical and empathetic. In other words, AI isn’t sabotaging UX—it’s making it more critical than ever. As human interaction with systems evolves through technologies like AR, VR and multimodal interfaces, one constant remains: human cognition. UX is the key to understanding this, as it goes beyond data, focusing on the emotional, cultural, and contextual aspects of user behavior. While AI optimizes, UX ensures designs resonate on a deeper, human level. The future of UX lies in this synergy, where humans work alongside AI to create meaningful digital experiences.

References

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