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DREAMS AND DATA: GHIBLI-STYLE ART, COPYRIGHT, AND THE RISE OF VIRAL AI IMAGERY

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ABSTRACT
This review explores the relationship between Ghibli-style visual characteristics, copyright regulations, and viral phenomena in the context of modern generative artificial intelligence (AI). This research examines the ethical, legal, and technological implications of the new wave of Studio Ghibli-inspired AI-generated visuals, focusing on their popularity. The research employed a narrative review method to synthesize findings from computer science, law, media studies, and art theory literature. Research shows that Ghibli-style content created by AI raises important copyright challenges while posing considerable ethical questions about ownership, creator identification, and the pressure on computational systems due to its widespread popularity. The paper examines theoretical explanations that link authorship with labor, as well as nostalgia dynamics that activate digital virality. The review proposes future research approaches and advocates for modern legal structures, moral guidelines, and collective leadership mechanisms to safeguard artistic quality in our age of automated creative production.

KEYWORDS: *Ghibli-style, AI-generated art, copyright, viral imagery, generative AI, ChatGPT, GPU overload, digital aesthetics, intellectual property, ethical AI*

1.0 INTRODUCTION
Artistic creativity in the digital age has undergone a radical transformation with the emergence of generative AI, as it has altered all aspects of creative production, distribution, and consumer appreciation of art. OpenAI's ChatGPT, DALL·E, and platforms Midjourney and Leonardo.AI, through their AI tools, enable high-quality image generation, allowing all users to easily produce recognisable aesthetics with astonishing accuracy (Khadake, 2024; Nagapushpa et al., 2024). Digital Ghibli artwork stands as one of the most powerful cultural phenomena created by Hayao Miyazaki.

AI-generated art offers users new capabilities for exploring art, yet it challenges us to investigate the rights to original content and the responsible use of materials. AI-generated content now spreads across X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Reddit platforms, where public and scholarly experts focus on copyright infringement, artist consent, and attribution issues (Chen, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023). Many AI models undergo training using extensive unlicensed internet data collections that include artists' content without their consent (Zhou et al., 2023; Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024). The AI revolution creates pressure on technical infrastructure that must support its operations. CEO Sam Altman acknowledged severe GPU failures resulting from sudden Ghibli-style popularity surges at OpenAI (Vincent, 2025). Ghibli-style AI art serves as a representative model of the major issues affecting AI-generated creative production through its combination of stylistic matching alongside integrity doubts and system capacity issues.

1.1 Background Information
The number of countries involved in regulating artificial intelligence has increased significantly since 2011 alongside the integration of areas such as computer vision, deep learning, and visual storytelling (Fan & Liang, 2023; Grba, 2022). The process of converting natural language prompts into visually appealing works through AI algorithms utilizes both Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) and diffusion models (Ibrahim, 2023; Khadake, 2024). Modern technological developments have dramatically reduced the difficulty of art creation, allowing untrained people to generate artistic work that imitates the emotionally intense, painterly style found in Studio Ghibli productions.

The visual characteristics that have made Studio Ghibli films so popular, including their peaceful color schemes combined with gentle textures and relaxed pacing, now find perfect reproduction in AI through models such as Ghibli Diffusion and DALL-E (Getimg.ai, 2024). The widespread attention toward Ghibli's style mimicry stems from across cultures because its emotional aesthetic elements create feelings of nostalgia while inspiring relaxation (Corrêa, 2023). The copyright laws face an existing flaw because they currently protect individual works yet fail to address intellectual property rights to original artistic styles or methods (U.S. Copyright Office, 2021).

Leading artists and legal scholars have raised significant concerns about the unregulated use of copyrighted content in AI dataset training and the ambiguous ownership of AI-generated creations, as noted by Cullen (2023) and Jiang et al. (2023). Hayao Miyazaki described AI-generated art as a fundamental threat to life itself (The Atlantic, 2025).

Art generated through AI using the Ghibli style has been placing greater strain on the technical components of OpenAI and other similar platforms. The spread of viral trends, powered by attractive aesthetics, tests software's ethical limits and exceeds the technological capabilities of present artwork-producing methods. The evaluation builds its foundation from creative and legal aspects alongside emotional and infrastructural factors.

1.3 Objectives of the Review Paper

- To examine the rise of Ghibli-style AI art within the context of copyright law and viral content trends.
- To explore how generative AI, particularly through ChatGPT's image capabilities, is reshaping the boundaries of creativity and authorship.
- To assess the response of industries, artists, and policymakers to these developments.
- To identify theoretical and practical gaps for future research and regulation.

1.4 Research Importance

Visual art creation that utilizes generative artificial intelligence introduces uncharted concepts of authorship and ownership, along with style replication, which currently lack clear legal definitions and established ethical standards. This investigation holds significance since it provides an analytical examination of the popularity of Ghibli-style AI-generated images to study major digital creative economic shifts alongside legal, structural, and emotional changes. The worldwide fascination with Ghibli-style visuals created using AI tools, such as DALL-E, Midjourney, and Leonardo.AI, has sparked interest but also raised questions about artistic recognition protection and the commodification of imaginative human work (Chen, 2023; Khadake, 2024).

AI-created artwork exists legally between defined areas as these entities continue to grow more prevalent. Copyright laws show limited effectiveness in addressing AI-generated outputs, as they were primarily created for human authors of fixed works. In contrast, the reproduction of specific artistic styles through AI falls outside their current legal framework (U.S. Copyright Office, 2021; Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024). The evaluation of Studio Ghibli's visual replication highlights the insufficient present-day copyright protection for style-based characteristics, which has become an essential concern for digital creators and cultural institutions (Stokel-Walker, 2025; Cullen, 2023).

This study integrates knowledge about how people think about viral images as part of their cultural psychology. Ghibli-style visuals achieve digital virality through their combination of emotionally charged warmth that people naturally remember. The emotional connections that strongly engage users significantly impact their social media activity and judgment of art authenticity, yet social media algorithms amplify these feelings (Xiang et al., 2024; Corrêa, 2023). Investigating the interactions of AI-generated content with external variables provides insight into the evolving taste trends within digitally controlled environments.

The review takes on immediate relevance in addressing infrastructure needs for AI-generated content that goes viral. Both the high energy requirements of AI-driven image generation and distribution, as well as the resulting platform breakdowns, indicate that systems need better sustainability and scalability to meet growing demands (Vincent, 2025; Grba, 2022). The study seeks to create a connection between the fields of art, law, and technology for developing sustainable and ethical systems surrounding AI art.

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1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the legal and ethical concerns surrounding AI-generated Ghibli-style art?
2. How does viral Ghibli-style imagery reflect trends in digital content creation and consumption?
3. What are the current copyright frameworks governing AI-generated art, and where do they fall short?
4. How are content industries, including media and entertainment, responding to AI-generated visual content?
5. What future governance strategies might balance innovation and creator rights?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This review follows a **narrative literature review** approach to synthesize academic, legal, and cultural discussions surrounding AI-generated art and its copyright implications.

2.1.1 Search Strategy

Search Terms & Boolean Operators

- ("Ghibli-style" OR "anime-style") AND ("AI-generated art" OR "generative AI")
- ("ChatGPT" OR "OpenAI") AND ("viral imagery" OR "GPU overload")
- ("copyright" OR "intellectual property") AND ("AI art" OR "image generation")

Databases used: Google Scholar, JSTOR, IEEE Xplore, SSRN, ArXiv, and news/media archives.

2.1.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion

- Peer-reviewed papers (2018–2025)
- Legal and industry reports
- Articles on viral trends in AI-generated content
- Interviews or commentaries by artists and developers

Exclusion

- Non-English publications
- Pre-2018 content unless foundational
- Purely technical papers without relevance to copyright or art style

2.1.3 Data Extraction & Synthesis

Extracted information was grouped thematically: legal frameworks, aesthetic mimicry, platform responses, artist perspectives, and viral impact. Trends and gaps were identified using comparative analysis.

2.1.4 Limitations

- Rapidly evolving field; some sources may be outdated quickly
- Lack of empirical data on user behavior and artist reactions
- Legal precedents are still emerging and vary by jurisdiction

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Ghibli-Style Aesthetics in AI-Generated Art

Studio Ghibli has long been celebrated for its distinctive visual language, which blends hand-drawn animation, soft color palettes, and emotionally immersive storytelling. The studio's films often portray tranquil natural settings, whimsical characters, and themes of innocence, nature, and quiet resilience, which together form a recognizable “Ghibli aesthetic” (MotionCue, 2023). This style, which evokes strong emotional and nostalgic responses, has now been adopted and emulated by generative AI tools—often without the involvement or consent of Studio Ghibli or its artists.

Advances in generative AI, particularly in diffusion and transformer-based models such as DALL·E, Midjourney, and Leonardo.AI, allow users to create original images in the Ghibli style by submitting simple text prompts (Fan & Liang, 2023; Getimg.ai, 2024). These models are trained on massive datasets containing artistic imagery, from which they learn the patterns, textures, and emotional cues that characterize specific styles. Tools like the Ghibli Diffusion model

are specifically designed to replicate Studio Ghibli's artistic features, including pastel brushwork, watercolors, and childlike facial expressions (Getimg.ai, 2024).

Culturally, the replication of the Ghibli aesthetic speaks to the nostalgic allure and emotional impact of the studio's work. Salkowitz (2025) argue that the aesthetic's success in AI art is not just visual but emotional—Ghibli's tone evokes a deep, shared longing for a simpler world, one that resonates strongly in times of cultural anxiety. These emotional undercurrents contribute to the virality of Ghibli-style AI art, which spreads rapidly across platforms like X, Reddit, and TikTok as users generate, share, and remix this familiar aesthetic (Khadake, 2024).

AI tools' attempt to replicate Studio Ghibli's style has faced opposition from creators and scholarly criticism. The Atlantic (2025) documented Hayao Miyazaki strongly objecting to AI-generated art because he considered it harmful to the essence of life. A significant anxiety exists among artistic creators because algorithmic reproduction reduces artistic expression to simple, mimetic work that strips genuine emotional content and cultural meaning.

Equitable concerns emerge about the proper use of Ghibli's artistic style for both training and output tasks in AI systems. The use of Ghibli-style cues by AI image generators raises concerns regarding attribution, as these systems often lack original creative output. The ability of human artists to develop their influence over time does not exist for AI models, as they instantly produce work that imitates Ghibli's style, lacking an understanding of cultural meanings (Grba, 2022).
The technical capabilities and cultural impact generated by Ghibli-style AI art expose important concerns about artistic originality, consent protection, and human creative freedom.

3.2 Copyright Challenges in the Age of Generative AI
Generative artificial intelligence technologies have created unforeseen challenges for existing copyright regulations. DALL-E, along with Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, operates using large training datasets collected from the internet, which raises significant concerns about ownership and potential copyright theft. AI-generated Ghibli art continues to spark debates about copyright issues because these artificial images use a specific aesthetic pattern despite lacking content from any protected works (Khadake, 2024).

The primary issue arises from the outdated definition of who qualifies as an author under current law. The U.S. Copyright Office enforces copyright protection only for human-authored works according to their current established policy (U.S. Copyright Office, 2023). In Thaler v. Perlmutter, the court ruled that AI-generated content, lacking human creation, cannot receive copyright protection due to the requirement that legal authorship belongs to natural persons (Grba, 2022). Currently, AI-generated images remain unprotected by conventional laws because courts recognize them as machine-produced rather than human works; thus, there is an unprotected space with ownership challenges.
The dilemma surrounding Ghibli-style art becomes more complex than typical situations. The U.S. Copyright Office (2021) establishes that copyright protection applies to specific fixed expressions, but it does not encompass style, as it remains unsecured. The law recognizes that AI-generated images that mimic Studio Ghibli's color patterns, aesthetic qualities, and line artwork do not constitute copyright infringement, even if they exhibit a remarkable resemblance to the studio's products (Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024). Platforms exploit legal ambiguities concerning stylistic replication to disseminate numerous copies, although this freedom raises widespread ethical concerns.

Several artists have voiced their arguments against the practice of using their artwork in training datasets without seeking permission. AI companies face multiple legal claims about copyright infringement due to their unauthorised use of unlicensed materials throughout model training (Andersen v. Stability AI Ltd., 2024). The legal actions demonstrate an increasing public desire for AI transparency while establishing legal frameworks that protect artists who generate the basic content utilised in AI systems (Zhou et al., 2023).

The discussion about copyright and generative AI centers on the principles of derivative works. Research has proven that models use copyrighted content to create derivative works, particularly when their style mimicry technique is exact and deliberate (Chen, 2023). The lack of legal recognition for style replication hinders the possibility of establishing any claim enforcement, despite its existence. Creativity is becoming increasingly uncertain because creators lack adequate protection against the unauthorized use of their intellectual property in datasets and outputs.

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AI-generated Ghibli-style imagery highlights the need to revise current intellectual property standards due to technological advancements. Generative AI remains unregulated in terms of copyright law because style protection has not yet been recognized as a legal concept. This situation creates an ethical issue that stems from the blind spot.

3.3 Viral Trends and the Role of Social Media

AI-generated images following the Ghibli aesthetic went viral on X (formerly Twitter), Reddit, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram, demonstrating how digital content spreads through viral culture. People rapidly embrace visuals that start from prompts such as "Studio Ghibli-style photo of my hometown" because they activate shared emotions while offering familiar visual aesthetics and facilitation for sharing. The rapid cultural adoption of AI-generated art occurs when these artistic productions are combined with user behavior and algorithmic elements of specific social networks to reach large audiences (Xiang et al., 2024; Khadake, 2024).

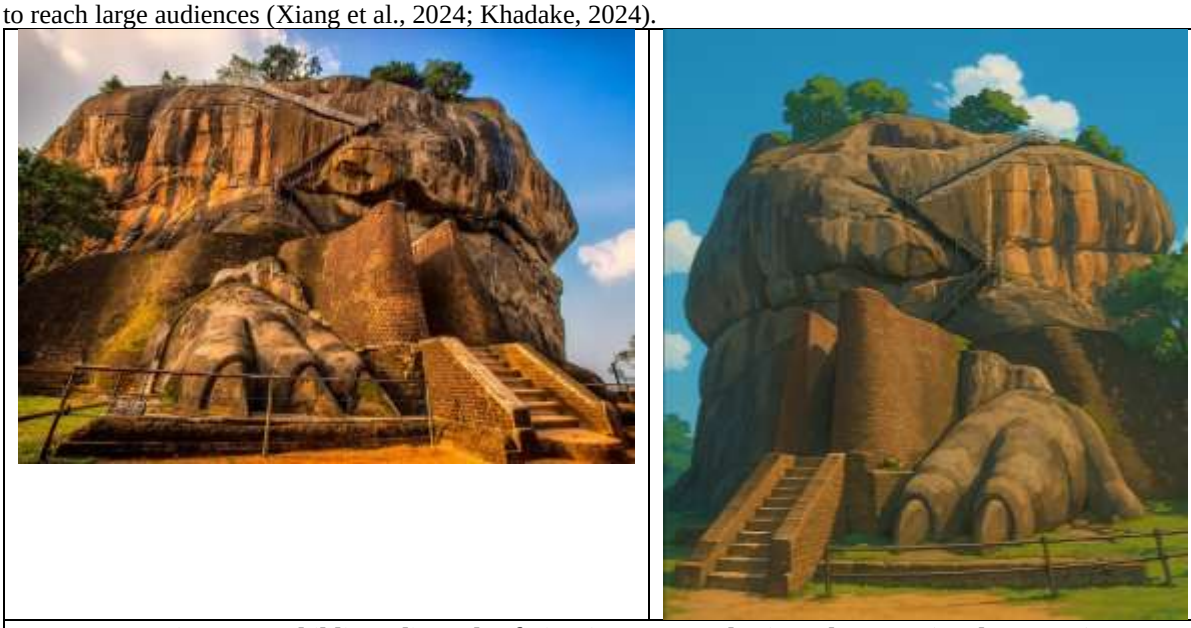

Figure 1 : Ghibli Studio Style of Sigeria Generated using ChatGPT (Author, 2024)

The emotional connection and sentiment toward Ghibli-style content form the base for its widespread popularity. The visual language of Studio Ghibli creates comfort for audiences through its signature soft watercolor image scheme, tender drawing concepts, and dreamlike studio environments (Salkowitz, 2025). The AI-generated imagery, based on user preferences, evokes societal sentiments that enhance sharing activities among users, as it activates collective memories that align with their emotions. Both TikTok and Instagram enable nostalgic media to gain increased power through their blend of personal identity, memory, and aesthetic expression (Xiang et al., 2024).

Algorithmic recommendation methods significantly enhance the level of virality that these pieces achieve. Instagram algorithms promote visually interesting posts which contain emotionally strong content; therefore, Ghibli-style pictures get greater exposure. User-generated AI-populated images of realistic and fantastic areas proliferate like memes because they find both visual allure and participation opportunities in the digital realm (Fan & Liang, 2023). The circulation of Ghibli-style imagery, both within and outside social media platforms, motivates more users to contribute to the trend through their own submissions, thereby sustaining the viral nature of this content.

3.4 ChatGPT, GPU Overload, and Infrastructure Strain

Tools in generative AI have experienced explosive popularity, resulting in a massive strain on digital infrastructure alongside new creative potential. OpenAI encountered technical difficulties and hardware strain due to viral trends, such as Ghibli-style image requests, which put a strain on their ChatGPT-related image-generation services. The explosive demand for generative AI tools highlights an important yet often overlooked aspect of scalability that people face during the current wave of AI adoption.

OpenAI implemented usage throttling because Ghibli-style content generation with DALL-E and GPT-4o triggered such high demand among users. Chief Executive Officer Sam Altman told the public, "Our GPUs are melting" which

indicated that the computing power of GPUs had exceeded hardware capabilities in running image generation activities (Vincent, 2025). The combination of training and inferential phases in these generative models consumes significant computing resources, so much that viral prompting leads to fast GPU cycle depletion, which diminishes system performance and increases energy expenditure (Fan & Liang, 2023; Grba, 2022).

Current infrastructure problems reveal more than just technical issues, as they expose fundamental weaknesses in scaling AI operations. AI image generation implemented through diffusion models requires thousands of GPU hours for both training phases and user-serving periods, particularly during times of viral popularity (Khadake, 2024). The rapid spread of Ghibli-style imagery through social media platforms overwhelmed the prompts at such a high volume that it stressed all available AI infrastructure systems, which subsequently demonstrated their delicate nature.

These rapid increases have significant environmental impacts due to their geological effects. The analysis of energy and water usage in large-scale generative models has gained increased attention in the research field. The carbon emissions from generative models approach those of traditional data centers, particularly in environments where power is generated from fossil fuels (Grba, 2022). Popular aesthetically pleasing trends, such as Ghibli-style graphics, have ecological disadvantages that should be considered in discussions regarding sustainable AI systems.
The analysis of infrastructures reveals that viral AI content extends beyond being a social phenomenon, as it requires substantial resources that have ethical and environmental repercussions. Online virality-driven variations in usage require AI providers to establish technologically sound, sustainability-focused, and scalable computing systems that support inventive practices.

3.5 Review of Relevant Theories

An evaluation of Ghibli-style AI-produced visual content requires theoretical frameworks for interpreting both cultural patterns, legal matters, and technological applications. This section examines three relevant theories: Walter Benjamin's concept of “aura” in the age of mechanical reproduction, Lawrence Lessig’s “Remix Culture”, and Digital Labor Theory, to interpret the changes that generative AI introduces regarding authorship, creative ownership, and authenticity.

The Loss of Artistic “Aura” in the Digital Age

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction by Walter Benjamin (1935/2008) serves as a foundational text when discussing the reproduction of specimens and authenticity. According to Benjamin, mechanical reproduction results in the disappearance of the “aura” from artwork while removing it from its original physical environment. Through AI generation technology, the condition described by Walter Benjamin has reached its most extreme phase, as algorithms can fabricate pieces that pretend to have Ghibli's distinctive style but exist separately from their real-world source. Digital models produce millions of artworks that replicate Ghibli's aesthetics, resulting in an additional erosion of aura according to Benjamin's principle (Grba, 2022).

Remix Culture and Creative Ownership

Lawrence Lessig (2008) developed the theory of Remix Culture, which explains how digital technology enables users to perform authorized copies of existing cultural material and transform them into new combinations. The process of AI-generated Ghibli-style image production involves machine-generated remixes created through algorithmic inference that learn from extensive datasets rather than relying on human selection. According to Lessig, the use of unlicensed content in AI training undermines ethical notions about remix as a form of creative free expression within participatory culture (Chen, 2023). The current controversy highlights how automated systems have replaced human involvement in remixing, creating new challenges around content permissions as well as authorship acknowledgment.

Digital Labor and the Invisible Work Behind AI Art

The development of AI art products relies on untapped human work through activities such as dataset assembly, tagging and moderation duties, and model optimization tasks. Trebor Scholz (2013) explained Digital Labor Theory to show how digital economies exploit unacknowledged labor forces in his writing. The artistic works used by generative models for training remain unrecognized and uncompensated, yet they directly influence the capabilities of these models (Zhou et al., 2023). The computerized handling of large amounts of artwork data to create AI art highlights a fundamental disparity between technology programmers and creative practitioners, thereby widening ethical dilemmas regarding authorship rights.

These artistic theories provide a full context for AI-generated Ghibli-style artwork beyond its appearance, as they reveal how such creations remain a unique fusion of cultural fears and copyright standards, as well as non-visible work output, which algorithmic technology excels at disseminating through online networks.

3.6 Theoretical Implications

AI-generated artwork based on Ghibli stylization facts reveals intricate theoretical implications regarding who is entitled to claim authorship rights in modern digital conditions. Three perspectives — postmodern, legal, and labor-oriented —function in this section to analyze how AI generation affects creative concepts within modern industries and motivates regulatory changes.

Reimagining Authorship and Authenticity

AI-generated imagery renders traditional views on authorship obsolete, as these views often emphasize human creators as the original sources of meaning. The autonomous art production of DALL·E and Midjourney raises questions about the definition of original authorship when the models recreate emotional and aesthetic cues from known studios, including Studio Ghibli (Grba, 2022; Benjamin, 2008). When style is reproduced without either emotional or historical intention, it breaks the authentic aura described by Benjamin, as it leads to digital images that lose their contextual uniqueness.

The creative process distributes its authorship across datasets, training engineers, prompt engineers, and end-users under the concept of algorithmic authorship (Khadake, 2024). When creative power among multiple contributors converges, it becomes difficult to identify either the rights holder or the legitimate source of the resultant artistic work, while obscuring which entity maintains creative control.

Impacts on Traditional Artists and Industry Models

The implementation of generative AI moved at a rapid pace, thereby disrupting existing creative frameworks. Independent artists, along with specific visual studios, such as Studio Ghibli, are increasingly facing difficulties in sustaining total ownership of their creative approaches and brand recognition (Zhou et al., 2023). As consumers increasingly favor AI-generated content that mimics premium aesthetics, the market demand for authentic, human-made art faces an economic threat.

AI art disrupts traditional business principles that govern the creative industries worldwide. AI-generated content undermines three core pillars of licensing, branding, and intellectual property management, as it renders authorship identification and originality assessment impossible (Chen, 2023). AI platforms with data aggregators gain increased market value through their ability to generate revenue from unlicensed content despite the artists being removed from the revenue stream.

Future of Style-Based Protection and Legal Reform

The shift from frame-based to style-based representation poses a significant theoretical challenge regarding the inadequate intellectual property mechanisms for addressing style replication. Under American copyright law, specific artistic expressions receive protection, but the law does not prevent other artists from using general creative styles (U.S. Copyright Office, 2021). The legal status of works that resemble Ghibli's visual style remains unclear, as these artworks refrain from including specific copyrighted frames.

The field of research recommends expanding copyright protection for artistic styles, along with payment mechanisms for artists whose works are generated by AI models and licensing programs for AI training materials (Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024; Ducru et al., 2024). Modern legal systems require changes because the community acknowledges the necessity of adapting to algorithm-generated creative outputs that impact both artistic styles and cultural identities, as well as artistic labor.

4.0 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Longitudinal Studies

Longitudinal research must track the extended influence of generative AI on how people perceive art, as well as its impact on consumer choices and legal standards in the visual culture space. Longitudinal research related to Ghibli-style AI-generated pictures helps demonstrate how users interact with machine-produced art and their abilities to

distinguish it from handmade works. According to Fan and Liang (2023) and Khadake (2024), advancements in generative technology and their integration into mainstream content production will transform how people perceive authorship and the value of genuine creative work.

The public's ability to detect AI-created Ghibli-style images requires investigation through longitudinal studies, as the recognition capabilities of generative tools continue to increase in sophistication. Research evidence suggests that testers struggle to distinguish between AI-generated visual creations and human-made works when the machine replicates famous artistic aesthetics (Zhou et al., 2023). Further research should investigate user responses when aesthetic fidelity improves, as it will help determine the extent of appreciation for stylistic details and tolerance for questions regarding originality.

Consumer trust, together with observational behaviors, remains a crucial element for conducting extended investigative research. Longitudinal research examining social media platforms such as TikTok and Reddit can establish the effects of spreading AI-generated content on user decision-making regarding purchasing behaviors, as well as their relationships with human creative talent and support for original artists. The insights yield essential knowledge to create economic frameworks that maintain traditional creators' income streams in AI-dominant markets (Chen, 2023; Xiang et al., 2024).

The evolution of interpretation by law and public perspectives toward style-based protection becomes possible through the application of extended research methods. The development of legal strategies for protecting artistic datasets requires an understanding of how judicial bodies, artist communities, and end-users will evolve their responses in the years to come (Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024). The collected data from these studies would direct possible systematic changes to the legal system through applications for style-based ownership protection and dynamic licensing protocols adjusted for AI systems.

Research conducted over long periods helps develop ethical AI regulation while safeguarding artistic uniqueness and predicts upcoming changes in digital artistic markets.

4.2 Intervention Studies

Style-based image generation in the art world is increasingly requiring intervention strategies to manage its ethical, legal, and technological challenges, particularly in light of generative AI development. Scientific research studies demonstrate the effectiveness of watermarking, style anonymization tools, and licensing frameworks in preserving creator protection while fostering innovation, according to Chen (2023) and Zhou et al. (2023).

Watermarking and Image Attribution

AI-generated images obtain their identification and tracking capabilities from a leading technical solution known as watermarking. Digital signatures enable watermarking technology to detect AI-generated content through invisible labels that do not impact the image's visual presentation (Fan & Liang, 2023). Research at Google and OpenAI investigates this technique for new models that aim to distinguish between AI-generated and human-generated visuals. According to studies, the application of watermarks faces limitations, as they can be altered or eliminated from content and do not address the fundamental problem of unauthorized data collection (Khadake, 2024).

Style Anonymization and Visual Neutralization

Style anonymization is another proposed method that removes stylistic qualities from AI-produced content related to distinct artists or studios, according to Grba (2022). The ongoing experimental work on this technique aims to mitigate legal hazards and moral complexities by eliminating the distinct artistic qualities associated with Studio Ghibli. The process of stylistic neutralization diminishes the appeal factor of AI creations when their aesthetic value depends on nostalgic stylistic elements (Salkowitz, 2025).

Licensing Agreements for Training Data

The development of sustainable AI depends heavily on licensing, according to an increasing number of legal and institutional actors. License management systems provide artists with choices regarding data usage, thereby protecting their reproduction rights for their artwork (Ducru et al., 2024). Several proposals recommend creating platforms for creators to form bargaining agreements with AI businesses about the usage terms of their data (Vivaldi & Sutedja,

2024). The licensing solutions aim to provide payment to artists for their original works, as well as for algorithm-derived outputs that utilize artists' visual language.

Case Study Value and Future Impact

The combination of intervention research provides benefits for developing both new safety protocols and concrete applications of artificial intelligence policy. The evaluation of platform security protocols requires researchers to test real-world platforms that utilize watermarking, anonymization, and licensing approaches to determine their effectiveness. The development of intervention studies will serve as a keystone to protect creative ethics during the AI market expansion.

4.3 Ethical Frameworks

The widespread adoption of generative AI technology in artistic and cultural output underscores the urgent need for comprehensive ethical standards. AI tools generate Ghibli-style imagery to highlight a growing ethical concern in digital creative work, which lies between accessibility and artistic appropriation. Ethical standards should be established to resolve the issues about consent procedures alongside attribution matters, compensation rules, and general cultural aspects related to machine-made art.

Consent and Dataset Transparency

AI training datasets containing copyrighted content and stylistically rare artistic pieces continue to raise the most critical ethical issue because original creators are not being given consent. The training of several generative models is often conducted using internet-sourced data, frequently without proper attribution or permission (Zhou et al., 2023). Derivative works generated through AI raise questions about legitimacy because the practice often violates essential informed consent principles related to copyright terms. The framework needs to implement mandatory dataset transparency standards with defined processes for artists to decide whether their work should be included (Chen, 2023).

Attribution and Recognition of Labor

The generative AI era creates ambiguity regarding who performs creative work, as AI models often obscure original creative contributions. The creation of AI-generated images under styles like Studio Ghibli's undermines the original artistic contributions which serve as the source for models to generate their outputs (Fan & Liang, 2023). An ethical system of AI protocol must provide attribution methods to identify both users who initiate images and the original artists who define the AI's visual language while ensuring they receive appropriate credit (Scholz, 2013).

Compensation and Licensing Mechanisms

AI systems generate profit when they replicate styles that possess both cultural value and market value, but the original artists often do not receive payment without legal intervention. The ethical systems should establish payment mechanisms to provide fair compensation to creators during AI training sessions and style replication operations. The potential solutions for economic compensation include "AI royalties" as well as an artist opt-in registry system, according to Ducru et al. (2024) and Vivaldi & Sutedja (2024).

Multistakeholder Governance and Global Standards

The formation of ethical AI art environments requires multiple interest group conversations among creators and developers, as well as artists, policymakers, and professionals in law fields. The development of adaptive frameworks requires collaborative policymaking because it ensures the creation of inclusive solutions that answer diverse creator needs globally. To prevent jurisdictional gaps and create fair protection for creators globally, international coordination approaches should be established (Chen, 2023).

Ethics for AI artistic creation must expand beyond technical remedies by addressing both cultural rights and economic issues, as well as the ethical values related to digital creativity fields. These frameworks enable innovation by achieving consent while providing attribution and compensation and encouraging collaboration between humans and AI in artistic creation.

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5.0 DISCUSSION

The present section integrates review findings to answer five primary research questions about Ghibli-style AI-generated imagery. Research conclusions draw on modern scholarly discussions, as well as legal analysis of AI-generated artwork and technical reference materials, to examine the implications of visual art.

1. What are the legal and ethical concerns surrounding AI-generated Ghibli-style art?

The use of AI for generating art in the style of Ghibli creates multiple serious legal together with ethical dilemmas regarding authorization methods and proper acknowledgment and payment systems. The legal frameworks that protect copyright do not protect artistic style, which enables AI models to reproduce Ghibli's specific visual elements without copyright infringement issues (U.S. Copyright Office, 2021; Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024). Artists express ethical solidarity by raising concerns about the lack of permission from creators whose artwork is used to train systems that they never authorized to support (Zhou et al., 2023). The absence of both attribution and financial remuneration for human work that feeds into AI outputs includes the underlying structural problems that plague these systems, according to studies by Fan & Liang 2023 and Scholz 2013.

2. How does viral Ghibli-style imagery reflect trends in digital content creation and consumption?

Digital culture reflects three main trends in the recent viral Ghibli-style AI image dissemination on TikTok and Reddit, which include algorithmic power boosts and nostalgia-style aesthetics, along with user-driven content creativity. The nostalgic appeal, together with the emotional depth of Ghibli-style content, attracts users because it matches the popular nostalgic trend seen in digital media designs (Xiang et al., 2024). Users currently achieve facile content sharing and generation while operating as both content consumers and content curators in this latest observer-controlled content creation paradigm. Through their structural design, social media platforms amplify these visual trends by establishing feedback loops that accelerate the adoption of content generated by AI (Khadake, 2024).

3. What are the current copyright frameworks governing AI-generated art, and where do they fall short?

United States copyright laws, alongside other existing statutes, characterize works that qualify for protection as human-created compositions (U.S. Copyright Office, 2023). AI-generated art often fails to obtain copyright protection under existing regulatory frameworks, even when exhibiting original stylistic qualities or possessing cultural significance. The existing laws protect original authorship but not artistic style, thus making it possible for Studio Ghibli artists to face imitation without any legal options (Cullen, 2023). Court cases like Thaler v. Perlmutter gain additional validation from Perlmutter and his lawsuit, according to Grba's (2022) analysis, which supports the human-authorship definition in authorship laws.

4. How are content industries, including media and entertainment, responding to AI-generated visual content?

The response from the creative industries has been mixed. While some studios and creators are exploring AI as a creative tool, others are expressing strong opposition, particularly when AI-generated content mimics proprietary aesthetics. Studio Ghibli, for example, has publicly condemned the trend, with co-founder Hayao Miyazaki calling AI art "an insult to life itself" (The Atlantic, 2025). On the institutional side, some companies are developing tools to watermark or flag AI-generated content, ensuring transparency and provenance (Fan & Liang, 2023). Others are exploring licensing models that could compensate creators whose work is used in training datasets (Ducru et al., 2024).

5. What future governance strategies might balance innovation and creator rights?

Future governance strategies must include both technical and legal interventions. Licensing agreements that allow artists to opt in or out of training datasets, along with royalty systems to distribute profits from AI-generated works, are emerging proposals to rebalance power in favor of human creators (Ducru et al., 2024; Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024). Policy recommendations also emphasize the need for multistakeholder governance, involving AI developers, artists, legal experts, and policymakers to co-create adaptive and ethical frameworks (Chen, 2023). Additionally, technological solutions such as style anonymization and digital watermarking can offer practical mechanisms for protecting stylistic integrity without stifling innovation (Grba, 2022; Khadake, 2024).

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6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

Theme Key Findings

Cultural Significance	Ghibli-style AI art taps into nostalgia and emotional aesthetics, making it highly shareable and culturally resonant.
Legal Uncertainty	Current copyright laws do not protect artistic style, allowing AI models to replicate Ghibli aesthetics without infringement
Ethical Dilemmas	The use of unlicensed training data raises concerns around consent, attribution, and fair compensation for artists.
Virality and Infrastructure	Viral trends, such as Ghibli-style prompts, have overwhelmed GPU infrastructure, revealing scalability challenges.
Creative Authorship	AI blurs the lines of authorship by distributing creative control across datasets, algorithms, and user prompts
Industry and Policy Response	Industry responses range from condemnation to cautious adoption; legal and licensing reforms are proposed to protect the rights of creators.

Table 1: Theme Key findings

6.2 Call to Action

Considering the unresolved legal, ethical, and technological challenges posed by AI-generated Ghibli-style art, it is imperative that key stakeholders—artists, developers, policymakers, and platform providers—take coordinated action to safeguard creative integrity while supporting innovation.

First, policymakers must urgently update copyright frameworks to reflect the realities of generative AI. This includes considering protection for stylistic expression, formalizing attribution standards, and enabling licensing mechanisms that compensate creators whose works train or influence AI outputs (Ducru et al., 2024; Vivaldi & Sutedja, 2024).

Second, AI developers and platforms should implement transparent dataset governance, offering opt-in and opt-out options for artists and ensuring consent is integrated into model training practices (Zhou et al., 2023). Watermarking and metadata tagging of AI-generated content should also become standard, enabling the distinction between machine-made work and human creations (Fan & Liang, 2023).

Third, educators and digital media users must be equipped with critical literacy skills to comprehend the origins, ethics, and implications of AI-generated art. Public awareness campaigns can help users make informed decisions about how they create, share, and value digital content (Chen, 2023).

Finally, collaborative international dialogue is essential. As AI-generated content transcends borders, global cooperation will be required to establish consistent ethical and legal standards that protect cultural identity, artistic labor, and creative diversity in the digital era.

Only through proactive, inclusive, and interdisciplinary action can we ensure that the future of AI art is both innovative and equitable.

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