

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MULTIMEDIA

Capstone/Special Project

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study
of Animators in the Animation Industry



**University of the Philippines
Open University**

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MULTIMEDIA STUDIES

JOEL RAMON L. LOPEZ

**Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation:
A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry**

Special Project Advisor:

**Dr. Ruth B. Rodriguez
Faculty of Information and Communication Studies**

May 2026

Permission for the classification of this academic work access is subject to the provisions of applicable laws, the provisions of the UP IPR policy, and any contractual obligations:

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study
of Animators in the Animation Industry

University Permission Page

ANALYZING THE CREATIVE FREEDOM IN THE AGE OF AI AND 3D ANIMATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ANIMATORS IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY

“I hereby grant the University of the Philippines a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free license to reproduce, publish and publicly distribute copies of this Academic Work in whatever form subject to the provisions of applicable laws, the provision of the UP IPR policy and any contractual obligations, as well as more specific permission marking on the Title Page”

I specifically allow the University to:

- a. Upload a copy of the work in the theses database of college/school/institute/department and in any other databases available on the public internet*
- b. Publish the work in the college/school/institute/department journal, both in print and electronic or digital format and online; and*
- c. Give open access to the work, thus allowing “fair use” of the work in accordance with the provision of the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 8293), especially for teaching, scholarly, and research purposes.*

Joel Ramon L. Lopez

Signature over Student Name and Date

Acceptance Page

This paper prepared by **JOEL RAMON L. LOPEZ** with the title: **“ANALYZING THE CREATIVE FREEDOM IN THE AGE OF AI AND 3D ANIMATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ANIMATORS IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY.”** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment for the degree Course.

Biographical Sketch

Joel Ramon L. Lopez (He/They) was Born on July 01, 1995 at the VRP Medical Center, Mandaluyong City. They are part of a family of six, as the youngest child of four siblings. Today, they are currently residing within Merville Park, Barangay Merville, Paranaque City.

Lopez completed their elementary education, attending Colegio San Agustin Makati, Dasmarinas Village, Makati. Their high school education was taken at the now-closed Jesu-Mariae International School, Don Bosco, Paranaque. For their university education, Lopez enrolled at the University of the Philippines Open University, choosing to take the Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Studies (BAMS) Program in 2017.

In their free time, Lopez enjoys activities such as biking, sketching, listening to music, playing video games, creating videos, and assembling model kits.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my special project advisors, Dr. Ruth B. Rodriguez and Ms. Shari Eunice San Pablo, for being able to understand and guide me throughout the project from its proposal draft all the way back in MMS 200a, to its final completion in MMS 200b. It has been a difficult journey to meet expectations and deadlines, yet they still guided me all the way through whenever we interacted whether it be by back and forth emails and chats, or Google Meet, providing me with invaluable advice. This entire project would not have been completed without their feedback.

Secondly, I would like to thank my family, from my parents to my siblings, who provided much needed help, especially when it was clear that this project would not be completed within the given time.

Lastly, I would like to thank Ms. Editha Sarthou of Top Peg Animation and Creative Studio Inc., for allowing me to interview the animation team. The responses of her and her animation team to my interview questions have helped me greatly in the advancement of my research.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
University Permission Stage	ii
Acceptance Page	iii
Biographical Sketch	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	vii
Definition of Terms	x
ABSTRACT	xi
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Objectives of the Project	2
Significance of the Study	2
Research Questions	3
Scopes and Limitations of the Project	3
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	5
Introduction or Background	5
The Body of the Review	5
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework	10
Gaps in Literature Study	11
Purpose of the Study	11
Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry	vi

III. METHODOLOGY	12
Research Design	12
Steps	12
Scopes and Limitations of the Study	13
Respondents of the Study	14
Sampling Method	14
Data Gathering Procedures	15
Research Instrument	15
Data Analysis	15
Ethical Considerations	16
IV. Results and Discussion	17
Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents	17
Section 4.1 Awareness	18
Section 4.2 Software Creation	23
Section 4.3 Future of the Industry	24
Section 4.4 Synthesis	29
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION	35
Summary	35
Conclusion	35
Recommendation	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY	39
APPENDICES	42
Appendix A: TCPS 2 Research Ethics Certificate	43
Appendix B: Questionnaire	44
Appendix C: Interview Transcript - Respondent 1	45
Appendix D: Interview Transcript - Respondent 2	49
Appendix E: Interview Transcript - Respondent 3	52
Appendix F: Interview Transcript - Respondent 4	55
Appendix G: Interview Transcript - Respondent 5	58
Appendix H: Interview Transcript - Respondent 6	60
Appendix I: Interview Transcript - Respondent 7	63
Appendix J: Interview Transcript - Respondent 8	66

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework of the Study	10
--	----

List of Tables

Table 1 - Experience Distribution of Participants	18
Table 2 - Animator Awareness of AI and 3D Animation	19
Table 3 - Impact of AI in Workflow and Task Distribution	20
Table 4 - Software Development and Accessibility	23
Table 5 - Audience Reception and Creative Decision Making	25
Table 6 - Animator Perspective of the Future of Animation	27

Definition of Terms

3D Animation: Refers to the animated process of creating moving, three-dimensional images in a digital context.

Animation Industry: Refers to the professional sector of animation involved in the production of animated content for films, TV, and video games.

Animator: A professional artist responsible for creating animations for cartoons and films.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): In animation, AI refers to the use of AI-assisted tools to automate and enhance the process of creating animated content.

Creative Freedom: In animation, creative freedom refers to the degree artists can express independent ideas, thoughts, and emotions without constraint and external control, allowing for personal touches and experimental visuals.

Industry Trends: In animation, industry trends refer to patterns and shifts in the technological and production within the industry, affecting how animated projects are produced, and the level of creative freedom to animators.

Workflow: The sequence of steps involved in moving from the beginning to the end of a working process.

ABSTRACT

This study examines how AI-assisted tools and 3D technologies influence animators' creative freedom. Specifically, this study focuses on the shift to 3D workflows and the integration of AI, and how these influence animators' creative decision-making.

For this study, animators working locally in the Philippines were interviewed to provide their thoughts and overall experience to both AI and 3D animation. In addition, these animators were asked how the studio they work for has adapted in response to these changes and how they see the future of animation now that these changes are in effect.

The results of the study show that while AI tools improve efficiency, they also limit aspects of creative control. Meanwhile, the 3D animation workflow process reshapes the artistic decision-making. Despite these changes to the creation of animated media, animators continue to adapt their methods in order to maintain the creative expression. The study in this paper highlights the evolving balance between technological advancement and artistic freedom in contemporary animation practice.

Keywords: 3D Animation, Animation Industry, Animators, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Creative Freedom, Industry Trends

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of technological devices and growing development of media content credited for this transformation are the widespread integration of both 3D animation and Artificial Intelligence (AI). These methods not only change the way animated productions are made, but have also redefined the animator's role in the creative process. While this is an efficient process, these changes raise questions about artistic expression during the production process.

By examining the animator's perspective on these new practices in the industry, this study aims to assess whether these trends in the animation industry push animators to new possibilities, or confine them within the limits imposed by these trends. In doing so, this gives a better understanding of the continuing relationship between technology and creativity in the animation industry.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the integration of AI software and 3D animation in the animation industry, research that discusses how these industry trends influence the animators' creative freedom, work flow, and role from their own perspective is limited. This research gap is evident when discussing the technological risks associated with these trends without understanding of the animators' experience and interpretation.

This study seeks to answer the following problem:

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

- The extent that industry trends such as AI integration and 3D Animation limit the animator's creativity within the animation industry.

This inquiry aims to explore how the world of animation is being shaped by the current industry trends, and to what extent these trends limit creativity and diverse storytelling.

Objectives of the project

As animation continues to maintain its relevance in entertainment, the industry likewise shapes how the finished animated product turns out in reference to how the current state of the animation industry shapes it. The researcher aims to explore how industry trends affect the animation project during its production, and how the results of these industry trends affect the animation industry through qualitative research.

Research Objectives:

- Explore how animators perceive AI-assisted tools in the creative process.
- Examine how 3D workflows influence artistic decision making.
- Analyze how animators maintain creative control despite technological constraints.

By achieving these objectives, this paper aims to create a written paper that projects a deeper understanding on inner works of the animation industry.

Significance of the Study

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

This study explores the impact of current trends in the animation industry, particularly the integration of AI and 3D animation, affect the creative and professional process of animators. By focusing on the animators' perspective on these trends, this study highlights the tension between artistic innovation and economic efficiency. The findings of the study aim to assist both animators and studios in understanding how technological challenges shape creative decisions and workflow, allowing for the development of strategies that balance artistic integrity and commercial viability.

Research Questions

This research paper focuses on how industry trends in the animation industry have affected the creative freedom of animators. With this focus in mind, the paper aims to answer this main driving question:

Driving Question: *“To what extent do AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflow influence animators’ creative freedom?”*

In relation to the main driving question, there is an additional two secondary questions that this paper also aims to answer in the process:

SQ 1: How do animators perceive the use of AI-assisted tools in relation to their creative freedom?

SQ 2: In what way does 3D animation workflow influence animators’ creative decision making and artistic control?

Scopes and Limitation of the Study

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

While this study focuses on AI assisted tools and 3D animation in the animation industry and how it affects the creative freedom of animators, it is important to acknowledge limitations for the study. The study was conducted within a limited perspective, where the number of respondents from a single studio does not serve as the full representation of the animator population as a whole. In addition, how each respondent conveys their response is subjective and based on their own individual experience. This response is, once again, not the full representation of the entirety of the animation industry as a whole.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction or Background

In this chapter of the research, studies relating to AI assisted tools and 3D animation in animation production is discussed, with a focus on how the development and usage of these technologies influence the animators' creative freedom. In particular, the chapter examines the growing use of 3D animation and AI-assisted tools within the practices of modern animation.

The introduction of modern technology transformed the process. Instead of drawing each frame, animators today now work with digital models and rigging systems, or AI-generated work. While these new tools improve both efficiency and production, they also introduce new changes concerning how creative control is exercised during the process.

As animation continues to evolve through these technological advancements, understanding how animators adapt to these tools while maintaining creative freedom becomes important. This provides context for examining how creative freedom is practiced and negotiated within animation workflows.

The Body of the Review

While the animation industry is shaped by economic and production processes that influence how workflows are structured within studios, this study focuses on analyzing the creative freedom in the age of AI and 3D animation. This study is titled "Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry".

specifically on how technological changes, particularly 3D animation and AI-assisted tools affect animators' creative freedom.

AI in Animation

A. AI-Assisted Tools in Animation

The usage of AI in animation can be traced back to the first half of the twentieth century, coming into use after the use of computer graphics (CGI) was introduced. Prior to the introduction and usage of AI, animation studios used manual techniques in order to create scenes and characters to look realistic (Wow How Studios, 2025).

AI algorithms analyze data on human movement and expressions, leading to realistic and emotionally refined characters. The mechanization of repetitive tasks such as character rigging and animation refining boost animator efficiency, allowing them to shift their focus on creativity and storytelling. The usage of AI in animation enables the faster delivery of high-quality products, while accelerating the rendering process, and facilitating the creation of complex visuals (Prayan, n.d.).

B. AI and Creative Control

As AI continues to transform the creative landscape, including the realm of animation, it begs the question on whether or not AI is the technological change that enhances creativity, or limits it.

It is emphasized that as we evolve technologically, AI is meant to serve human creativity, rather than replace it. This highlights the importance of the collaboration between labor organizations and businesses to ensure that AI technology is used both

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study
of Animators in the Animation Industry

ethically and inclusively, including the fostering of environments where AI enhances human ingenuity, rather than automating it (World Economic Forum, 2025).

AI is transforming the entertainment industry by creating new storytelling and creative opportunities for writers. However, the benefits depend on current choices. Because AI lacks emotion, the over-reliance on AI can lead to outputs where originality and depth are sacrificed in favor of efficiency. Because AI relies on data from user inputs and contextual information to perform a task, rather than forming original ideas, the system identifies patterns or relationships from the data instead, lacking any conscious intent, or personal experience (Capitol Technology University, 2025).

C. Limitations of AI

Although AI is a helpful and efficient tool in animation, AI still has its limitations. For example, AI lacks consistency in terms of continuity and proportions. Even as new tools continue to be developed, manual correction and human creativity is still required to ensure a consistent quality across the entire process. As a result, oversight from a present human team is crucial for maintaining pacing and direction (Kozłowska, n.d.).

D. The Future of AI in Creativity

As stated before, AI should be treated as a tool that aids humanity, rather than as a competitor or replacement for original and creative thought. As such, the future of AI and creativity is viewed as a blend of both aspects, where the technology is used as a leverage in the creative process, where success can be found by utilizing AI as a tool for inspiration, rather than a complete replacement (Matheus, 2025).

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

3D Animation Workflow

A 3D Animation workflow refers to the structured sequence of stages that assist both artists and technical teams in the creation, refinement, and finalizing of 3D digital assets for animation visualization. The workflow works as a roadmap that organizes complex tasks into manageable phases, ensuring the efficient execution of both creative and technical aspects that transform any idea into a full 3D asset (GeekforGeeks, 2025).

A. Relation Between AI and 3D Animation

As previously discussed, AI is transforming the animation process by performing repetitive and time-consuming tasks. In 3D animation specifically, AI is used to analyze models by pinpointing the appropriate place to include a location for skeletons or bone structures, assisting in weight painting, ensuring the proper skin weight adjustments for the intended movement (Upworks, 2024).

In addition, AI is used to enhance motion capture, allowing for natural character movements by mimicking the human actors. When trained on extensive datasets, AI tools can identify errors in rigging and offer suggestions to improve the process (Upworks, 2024).

B. Limitations of 3D Animation

In contrast to traditional animation, 3D animation is specialized, involving multiple roles from modelers, to rigger, to animators and technical directors. While this division in animation improves both efficiency and technical quality, this process can reduce the

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study
of Animators in the Animation Industry

level of creative control, because animators only work on specific parts of the project, rather than the entire sequence (Hickman, 2024). The increasing reliance on technical tools and workflow systems shapes how creative decisions are made within the environment.

Animator Adaptation

A. AI-Assisted Tools

With the shift from manual to automated production, animators are required to adapt to these new workflows by shifting their focus to conceptual and creative roles within, emphasizing a human and AI collaboration rather than a replacement (Ir and Gunanto, 2025). At the same time, AI integration introduces new challenges from managing multiple tools, coordinating outputs, and maintaining creative control across the different stages of production (Wang, 2025).

B. 3D Animation

As the 3D animation workflow grows more, animators adapt to the new workflow like they do with the incorporation of AI-assisted tools. While animation techniques such as the timing and spacing of movement remain consistent, the shift to 3D introduces a new workflow centered around digital tools, rigging systems, and software-based manipulation instead of frame-by-frame animation (Animation Mentor, 2025). The transition involves a learning-structured production line and collaboration within teams, differing from the individual workflow associated with traditional animation (Hickman, 2024).

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

In addition, modern animation practices continue to integrate a hybrid approach that combines both 2D and 3D techniques. This approach requires animators to maintain a flexible skill set that adapts to the evolving industry and its demands (Combrinck, 2024). Despite the continuing changes to the workflow, animators still continue to play a critical role in the maintaining of artistic control, as manual refinement and creative-decision making continue to remain essential in the production of high-quality animation (Zainal, Mustaffa, and Razak, 2025).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

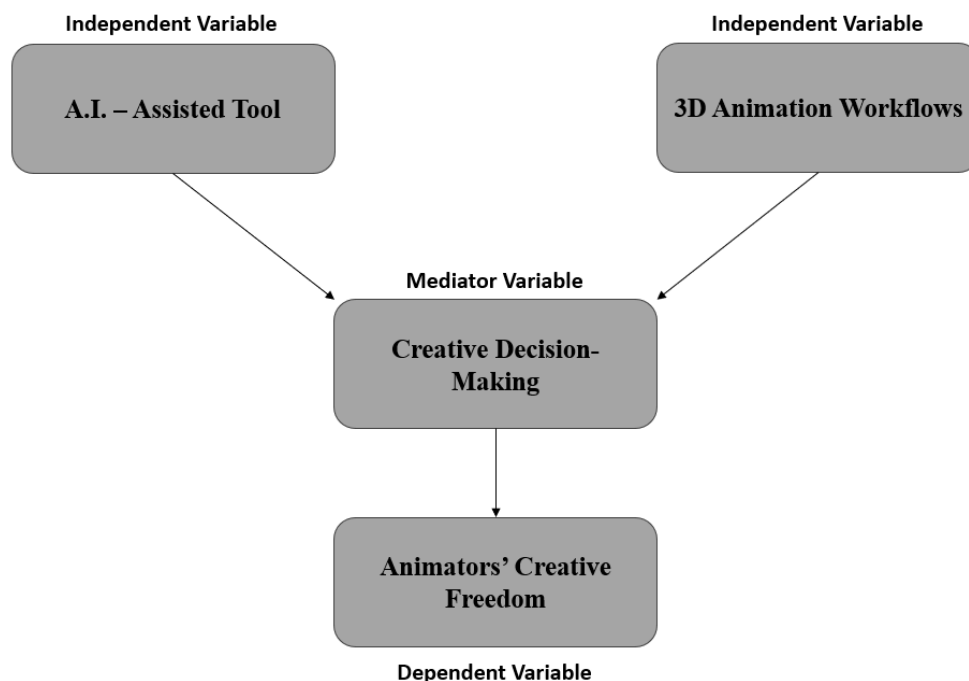


Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework of the Study

In research, a conceptual framework defines and clarifies the relationship between the **Independent Variable (IV)** and the **Dependent Variable (DV)**. For this study, the conceptual framework above illustrates how AI-assisted tools and 3D Animation Workflows influence Animators' Creative Freedom. Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

animation workflows (independent variables) influence the animators' creative freedom (dependent variable) mediated by the creative decision-making process (mediator variable).

Gaps in Literature Study

Even with the analysis of existing studies that explore how both the styles of animation and industry factors have evolved since the beginning, there is limited research that captures the animators' experiences and perspectives regarding how AI integration and the shift to 3D animation affect their creative freedom and workflow. In addition, the role of AI, and how it is perceived globally is still a section that remains unexplored in relation to the animation workflow.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative interview study examines how AI integration and 3D animation influence animators' creative freedom and workflow, based on the experiences of professional animators working in the industry.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

For this study, the qualitative descriptive research approach was used. This research approach utilizes the understanding and exploration of ideas established by past articles, and how the data within these articles has been interpreted.

Steps

The making of the entirety of the paper “**Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry**” followed an overall systematic process that includes the following:

1. Research

- The topmost requirement for this paper is the research, with the aim of comprehending the animation industry relation with these trends, and the result of the relationship. Relevant articles and reports were gathered, examined and reviewed for this step.

2. Interview

- Because the paper speaks about the effect of industry trends on the animators, an interview was conducted, with animators as the main focus to find out the extent these industry trends have in the freedom of the animators.

3. Compilation

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

- Once any and all relevant information has been gathered and reviewed, the compilation of any and all information was organized and rearranged to create a paper that is neatly organized, with all information situated in their respective part of the paper.

4. Writing

- Upon satisfaction with the compilation step, the penultimate step is the writing, which shall finally end up as the finished paper at which further reviews are conducted to discuss any and all final edits that continue to be made and needed.

5. Clean-up

- Strictly speaking, the clean-up process is a function during the writing process. The clean-up process is considered crucial as it helps in the fixing of any remaining oversights in the paper that were not immediately discovered during the writing process.

Scopes and Limitations of the Study

This study explored how industry trends in the animation industry, from the integration of AI, to the shift to 3D animation affect both the economic structure and creative direction of the animation industry through a qualitative research approach, with the focus on the analysis of historical development, technological advancement, and economics through existing articles and reports. The study includes the identification of how the trends affect the studios and their strategy.

This study is limited by the research gaps when connecting trends like 2D to 3D to outcomes such as labor and profits. Although the lack of data on regional trends and audience reception limited the depths of analysis, the study still provided a comprehensive view of the current industry and how this can influence future research to incorporate new methods such as perspectives from stakeholders.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were Filipino animators all working in-house at Top Peg Animation and Creative Studio Inc., Las Piñas, Metro Manila. To specify the ages of these animators, their ages ranged from the youngest at 26 years old, to the oldest at 37 years old. Additionally, all respondents have had at least one year's experience in the animation industry, with the longest being 10 years in the industry.

The specifics of their experiences as animators provided a more authentic and clear view of how they have experienced these trends as a part of their workflow.

Sampling Method

This study utilized purposive sampling, in order to select participants who possess direct experience and knowledge relevant to the research problem, ensuring that the data collected would provide insights into the impact of industry trends on animators' creative freedom.

Each participant selected needed the following criteria: (1) being a professional animator working in the animation industry, (2) having direct experience with the

workflow in animation production, and (3) exposure to industry trends such as AI-assisted software and/or 3D animation techniques.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher prepared a list of questions that were to be asked on the day of the interview itself. This set of questions were then sent to the admin of the studio via email to allow them to prepare for the interview, including a data privacy statement that assured respondents that their data is kept confidential, and that their data would only be used for this study.

The interview was conducted on-site at the studio itself. A semi-structured interview was used to ensure flexibility for the participants, allowing them to answer at their own pace. Each interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes.

Research Instrument

The main research instrument utilized in this study was a self-made questionnaire consisting of pre-made questions, designed to gather each participants' view on animation industry trends and its impact on animators.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the interview, each response to the questions were transcribed and carefully reviewed to ensure accuracy. After the transcription, the researcher noted any ideas and statements related to industry trends, creative freedom, workflow, and technological adaptation were noted.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

Each noted data was then grouped into categories. Each category was further refined into themes reflecting the animators' experiences and views regarding the integration of AI and 3D animation in their work.

The themes analyzed in relation to the research questions were interpreted alongside studies already noted in Review of Related Literature. This process allows comparisons between previous studies and interview results, identifying similarities and differences, and drawing conclusions regarding the impact of industry trends on animators' creative freedom.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the conduction of the on-site interview, a data privacy statement was sent to the admin that assured respondents that their data would be kept confidential, and would only be used for this study. During the day of the on-site interview, respondents were also provided a short and clear statement about the study and their participation in it.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this chapter, the key findings from the conducted interview are discussed and analyzed in accordance with the relation to both the main research question (MQ) and sub-questions (SQ). The results of the interview are thematically analyzed and interpreted to further contextualize the results.

The organization of each interview question discussed in this chapter is structured as follows:

- **Section 4.1 Awareness to the Trends:** A write-up of the respondents' responses in accordance with the questions that discuss the industry trends, covering their awareness of these trends, to the challenges that come with it.
- **Section 4.2 Software Creation:** A write-up of the respondents' responses in accordance with the question that asks about any new software that has been created as a result of these industry trends.
- **Section 4.3 Future of the Industry:** A write-up of the respondents' responses in accordance with the questions that ask about their audience's response, the future of animation concerning these trends, and their advice to the future generation of animators in preparation.
- **Section 4.4 Synthesis:** A synthesis of the findings, linking towards answering the main research question.

Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents

Experience as an animator	Frequency	Percentage
1 year	2	25%
2 years	2	25%
3 years	2	25%
6 years	1	12.5%
10 years	1	12.5%
Total	8	100%

Table 1 - Experience Distribution of Participants

Presented in Table 1 is the frequency and percentage of the respondents based on experience as an animator. The findings indicate a small proportion of respondents have a one year of experience as an animator, while a small proportion of respondents have a two years of experience as an animator. Only a small proportion have a three years experience, with a lone participant having a 6 year experience, and a lone participant with a 10 year experience as an animator.

Due to the small sample size of eight respondents, the findings presented in this chapter are not intended as a statistical generalization of the entire animation industry. Instead, the results aim to provide qualitative insights into the perspectives and experience of the respondents regarding AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflows.

Section 4.1 Awareness

At the beginning of the interview, respondents were asked about these industry trends, and whether they were aware of these industry trends, and their overall experiences with these trends within accordance with the workflow.

Additionally, respondents were also asked about the challenges that come with these trends, along with the skills that they believe were the most in demand.

4.1.1 Awareness to the Trends

Theme	Description	Majority/Minority View
High Awareness of AI tools	Most animators recognize AI as emerging, but limited in production use.	Majority
Partial awareness of 3D integration	3D used mainly as support, not full workflow shift.	Majority
Skepticism about AI capability	AI is seen as “not yet reliable” or “too early”	Minority

Table 2 - Animator Awareness of AI and 3D Animation

Presented in Table 2 is the view of respondents regarding their awareness of AI tools and its capability as a rising trend, along with the integration of 3D animation. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents are aware of AI tools and the partial integration of 3D animation. In terms of AI’s capability, a minority of respondents stated their skepticism towards the capability of AI, recognizing it more as a developing tool, rather than a core production asset.

In line with this finding, R3 conveyed that:

“For AI, I can’t really say because it’s still too early to tell, because it’s been mostly image generation or character chats, so I can’t really call it a tool that can help me.”

R5 emphasized the lack of AI usage in their work:
Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

“We’re not really allowed to use AI, nor are we using 3D animation because we are a mostly 2D animation company.”

Lastly, R6 acknowledged a gradual exposure to AI in their work.

“It’s only when designing that AI becomes useful, allowing us to save resources.”

Overall, while the awareness of the trends is high, a practical adoption of both AI and 3D animation is restrained by studio policies, production needs, and the overall uncertainty of AI’s reliability limits the use of these trends in the workflow.

Theme	Description	Majority/Minority View
Minimal Workflow Disruption.	AI does not significantly change the main animation workflow	Majority
AI used for minor tasks	Cleaning, suggestions, or references only	Majority
Entry-level task delegation	AI-related task often assigned to newcomers	Minority

Table 3 - Impact of AI in Workflow and Task Distribution

Table 3 represents the impact of AI on the animation workflow. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents say that AI does not change the workflow in a significant manner, and is instead relegated to minor tasks such as references or cleaning purposes. A minority of respondents say that tasks related to AI are assigned to newcomers.

R1 talked about the delegation of work associated with AI to those with entry level skills such as fresh grads or beginners:

“On the other hand, these jobs tend to be entry level, usually for people such as fresh grads or beginners.”

4.1.2 Challenges Imposed by the Trends

In response to the second question asked, which is about challenges faced in response to these trends, various challenges have been brought up, from challenges to the limits given in completing certain projects, which could affect the finished product's overall quality, to companies searching for the next major animated film to take over, citing films such as **Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse (2018)** and **K-Pop Demon Hunters (2025)** for example.

R7 related this result in a response showing that it had always been the same process:

“When something new becomes really big such as with Toy Story for example. It was very innovative for its time, and what happened? Everyone suddenly wanted to do the exact same thing. The same is true even today.”

When the integration of AI was brought up, interviewees cited that while AI has been used to replicate certain art styles or design, the AI software struggles to replicate certain, unique details present on the character being replicated, and replicating the art styles accurately, requiring them to step in and fix the problem.

R5 relayed this in a response citing an experience with AI regarding its inaccuracies:

“Based on our work, AI is not exactly competitive because it still has a few inaccuracies compared to traditional animation such as replicating a certain art style. Really, we use AI as a supplement that we use as a guide.”

4.1.3 Skills

As part of question 2, respondents were asked what skills they believed are the most in demand for animation.

Responses varied from knowing how to draw, understanding how the human anatomy bends and reacts, to properly translate into the animated character.

R1’s response considers anatomy an important skill, serving as an indicator that an animator can still go back to basics, and improve:

“Your foundation is important, basically knowing how to do anatomy and proportions. Studios consider this important because it shows that you can still go back to basics, and still use your skills to improve.”

According to interviewees, these skills help assure studios that the animator can utilize these skills to make any fixes to the animation when needed. The ability to come up with a new, unique idea for an animation project was also cited as a viable skill.

R3 echoed this in their response, citing the need for new ideas, with clients searching to find an animation to become popular:

“For me the most in demand are the ideas, especially when you look into the trending shows and movies. Clients want to find and create the next big thing similar to K-Pop Demon Hunters or Spider-Verse, especially since after their popularity, there were many others who were copying it, in order to replicate its success.”

According to the respondents, having these skills allows the studio to create an animated medium that not only resonates with the audience, but in turn, allows the studio to profit from the medium’s success.

Section 4.2. Software Creation

Theme	Description	Majority/Minority View
Increase in available tools	More animation software now available (free and paid)	Majority
Cost barriers	Premium tools restrict efficiency and access	Majority
Software improvements over time	Workflow improved compared to earlier industry stages	Majority
Unequal adoption	Some animators are unaware of new tools	Minority

Table 4 - Software Development and Accessibility

Table 4 represents the views of respondents regarding animation tools that have significantly increased in both numbers and accessibility over time.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

R3 conveys the increasing availability of these new software:

“Back then, we only had Adobe to rely on. But now, there’s much more available software, both free and paid. Even the resources we have now, are spread out between free and paid. There’s really a lot more available to animators now compared to before.”

R1’s response puts emphasis on the improvement of new software over the years:

“Actually there is a lot of software that is made for animation. They used to be expensive, but now it’s cheaper and easier to do.”

Despite the high availability of these new software, the affordability remains a barrier that limits access to these new tools.

R7 weighs in their response to these limitations, despite the eagerness to its helpfulness:

“Currently, there is more advanced software out there that has AI capabilities, but we haven’t really gotten around to using it yet because of its high asking price. Would it be helpful for us? I think so.”

Section 4.3 Future of the Industry

In this section the fourth, fifth, and sixth questions asked the interviewees about audience reception, their thoughts on the future of animation, before finishing off the

interview with any advice that they want to give for future, aspiring animators respectively.

4.3.1 - Audience Reception and Response

Theme	Description	Majority/Minority View
Limited audience influence	Most animators are not directly affected by audience feedback	Majority
Client-controlled decisions	Final creative decisions are dependent on clients, not audiences	Majority
Partial audience awareness	Some animators track feedback indirectly	Minority

Table 5 - Audience Reception and Creative Decision Making

Table 5 showcases the respondents' view on audience reception, and the extent of its influence on animator's creative decision, and how it remains as a factor in shaping the final output of the project.

R8 explained the impact of audience reception to a project:

"It's really hard to tell when audience preferences influence what we make specifically. For the most part, our clients just give us instructions, and we follow them to their specifications."

This reinforces a production structure where animators act more as executors of a client's desired vision, rather than the direct responder to audience feedback.

This sentiment is shared with R1, recounting an experience with a previous client:

“We had a director from South Korea, and they wanted an animation centered around their legends and culture, which didn’t click with the audience, especially with their local community. Later on, they wanted a slapstick-style comedy similar to Mr. Bean which did click with the audience.”

Despite the vision being based more on the client, respondents, such as with R7, answered that some awareness of audience responses still exist:

“To be honest, it’s really hard to estimate what audiences really want, because they change quickly. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but when one new thing comes out, they abandon the old trend in favor of a new trend. This is true especially with animation.”

The responses show that while being aware of any audience reception isn’t necessarily impossible, the workflow is still primarily based on client interpretation.

4.3.2 Future of Animation

Theme	Description	Majority/Minority View
Optimism toward the future of animation	Respondents believe animation still has a strong potential future	Majority
Rise of indie animation	Respondents believe independent creators have more opportunities	Majority
Importance of originality	Unique styles and storytelling are seen as essential	Majority

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

Human creativity over automation	AI cannot fully replace storytelling	Majority
----------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------

Table 6 - Animator Perspectives on the Future of Animation

Table 6 showcases the respondents' view of the future of animation in regards to the continuing integration of AI tools and 3D animation. The results show that the majority of the respondents believe that there is still a future for animation in spite of the inevitable rise and integration.

R8 conveyed that despite the rise of AI, the audiences still want genuine animated media:

“People still want genuine animation, and hate AI generated work. Notice how even when a small bit of AI shows up, people are very quick to express their negative opinions about it. That to me says a lot about the future.”

R8's response is similar to that of R7, who initially believed that there would be no future, but with responses based on social media, they now believe that the future of animation is indeed good.

“If you had asked me this question before, I would've said that the future of animation is bad. Nowadays, I'd say that the future is in good hands. Sure, some companies do want to switch to AI, but if you look around social media for example, there are still strong advocates for genuine animation”

The growing popularity of indie animation is another indication for respondents that more opportunities are opening to succeed because of the accessibility of both animation software and social media to more people.

This is supported by R2's response:

"There are a lot of people out there unconnected to big name studios such as Warner Bros. who can create their own animated work. The competition is not that bad honestly, because there are still a lot of doors open for indie animators to create their own work."

R2 further suggested having ambitions outside of animation, considering interests outside animation as an influence in the formulation of new stories:

"Have ambitions outside of animation. Which is not to say that they should abandon animation entirely, but have things unrelated to animations, because those interests can help you develop stories that can help you with your animations."

Additionally, there is an emphasis from respondents about the want for original and unique ways of storytelling that showcase the capabilities of animation in a unique way, as conveyed by R1:

"When they did Spider-Verse for example, even though it was 3D, they did something new and unique. Same goes for Arcane. It was a blend of 3D and 2D, something new to see. Nowadays, they're doing animation with new ways to animate, and that's what I like: animators thinking outside the box to create a new experience."

The results and findings suggest that despite the continuing integration of AI and 3D, overall, animators see the future of the animation industry as one that is growing advanced in a technological way, but still dependent on human creativity.

4.3.3 Advice

The interview concluded with advice for future aspiring animators to continue to work on their skills to not only better their skills at animation, but to also have an understanding of the basic skills such as the weight and movement of the characters.

In response to AI usage, respondents advised to find the balance between animating regularly and utilizing AI. While future animators should start integrating to the use of AI, they should also remember to practice traditional animating techniques, because relying too much on AI can weaken existing animation skills.

This is relayed in a response by R8:

“I think finding a good balance is also good if you insist on using AI, but I’d still prefer if one sharpens their own skills, that way they have something to rely on if there’s a strict no AI rule.”

Section 4.4 Synthesis

For the final section, the study integrates and discusses the findings in Sections 4.1 to Section 4.3 to address the main research question (MQ) introduced in the Introduction section. Additionally, the study integrates all gathered data to answer the sub-questions included, while relating the interview findings to existing research.

Main Question

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

MQ: “To what extent do AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflow influence animators’ creative freedom?”

The interview findings revealed that AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflows influenced animators’ creative freedom in a limited, yet evolving manner. While these technologies introduced new methods and processes in animation production, they do not fully restrict or replace the creative role of animators

The responses gathered in *Table 2* under **4.1.1 Awareness to the Trends** demonstrate that animators remained highly aware of current industry trends, particularly AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflows. However, *Table 3* in the same section showed that these technologies have not significantly changed most respondents’ workflow. Although these trends shape animators’ perception of production, respondents still view them as supplementary rather than a transformative tool

4.1.2 Challenges Imposed by the Trends further demonstrate that animators primarily use AI for minor and repetitive tasks, such as the cleaning or refining generated elements. Respondents also noted that AI-generated outputs often lack detail and accuracy. These findings reinforce the idea that creative decisions still depend on the animator’s adaptability and technical skills, highlighting the continued importance of the human workforce in animation production. **Section 4.1.3 - Skills** also shows that foundational animation skills such as drawing, anatomy, and creativity remain despite the growing development of new technologies.

At the same time, **Section 4.2 Skills** highlights that new software and tools improve production efficiency without replacing the animator's role in shaping the final output. Instead, animators use these technologies to streamline certain processes while still actively guiding the creative decision of the work

Despite the continued development of AI tools and 3D animation, **4.3.2 Future of Animation** reveals that most animators still maintain a positive outlook toward the animation industry. Respondents believe that the demand for man-made content and skilled artists continue to sustain the industry despite the increasing trends. This perspective connects perfectly with **4.3.3 Advice**, where animators emphasized that the traditional animation principles remain the foundation of practice in animation even as AI becomes more widespread. Respondents encourage future animators to balance AI usage with artistic talent, warning that the excessive reliance on AI may weaken existing creative skills.

Overall, AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflows continue to influence creative freedom by changing the production process, but they have not significantly reduced the importance of an animator's skills and creative contributions. Animators still maintain creative freedom through their roles in interpreting, refining, and finalizing animated works.

Secondary Questions

In addition to answering the main question, this study also addressed the two sub-questions (SQ) introduced during the Introduction. This section of the Synthesis Section connected the study's findings with existing research.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

SQ 1: How do animators perceive the use of AI-assisted tools in relation to their creative freedom?

The findings revealed that animators primarily perceive AI-assisted tools as supplementary technologies rather than a complete replacement.

The responses analyzed during **4.1.2 Challenges Imposed by the Trends** and **4.2. Software Creation** shows that animators use AI-assisted tools are viewed as tools to improve efficiency when handling time-consuming or repetitive tasks. Respondents also emphasized that AI remains limited in replicating both artistic expression and stylistic accuracy.

Respondents explained that AI-generated outputs require correction and refinement, particularly when dealing with finer details or matching a specific artistic style. These responses show that animators still play an active role in refining and adjusting outputs to meet artistic standard and client expectations. This process highlights the continued importance of human input in maintaining the quality of the final product.

Overall, the current level of AI integration suggests that animators do not perceive AI as a direct threat to their creative freedom. Instead, they view AI as a complementary tool that supports the creative process without reducing artistic control.

SQ 2: In what way does 3D animation workflow influence animators' creative decision making and artistic control?

The findings indicate that 3D animation workflow influences creative decision-making by changing how animators produce and integrate visual elements rather than limiting artistic control.

As discussed in **Section 4.1.1 Awareness to the Trends**, many respondents primarily work with 2D animation while incorporating 3D elements into backgrounds, environments, or visual effects. This integration requires animators to decide how they can combine different animation styles while maintaining visual consistency throughout the project.

As a result, animators must consider new creative and technical factors when blending in different techniques and adapting to changing production methods. Despite these adjustments, respondents stated that they still maintain control over the final output. Respondents explained that their role ensures that all visual elements align with the intended artistic direction and client's request.

Therefore, although 3D workflow influences the production process, they do not reduce the animator's role in creative decision-making. Instead, these workflows expand the tools available to animators and allow them to adapt, while maintaining artistic control.

Summary of Findings

Overall, this study shows that AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflows influence animation production primarily through changes in process and efficiency, rather than reducing the animator's creative role. Despite the integration of emerging

technologies, animators continue to play a central role in the decision-making process and maintain authority over the final creative output. The findings emphasize the importance of balancing technological advancement with human creativity as the animation industry continues to evolve

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

When the research first started and continued to be developed, this study set out to answer one main question: *“To what extent do AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflow influence animators’ creative freedom?”* This study aimed to examine how AI-assisted tools and 3D animation workflows influence the creative freedom of animators, addressing the limited research on how these technologies affect animators’ roles and creative decision-making from their perspective. Specifically, the study explored how AI and 3D tools shape the production workflows and how animators maintain creative control, while adapting to these changes.

Using a qualitative research approach, data was collected through interviews with animators in the industry. Their responses were analyzed in order to understand how these technologies impact the creative process.

Insights were found that, while AI and 3D tools improve efficiency and streamline production, they also introduce certain limitations when it comes to maintaining creative control. Despite these constraints, animators adapt their workflow accordingly and continue to exercise their creativity through both problem solving and artistic decision making.

Conclusion

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

Based on the results of the studies, the following conclusions are posited:

This study concluded that AI and 3D animation workflows shaped and influenced the creative freedom of animators from their own perspective, through qualitative insights from these animators. By focusing on the insights from working animators, the study shows that these technologies do not eliminate the creative freedom entirely but instead reshape how it is expressed within the modern animation workflow.

AI and 3D tools improve efficiency and enhance production capabilities, but they also impose constraints in relation to software limitations and structured workflows. In response, animators adapt their creative process, demonstrating flexibility while maintaining a strong artistic input.

Overall, this study highlights the evolving relationship between technology and creativity in animation. Despite the increasing automation from both AI tools and the 3D animation workflow, animators continue to rely on human judgement and the artistic decision-making process as central elements to the animation process.

Recommendations

Based on the findings researched throughout the study, the researcher proposes the following recommendations for the respective demographics:

For Animators and their Respective Studios:

For animators and animation studios, the study encourages professionals to actively balance AI-assisted tools with human input. Animators should use these technologies to enhance efficiency while continuing to make artistic decisions

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study
of Animators in the Animation Industry

themselves, rather than relying on AI as a replacement. Studios should also design flexible workflows that preserve creative control, especially in 3D environments that depend on pre-built systems.

For Education Institutions

For educational institutions, the findings highlight the need to update the animation curricula to reflect the increasing use of AI and 3D technologies in the production workflows. Schools should actively emphasize both creative decision-making and the development of artistic identity, alongside technical training. By introducing courses that incorporate AI tools introduced in a guided and ethical manner, schools can help students understand both their benefits and limitations within the creative process.

For Researchers:

For researchers, the study recommends expanding future studies by including a broader and more diverse group of animators from different studios and regions outside of the Philippines, such as Rough Draft Studios located in South Korea. Additionally, a comparative analysis across studios provides deeper insight into how different workflows shape creative freedom.

Additionally, research should continue examining how the growing integration of AI tools influences the creative process over time.

For Audiences

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

For audiences, the research encourages viewers to develop a more informed appreciation of animated works by recognizing the roles of animators behind these emerging technologies.

When audiences understand that AI and 3D tools function as support system rather than replace human creativity, they can better appreciate the effort and artistry involved in animation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wow How Studios, (2025) Revolutionizing Storytelling: The Impact of AI in 2D/3D Animation. <https://wow-how.com/articles/impact-of-ai-in-animation>

Prayan Animation Studios (n.d.) The Rise of AI in Animation: Shaping the Future of Storytelling. <https://www.prayananimation.com/blog/ai-animation/>

Capitol Technology University (December 10, 2025) Is AI Good or Bad for Creativity: How Generative AI is Transforming Human Ideation. <https://www.capttechu.edu/blog/how-generative-ai-is-transforming-creativity>

Kozłowska, M. (n.d.) AI animation - cost saver or strategic trap? 6 risks. <https://explainvisually.co/en/ai-animation-cost-saver-or-strategic-trap-6-risks/>

World Economic Forum (January 21, 2025) Labour Leaders: Artificial intelligence must serve human creativity, not replace it. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/artificial-intelligence-must-serve-human-creativity-not-replace-it/>

Matheus, L. (May 15, 2025) The Future of AI in Creative Professions: Innovation or Disruption? <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/future-ai-creative-professions-innovation-disruption-luidi-matheus-uvppf>

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

GeekforGeeks (August 21, 2025) 3D Modeling Pipeline: A Complete Guide.

<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/blogs/3d-modeling-pipeline/>

The Upwork Team (January 19, 2024) What Is Rigging in 3D Animation? Basics and How It Works. <https://www.upwork.com/resources/3d-rigging-animation?>

Hickman, M. (2024, October 17) The Role of Technical Directors on a 3D Animation Team. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11563168/>

Ir, T. and Gunanto, S. (June, 2025) The Future of Animation: Exploring the Integration of Generative AI and the Role of Animators.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/393747534_The_Future_of_Animation_Exploring_the_Integration_of_Generative_AI_and_the_Role_of_Animators

Wang, W. (2025, November 22) AnimAgents: Coordinating Multi-Stage Animation Pre-Production with Human-Multi-Agent Collaboration.

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2511.17906>

Animation Mentor (2025, August 07) Free Workshop: Transitioning from 2D Animation to 3D Animation.

<https://www.animationmentor.com/blog/transitioning-from-2d-to-3d-animation/>

Combrinck, T. (2024, November 30) How 2D digital art and 3D animation workflows are merging.

<https://www.creativebloq.com/art/digital-art/how-2d-digital-art-and-3d-animation-workflows-are-merging>

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

Zainai, I., Mustaffa, F., and Razak, A. (January, 2025) Reimagining 2D to 3D: Towards a Seamless AI-Augmented Workflow for High-Fidelity Animation Production.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387679513_Reimagining_2D_to_3D_Towards_a_Seamless_AI-Augmented_Workflow_for_High-Fidelity_Animation_Production

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
TCPS 2 RESEARCH ETHICS CERTIFICATE



APPENDIX B:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview Questions

Provided by: Joel Ramon L. Lopez

Questions:

1. Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? (Example: AI integration, Shift to 3-D animation, etc.)
If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve or hinder the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges?
If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?
2. What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?
3. Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow?
If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task?
If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?
4. Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate?
If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow?
If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?
5. With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?
6. What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends.

APPENDIX C:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 1

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R1

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R1: Yes. I am aware of these trends. Just recently, a client sent an AI-generated image that I had to clean up.

On one hand, the trend of AI has a possibility that it could remove a lot of the more tedious parts of animation such as clean-up and in-betweening.

On the other hand, these jobs tend to be entry level, usually for people such as fresh grads or beginners. So when AI starts getting rid of these, there are less and less people coming in for a potential job.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R1: When you apply to any animation studio, your foundation is important, basically knowing how to do anatomy and proportions. Studios consider this important because it shows that you can still go back to basics, and still use your skills to improve.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

For 3D, you should still have the eye for creating anatomy. It really goes back to the foundation of skills to model a character in 3D.

It's less on the technical and animation side of things. It's more on the foundation of your skills that will get you more likely to be hired.

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R1: Actually there is a lot of software that is made for animation. They used to be expensive, but now it's cheaper and easier to do. I've seen it on YouTube with different animators coming out. Sometimes, they do different styles. There was this new animation software that came out sometime after the pandemic, it was a real game changer with their main selling point being that their 2D rigging is similar to 3D animation. Additionally, different styles can be applied such as textured animation.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate? If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R1: This is a really hard question to answer, because really, the audience's perception of animation has changed. Before, they saw animation for kids, such as parents not watching these animated projects. Now, because these kids are now adults, they're actually enjoying animated shows such as anime and other kinds of animation.

The problem with doing your own animation is that we don't know what stories will click with the audience. For example, we had a director from South Korea, and they wanted

an animation centered around their legends and culture, which didn't click with the audience, especially with their local community. Later on, they wanted a slapstick-style comedy similar to *Mr. Bean* which did click with the audience. If we compare what happened here in the Philippines, it's the same story. Films with local elements such as *Dayo* and *RPG Metanoia* were successful but people said it was not good. We've talked with people who worked with Disney and Pixar, and they watched it, and said it was good. When they asked why it failed, we said because the audience wasn't interested. It's very hard to make animation to click with audiences.

Now, with the advent of YouTube and streaming, you can show bits and pieces of it such as a teaser and pitch, which maybe in the future can be successful.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R1: Animation is going to be faster when it comes to developing animation such as movies. The problem with this is the issue with collector property, which is the art style that AI is copying. The problem is that people are getting used to AI, and will think that everything is AI. Because AI has a certain look, it can look too perfect. For example, AI is being used to perfectly replicate certain styles such as Ghibli and *Spider-Verse*. Because of that, the next time these companies will release a new movie, you'll have people go around saying "*Oh, that's AI.*" which is going to be a problem in the near future.

Hopefully, people will drop AI for creative purposes. They may still use AI for other stuff, but for creativity, hopefully, it gets dropped entirely.

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

R1: My advice to animators is that even with the advent of AI is to focus on your skills. Learn how to draw, anatomy, and storytelling, because that is what I find lacking. More original stories, because sometimes, we just copy stories from existing media and make it our own.

I want to see new stories and also unique ways of animation. When they did *Spider-Verse* for example, even though it was 3D, they did something new and unique. Same goes for *Arcane*. It was a blend of 3D and 2D, something new to see. Nowadays, they're doing animation with new ways to animate, and that's what I like: animators thinking outside the box to create a new experience.

APPENDIX D:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 2

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R2

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R2: The biggest challenge for me personally is the “Crunch Culture” in the industry. It can really exhaust animators, and make future projects suffer. I think this can tie in to competitiveness. It might not be as competitive as we think it is because companies like circling back to AI. If they’re using AI to replace people, then that means that there is a need for people surely. There is space. There is not much competitiveness. People can still get in, they just need to get in.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R2: The most in-demand skills right now are those who are good draftsmen with a good understanding of volume and the physicality of art. People with that skill are considered flexible, and easier to teach. Surprisingly, people with this skill are more uncommon than you think.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study
of Animators in the Animation Industry

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R2: To be honest, I am not familiar with any new tools. With the software that I use now, I like that it is a decent tool when it comes to illustrating and animation, that I can easily rely on.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate? If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R2: In terms of audience preferences to the trends, I prefer following the trends that I'm already familiar with. If I'm following the trends that I'm more interested in, I'm more likely to do a good job, which attracts people. With the freedom to draw what you like captivates your audience in a way unlike when you try to chase and capitalize on trends you're not interested in.

It's better to create your own success and doing your own thing, which captivates audiences more to your own style.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R2: For the future of animation, I think that there is still a future because there are still talented 2D animators out there. I haven't watched *Hazbin Hotel* yet, but the success of that show has opened the doors for more indie animated series to come out. There are a lot of people out there unconnected to big name studios such as *Warner Bros.* who

can create their own animated work. The competition is not that bad honestly, because there are still a lot of doors open for indie animators to create their own work.

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

R2: Stay human. Stay connected. Have ambitions outside of animation. Which is not to say that they should abandon animation entirely, but have things unrelated to animations, because those interests can help you develop stories that can help you with your animations.

APPENDIX E:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 2

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R3

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R3: For AI, I can't really say because it's still too early to tell, because it's been mostly image generation or character chats, so I can't really call it a tool that can help me. For 3D animation, while I do use 3D animation, I really only use it as a background for perspective purposes. In terms of the final product, its visibility depends on the final result. It's more of a benefit for backgrounds, because it can be reused for different camera shots instead of redrawing it again in 2D.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R3: For me the most in demand are the ideas, especially when you look into the trending shows and movies. Clients want to find and create the next big thing similar to *K-Pop Demon Hunters* or *Spider-Verse*, especially since after their popularity, there were many others who were copying it, in order to replicate its success.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study
of Animators in the Animation Industry

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R3: Yes, and it's based on the availability of software. Back then, we only had Adobe to rely on. But now, there's much more available software, both free and paid. Even the resources we have now, are spread out between free and paid. There's really a lot more available to animators now compared to before.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate? If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R3: Based on the trend on different entertainment styles such as shorts, as long as you're entertaining, and you can find an audience, which will shape the content you create.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R3: For me, the future of animation will be geared more towards independent animators. Because with the ability to post animation in social media sites such as YouTube or Twitter, they can find an audience, and eventually a studio who would be interested in developing it into a full-length animated show.

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

R3: I think we should watch these trends closely, while at the same time, you do what you like. You might think it's better to copy what others are doing, but if you do what you like, you may end up attracting people to what you create.

APPENDIX F:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 4

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R4

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R4: The usage of AI for us is really dependent on our director. Some have used AI as a crutch to speed our animation in time, or for lengthy processes to be reduced in a shorter time, which back then would've taken longer to process without AI.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R4: So far, there is a lot less reliance on outsourcing other artists or studios for our animation. Even without AI, we still have various ways to utilize to make our own animation, depending on what we have. Before, there was barely any software that could create animation for certain animation requirements. Now, we have new software that speeds up the process, and makes it easier for us.

In terms of skills, the most in demand for me is flash animation. Traditional animation is much more costly, since flash animation makes it easier for someone to find jobs.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R4: As of right now, apart from what has been directly given to me by my directors, I haven't really used any tools that have any direct AI usage within it.

So far, I haven't really thought about what could be missing on the way I work or draw. I feel like that I've already optimized myself to manage and work myself to work consistently.

I don't really mind learning about new software. Every few years, I learned how to animate in a new way, and adjust myself accordingly to still deliver a consistent workflow for myself.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate?

If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R4: I can't really say because I don't really hear much input. Really, I only do the job. It's not that I don't care when I animate, it's more that I don't really see a problem with it.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R4: To be honest, there's still a lot of talented people out there, even with the rise of AI. It's just like a game really, where eventually, we'll all get used to it, and be able to discern what is AI or not, to the point that people will be forced to disclose any AI generated work.

When you look at the younger animators and what they post, they're very talented, and I don't think any software will ever take that away. So long as people want to animate and bring in the effort, I don't see a bleak future for animation.

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

R4: I suppose discipline and consistency is the best advice I can give. As long as you're not very rigid in the industry, you are able to adapt and overcome any challenge that comes your way. As long as you're consistent, you'll be all right.

APPENDIX G:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 5

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R5

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R5: In using AI tools, I am aware of it both as a trend, and its ability to generate an image and other actions based on prompts. We're not really allowed to use AI, nor are we using 3D animation because we are a mostly 2D animation company.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R5: Based on our work, AI is not exactly competitive because it still has a few inaccuracies compared to traditional animation such as replicating a certain art style. Really, we use AI as a supplement that we use as a guide.

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R5: As a 2D animator, our 2D animation is really a software that uses hand drawing and vast coloring to create the work. So my answer is no, because the software used is based on the version installed where AI is a part of the new version.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate?

If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R5: Yes, audience preference does influence the stories we make, because sometimes, our clients will send us the work, and it's often influenced by audience feedback, which is why it's needed and a big help, because how we animate the story is based on the audience's feedback given to us.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R5: In terms of these trends, they'll be easier to use in the future because there are already students, elementary age students at that because of the easy access they have. In contrast with regular animation where they still have to draw each individual frame, and bypass the training process.

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

R5: My best advice for them is to still study the fundamentals of animation, because even with the easy access of AI, they'll still need to practice drawing and learning about stuff such as the human anatomy because they're the basic skills needed.

APPENDIX H:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 6

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R6

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R6: Yes. And I think that it is really affecting animation in the long run because right now, it's giving us an advantage rather than a disadvantage because using AI, we manage to cut costs.

Really, it's not affecting us greatly because our clients prefer authentic animation made by actual artists. It's only when designing that AI becomes useful, allowing us to save resources.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R6: Right now, I guess it's flash animation that's in demand. Not only because it's what appeals to children, but adults in general prefer the movements that resemble something close to *Samurai Jack*. They want an animation that is similar to those that are currently trending.

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R6: Currently, our software is not AI software, but it is a software tool originally made from Japan. Our software isn't meant to fight AI, because our clients still prefer authentic animation.

Really our AI usage is limited to Chatgpt, usually for suggestions, and we develop the suggestion from scratch on our own to our liking.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate?

If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R6: What we animate doesn't really have a say from the audience. Rather, we have clients telling us what to animate, and how it should be done. Really, it's the opposite. We create stories that affect the audience. Not the other way around.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R6: For me, it's really inevitable. Sometimes for me, it goes to my mind that I have to change jobs because these changes would affect the animation portion, because one click, and it could show you an animation. But, I consider it a slow descend of traditional animation, because the more AI does an animation, it cannot replicate emotion like we can. Even after seeing a lot of AI animation, I can tell that the movement is very robotic, and lacking any sort of emotion. Even though more people are using AI, they still prefer the original.

I believe that the more animators show our hard work, the more people can see how it's really done.

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

R6: For me, the young ones still like to go for traditional animation, but they should try to integrate AI, because it is the future. Additionally, don't rely on AI too much, because once people rely on AI too much, that is when the art truly disappears. A good balance between AI and traditional animation is what they should have.

APPENDIX I:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 7

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R7

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R7: Yes, I am aware of these trends. As you know, AI has been used to generate imagery and even animation to an extent, allowing access for many users all around. We're not affected by these mostly because of our 2D-focused work, so we rarely get any AI images to work on.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R7: It's really about creating the next big thing that will resonate with audiences. When something new becomes really big such as with *Toy Story* for example. It was very innovative for its time, and what happened? Everyone suddenly wanted to do the exact same thing. The same is true even today.

As for the skills, I say human anatomy is important. We will have character models to animate that don't always follow regular human anatomy, but the concept is still there.

Analyzing the Creative Freedom in the Age of AI and 3D Animation: A Qualitative Study of Animators in the Animation Industry

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R7: Currently, there is more advanced software out there that has AI capabilities, but we haven't really gotten around to using it yet because of its high asking price. Would it be helpful for us? I think so.

Our current software is a bit behind because it's an older version with a newer version available that has improvements over the current version.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate?

If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R7: To be honest, it's really hard to estimate what audiences really want, because they change quickly. I don't know if you've noticed, but when one new thing comes out, they abandon the old trend in favor of a new trend. This is true especially with animation. I mean, how long will it be really until something like *K-Pop Demon Hunters* is abandoned for the next big thing? It's sad and inevitable.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R7: If you had asked me this question before, I would've said that the future of animation is bad. Nowadays, I'd say that the future is in good hands. Sure, some companies do want to switch to AI, but if you look around social media for example, there are still strong advocates for genuine animation, which is very reassuring to me,

because it shows that even as something like AI continues to grow strong, the want for genuine animation is still very strong.

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

R7: First of all, I know that AI feels very tempting to use, and while I understand that AI is here to stay, don't rely on it too much for your work. Be creative. Pick up even a pencil and paper and draw something once in a while. It doesn't even have to come from the heart. Even a simple doodle can mean a lot when it comes to creativity, because it sharpens yourself to be reliant on your own skills.

APPENDIX J:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT - RESPONDENT 8

DATE: December 10, 2025

PARTICIPANT CODE: R8

Interviewer: Are you aware of any industry trends in the animation industry? For example, AI integration, shift to 3D animation, etc. If yes, how have these changes affected the workplace? How do they improve the workflow? What have been the biggest challenges? If no, have you noticed any changes in the way animation projects are being created compared to when you first started?

R8: Yes, I am aware of these trends. You bump into it every so often when you go around the internet. While I can't say that it has really affected the workflow here, I am aware of this movie, I don't remember the name unfortunately, but it was marketed as the first film fully animated using AI, which deeply upsets me, because its existence alone is enough to tell me what AI is truly capable of, and I fear that it's going to attract more executives to the idea of it.

Interviewer: What are the biggest challenges that you have faced in the industry, and how competitive is the market right now, and what skills do you believe are the most in demand?

R8: Based on what experience I have, it's definitely the idea. Clients want something to trend so it makes them a lot of money. I know it's repetitive, but the popularity of animated content such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *K-Pop Demon Hunters* really resonated well with the audience, and you know that executives out there want a piece

of the success it generated. If you can come up with an idea of equal or greater value, it helps a lot.

Interviewer: Has any new software or tools been created as a result of these trends to improve workflow? If yes, what tools have made the biggest differences for you, and how do you approach these new tools for your task? If no, what do you believe is missing in these tools that could help your work?

R8: Well for me, our current software tool is very helpful, but I definitely think that we could get a better one out there that could make things easier for us. Animation is a tedious process, I will tell you that. But I think even with the slightest bit of improvement, it can make the job just that more tolerable for us in the long run.

Interviewer: Has audience preferences influence the stories that you animate? If yes, can you give an example, and how it has affected the work flow? If no, does it give you artistic freedom? Why or why not?

R8: It's really hard to tell when audience preferences influence what we make specifically. For the most part, our clients just give us instructions, and we follow them to their specifications. If we want to improvise, we take extra precaution in that regard to avoid dissatisfying the client.

But something tells me that audiences do help to a degree. Just look around social media. They are very vocal about what they like and don't like, especially when it comes to animation. Take *Sonic the Hedgehog* for example. Remember when the teaser first came out, and everyone hated how he looked so badly that the studios were forced to change his look to be more accurate to his in-game model? I think the same can apply.

I'm not made aware of it directly, but something tells me that it has *some* influence one way or another.

Interviewer: With the rising trends, how do you see the future of animation?

R8: I think the future is good. People still want genuine animation, and hate AI generated work. Notice how even when a small bit of AI shows up, people are very quick to express their negative opinions about it. That to me says a lot about the future. Sure, some companies want to shift to AI, but with too much negative feedback surrounding it, can you really say that it will be worth it in the end?

Interviewer: What advice can you give to aspiring animators for preparing for future industry trends?

R8: Practice your skills. I know AI sounds like it will take a lot of work and make things easier, but you grow better when you practice your skills. I think finding a good balance is also good if you insist on using AI, but I'd still prefer if one sharpens their own skills, that way they have something to rely on if there's a strict no AI rule.