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Evolution and innovation: Contemporary trends in graphic design

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Abstract. This article aimed to explore current trends in graphic design and to identify the skills and philosophies required for designers to remain relevant in an increasingly digital and user-centric world. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis to examine prevailing trends in graphic design, with a particular focus on identifying patterns and innovations in design practices – especially in relation to digital tools, minimalist aesthetics, typography, and user experience. The study found that the integration of digital tools, such as AI powered design software and augmented reality, has transformed the creative process, enabling designers to produce more dynamic and interactive visual experiences. At the same time, the trend towards minimalism reflects a broader cultural shift towards simplicity and clarity, with designers prioritising clean layouts, limited colour palettes, and functional aesthetics. Typography has also evolved, becoming increasingly experimental through the use of custom fonts and dynamic typefaces that enhance brand personality and user engagement. An emerging trend has been the incorporation of sustainable practices into design, such as eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient digital solutions. The findings indicate that contemporary graphic design continues to adapt to a digital and user-focused environment. These results have significant practical implications for both designers and industries reliant on visual communication, providing a valuable resource for understanding and navigating the rapidly evolving graphic design landscape

Keywords: interaction; visual communication design; user engagement; interactive design; user experience (UX)

INTRODUCTION

Graphic design is continually evolving, shaped significantly by rapid technological developments and shifting cultural paradigms. With digital innovation increasingly influencing creative methodologies, designers are now leveraging sophisticated tools such as AI-driven software and augmented reality (AR) to generate interactive and immersive experiences. Designers integrate these technologies not merely as supplementary elements, but as integral components of the creative process. Recent studies on the evolution of graphic design have highlighted the transformative role of digital tools, yet gaps remain in addressing the full scope of technological advancements and their interdisciplinary impacts. For instance, A. Balakrishnan & M. Najana (2024) noted that while AI and AR have revolutionised creative processes, their potential for fostering real-time interactive user engagement – particularly in non-gaming contexts – remains underexplored in commercial design applications. Similarly, F. Song *et al*. (2024) demonstrated how AI integration in metaverse ecommerce

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extends beyond efficiency gains, enabling immersive brand experiences that redefine visual communication. However, foundational studies such as those by G.E.D. Elkheshen (2020) primarily focused on the initial phases of the digital revolution, overlooking the nuanced applications of AR and AI in contemporary design practices.

The minimalist aesthetic, as examined by M.C. Wibowo & A. Zainudin (2024), reflects a cultural shift towards simplicity, with empirical evidence showing its efficacy in reducing cognitive load for Generation Z audiences. Their findings align with S. Gumber's (2023) assertion that minimalism transcends visual trends, serving as a functional framework for enhancing usability. Nonetheless, prior research has often neglected the cultural motivations behind minimalist principles, particularly their role on digital platforms. Typography's evolution is another critical area where recent scholarship, such as S.T.F. Poon (2021), has underscored the strategic use of custom fonts to reinforce brand identity in digital media. Prior research in this domain, however, has largely overlooked the adaptive potential of experimental typography within multilingual and interactive digital environments. N. Qyll (2022), in their article, pointed out the lack of a new paradigm that accounts for the differences between screen and print typography and called for the development of a conceptual framework that reflects the impact of new media on typographic practice.

User experience (UX) research has also advanced, with T.S. Da Silva *et al.* (2012) laying the groundwork for iterative design methodologies. Recent studies, such as A.G. Persada's (2018), have expanded this by integrating emotional design principles, showing how aesthetics and psychology converge to enhance engagement. Yet, a holistic framework linking UX to sustainability – as proposed by G.A. Bonsu *et al.* (2020) – is still nascent. Their study critiqued the lack of eco-conscious practices in developing nations, urging designers to adopt lifecycle approaches. While contemporary graphic design research has achieved noteworthy advancements, it still falls short of a unified framework that fully captures the interplay among technological progress, aesthetic innovation, and user-centred strategies. Although many studies discuss these elements individually, few address how they converge and reinforce one another in practical design contexts. This fragmented understanding limits designers' ability to seamlessly merge cutting-edge tools and culturally resonant visuals with user-driven principles, ultimately constraining the potential for transformative outcomes.

Consequently, there is a pronounced gap in the literature examining the wider implications of these trends for both practical applications and theoretical evolution within graphic design. Bridging this gap is crucial for charting more holistic directions in future practice and education, ensuring that the discipline remains relevant, responsive, and robust in a continually shifting digital landscape. By analysing key developments such as the integration of digital tools, the rise of minimalism, the evolution of typography, and the growing emphasis on user experience, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of graphic design.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, combining qualitative case study analysis with quantitative data evaluation, to investigate contemporary trends in graphic design. The methodology was selected to provide both an in-depth understanding of design practices and measurable evidence of their effectiveness. The research was conducted in three sequential phases. Case selection phase: five industryleading brands were selected for analysis based on their prominence in design innovation: Apple (n.d.) (website design), Netflix (typography system) (Doughnut, 2023), Nike (AR campaigns) (Williams, 2020), Headspace (app interface), and sleepmōd (Sleepmod, n.d.) (sustainable branding). Selection criteria included: a) market leadership, b) design award recognition, and c) documented user engagement metrics. Data collection phase: digital assets were gathered from official company websites and mobile applications; typography samples were extracted from Google Fonts (n.d.) and Variable Fonts (n.d.) platforms; AR campaign data were collected from Nike's official marketing materials; sustainable design specifications were obtained from sleepmōd's product documentation. Analysis phase: visual analysis evaluated colour schemes, layout structures, and typographic systems; user experience metrics assessed navigation efficiency and accessibility features; sustainability indicators measured material choices and energy efficiency claims.

The study adopted the design evaluation model proposed by B. Müller *et al.* (2013) for brand consistency assessment while incorporating the UX testing methodology from T.B. dos Santos *et al.* (2021). Key evaluation metrics included:

1. Digital integration: depth of AI/AR implementation; range of device compatibility.

2. Minimalist aesthetics: colour palette complexity; compositional balance, including the level of negative space used to enhance visual expressiveness and interface readability.

3. Typography innovation: investment in custom font development; capability for multilingual adaptation.

4. User experience: task completion rate; emotional engagement score.

5. Sustainability: percentage of recycled materials used; digital energy efficiency claims.

Data sources, including primary materials, consisted of screenshots from the analysed digital platforms, variable font files from Google Fonts, AR campaign

demo videos from Nike, and technical specifications for sleepmōd's textile materials. Secondary data were collected from Google Scholar and IEEE Xplore.

The methodology incorporated modified versions of Y.K. Lee's (2022) AI implementation framework and G.A. Bonsu *et al.*'s (2020) sustainability assessment tool, with adaptations noted in Table 1. All website data were captured using Wayback Machine archives to ensure temporal consistency. This systematic approach enabled a comprehensive evaluation of each design element while maintaining replicability. Researchers documented all procedures in a shared digital logbook with timestamps and version control to ensure methodological transparency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The in-depth investigation into interactivity within visual communication design reveals a wide array of influences and factors, ranging from the enhancement of user engagement and learning outcomes to addressing potential issues related to cognitive load and accessibility. This section presents the findings in detail and considers their broader implications, offering a nuanced perspective on the extent to which interactivity is shaping and redefining the visual communication design landscape.

Design in transition: Integrating AI, AR, and minimalist aesthetics in contemporary practice

The adoption of AI and AR in graphic design has transformed creative workflows, enabling dynamic and interactive visual experiences. For example, AI-powered tools such as Adobe Sensei automate repetitive tasks, allowing designers to concentrate on innovation. This aligns with the findings of Y.K. Lee (2022), who demonstrated that AI integration enhances efficiency in design processes. However, while Lee's study emphasised productivity gains, the present research further identified AR's role in bridging digital and physical experiences – a factor less explored in prior studies. Nike's AR-based advertising campaigns (Fig. 1) exemplify how immersive technologies enhance user engagement, a trend corroborated by X. Fan *et al.* (2025), who found that AR increases customer purchasing intention compared to traditional media.

Minimalist design principles, characterised by clean layouts and restricted colour palettes, dominate contemporary aesthetics. Apple's website (Fig. 2) demonstrates how minimalism reduces cognitive load – a finding supported by S.M. Sani & Y.K. Shokooh (2016), who linked minimalist interfaces to improved user comprehension. In contrast, B. Müller *et al.* (2013) argued that oversimplification led to an 11% decrease in brand recognition. The results of this study counter this by demonstrating how brands such as Google balance simplicity with strategic typography and imagery, reinforcing identity without clutter. This divergence underscores the need for context-specific design frameworks.

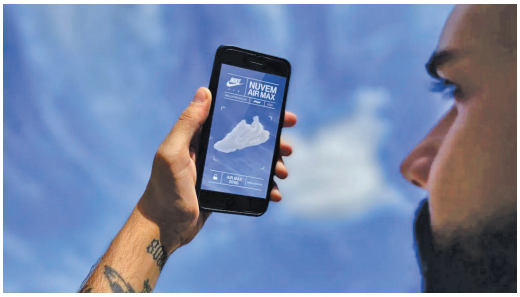

Figure 1. An AR-based advertising campaign by Nike
Source: R. Williams (2020)

Figure 2. Apple's website highlighting minimalist design elements
Source: Apple (n.d.)

Likewise, Google's Material Design framework emphasises simplicity, consistency, and responsiveness, ensuring a unified user experience across diverse platforms and devices. By removing superfluous elements, these minimalist approaches promote a clear, seamless interface that maintains brand consistency while fostering deeper user engagement.

Evolution of typography: Custom fonts and dynamic typefaces

The use of custom typography not only reinforces brand identity but also increases adaptability across different platforms. According to V. Singla & N. Sharma (2022), fonts constitute a core component of a brand's visual identity system, serving to strengthen its uniqueness and recognition. Different font styles effectively convey brand values and cultural positioning, thereby fostering deeper connections with target audiences. This perspective is further extended by recent advancements in dynamic typography – particularly its capacity to respond to user interactions – which significantly enhances engagement, a dimension that earlier typographic studies often underestimated (Poon, 2021; Thottingal, 2025).

These innovations transcend mere aesthetic considerations, emerging as powerful strategic tools for brand differentiation in increasingly competitive markets. Through the development of proprietary typefaces – exemplified by industry leaders such as Netflix and

Spotify – designers are able to encapsulate a brand's unique voice, values, and visual identity within each letterform. A paradigmatic case is Netflix's custom typeface, Netflix Sans, which was meticulously engineered to reflect the brand's dynamic character while ensuring optimal readability across diverse screens and devices (Fig. 3). This typographic solution not only consolidates Netflix's distinctive branding but also enhances user experience through optimised on-screen text presentation. The strategic implementation of such custom typography demonstrates how technical innovation can intersect with brand strategy to create compelling visual communication systems.

Figure 3. Dynamic typography in action
Source: Doughnut (2023)

Beyond their direct effect on brand cohesion, custom typefaces can also address multilingual requirements, allowing designers to tailor the appearance and functionality of text to align with cultural norms and linguistic nuances. This flexibility is especially valuable for global companies that must accommodate audiences who speak different languages or use scripts with unique typographic properties. Consequently, custom fonts are increasingly regarded as an essential asset in establishing a genuinely universal brand presence.

However, dynamic typography presents technical challenges. As noted by S. Thottingal (2025), although variable and colour fonts provide designers with greater creative flexibility, they also introduce complications, such as browser compatibility, performance limitations, and the challenge of maintaining consistency across platforms and devices. The findings of this study echo this but further emphasise the importance of collaboration between designers and developers in addressing these obstacles. Dynamic typography, which adapts in real time to evolving user interactions and contextual variables, is likewise on the rise. Its influence is most apparent in digital environments, where letters and words may shift, animate, or change style in response to a user's behaviour, ambient lighting, or device specifications. For example, platforms such as Google Fonts (n.d.) and Variable Fonts (n.d.) employ variable fonts capable of automatically adjusting attributes such as weight, spacing, or contrast to enhance legibility under varying resolutions or screen orientations. Through these real-time adaptations, dynamic typography transcends its traditional role of presenting static information and instead becomes a core component of the user experience. Furthermore, the integration of motion graphics and micro-animations in dynamic typography can capture attention more effectively, guiding users' focus and subtly highlighting key content or calls to action. Ultimately, this transformative approach not only enhances usability but also offers designers and brands a powerful means of crafting immersive, memorable experiences that resonate within an everevolving digital landscape.

Emphasis on user experience (UX): Iterative and collaborative design

The shift towards UX-centric design is evident in apps such as Headspace (Fig. 4), where iterative testing refines usability. This mirrors the conclusions of T.B. dos Santos *et al.* (2021), who found that prototyping helps companies integrate user feedback into development, thereby improving user experience and market success. However, their study overlooked emotional design, which this research identifies as a critical component of long-term engagement. The growing emphasis on user experience (UX) has propelled graphic design beyond superficial aesthetics into a domain where usability, accessibility, and adaptability take precedence. Designers increasingly recognise that a visually striking interface alone does not guarantee user satisfaction. Instead, true fulfilment arises from ensuring that each design decision resonates with actual user preferences and aligns with contextual needs. As a result, user-centred design methodologies – including usability testing, prototyping, and ongoing feedback loops – have become fundamental components of the modern design toolkit.

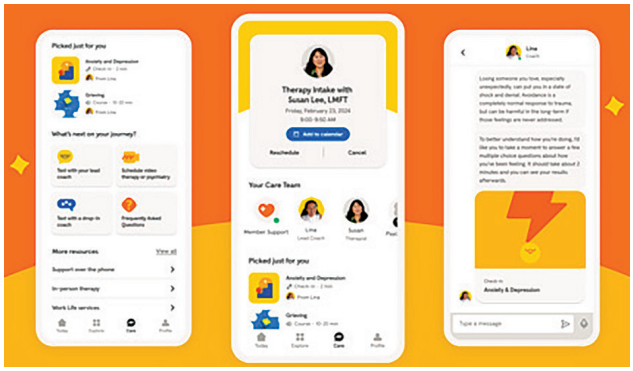

Figure 4. Headspace app interface
Source: Mexico Bariatric Center (2024)

An illustrative example is the widely adopted meditation app Headspace, where designers invested considerable resources in iterative testing to refine aspects such as navigation flow, visual hierarchy, and interactive elements (Fig. 4). By soliciting and incorporating input from real users at multiple stages of the development

process, the design team effectively merged simplicity with rich functionality. Similarly, companies such as Airbnb exemplify the value of collaborative design by assembling multidisciplinary teams – comprising designers, product managers, developers, and researchers – to address UX challenges. This cross-functional approach ensures that design decisions reflect diverse perspectives, align with broader organisational goals, and remain attuned to user aspirations. The outcome is a product that balances aesthetic appeal with practical utility, keeping pace with consumers' evolving expectations in a fast-paced digital environment. K.K. Feng *et al*. (2023) likewise highlighted that interdisciplinary teams can integrate knowledge and skills from varied professional domains, thereby enhancing the quality of user experience design. Similarly, Figma's real-time collaboration system exemplifies how cloud-based design tools enable seamless teamwork across disciplines. By allowing designers, developers, and stakeholders to co-edit projects synchronously, Figma shortens feedback cycles and accelerates iterative refinement. Its version control and commenting features further streamline the incorporation of user insights, aligning with the UX-focused principles evident in Headspace's development. This approach not only increases efficiency but also democratises the design process, ensuring inclusivity in decision-making – a crucial factor for projects involving distributed teams or operating under tight deadlines.

Sustainability in graphic design: Eco-friendly practices

Sustainable design practices – ranging from the use of recycled materials to energy-efficient digital solutions – are gaining momentum. Studies by I. Hameed & I. Waris (2018) confirmed that eco-conscious branding enhances consumer trust. However, this research adds that sustainability initiatives must also be economically viable to ensure broader industry adoption. Heightened awareness of environmental concerns has led many graphic designers to adopt eco-responsible strategies across all stages of their work, reflecting a systemic shift towards more sustainable modes of production and consumption. This shift extends beyond the use of environmentally friendly materials in print projects – such as recycled paper, vegetable- or soy-based inks, and low-impact printing processes – to encompass a comprehensive lifecycle approach. Designers increasingly strive to reduce waste and resource consumption from concept development through to distribution, integrating sustainable principles directly into creative briefs and client proposals. By doing so, they aim not only to minimise ecological harm but also to set a precedent for forward-thinking, conscientious design.

For instance, the design agency ecoBrand specialises in crafting sustainable branding solutions, combining recycled or biodegradable materials with efficient, low-ink printing technologies and ecofriendly packaging. One example is their project "sleepmōd", an eco-friendly bedding brand that utilises certified eco-fibres from Lenzing AG and Unifi, Inc., such as TENCEL™ and REPREVE®. These materials effectively reduce water usage, fertiliser and pesticide application, and microplastic pollution associated with traditional textile production (Sleepmod, n.d.). The brand's products are dye-free and pollution-free, and recycling plastic bottles into premium textile fibres, significantly reduces its environmental impact. These initiatives lower the overall ecological footprint while underscoring a commitment to social responsibility. Beyond print-based efforts, web and application design also present opportunities for sustainability. Some creatives advocate for "dark mode" interfaces or other low-energy UI solutions to conserve power – particularly on devices with OLED or AMOLED screens, as quantified by S. Andrew *et al.* (2024). Others optimise websites to reduce data transfer demands and reliance on resource-intensive hosting services. Furthermore, certain agencies have begun exploring carbon offset programmes and green hosting providers to further diminish their digital impact. Such practices not only align with international sustainability objectives but also resonate strongly with a growing audience of consumers who actively seek out environmentally responsible brands. In an increasingly competitive market, adopting these ecofriendly strategies offers both a moral advantage and a tangible business benefit, enabling companies to stand out while demonstrating a genuine commitment to preserving the planet. Another notable example is IKEA's modular packaging system, which exemplifies sustainable design through material efficiency and functional adaptability (IKEA, n.d.). By standardising box sizes and optimising spatial use, IKEA reduces material waste during production and transportation while maintaining structural integrity. The packaging also incorporates recycled cardboard and minimalist graphic elements, aligning with the brand's eco-conscious ethos. This approach not only reduces environmental impact but also enhances the user experience – customers can easily identify and assemble products due to the intuitive visual labelling system. Such innovations demonstrate how sustainability can be embedded within both physical design and logistical workflows, offering a scalable model for other industries.

Synthesis and implications: Interconnected trends shaping modern graphic design

The findings of this study demonstrate that contemporary graphic design is shaped by a dynamic interplay of technological innovation, aesthetic evolution, and user-centred methodologies. As the study has shown, the integration of AI and AR tools – such as those employed by Nike and Adobe Sensei – has redefined creative workflows by enabling interactive and immersive experiences. According to the conclusions of the study by X. Fan *et al.* (2025), AR significantly enhances user

engagement, yet accessibility barriers remain a critical limitation, particularly in markets with technological disparities. This technological shift is further complemented by minimalist design principles, which reduce cognitive load and improve usability, as evidenced by Apple's streamlined interfaces and supported by empirical data from S.M. Sani & Y.K. Shokooh (2016). However, B. Müller *et al.* (2013) cautioned against excessive simplification, highlighting the need for balanced design strategies that maintain brand recognition while optimising functionality.

Typography has also undergone a transformative evolution, with custom and dynamic typefaces serving as key tools for brand differentiation and multilingual adaptability. According to data from V. Singla & N. Sharma (2022), proprietary fonts such as Netflix Sans reinforce brand identity, while dynamic typography, as analysed by S. Thottingal (2025), introduces technical challenges that necessitate closer collaboration between designers and developers. These typographic advancements align with broader UX-centric trends, where iterative design processes – exemplified by Headspace's development cycle – prioritise usability and emotional resonance. T.B. dos Santos *et al.* (2021) emphasised that prototyping and user feedback are critical for refining digital products, yet their research overlooks the economic and logistical constraints faced by smaller design studios – an aspect examined in greater depth by R. Frankiv & D. Ditkovskyi (2023) across the context of the impact of business models on UX/UI solutions across various service sectors.

Sustainability emerges as another pivotal trend, with eco-friendly practices gaining traction in both print and digital design. According to the study by I. Hameed & I. Waris (2018), sustainable branding enhances consumer trust, but widespread adoption depends on economic viability. The research further reveals that minimalist design principles inherently support sustainability by reducing resource-intensive elements, while AI-driven tools optimise energy-efficient digital solutions. These interconnected trends underscore a broader shift towards holistic design frameworks that harmonise technological capabilities, aesthetic clarity, and ethical considerations.

The study addresses its core research questions by identifying four dominant trends in modern graphic design: (1) the integration of AI and AR for interactive experiences; (2) the dominance of minimalist aesthetics for improved usability; (3) the strategic use of dynamic typography for brand engagement; and (4) the prioritisation of UX and sustainability. To navigate these trends, designers must cultivate a diverse skill set, including proficiency in digital tools, an understanding of cognitive psychology, cross-disciplinary collaboration abilities, and a commitment to sustainable practices. These competencies enable designers to create solutions that are not only visually compelling but also functionally robust and ethically grounded. Limitations of this study include its focus on tech-forward markets, which may not fully represent global design practices. Future research, as suggested by F.M. Van Amstel (2023), should explore these trends in underrepresented regions to decolonise design discourse and ensure inclusivity. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term impact of converging trends on industry standards and educational curricula. These directions will be critical for fostering a more equitable and adaptive design landscape.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the analysis conducted, it was found that technological advancements, cultural shifts, and evolving user expectations have a transformative impact on modern graphic design. The integration of digital tools – particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) – has expanded the possibilities for creating dynamic and interactive visual content, thereby enhancing the depth of user engagement. It was also found that the spread of minimalist aesthetics aligns with a broader cultural trend that favours simplicity and functionality. In highly visually saturated environments, minimalism enables clear and effective communication of essential messages. The evolution of typography has demonstrated the growing importance of custom fonts and dynamic typefaces as tools for reinforcing brand identity and capturing user attention across various media platforms.

Particular attention was given to the rising importance of user experience (UX), which has led to the development of more iterative and collaborative workflows. In these processes, designers, developers, and researchers jointly prioritise usability, accessibility, emotional engagement, and visual quality. Furthermore, the active incorporation of sustainable practices into graphic design reflects a growing sense of environmental responsibility among brands. Eco-oriented methods not only meet consumers' ethical expectations but also provide a tangible competitive advantage.

Thus, the findings of the study outline key directions in the transformation of the graphic design field that are relevant for designers, businesses, and educational institutions. Future research should focus on the intersection of technology, aesthetics, and sustainable design, as well as evaluate the long-term consequences of these converging trends for creative practices and market demands.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Еволюція та інновації: сучасні тенденції в графічному дизайні

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Анотація. Метою цієї статті було дослідити сучасні тенденції в графічному дизайні та визначити навички і філософію, необхідні дизайнерам, щоб залишатися актуальними у світі, який стає дедалі більш цифровим і орієнтованим на користувача. У цьому дослідженні використано змішаний підхід, що поєднує якісний і кількісний аналіз для вивчення сучасних тенденцій у графічному дизайні, зосереджуючись на виявленні закономірностей та інновацій у практиці дизайну, зокрема щодо цифрових інструментів, мінімалістичної естетики, типографіки та користувацького досвіду. Дослідження показало, що інтеграція цифрових інструментів, таких як програмне забезпечення для дизайну на основі штучного інтелекту та доповненої реальності, революціонізувала творчий процес, дозволивши дизайнерам створювати більш динамічні та інтерактивні візуальні образи. Водночас тенденція до мінімалізму відображає ширший культурний зсув у бік простоти і ясності, коли дизайнери надають перевагу чистим макетам, обмеженим кольоровим палітрам і функціональній естетиці. Було виявлено, що типографіка також еволюціонувала, стаючи більш експериментальною завдяки використанню нестандартних шрифтів і динамічних гарнітур, які посилювали індивідуальність бренду та залучення користувачів. Також було виявлено нову тенденцію, яка полягає у впровадженні сталих практик у дизайн, таких як екологічно чисті матеріали та енергоефективні цифрові рішення. Результати дослідження показали, що сучасний графічний дизайн адаптується до дедалі більш цифрового та орієнтованого на користувача світу. Результати цього дослідження мають важливе практичне значення як для дизайнерів, так і для індустрій, що покладаються на візуальну комунікацію, слугуючи цінним ресурсом для розуміння та навігації у швидкозмінному ландшафті графічного дизайну

Ключові слова: взаємодія; дизайн візуальної комунікації; залучення користувачів; інтерактивний дизайн; користувацький досвід (UX)