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# If it's artificial, it's not journalism

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The media crisis has dovetailed in time with the rise of content marketing, that is, the commercialisation of goods and services via the distribution of materials that are useful for the audiences they are trying to attract with these mechanisms. The digital social media – Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok and many others – have become the meeting point of journalistic and other companies who are testing out these formulas. This is why brands prefer news professionals to be in charge of these tasks.

Even if they have been educated as journalists, no one could undertake this promotional mission as successfully as news professionals can. Minute-by-minute, firms specialised in content marketing and similar activities show incredible skill at resolving two tensions in the market: how to deal with this kind of production and how to employ a host of journalists who, were it not for this solution, would be jobless.

This job refit seemed like a good remedy for the problem of journalists who until recently had worked in media that had had to let them go or were even forced to shut down. However, this widespread transformation actually began when numerous reporters started to join press offices and communication agencies. That corporate transition, done either by vocation or simply by need, was not free of controversy, nor is the current one, with artificial intelligence and other systems from the so-called *fourth and fifth industrial revolutions*.

Digitalisation has unleashed a sophistication that piles on even more ethical questions (Shilton, 2018: 107-171). The media are starting to integrate artificial intelligence, deep learning and machine learning into the routines of their departments, including marketing, advertising, newsroom, infographics, photography... The media industry, which is still suffering from the dire consequences of the latest economic upheaval – from the collapse of the real-estate bubble

in 2008 to the coronavirus pandemic – is aiming to ensure its future through the automation of the collection, analysis and processing of commercial and journalistic information (Guzman, 2019: 83-96).

Many of the heads of these organisations have figured that if the tech giants – Google, Meta, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, IBM and others – have committed to this trend with conviction and heavy investments, they should try it, too (Moran & Shaikh, 2022: 1756-1774). Within the framework of industry 5.0, generative artificial intelligence, which consists of collecting information on different topics which later will be used to generate new ideas, is so fashionable that even the audiovisual industry is relying on it to ensure the best possible future.

This is one of the prognoses that can be gleaned from a recent study by experts from Dentsu, who claim that this technology will be fundamental in revitalising creative formulas, especially the media: television, computers, tactile tablets, smartphones, consoles and other Internet of Things devices.

The analysts claim that generative artificial intelligence will transform the way users access contents on both platforms and search engines (Pavlik, 2023: 84-93). Furthermore, advertisers, scriptwriters, content producers and influencers will have a kind of assistance never before seen in the history of communication that is capable of determining the effect their material will have with a minimal margin of error. In fact, they are already aware that generative artificial intelligence will enable them to fabricate images, sounds and other resources that would never exist without it. At the same time, consultants are convinced that the competition among corporations, the media, channels and streaming operators is going to be heightened in the forthcoming seasons due to the onset of this mainstay of the fifth industrial revolution, among other factors.

The explanation of this phenomenon is actually quite simple: if the competitors use identical machines, the results will tend to resemble each other, perhaps too much... Therefore, from Hollywood to Barcelona, from Bollywood to Stockholm, efforts to individualise commercial propositions will multiply, and advertisers are looking for new formats with the goal of capturing the attention of a public besieged by a growing number of stimuli (O'Neil, 2017).

Regardless, the most expert voices (human ones, that is) warn that audiences will soon tire of inhabiting an ecosystem with virtually omnipresent promotions. So what can help brands to prevent spectators, listeners, readers and browsers from losing interest? The experts have a clear answer: authenticity and a commitment to social and ecological values, factors which – incidentally – will one day cease being beyond the reach of generative artificial intelligence.

Indeed, this technology is arousing the interest of companies and institutions, monopolising headlines and even prompting mistrust among the public at large. More critical scholars view it as the main threat to being able to continue seeing the economy, society and culture as they have been understood thus far. In any case, the overall assessment of this innovation is highly

positive (Stray, 2019: 1076-1097), even if we run the risk that the enthusiasm sparked by the embrace of this technology reveals an acritical, snobby attitude.

For the time being, there are few rigorous studies that enable us to shift from the intuition and clamour of talks and colloquia to cool-headed, science-based analysis. One of the few exceptions in this regard is the use of artificial intelligence by audiovisual producers. And the conclusions of the heads of the Yahoo Entertainment and YouGov survey from which these ideas are drawn are as striking as they are disconcerting.

They found that audiences in the leading world power, the United States, do not enjoy watching films or TV programmes generated by artificial intelligence, especially if they feature characters who are not flesh-and-blood people. In short, audiences and professionals agree on the essentials. When preparing a report, interviewing the main actors in the news, crafting an on-the-ground chronicle, designing an expert analysis or improvising live in the wake of an unexpected event, there is no debate whatsoever: the reporters have to be there. And there they will remain, because if it's artificial, it's not journalism.

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