
Miscellaneous

Félix Arias-Robles

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5910-1541>

farias@umh.es

Universidad Miguel Hernández

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Between interest, uncertainty, and awareness: Outlooks on AI in leading media organizations

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has already become an inherent part of newsrooms, so how professionals perceive it is crucial in determining its impact. Through semi-structured interviews (n=21) with executives, technicians, and journalists from 8 leading media outlets in the United Kingdom, this article reflects a wide range of perspectives, almost never defined by professional roles, but converging in the figure of a professional eager for knowledge, unafraid, and adopting a critical stance. A swift development of this technology is anticipated, with a profound impact on business models that will reshape the labor market, and where the relationship with tech giants will be pivotal. The production of quality content, the balance between personalization and public interest, and the fight against disinformation will be critical factors. Understanding and contextualizing the opinions of journalism professionals on the impact of AI is one way to help steer the consequences of this profound industrial transformation.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, newsrooms, business models, quality, platformization, disinformation, United Kingdom.

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1. Introduction

A decade after the first experiments with algorithms in newsrooms, the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a novelty. In this more mature phase, the most extreme reactions, both of enthusiasm and rejection, have subsided. It is uncommon to find alarmist views regarding a sudden decline in jobs due to task automation (Kim & Kim, 2017, p. 187) or drastic changes in production and distribution (Nechushtai & Lewis, 2019, p. 298). Even less prevalent are studies that deny the potential of this phenomenon to transform journalism and society.

Instead, the idea that AI will shape the medium-term development of journalism has solidified (Zheng et al., 2018, p. 267). AI has been present everywhere for years, particularly in our phones (Agrawal et al., 2018, p. 1). This includes, prominently, news information (Lim & Zhang, 2022, p. 1). At the very least, journalists are required to experiment with and understand this technology through knowledge, training, and a critical attitude (Peña-Fernández et al., 2023, p. 1).

In the first JournalismAI report, Beckett (2019, p. 90) already announced a new critical historical moment for journalism and warned of a window of 2 to 5 years to adapt to this technological disruption. In the second publication from this London School of Economics think tank, he emphasized the challenges facing the profession, for which AI was not a solution, but rather a necessary challenge to address (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023, p. 1).

The significance of this transformation soon made its way into academia. The broad overviews and theoretical questions of early works gave way to more specific and in-depth analyses of “the growing visibility and importance of algorithms and associated forms of automation in how news is organized, produced, and distributed” (Thurman et al., 2019, p. 989). A recent systematic review highlighted research in four major areas: testing algorithmic tools, establishing practices and standards for journalistic work, attitudes and technological acceptance, and discourses on AI and journalism (Siitonen et al., 2023, p. 303). Another compilation, this time not limited to communication (Fox & Griffy-Brown, 2022, p. 1), showed that papers on AI have experienced a significant surge since the 1980s, with a notable increase in publications since 2020.

The rise of generative AI in recent years has highlighted the need to intensify efforts in these research areas. DeVerna et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of comparing AI research before and after the surge of these digital tools. In the journalistic field, Pavlik (2023, p. 92) underscored the need for systematic and critical analyses to assess the impact of platforms like ChatGPT.

Some authors have focused on methodological aspects. A study led by Thurman (2019, pp. 981–982) emphasized ethics, organizational principles, and the symbolic value of machine-driven journalistic work. Guzman Lewis (2020, p. 1) proposed three horizons: 1) studying how people make sense of these applications; 2) analyzing the dynamics these changes introduce into newsrooms; and 3) reflecting on their metaphysical implications.

The first of these propositions frames this research, which aims to analyze the perspective of professionals from leading media outlets in the United Kingdom on the evolution of AI and the main consequences of its application to journalism: content quality, the relevance and sustainability of the profession, employment, personalization, and disinformation. The goal is to contribute to the discussion on the best way to address this technological transformation, drawing on the opinions of some of those shaping the present and future of AI in the sector.

2. Literature review

2.1. The reshaping of journalism through generative AI

AI, understood as “a collection of ideas, technologies, and techniques that relate to a computer system’s capacity to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence” (Beckett, 2019, p. 15), encompasses technologies such as statistical analysis and language processing, elements that have been an integral part of journalism since its inception (Deuze & Beckett, 2022, p. 1915). Introduced by McCarthy in 1956, the concept of AI has evolved into practical applications in communication, including conversational agents and automated writing software (Guzman & Lewis, 2020, p. 3).

The development of large language models (LLMs) has accelerated a trend that was already emerging (Björn Becker et al., 2023, p. 2) in the generation of text, audio, images, and video (Zhao et al., 2024, p. 1). Generative AI, the result of these models, specializes in creating new information by identifying trends and patterns in existing data (Codina et al., 2024, p. 221). One of the most widespread families of models, Generative Pre-trained Transformers (GPT),

is trained on vast amounts of data to generate writings that mimic human language (Javaid et al., 2023, p. 2).

Despite not being conscious or autonomous, platforms like ChatGPT are capable of processing and presenting information in a manner that closely resembles human communication. They stand out for offering greater accessibility and lower technical requirements compared to previous AI applications, representing a significant leap for newsrooms (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023, p. 8). Moreover, their potential for further development seems vast (Newman, 2023, p. 35).

Generative AI tools optimize production processes and reduce operating costs, thereby facilitating content personalization and opening up new opportunities for audience segmentation (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). On the other hand, this technological shift poses significant challenges by disrupting the revenue structure based on traditional advertising (Lindblom, Lindell & Gidlund, 2022). The reconfiguration of the role of journalistic professionals in response to automation implies the redefinition of media value propositions, generating renewed competition in an increasingly digitized environment (Van Dalen, 2024).

At least in the short term, journalists will not disappear due to their creative abilities, adaptability, and judgment (Linden, 2016, p. 136). AI systems have limitations, such as the inability to innovate or understand subtle human emotions, as well as their reliance on provided data, which hinders the verification of the accuracy of their responses (Haleem et al., 2022, p. 6). Thurman et al. (2017, p. 1) predicted a greater development of human skills necessary to complement AI, particularly judgment, curiosity, and skepticism.

The consequences of these transformations on employment in the sector remain uncertain. AI primarily assists news workers rather than replacing them. However, there are no guarantees that this will continue. AI is already mature enough to directly or indirectly replace certain journalistic tasks. Moreover, it is unclear whether AI will free journalists to engage in more in-depth journalism; on the contrary, this time-saving could be filled with new or additional low-value demands (Simon, 2024, p. 5). The more critical perspectives emphasize the need for critical thinking about technology (Helberger et al., 2022, p. 1605) and challenge the belief in technological advancement as a solution to existing problems (Broussard, 2019, p. 10).

In the current context, quality journalism could be considered more essential than ever. There are new opportunities for smaller media outlets, provided they define a strategy with clear objectives that prioritize content curation over overproduction (Borchardt, 2022, p. 1923). However, the profession faces significant pressures due to revenue loss and competition from alternative information providers. And AI, like any technology, is not a magic solution (Opdahl et al., 2023, p. 13). The future of AI-assisted journalism depends on striking a balance between algorithms and editorial and ethical parameters to maintain content integrity and trustworthiness (Ahmad et al., 2023, p. 323).

The development of AI in journalism, often driven more by technological novelty than by strategic vision, frequently fails to significantly improve the product. Without a clear strategy, media outlets are vulnerable to costly and ineffective technological solutions (Helberger et al., 2022, p. 1606). A well-defined vision of AI not only catalyzes successful innovation, but also empowers media and society to resist the influence of large tech giants with their own vested interests (Kueng, 2017). Some research explores new funding models, such as collaboration with tech companies (Deuze & Beckett, 2022, p. 1915). Others, however, advocate for resisting the growing dependence of media on these large corporations (Simon, 2023, p. 18).

In any case, the survival of the profession will depend on how it adapts to changes and, consequently, on the reflection made about its new role. Whether AI poses a threat or becomes

a valuable tool for enhancing quality and efficiency in a context of time and resource constraints (Pavlik, 2023, p. 92) depends on how it is conceptualized. It is essential to define concrete models for AI implementation, promote newsroom workflows, and introduce editorial skills among professionals to support these processes (Caswell & Dörr, 2018, p. 17).

The use of algorithms could precisely serve as an incentive to promote internal transparency in media organizations (Diakopoulos & Koliska, 2017, p. 1). This is particularly relevant in a context where AI can act as both a catalyst and a tool to address two major social issues: polarization, often resulting from content personalization, and disinformation (Simon et al., 2023, p. 1).

Personalization is a central consequence of AI use in journalism, aiming for systems that emulate Netflix or Spotify in offering tailored content recommendations. The next step would be generating personalized stories based on users' interests and demographic data (Lim & Zhang, 2022, p. 1). However, creating differentiated content for each user poses risks such as the loss of autonomy and privacy, selective exposure, discrimination, and an individualism that is incompatible with the health of a robust democratic system. These aspects challenge traditional notions of journalism, potentially reducing diversity and reinforcing biases by creating filter bubbles and echo chambers (Rydenfelt et al., 2022, p. 1). Furthermore, the use of algorithms can erode editorial control, introducing biases at various stages of content production (Noain-Sánchez, 2022, p. 116).

These information bubbles have already become fertile ground for disinformation. The so-called “deepfakes”—hyper-realistic videos, audios, and images created with AI—pose one of the major potential dangers (Mustak et al., 2023, p. 1). On the other hand, technology can also be an ally in combating disinformation. Fact-checking organizations use AI at various stages of their routines, speeding up processes, simplifying tasks, and improving the accuracy of results. However, integrating AI presents risks such as inequality, as technological resources and expertise are required (Gutiérrez-Caneda & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024, p. 1), as well as mistrust. Effective implementation and results rarely have empirical support, which limits criticism and feedback from stakeholders (Schlichtkrull et al., 2023, p. 1; Montoro-Montarroso et al., 2023, p. 3).

2.2. *The perception of AI in newsrooms*

Although fewer in number, it is important to emphasize studies that have captured the perspectives of professionals and users regarding the advancement of AI in journalism. Kim and Kim (2018, p. 354) highlighted journalists' hesitancy toward AI due to its potential negative effects on content and the erosion of professional status. In a similar vein, some journalists believed that, despite the introduction of AI, they still maintained control over all stages of the production process, particularly in selection and editing, and were determined to protect their roles as “final arbiters” (Wu et al., 2018, p. 2).

Van Dalen (2012, p. 655) was one of the first to analyze professionals' perceptions of the effects of AI, although his study was based on a content analysis of specialized blogs. He did not detect outright rejection of these advances, but he noted that this could be due, firstly, to the likelihood that the authors were early adopters of the technology and therefore more open to change; and secondly, to the fact that they did not yet perceive an imminent threat to their jobs from what was still a largely abstract development.

In the aforementioned first JournalismAI report, Beckett (2019, p. 81) observed a similar sentiment when speaking with professionals directly involved in the implementation of AI. Most viewed it as an incremental change, comparable to other technological transformations, describing it as “a marathon that needed to be started.” In the most recent report, however,

Beckett identified a greater level of concern about issues such as a lack of ethics, biases, cultural resistance, a lack of collaboration among colleagues, and challenges in keeping pace with these advancements (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023, p. 6).

Soto-Sanfiel (2022, p. 1197) has delved deeper into the influence of context on journalists' attitudes toward AI, specifically in the case of Latin America. Professional culture is, in fact, considered a key factor that tends to slow the adoption of technological advancements. Tradition would uphold a certain continuity, as well as the importance of sensory experiences that some individuals seek, where human contact cannot be replicated by AI, regardless of its perceived usefulness or ease of use (Kelly et al., 2023, p. 8).

Peña-Fernández et al. (2023, p. 839) observed a shift towards more cautious attitudes among professionals. Whereas previous discussions focused on the potential of the technology, perceptions now tend to highlight risks such as increased disinformation, bias, and declining content quality. In contrast, Sánchez et al. (2023, p. 829) identified a more favorable outlook. The professionals they surveyed continued to believe that AI could free them from repetitive tasks without losing control over published content. However, perceptions were more positive among managers and executives than among reporters, where concerns about potential job losses persisted. Meanwhile, more technical profiles reported difficulties in integrating some of these tools into journalistic workflows. Another study revealed that AI tools must align with the professional practices and values of journalism to be accepted as editorial tools, recommending close collaboration between journalists and technologists, as well as a sociotechnical design that integrates workflows and values (Gutierrez Lopez et al., 2022, p. 1).

Research on perception has further developed with a focus on users, particularly through a quantitative lens. In the case of using chatbots like ChatGPT, it was found that acceptance has a cultural dimension. Users' perceptions of the news provided by these platforms, as well as how they interact with and consume this information, depend on the context in which the interaction takes place (Shin et al., 2022, p. 1).

Kelly et al. (2023) provided a comprehensive view on the phenomenon of perception, and more specifically the acceptance of a technology like AI, through a systematic review, although not limited to the communication sector. According to their findings, AI acceptance ranges from conscious personal choices, such as purchasing AI-enabled devices, to involuntary actions, like the use of AI chatbots. They also employed a robust theoretical framework to conclude that it is crucial to assess user acceptance using models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and the more recent AI Device Use Acceptance (AIDUA) model. A systematic review of some of these works revealed that issues related to trust and power were recurring themes, and it recommended carefully studying the possibilities and limitations of these new technologies (Siitonen et al., 2023, p. 308).

Based on these premises, the present research is guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1: What general trends do professionals observe regarding the technological development of AI?
- RQ2: How does AI impact the sustainability of the news industry, business models, and employment?
- RQ3: What consequences does AI have on the quality of informational content and, therefore, on the social relevance of journalism?

RQ4: How does AI influence disinformation and other potential social issues such as individualism or the perpetuation of biases?

3. Methodology

3.1. Selection

This research is based on 21 semi-structured interviews with executives, technicians, and journalists experienced in the implementation of AI across 8 British media outlets. The United Kingdom was selected due to its leadership in Europe in the adoption of this technology and, more importantly, for its transparency in the criteria for its use. A study by Björn et al. (2023) revealed that the UK is among the countries that most frequently mention principles, values, potential risks, and accountability frameworks in a sample of 52 media organizations from 12 countries worldwide. Similarly, Newman et al. (2024) identify the UK as one of the three key contexts for analyzing attitudes toward the use of AI in journalism.

As in most studies of this kind, the decision was made to focus on cases from prestigious and well-established media outlets, which offer a broader and more experienced perspective on the application of AI. All of the selected organizations had already implemented AI projects before the rise of generative AI in 2022. The initial preselection included 10 media outlets, corresponding to all cases of British media in which any initiative related to AI had been documented in both academic and professional publications, especially in the compilation of cases by JournalismAI (2025). However, access was ultimately secured to only 8, as it was not possible to arrange in-person visits to the remaining 2.

Ultimately, the decision was made to focus on the perceptions of professionals. Linden (2016, p. 136) had already highlighted the importance of studying resilience in the journalism sector in the face of the changes brought about by AI. Professionals, as key players in the news industry, continue to hold a special status and play a crucial role in the reconfiguration of newsrooms (Kim & Kim, 2018, p. 314).

Both the number of participants (n=21) and the profile of the interviewees align with the standards of high-quality academic research. In a recent study with similar objectives, for instance, 10 professionals from 9 British media outlets were interviewed (Denisova, 2022), 5 of whom overlap with the participants in this research.

The final sample consisted of 9 executives, 5 journalists, 5 technicians, and 2 editors, of whom 7 were women and 14 men. Efforts were made to achieve greater gender parity, particularly among the executives. However, when this was not possible, priority was given to ensuring the interviewee's alignment with the research objectives. The underlying premise was to have an executive and a newsroom staff member –be it a journalist, editor, or technician– in each media outlet; however, this was not achieved in two of the media outlets.

For the selection and contact process, the researcher primarily utilized contacts and support provided by JournalismAI, which has become one of the leading references in research and training in this field, and where the researcher completed a research stay. Additionally, the snowball technique was employed, a well-established method for gaining access to study subjects in specialized environments through recommendations from the interviewees themselves (Linden, 2016; Wu, Tandoc, and Salmon 2019, 2).

All the sample data are detailed in this anonymized table, as per the agreement with the interviewees to ensure they could speak freely.

Table 1. Sample of Anonymized Interviewees

Ref	Gender	Position	Media outlet
BB1	Male	Manager	BBC
BB1	Female	Manager	BBC
FT1	Female	Manager	Financial Times
FT2	Male	Editor	Financial Times
FT3	Male	Technician	Financial Times
FF1	Male	Technician	Full Fact
FF2	Male	Journalist	Full Fact
RN1	Male	Manager	Reuters News
RN2	Female	Manager	Reuters News
RN3	Female	Journalist	Reuters News
RN4	Male	Technician	Reuters News
SN1	Male	Manager	Sky News
SN2	Male	Manager	Sky News
TE1	Male	Manager	The Economist
TE2	Male	Journalist	The Economist
TG1	Male	Manager	The Guardian
TG2	Female	Editor	The Guardian
TG3	Female	Journalist	The Guardian
TS1	Male	Technician	Times & Sunday Times
TS2	Male	Technician	Times & Sunday Times
TS3	Female	Journalist	Times & Sunday Times

Source: Authors.

The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, 4 dedicated to each of the 4 main blocks that structure this research: AI trends and development; Business and employment; Quality, focus and relevance; Personalization, disinformation and biases. Additionally, since the interviews were semi-structured, some flexibility was allowed to incorporate follow-up questions to further explore topics that emerged during the conversation. All questions were open-ended and were slightly adapted to fit the nature of each profile and type of media outlet.

3.2. Data Processing

The method used was the semi-structured interview, the most suitable approach for case studies in areas such as journalism innovation (García-Avilés et al. 2018, 14). Most of the interviews (18) were conducted in person at the newsrooms of the selected media outlets, all located in London. The remaining 3 were conducted via videoconference, ensuring that at least one visit was made to each media outlet. These meetings also provided an opportunity to observe newsroom operations and engage in informal conversations with some professionals, which in some cases later developed into interviews. The 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted between July 2023 and January 2024.

All conversations, lasting between 45 and 70 minutes, were fully recorded. The recordings were then transcribed automatically using Whisper, OpenAI's audio software, and subsequently reviewed and manually refined. After anonymizing it, the transcriptions were processed and categorized in a spreadsheet, allowing for a detailed analysis of the responses. The spreadsheet was integrated with an extension that connected to OpenAI's API. After testing

several alternatives, GPT for Sheets, developed by Talarian, was ultimately employed. The use of queries to this AI platform allowed, for example, the extraction of summarized versions and category suggestions for some of the interviewees' responses, thereby enabling a comparison between common and opposing positions on the same aspect. This was always carried out with subsequent manual oversight, especially for those statements that were selected to develop the results of this paper.

To carry out this process, a combination of deductive and inductive methods was used. For the broader categorization of the responses, categories drawn primarily from the scientific literature were employed to align with the four sections into which the article is divided: trends, business and employment, quality and disinformation. Furthermore, to provide a more detailed analysis, additional subcategories were created based on the classification of the interviewees' various responses. Establishing these two levels of categories proved useful for fitting the responses into the research framework and identifying points of convergence as well as divergence.

As with journalism, AI presents significant challenges in academic research, ranging from disinformation to intellectual property concerns (Dwivedi et al., 2023, p. 32). However, despite the need for caution regarding data leaks or hallucinations, the benefits of such a system in enhancing human capabilities cannot be overlooked (Carabantes et al., 2023, p. 1), particularly in research focused on the present and future of AI.

4. Findings

The main results of the interviews conducted are presented below. We begin with the professionals' perspectives on trends in AI development, then delve into its impact on the journalism industry (its social relevance and employment), content quality, personalization, and disinformation.

4.1. AI trends and media industry

The first thing that stands out is the interviewees' level of knowledge about the current state and potential future developments of this technology. Two of them, both with technical profiles, expressed doubts about the sustainability of the infrastructure required to maintain these language models. "I'm somewhat skeptical about the long-term value of projects like ChatGPT, which cost hundreds of millions to develop" [FF1]. "If I invent a remarkable self-driving car tomorrow, the infrastructure to deploy or even build it may not exist" [TS2]. In contrast, one executive viewed the advancements more positively: "We aren't too limited by hardware, which I think a lot of the technological advances of the past were. So the growth rate is less constrained," although she later added, "I think there are some gnarly issues and problems along the way" [FT1]. Another executive highlighted the promotion of innovation by governments like the UK's [BB2], while a more technical profile emphasized advances in data processing through improvements in quantum computing [TS1].

The future of this technology unsettles the interviewees. Beyond its technical evolution, which is taken for granted, one executive criticizes where and why it is integrated into daily routines [TG1]. Another executive directs her concerns toward the inequalities in the distribution of technological advancements: "Once the future is here, it's just not evenly distributed" [FT1]. Speculating about the future is challenging, yet another executive remains optimistic provided that changes are managed effectively: "As long as we navigate these changes and adapt swiftly, staying rooted in our core purpose, I believe there's a bright future ahead" [RN1].

Some also lament the excessive hype and noise surrounding AI, where the media play a crucial role. “This amplification of noise will make the role of fact-based, unbiased reporting from trusted sources even more crucial,” one executive expresses confidently [FT1]. At times, journalistic coverage oversimplifies technological advancements as something inevitable and wholly positive, which can be dangerous, according to another executive [TG1].

There are also optimistic views about the exponential growth curve driven by AI. “A combination of computational power and models could potentially accelerate the pace of development,” one technician explains [TS1]. The key, according to an executive, likely lies in the evolution of these systems and how they can be used to self-analyze and innovate toward transformative models: “There are ways to use these systems to analyze themselves, but the cutting-edge innovation in improving the transformer models and all that, that’s humans coming up with new ideas” [TE1].

There is no consensus on how media organizations should participate in the development of AI-based tools. Data ownership, in particular, is a major concern. One executive argues that not all companies need to develop their own AI, as most can efficiently use existing tools and thereby avoid legal issues [TE1]. In contrast, another senior executive worries that large tech companies could exploit this by using data to train AI models, raising ownership concerns [SN1]. For this reason, a technician notes that some companies are training their own generative models to avoid legal issues related to copyright [TS2]. A journalist, however, believes the key lies not in intention but in capability: “Very few media outlets, around twenty worldwide, will be able to develop AI tools internally” [TE2].

Ethics takes a central role for some professionals, starting with the use of only those technologies that have been ethically developed, according to one journalist [TG2]. An executive highlights the errors and biases, exacerbated by synthetic data, though she acknowledges that the same technology can be used to address these issues: “If I can tell a model what bias is, I can then ask the model to identify that bias in the content I provided and help me strip it out” [FT1]. Regarding the possibility of a virtuous circle, where AI programmers not only leverage synthetic data but also benefit from their own advancements, another executive raises concerns: “Only a tiny fraction of programmers worldwide are working on the development of cutting-edge AI systems” [TE1]. While many people use AI tools, the true innovation and improvement of these technologies depend on those working “at the edge of what is possible.”

4.2. *Business models and employment*

The interviewees assign critical importance to the transformation of the journalism industry already being driven by AI. Their views reflect both the uncertainty surrounding the sector’s economic future and the opportunities that a virtuous use of AI could bring to the profession.

Most of the interviewees acknowledge their inability to predict the future, even in the short term, despite admitting that they are investing significant time in trying to understand the situation. “It’s clear that we’re only scratching the surface,” one executive states [FT1]. An editor highlights the difficulty of quantifying the costs and benefits of incorporating these new technologies into newsrooms [FT2]. These uncertainties, according to another executive, explain the conservative stance many companies and journalists take towards AI, despite its potential [RN2].

Economic concerns about the impact of changes in information consumption due to chatbots and other AI manifestations are prevalent. One executive believes that practices such as automated and massive scraping of journalistic content may be affecting the financial landscape of media outlets [SN1]. Another executive expressed worry about how AI could

impact the use of search engines and the subsequent monetization of the traffic they generate for media organizations [TG1].

There is no doubt about the impact on current business models, but there are differing views on its direction. A technical expert emphasizes that language models should align with and enhance existing mechanisms [TS1]. A journalist is convinced that AI can improve subscription systems and other audience-related revenue streams [TS3]. However, some go further and discuss different scenarios. One executive predicts that new business models will emerge over time [BB2]. Another does not rule out the possibility of AI-native news organizations, although it is uncertain whether they will be more than mere content aggregators [RN1].

An issue that raises some controversy is the varying impact of this technology across different organizations. One executive sees advantages for small organizations: “This technology levels up. If you’re a small news organization, you suddenly have capabilities that were once reserved for the big players” [BB2]. A journalist is less certain and believes that it could widen the gap in favor of those who can dedicate time and resources to rapidly evolving and volatile advancements [TG3].

The perspective on the impact of AI on employment presents significant nuances, especially concerning the time frame. An editor mentions that the effects could be profound in the long term but might take several years to fully manifest [FT2]. There is more consensus on the scale of changes. Most agree that rather than drastically reducing or replacing jobs, AI will alter how tasks are performed and their very conception. “I don’t foresee this leading to a net loss of jobs, but rather a change in job types and descriptions,” notes a journalist [TS3]. “Whenever a disruptive technology comes around, it doesn’t destroy jobs entirely, but it does change the nature of them,” adds an executive [FT1]. “Technology will change the nature of many journalism jobs, but it’s not likely to completely replace them,” complements another executive [SN1].

Interviewees agree that AI could both destroy and create jobs, but the balance between the two remains uncertain. “Some jobs will be created, some will be destroyed, but it’s going to be very hard to predict the balance. We’ll have a couple or three years, wherever it’s going to be sort of making existing stuff more efficient. And then it’ll become to completely rearrange our workflow and that’ll be all traumatic in unions,” predicts an executive [BB2]. “It’s hard to see if it will destroy more than it creates,” confesses a journalist [FF2].

4.3. Quality, relevance and ethics

AI has the potential to transform the essence of news content. Interviewees agree that, at least initially, AI is primarily used to automate repetitive tasks. However, the generation of large volumes of information presents significant challenges, such as producing low-quality content, saturation, and noise. “One of the key challenges will be maintaining the quality of journalism while facing the influx of AI-generated content,” warns an executive [BB2]. In fact, distinguishing between noise and valuable content will be crucial in the future, and this could be positive for the sector, according to a technician [FF1].

Another executive goes further and sees advantages in the ability to offer different levels of depth: “You could have different standards for quality depending on the audience, and AI can help to target those standards more precisely” [BB2]. In any case, transparency about AI usage will be crucial to maintaining audience trust [BB2]. This aspect is being incorporated into both internal and external guidelines by many of the media organizations analyzed, as all consider it essential for users to know if they are consuming content that has involved any form of AI in its creation.

In any case, the production of high-quality content, especially complex analysis, remains an area where humans outperform machines, according to a journalist [RN3]. One of her colleagues estimates that AI can elevate the level of certain tasks, particularly for non-experts, if used judiciously [RN4]. As emphasized by an executive, integrity and accuracy continue to be priorities in journalism, even more so with the rise of AI [FT1]. Another professional trusts that the credibility derived from human interpretation will remain essential [FF2].

One of the most controversial issues is the relationship between media outlets and tech giants. An executive foresees interesting outcomes from this collaboration [BB2], and another believes in fostering cooperation: “I believe in the adage that the enemy of our enemy is our friend. This suggests that collaboration can be beneficial” [RN2]. However, most express concerns about the increasing role these platforms are playing in media infrastructure. One executive fears the growing dependency on these resources [SN1], while another is concerned about the asymmetry of this relationship [TE1]. Another executive is convinced that relying on intermediaries could limit control over distribution and, consequently, over content quality [TE1]. In a more intermediate stance, one executive sees this dependency as akin to past relationships [RN1], and a technician notes that it is not different from what occurs in other sectors [TS2].

Another significant aspect is the impact on human creativity. Some responses reflect concerns about the loss of this facet in the face of AI. “If someone from the outside can’t tell whether a human or AI wrote the story, it raises questions about the value of humans,” a journalist reflects [FF2]. Maintaining a balance between what AI does and what humans contribute might be a solution, according to an executive: “What we don’t want is for AI to take all the good bits and leave us doing the boring bits: leave us hoovering the carpets while it does all the great thinking” [BB2].

4.4. *Disinformation, personalization and biases*

In addition to the noise created by the sheer volume of information, the problem is exacerbated if the content is inaccurate or false. Many of the interviewees admit that AI could amplify disinformation in the future, particularly concerning its ability to scale processes of radicalization or grooming through interaction with users.

A journalist expresses concern about the growing sophistication of fake videos and how search engines might need to adapt to handle such visual disinformation [SN2]. Others temper this alarm, estimating a limited impact of disinformation and deepfakes. There is also no consensus on the role of journalists in this scenario. On one hand, a journalist argues that journalists should be proactive in addressing these issues, seeing it as an opportunity for the profession: “If journalists and platforms are smart in their response to fakes, then it will be more of a benefit than a problem.” On the other hand, a technician acknowledges that the sector might be part of the problem, as ad-based business models could be facilitating disinformation. Thus, a shift towards subscription-based models might be advisable: “It’s not solely a technological issue. We’re reaching a saturation point for certain types of business models that essentially enable this kind of virality or ad-fueled disinformation. It will be interesting to see if the ability to create infinite amounts of mediocre content actually prompts people to seek more subscriber-based, tailored content” [TS2].

There is also no consensus on the benefits of using AI for moderation and detecting disinformation. A technician is convinced that AI will play a significant role in the fight against disinformation and fake news, although he acknowledges that the problem is complex and won’t be solved quickly [FF1]. Another technician suggests a potential solution in using technology to regulate and categorize different types of content. A system of digital signatures

for AI-generated content could help identify deepfakes and distinguish them from original material [TS1]. However, an executive questions the use of AI-based tools for moderating content and detecting signs of disinformation, arguing that they will always lag behind those intent on causing harm: “We’re talking about an arms race that can’t even reliably identify synthetic content at present. It’s akin to arguing that cars will improve road safety” [TG1].

This technology could play a central role in the distribution of increasingly personalized content, thereby further modifying and diversifying consumption habits. “Chatbots could potentially impact search, which might change how people find and consume news,” predicts an executive [TE1]. It is unclear how these changes could be introduced without compromising the quality and diversity of news and without continuing to inform the public about essential issues for maintaining a democratic society. The impact could vary significantly among users, as noted by another executive: “Some individuals benefit from automation in news distribution, while others may not” [SN1]. “I use personalization as a tool, but it has to be balanced with diversity in content,” admits another manager [BB2].

In contrast, some interviewees question the existence and relevance of so-called “filter bubbles,” which could limit informational diversity, as well as their direct impact on user experience. “Filter bubbles aren’t really a thing. The biggest impact of personalization is improving user engagement rather than isolating people,” clarifies an executive [BB2]. A journalist, while not dismissing the potential issue, believes that these effects had already materialized with the popularization of social platforms and their algorithms [TG2].

In any case, there are concerns about the possibility that algorithms and platforms may reinforce biases or limit informational diversity. Additionally, technological surveillance of user habits raises dilemmas regarding privacy and excessive influence on content selection. This scenario underscores the importance of maintaining careful oversight and establishing ethical frameworks that protect both informational diversity and user rights [RN3].

5. Discussion and conclusion

This research reflects an informed, cautious, critical, and predominantly optimistic perspective from 21 leading media professionals in the United Kingdom regarding the impact of AI on journalism. Specifically, it captures and analyzes their views on the evolution of this technology and its consequences for content quality, the sustainability of the profession, changes in the job market, its social relevance, personalization in distribution, and disinformation.

Overall, the results obtained contradict some previous studies that highlighted journalists’ reluctance towards this technology due to its influence on content and professional status (Kim & Kim, 2018, p. 354) or recorded a shift towards more cautious positions among professionals due to increased concerns about issues such as disinformation (Peña-Fernández et al., 2023, p. 839). There is also no significant difference observed between the opinions of executives and journalists, unlike in other studies such as that of Sánchez et al. (2023, p. 829), except in relation to two specific aspects that are discussed further below. Concerns about potential ethical and professional consequences are noted, in line with Beckett and Yaseen (2023, p. 6), but it cannot be asserted that the overall perspective is negative.

Instead, what seems to be widespread in the studied sample is the high level of attention, interest, and knowledge regarding the situation and development trends of AI (RQ1). Most interviewees admit that they invest significant time in understanding the situation. This level of information would provide a solid foundation for developing a clear perspective on AI that could drive successful innovation (Kueng, 2017) and enable the industry to maintain some

degree of autonomy against the interests of tech giants (Helberger et al., 2022, p. 1606). However, as detailed later, this is based on a partial and non-representative sample of the entire sector.

Although they are aware of the complexity of any forecast, the interviewees anticipate a still exponential growth of the curve driven by AI, in line with the vast development potential predicted by Newman (2023, p. 35). This technological momentum generates concern, particularly regarding how it will transform journalism in all its facets (Beckett, 2019).

There is no doubt about its enormous impact on the media business model. The perspectives reflect both the uncertainty about the economic outlook of the sector and the opportunities that a virtuous use of AI could offer to the profession, including changes in information consumption, production, organization, and distribution. There are, however, differing views on the direction of this revolution. Some believe that AI can improve subscription systems and other audience-related revenues, while others, in line with the findings of Opdahl et al. (2023, p. 1), foresee challenges from competing with new information providers. Others anticipate the emergence of new models or even AI-native news organizations, although their true nature remains uncertain.

There is no consensus on how the size of organizations will determine the impact of AI. Here, differences arise between the roles of the interviewees. Executives see more advantages for small organizations compared to journalists, who fear that the gap will widen in favor of those with more resources. This divergence is also reflected in academia, with some viewing it as an opportunity for small media outlets (Borchardt, 2022, p. 1923) and others seeing it as a risk to equal opportunities (Gutiérrez-Caneda & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024, p. 1).

The interviewees agree that AI will both destroy, create, and transform jobs, but they also concur that the overall impact and timelines are uncertain. Some speak of profound long-term effects, yet their impressions align with previous studies indicating that there will not be an immediate replacement of jobs (Kim & Kim, 2017, p. 187) and that journalism will not disappear due to its creativity, critical capacity, adaptability, and judgment (Linden, 2016, p. 136). Conventional pillars such as integrity and accuracy will become even more relevant in the profession in the current context. In the production of high-quality content, machines are still far from matching human capabilities.

However, since AI currently primarily serves to automate simple tasks, notable changes are anticipated in an even more saturated information ecosystem. Many interviewees believe that distinguishing valuable content from noise could be beneficial for the sector, although, in line with Simon (2024, p. 5), they do not think that AI will always free journalists to engage in more thoughtful journalism. They also remain uncertain, as reflected in the work of Lewis and Guzman (2019), about whether this technology will enhance their effectiveness and relevance or facilitate interaction with users.

As is the case in academia, perhaps the greatest dilemma among the interviewees lies in the relationship with technology companies. Some lean towards collaboration with these organizations, either to explore new funding avenues (Deuze & Beckett, 2022, p. 1915) or to avoid significant investments or potential legal issues in developing their own tools. However, a similar proportion express concerns about the power of these platforms within the media infrastructure and the possibility that they might exploit a growing dependency and inequality (Simon, 2023, p. 18).

The influence of AI on news distribution and consumption is also notable in the sample of this research. Some highlight AI's potential to generate different versions of the same content, seeing no danger in this regarding the increase of echo chambers. Others, however, express

concerns about the reinforcement of biases and the limitation of informational plurality, as well as the individualism and reinforcement of prejudices mentioned by Rydenfelt et al. (2022) due to the misuse of personalized stories based on interests and demographic data (Lim & Zhang, 2022, p. 1).

However, the interviewees agree that the greatest danger to users arises from the potential increase in disinformation. The role of journalists in this context is less clear. Some view it as a responsibility or an opportunity for journalists; others highlight the risk of exacerbating the problem due to professional malpractice. There is also no consensus on whether the use of AI will be decisive in combating disinformation, as reflected in Truică & Aposto (2023, p. 1). For the second time, differences are observed between profiles: technical profiles are more convinced than executives about the role of technology as a tool for the common good.

Undoubtedly, this research has limitations. Firstly, it is confined to a limited sample of a single geographic context, the United Kingdom, leaving aside the diversity of AI's impact on newsrooms around the world. Although a qualitative method was deliberately chosen over a quantitative approach, it is important to acknowledge that the findings are limited to the perspectives of professionals from large media organizations. Consequently, the results rely on subjective statements that may be influenced by potential conflicts of interest among the interviewed professionals.

The study does not provide a comparative study over time that would allow, as suggested by DeVerna et al. (2023), for the evaluation of the impact of platforms such as ChatGPT. The results were obtained several months prior to the publication of the article, which, in the context of continuous and profound changes, should be taken into account. It is also necessary to acknowledge the very broad and diverse nature of the aspects covered, making it impossible to delve deeply into any one of them. Finally, it is important to recognize the essentially descriptive and exploratory nature of this article, which was conceived and developed without a clearly defined theoretical framework as its foundation.

Integrating the analysis of AI initiatives in newsrooms with models such as Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Primo & Zago, 2015) or even with approaches like platformization (Simon, 2023) represents one of the most evident future lines of research in this field. Combining this with studies across different geographical contexts and more diverse media outlets—and integrating other methodologies such as surveys or participant observation—would be a promising way forward to deepen our understanding of the profound changes transforming the profession.

In any case, this work provides new perspectives on how professionals internally perceive the impact of a technology poised to transform all its pillars. It contributes to the development of one of the four major themes identified by Siitonen et al. (2023, p. 303) in their systematic review: attitudes and acceptance of this technology; and to one of the three horizons proposed by Guzman and Lewis (2020, p. 1): studying how people make sense of these applications. Additionally, it follows Christin's (2017, p. 1) recommendation to exploit ethnographic research within newsrooms.

AI is not a magic solution to any problem (Opdahl et al., 2023, p. 13), but it will become an insurmountable issue if not studied thoroughly. If the future of journalism depends on a balance between machine and human (Ahmad et al., 2023, p. 323), it is crucial to delve deeply into how the latter understands and shapes the former. And since we need to think critically about technology (Helberger et al., 2022, p. 1605) because its conception will determine whether

AI becomes a threat or a valuable tool in such a complex context (Pavlik, 2023, p. 92), we must contribute to a rigorous and in-depth analysis shaped by those who use it.

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