

THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - ENIGMA FOR MACEDONIAN MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

In a reality marked by extremely rapid technological progress, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has permeated numerous fields and professions, including the media industry. At a time when some media outlets use or experiment with the potential of artificial intelligence, additional efforts are needed to increase awareness of its use among media professionals and among the audience. While international institutions are taking steps towards regulating the legal and ethical aspects of using artificial intelligence and possibly preventing its abuse, global media companies are drafting guidelines and deciding on standpoints regarding the use of AI and the need to educate the audience and raise awareness about how a certain media product is created. This paper will analyse how prepared Macedonian media are to respond to the new challenges surrounding the use of AI in their work processes, but also in preparing the audience to receive media products in which AI is used. At the same time, an effort is made to respond to the ethical and moral aspects of that process, transparency, accountability, and other professional principles in the journalistic profession.

Keywords: media, AI, media literacy

INTRODUCTION

Frederick S. Siebert, Wilbur Schramm, and Theodore Peterson in their „Four Theories of the Press“ argue that the mass media always take on the shape and the general tone of certain social and political structures and the circumstances in which they operate. The authors believe that the oldest theory is the authoritarian one, which originates from the 16th century, derived from the state’s philosophy of absolutism, where the press should support the government’s policy and serve the state. Apart from the authoritarian one, they also single out the libertarian theory, the Soviet theory, and the theory of social responsibility of the media. The theory of social responsibility of the media is based on the idea of a free press that is always bound by certain obligations to society. The theory distinguishes six functions : to serve the political system by making information and discussions of public interest generally available, to educate the public so that it is capable of autonomous action, to protect the rights of individuals with the mass media assuming the role of watchdogs of democracy, to serve the economic system, to offer entertainment and see that financial independence is maintained in order to avoid dependence on special interests and influences of special sponsors ¹. The media are shaped by the social and political circumstances in which they operate. They especially reflect the system of social control, which also includes the relationships between individuals and institutions. Understanding those aspects of society is the basis for any systemic understanding of the press ².

The critical theory of society arose as a criticism of civic civilization, the alienation of man in the capitalist industry system. Its foundations were laid by the pioneers of the so-called Frankfurt School, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who advocated for the vision of a humane society. They criticize mass, especially electronic media for presenting a partial picture of the world and structuring information in a manner that impoverishes the complexity of events, abandons analytical information, minimizes the quantum of knowledge, and maximizes entertainment and economic propaganda. Thereto, the audience is deprived of the right to speak and object. The products of the culture industry are leading people into conforming to mediocrity, to that which is general than what they previously experienced as incompatible with their interests ³. The authors of the critical theory of society label the culture industry as „anti-enlightenment“ or „mass fraud“.

The media intrusion theory speaks of the fact that the media have taken the place and role of politics. This theory is not a neatly articulated set of ideas, it exists as a series of loosely connected assumptions from political science and communication research. The theory rests on the assumption that the political system works best when a responsible and informed political elite mediates between the public and the elected leaders. Many social groups from which leaders originate are losing membership and influence, a phenomenon called „declining social capital,“ and theorists accuse the media for this situation. They state that people are staying at home to consume media content at the expense of participating in local groups. The argument goes so far as to consider that television has replaced the parties in the election process, and the candidates do not need the support of the parties. The political process is seen as a game

1 Kunczik M., Zipfel A. (2006) Uvod u znanost o medijima i komunikologiju, Zagreb, Zaklada Friedrich Ebert p . 39.

2 Hallin, D.; Mancini, P. (2004) Comparing Media Systems, Three models of media and politics, Cambridge: University press, p . 9

3 Vreg, F. (1991) Demokratsko komuniciranje, Sarajevo: FPN, p. 199.

of opposing groups, while the main stars are the politicians. The media does not systematically inform its audience about the problems and solutions of the candidates, instead, it encourages its consumers to be political observers while the stars perform ⁴.

Critics of this theory argue that journalists are given a minor role in the election process, while the media are given more power than the audience. The development of AI among the professional public is considered the third wave in technological development. The first is the emergence of the Internet and the abandonment of traditional forms of media product preparation, and the second is the emergence of social media. As a relatively new phenomenon, anything related to AI is considered a new skill. It has led to a significant improvement in numerous areas of society, for example in the operation of news aggregates or the automatic translation of content into different languages, and it inevitably leads to changing perspectives in the work of newsrooms.

In addition to informing, the role of the media is to educate and entertain. That is why it is important that issues regarding AI and knowledge about its use are part of the education of future journalists, as well as people who work on media literacy. In the context of media literacy, it is necessary to quickly adapt to new circumstances, the development of technology, and, in that context, AI⁵.

On a global level, AI is already being used in the process of creating media content, as one of the tools for collecting data and information about journalistic stories or identifying fake news. At the same time, there is a legitimate concern that AI can be used to create fake news, misinform, disinform, and mislead the audience.

According to the UNESCO recommendation on the ethics of AI, “AI systems are information processing technologies that integrate models and algorithms that produce a capacity to learn and perform cognitive tasks, leading to results such as prediction or decision-making in material and virtual environments. AI systems are designed to operate with varying degrees of autonomy by modelling and representing knowledge and by exploiting information and computing correlations⁶.” In the context of journalism, AI is defined as a set of ideas, technologies, and techniques related to the capacity of a computer system to perform a task requiring human intelligence (Brennen et al., 2018).

UNESCO’s “Handbook for Journalism Educators – Reporting on Artificial Intelligence” outlines several key postulates that students should be aware of when reporting on topics related to AI. In that context, it is stated that it is necessary to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field, understand the ethical and social implications of AI and its impact on various sectors and industries, critically analyse the statements and views by experts, check and verify facts before publishing a story, be aware of the possible bias and limitations of the technology that creates AI and take them into account when informing about them or using them⁷. Regarding the regulation of the area, it is necessary to emphasize the responsible and

4 Baran, J. Stanley; Davis, K. Dennis (2010) Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future, Boston, USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 310

5 A handbook for Journalism educators, Reporting on Artificial intelligence UNESCO 2023 стр.6 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384551/PDF/384551eng.pdf.multi>

6 Ibid , p. 29

7 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384551/PDF/384551eng.pdf.multi>, Ibid p. 7

ethical approach to the use of AI, especially how data is generated and shared. The centralization of power over the development of AI requires deeper media attention, as it is important for humanity, democracy, human rights, environmental sustainability, and development. Among the questions that journalists should additionally answer while following topics related to AI are what ethical protocols were used during the creation of data, their storage, and preservation, what checks were made, as well as whether any incidents occurred, and what can be learned to improve the system. New technologies can improve the effectiveness of work, but the question that is most often asked by the public is whether they can replace the work of journalists.

GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

There is an awareness in the European Union that how artificial intelligence will be approached will define the future world we live in, help build a resilient Europe, and people and businesses will reap the benefits of AI and feel safe and protected.

The European Commission has proposed three legal initiatives that should lead to the construction of a trustworthy AI: a European legal framework for AI that addresses fundamental rights and security risks, a framework for civil liability, adaptation of liability rules in the digital age and the era of AI, and revision of the sectoral security legislation⁸. In June 2023, the European Parliament adopted the negotiating position on AI, ahead of the talks with member states over the content of the law. The rules should ensure that AI which is developed and used in Europe, is fully compliant with EU rights and values, including human supervision, security, privacy, transparency, non-discrimination, and social and environmental well-being⁹.

Some media companies in the UK have already announced that their content was created with the help of AI, but the editorial team was involved in the process¹⁰.

Generative AI will not change the role of journalists, according to the editor-in-chief of Germany's Deutsche Welle, Manuela Kasper-Clidge. During the seventy-year existence of this media outlet, journalists have had to adapt to rapid technological changes, however, the quality standards remained unchanged. Deutsche Welle already uses some AI-based applications, for example, to analyse large databases for their research or translate articles from one language to another, but it is crucial that journalists exercise quality control¹¹. The editor's view is that AI can be used to better find content on search engines or to identify hate speech, but journalists should always check the quality of these applications. Particularly important is her view that journalists must learn to recognize the biases that are part of the files on which AI operates.

8 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-approach-artificial-intelligence> accessed 8/10/2023

9 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230609IPR96212/meps-ready-to-negotiate-first-ever-rules-for-safe-and-transparent-ai> accessed on 8/10/2023

10 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/mar/07/mirror-and-express-owner-publishes-first-articles-written-using-ai> published on 07/03/2023

11 <https://www.dw.com/mk/kakov-e-stavot-na-dojce-vele-kon-generativnata-vestacka-inteligencija/a-66874278> published on 20/09/2023

A policy introduced by the Associated Press (AP), one of the world's largest news agencies, states that AI tools cannot be used to create content for publishing or images on its news services. AI-generated content should be carefully examined, just like material from any other news source, because it is important to protect their integrity¹². The AP, however, has been experimenting for a decade with some simpler forms of AI to make short news stories out of sports scores or business reports.

Reuters has a tool that, with the help of AI and special algorithms, is used to spot news on social media, especially in cases of breaking news¹³. Algorithms look for clusters of tweets that refer to the same event and generate a newsworthiness rating. Nevertheless, Reuters journalists independently verify the news through their channels, before publishing it. This tool has given Reuters a head start in breaking news over other news agencies.

BBC director Rhodri Talfan Davies outlined the three principles that will underpin their approach to the use of AI: to work in the best interests of the audience to deliver greater value; to give priority to talent and creativity, to the authentic and humane presentation of stories and to be open and transparent with the audience about the use of AI¹⁴. This media company will soon start several projects that will explore the use of generated AI in the content they create and the way they work.

MACEDONIAN MEDIA AND AI

To investigate to what extent the use of AI has penetrated the work of Macedonian media and whether they have prepared guidelines and recommendations regarding the method of use, we contacted several editors-in-chief working in television media, traditionally the most popular type of media in Macedonia, as well as editors-in-chief working in online media (web portals) considering their presence on social media and the use of innovative technologies in interacting with the audience.

The answer we received from the heads of eleven media outlets is that Macedonian media do not use AI and that they have not prepared instructions and recommendations for their journalists and other media workers regarding their editorial position about the use of AI in the creation of content and the functioning of newsrooms.

"AI does not think creatively and intuitively, it is a system that cannot make human decisions. AI is a tool that is fast, and accurate, but never goes beyond the given code. It is constantly learning and gathering information that is accurate and relevant. Therefore, this tool can be used to control and detect fake news or images in the media, but it is not capable of independently creating news from everyday life without human factor verification. Nonetheless, this tool cannot be used in Macedonia yet, due to the language barrier. It will take a long time for these systems to start functioning in Macedonian"¹⁵, says the editor-in-chief of one of the Macedonian web portals.

12 <https://apnews.com/article/artificial-intelligence-guidelines-ap-news-532b417395df6a9e2aed57fd63ad416a> published on 17/08/2023

13 <https://www.reutersagency.com/en/reuters-community/reuters-news-tracer-filtering-through-the-noise-of-social-media/> published on 15/05/2023

14 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/articles/2023/generative-ai-at-the-bbc/> accessed on 13/10/2023

15 From a discussion with the editor-in-chief of a web portal on 5/10/2023

Although they do not have guidelines and recommendations, the editors say that they are analysing the benefits of using AI in the media and that they are aware of the importance of the topic and are thinking about how to train themselves or train representatives of their newsrooms on the operational segments in which they could include it. “We are aware that we are becoming aware”¹⁶. Following world trends, most of them think that they will have to adopt editorial guidelines and recommendations regarding this issue in the near future. “We do not use it and have received a recommendation not to use it,” says one of the editors-in-chief¹⁷.

“We are discussing the use of AI in the archiving process, we are aware that these are expensive processes, but they will prove useful. However, we think that it should not be used in the creation of media content”¹⁸.

The Media Information Agency, the main news agency in Macedonia, is staying up-to-date with digital and technological innovations related to journalistic and media trends. They are currently working on providing training for editors, journalists and other media professionals on the safe and correct use of AI. “The trust of our users matters the most to us, that is why we carefully approach the introduction of innovations in our work, which requires more comprehensive training. MIA publishes daily texts about new technologies and their application, including AI. In this way, we want to contribute to the entire community (not only the media), to be better informed about digital and technological innovations, their use and protection of citizens from misuse”¹⁹.

The founder of a Macedonian portal says that, apart from text generation tools, he also uses many more, such as grammar check tools.

“This process came about naturally, as it is with most people. With the ever-increasing development and trend of AI tools, my curiosity was piqued. In the beginning, I merely wanted to explore the options and play around with them, see how far their possibilities extend, and then integrate them in some way and, at least a little, make my daily work easier”²⁰. He argues that AI tools should be used in the daily work of journalists, but with great caution and without complete reliance on them. “I find the positive side in the increased productivity and the help they offer, but in the meantime, because some of them are still in development, they often provide wrong information or point in the wrong direction, so it is necessary to be cautious when working with them. I use it more often to check the grammar and language of the content I’ve created, to expand my horizons about some topics I have covered, possible profiles of interviewees, questions, to help me with ideas on some topics and the like”²¹. He adds that AI itself is not the future of journalism, but an accompanying tool that will make the work of journalists easier. “The sooner this reality is accepted and the doubts that old-school journalists and editors have and the general suspicion towards them are put aside, the easier it will be for them to immerse themselves as soon as possible in today’s digital society that is in the midst of the inevitable development of AI. What AI will never achieve is to bring emotions to the surface, to tell the story through a human lens, only people can do that.”²².

16 From a discussion with the editor-in-chief of a web portal on 5/10/2023

17 From a discussion with the editor-in-chief of a web portal on 5/10/2023

18 From a discussion with the editor-in-chief of a television channel on 16/10/2023

19 Announcement of the Media Information Agency 6/10/2023

20 From a discussion with the editor-in-chief of a web portal on 7/10/2023

21 Ibid

22 Ibid

CONCLUSION

Macedonian media still do not use AI in their daily work. In the newsrooms, there is still no concrete, editorial position regarding the possible use of AI tools, nor recommendations and guidelines for how journalists and other media professionals should behave about this issue. The editors-in-chief in most of the influential Macedonian media outlets are aware that the topic of using AI in the creation of media content will become more and more relevant, given the global trends and the process of regulation of this area which is ongoing in the European Union. Some of the employees in Macedonian media are involved in trainings about the use of AI, however, for the time being, their numbers are low. Macedonian media report on issues related to the development of AI, in line with the type of content they create.

In the next period, Macedonian media will inevitably have to consider the perspective of AI both in terms of the functioning of the newsroom, as well as in terms of content production. In this process, it is necessary to monitor the development of other industries, as well. Taking into account the fact that these are tools that require significant financial resources, smaller newsrooms will face greater challenges in navigating and staying afloat in the new reality. Journalism schools will play a special role, future journalists will have to be trained to use the AI tools, to follow ethical principles and the principles of responsible journalism. Apart from the fact that the subject of AI is an enigma for the Macedonian media, the general public, also is not sufficiently informed about its effects, especially how the media operate, therefore additional effort will be needed to transparently explain these changes to the audience.

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