Reputation management: How PR and comms can maintain trust in an AI-assisted future

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Chapter 1: Artificial Intelligence is here – why should PRs care?

Advances in the ability of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create, generate, and assist have been a huge topic of discussion and debate this year. As a communicator, there's no escaping the excitement, and trepidation, these new technologies are sparking across the creative industries.

While most of us will be touched by the application of AI in day-to-day life going forward, the public relations and comms industry has a particularly important part to play in its impacts on sectors like business, leisure, retail, and politics. After all, it's PRs who will be tasked with both the use of these new technologies as creators and the clean-up of any crises as communicators.

AI: A long-existing debate in public relations
Despite the boom in interest this year, the potential of AI isn't new to the communications industry. In November 2019, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)'s AI in PR panel extolled the possibilities, but warned that the PR industry was not yet ready for AI. At the time, Professor Anne Gregory determined that 'public relations is significantly behind the curve' compared to other industries and would 'need to get on with some serious work' to catch up.

In January 2020, for the launch of 'The Effects of AI on the Professions: A Literature Repository' at The Alan Turing Institute, the AI in PR panel continued to warn the industry of failing to prepare:

'PR has a vital societal and organisational role to play in the debate on AI,' said 2019 Chair Kerry Sheehan.

'It needs to better prepare itself with practitioners upskilling to work smarter and faster in their roles but also becoming equipped to advise on AI adoption and deployment within organisations and business, and to its stakeholders and society.

'It is our role to no longer debate on our own swim lanes – we must help drive business and organisations forward.'

Anne added: 'The jury is out on whether AI will replace all our jobs. That it is going to change the nature of work is indisputable'.

In 2023, AI is already changing the way our society works, accesses information, and learns, and its influence is only set to grow: 'The growth has been steady over the past five years but has exploded with the release of ChatGPT and related generative AI-based technologies. Practitioners can readily see many of the tactical public relations activities such as transcription, editing and content development being handled by machines,' said Wadds Inc managing partner Stephen Waddington in February 2023 on the release of AI in PR's latest report 'Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and the impact on public relations (PR) practice'.

'Practitioners who are prepared to invest time and energy into understanding the role that technology can legitimately and ethically play in public relations are more likely to enjoy the best that the AI has to offer as a digital assistant to human agency and creativity, free to spend time on tasks such as data analysis, and relationship management,' added current panel Chair and director of Escherman Andrew Bruce Smith.

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PR attitudes to AI in 2023

How does the PR industry feel about AI and its impacts so far? For this paper, Vuelio teamed up with international market research company Danebury Research to find out current attitudes and approaches to the use of artificial intelligence across the financial services, utilities, pharma, media, retail, and transport sectors.

300 interviews were conducted with UK-based business decision makers working at organisations with 50+ employees between 4 and 20 February 2023. The results show the stark impact AI has already had on the way we work, and the need to upskill our industry to keep up with advances.

'Since OpenAI released ChatGPT in 2022, the hype about the tool has raged on,' says Prohibition founder Chris Norton.

'That isn't about to change in 2023. After all, tech giant Microsoft has inked a $10-billion deal with the startup, vowing to incorporate the technology into Bing. Also, Google has declared a Code Red in response to the release of the tool. All these developments only mean one thing: we can expect a better ChatGPT and more similar tools to crop up in the near future.'

AI in journalism

Alongside the impact on public relations, we'll also examine its effect on journalism. AI technology has already been embraced by much of the UK media industry in some form, according to this year's Digital News Report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. The use of AI transcription tools in newsrooms is common, and 67% of surveyed publishers are using AI to help personalise content for their audiences already. A prediction from the findings is that AI technology will only become even more integrated into journalistic processes in the future.

Companies, including Semafor, are using technology to create video with overlaid AI images while the Newsroom (still in beta) can automate news based on AI summarisation. At our recent Voices by Vuelio panel, journalists William Turvill, Helena Pozniak and Amelia Tait explained current AI integration in the UK media, while ChatGPT was also a topic raised at this year's Publishing Show. BuzzFeed —which already utilises AI to create their quizzes — commercial director Caroline Fenner shared her believe that AI could only enhance journalism, assisting rather than replacing journalists.

Should PRs embrace AI?

Among those more hesitant regarding the use of AI for content is The Drum's publishing manager Gavin Jordan. At the Publishing Show, he advised the audience to 'not put all their eggs in the AI basket' just yet, and that it would be best to hone content creation skills, using AI to assist.

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) media and public affairs manager Matt Wilson also warned of potential issues when making predictions for the big PR trends this year. He said, 'A key challenge will be the threat of generative AI and combatting misinformation, particularly online. An area for opportunity and growth – the harnessing of tech to provide data rich intelligence that can underpin PR activity'.

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The issue of responsibility is a key cause for fact-checking organisation Polis Analysis, which has consulted with UK Government officials on the dangers of misinformation and educates on media literacy at universities including the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). As pointed out by CEO and founder Thomas Barton, PRs bear part of the responsibility of ensuring generated information is correct:

'The job of a PR is to protect the reputation of their organisation, or the organisations that they work with – corporations are not going to be immune from the onslaught of misinformation'. Those in the creative industries who are excited by AI are still at the discovery stage, making the most of innovations as they come. Forward-looking PR agencies like Citizen Relations are already acting on the potential of

AI to meet the expectations of clients reading about the wonders of artificial intelligence. It launched its 'dComm3' division at the start of February:

'From a Citizen perspective, our team sees Web3 shifts in AI, XR, and anonymity as substantial drivers of new opportunities for brands,' said deputy managing director Jules Day.

So how will this impact you?

A key concern raised in much of the debate and reporting on the integration of AI into the communication and media industries has been the possible negative impacts on truth and, ultimately, reputation. The building and maintenance of brand reputation, a central responsibility of PR and comms people, will not go unimpacted by AI.

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From 4 – 20 February 2023, Danebury Research conducted 300 interviews with UK-based business leaders in the Financial Services, Utilities, Pharma, Media, Retail, and Transport sectors, to get a snapshot of current opinions and approaches to reputation management.

2.1 Bad reputation: People can be a real problem

- 94% of business decision makers have had to deal with a brand reputation issue, many of them due to actions taken by more than one individual group.

- 53% have had to deal with a case due to actions taken by an employee and 46% by a customer, external person, or group

Perhaps surprisingly, considering the wide-reaching dangers of bad reputation in these sectors, fewer decision makers in the Financial Services and Retail industries have had to deal with a brand reputation issue (88% in each industry) than in others.

While people are the driving force of reputational issues, AI assistance could amplify their reach and create bigger problems for PR teams. Do business leaders realise how important PR is for this?

2.2 Business leaders recognise the vital role of PRs in reputation management, but aren't confident of their own abilities to handle a crisis

- 49% of business leaders fear having to deal with a brand reputation issue, 22% strongly so.

- Two thirds (67%) worry that a poorly-managed brand reputation issue would seriously damage their company, 1/3 (34%) strongly so.

- 82% agree PR support would be vital to properly manage a brand reputation issue.

- Half of business decision makers (50%) would be unsure how to reduce the impact of a brand reputation issue.

The business leaders most worried about how to deal with reputational problems are those in the Utilities and Pharma sectors (62% and 58%, respectively, agreed they would be fearful of having to deal with such an issue), higher than those in the Media (32%), Financial Services (44%) and Transport (44%) sectors.

And with so many negatively toned column inches in the UK press devoted to energy bills throughout the cost-of-living crisis this year, and health-related worries (and medical misinformation) boosted during the global COVID-19 pandemic, this fear is likely born from hard-won experience.

Smaller companies — perhaps comprised of stretched teams with less time and resource for the significant work required — are more fearful of dealing with reputational issues (62% of business leaders with under 500 employees compared to 38% of those with 500+ employees).

Fears regarding the impacts of brand reputational issues were significant for those in Retail — 90% of Retail businesses are worried about the damage a brand reputation issue could do.

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And despite being less fearful than others about dealing with one, 80% of Financial Services businesses are worried. This compares to only 36% in Media.

Business leaders in Media and Pharma are the most concerned about how to reduce the impact of a brand reputation issue on their businesses (64% and 62% respectively).

While a majority (82%) of those polled acknowledged that PR support would be vital to properly manage a brand reputation issue, fewer in the Utilities sector agree (68%).

Those at larger companies see the value in PR — 89% of organisations with 500+ employees believe PR is vital to properly manage a brand reputation issue, while 74% of businesses with under 500 employees agree.

2.3. Two-thirds of business leaders have a plan – or PR agency – in place to turn to in times of reputational turmoil. Meaning that a third don't.

- 79% of business decision makers have a plan in place to deal with any brand reputation issue that may arise.

- 71% would rely on their PR agency if faced with a brand reputational issue.

- 84% of business decision makers proactively use PR to improve their reputation in the media or online.

- One third (33%) of business leaders feel inadequately prepared to deal with a brand reputation issue.

Bigger businesses are more likely to have a plan in place (87% of orgs with 500+ employees versus 70% of orgs with under 500 employees) and more likely to rely on PR to fix reputational problems (58% of the smallest orgs — 50-250 employees — compared to 75% of the orgs with 250+ in their workforce).

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The Media is the industry most proactively using PR to improve their reputation in the media and online, with 96% taking this approach. Transport, less so, with 72%.

91% of organisations with 1,000+ employees proactively use PR to improve their reputation in the media/online.

Let's look at the worrying number of leaders who feel unprepared to deal with such a crisis.

Half (50%) of those in the Pharma industry feel inadequately prepared, compared to only 22% in the Media sector. 43% of orgs with under 500 employees said they're unprepared, compared with 25% of larger organisations.

Are a third of business leaders just paranoid about capacity to deal with potential reputational crises, or truly unprepared for what could be on the horizon?

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Chapter 3: Views on the risks of misinformation

Part of Danebury Research's review of industry opinion across our six sectors of focus centred on the subjects of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news.

Long overdue legislation on these deeply dangerous issues includes the EU Council's approval of the Digital Services Act (DSA) in October 2022 and the upcoming institution of the Online Safety Bill in the UK. While these arguably don't, and won't, go far enough to completely protect the public and businesses from the threats of misinformation, efforts at regulation points to a great and growing need for them.

So how do business leaders across Financial Services, Utilities, Pharma, Media, Retail, and Transport feel about the risks of misinformation on brand reputation, and what role will AI play?

3.1. Misinformation is high on the agenda for business leaders

- Two-thirds (67%) of business decision makers worry about their company falling victim to fake news/misinformation.

- 77% believe fake news/misinformation would cause their company reputational damage.

- 80% have taken steps to protect their company against fake news/misinformation.

84% of Media business leaders agree that fake news/misinformation would cause their company reputational damage, with 52% strongly agreeing with this statement. Larger organisations (500+ employees) are much more concerned about this (86%) than smaller businesses (65%).

For which sectors are most proactive about this risk, Media is in front with 90% of its businesses having taken steps to protect their company against misinformation and fake news, compared to 74% in both Financial Service and Utilities.

As a potential source of incorrectly researched and written news — with accountabilities built in — it's perhaps not surprising that the Media industry is best prepared for the damages of fake news.

3.2. The media sector is the most prepared to tackle the risks of fake news

- 3/4 (75%) business decision makers believe fake news/misinformation is on the rise.

- Fewer than half (45%) of business decision makers expect their company to be affected by fake news/misinformation in the next 12 months. 33% don't expect it, with 21% remaining neutral, and 1% not knowing for sure.

- Poorly managed fake news/misinformation would be a great threat to 73% of business decision makers.

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There's less agreement about whether fake news is on the rise in the Media industry, as only 64% agree with this statement. More (88%) business decision makers in the Transport industry see this as a growing issue. Unsurprisingly, considering data in 3.1, the Media sector is the most confident that their business won't be affected by misinformation and fake news. 56% disagreed that it would. This response could be a combination of the industry not seeing fake news/misinformation as such a growing threat and their proactivity in protecting themselves against it.

3.3. Around 7/10 of business leaders believe the media should be doing more to tackle misinformation

- 71% think journalists and the media need to do more to validate sources to help prevent fake news/misinformation.

- 83% think publications should clearly mark when ChatGPT has been used to create a story.

- Only 37% think ChatGPT will worsen the quality of media content, 47% disagree.

Like PRs, journalists are responsible for communicating, translating, and sharing correct information. As technology advances at pace, international publishers like BuzzFeed and Axel Springer have gone beyond AI transcription services to introducing AI into the newsroom, generating and publishing content without any involvement from human journalists.

While traditional media is subject to legislations protecting audiences from fake news, new digital media and social publishing platforms – including WhatsApp – are largely unregulated by firm Government-sanctioned and undisputable rules. This leaves individual journalists and editorial teams with great responsibility, and pressure, to ensure their research and sources are correct. And, crucially, that any use of AI in their process doesn't impact the truth of their reporting.

'Journalists are much less of a problem than scrapers, bots, AIs and biased sources,' believes Richard Stone, owner of technical PR and digital marketing agency Stone Junction.

'There are far fewer instances of reputable journalists getting it wrong than there are of unreputable communicators telling a story founded on something which is untrue or inaccurate. The echo chamber of choice is much more damaging than the flaws in the economy of truth.'

In fact, media is the most positive industry when it comes to maintaining quality while using ChatGPT for content — 68% say it won't worsen the quality, with 51% strongly disagreeing, implying they're very confident working with the AI tool when researching and writing.

Greatest reservations towards the use of AI come from business leaders in Utilities and Pharma — 55% and 50% respectively said that ChatGPT would worsen the quality of media content.

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Chapter 4: PRs on the opportunities and challenges of AI

PRs can be a tech-avoidant bunch, despite all the industry conversation around AI, Web3, and the Metaverse over the last year.

Ever on the hunt for new ways to engage audiences and measure success, the PR industry is as excited by the potential of AI as it is trepidatious.

'We are always in a test and learn phase,' said Deloitte's chief disruptor Ed Greig when talking about the PR–technology relationship at last year's Media Tel event The Future of Media.

'The tools communicators use are always changing, but the human need to address is the same. Think big, start small, and test often.'

4.1. AI is big news, but not necessarily being used all that much… yet

- Although 82% of business decision makers have heard of ChatGPT, only 1-in-5 (22%) have personally used it for work-related purposes.

- 30% of businesses are currently using ChatGPT as part of their communication strategy and another 45% are actively investigating how it could be used. Only 5% have no plans to use ChatGPT.

- 74% would be happy for their PR agency to use ChatGPT.

- 81% are excited about the ways ChatGPT could be used in PR.

- Despite their enthusiasm for its potential, 62% of business decision makers think it is too early for ChatGPT to be used in PR

46% of Media businesses are currently using ChatGPT for communications, compared to 12% in Retail and 14% in Transport. All industries have an appetite to try it, with fewer than 8% of business decision makers in any of the industries surveyed saying they did not plan to use it at all.

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Most across the six surveyed industries would be happy for their PR agency to use ChatGPT, with the exception of Transport, where only half (56%) would okay this.

On whether it's still too early for ChatGPT to be used in PR, Financial Services is split on the subject: 40% agree it's too early, but 34% disagree and 26% are neutral. Retail follows a similar pattern: 31% agree, 29% disagree and 41% are neutral. 83% of Media, 76% in Pharma and 75% in Transport agree it's too early – more testing and trial needed.

Most excited about the ways ChatGPT would be used in PR? Utilities. 95% of business leaders in the sector are enthusiastic about what it could do for public relations.

4.2 ChatGPT – as useful as PR toolkit standards like SEO?

- Two-thirds (67%) believe ChatGPT prompting will be as important as SEO. Most others (26%) are reserving judgement so far, scoring the question neutral. Only 6% disagree.

In Media, 51% business decision makers agree and 46% sit on the fence. 47% in Transport agree and 42% are neutral.

4.3 And now, the negatives – could AI kill human creativity, and their livelihoods?

- Business decision makers are split on whether ChatGPT could kill creativity: 37% agree, but 31% disagree. 32% are neutral.

- 65% of business leaders think ChatGPT poses a threat to jobs.

- Half (50%) of Pharma business decision makers believe content created by ChatGPT is unreliable

- 37% believe that ChatGPT is more of a risk than an asset, whereas 29% disagree, believing the benefits outweigh the risk. 32% responded neutrally.

The Utilities and Pharma industries are more decisive: 50% and 47% respectively agree it would kill creativity, only 1-in-5 disagree. Conversely, in Retail half disagree and in Financial Services 42% disagree with the statement. In Media, 54% are neutral. It's smaller businesses (<500) that are most worried about ChatGPT having a negative impact on creativity – 49% compared to just 27% of larger businesses (500+).

The sectors most worried about AI taking jobs are Media and Utilitlies — 78% of business decision makers in both industries agree that it could, whereas only 50% in Financial Services and Transport agree.

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Interestingly, half (50%) of business decision makers in the Pharma industry think the content created by ChatGPT is unreliable, compared to only 17% in Media. Precision is naturally required in both industries, but perhaps the discrepancy in opinion on this is due to usage. As shared during the recent Voices by Vuelio event, all journalists on the panel admitted to using the technology as a starting point for research only, with skepticism and interrogation of sources built into their process already. As a starting point, ChatGPT could be seen as reliable.

58% of business decision makers in the Utilities industry and 50% in Pharma agree that ChatGPT is ultimately more of a risk than an asset to business, however. 62% of those in Retail don't think it's more of a risk, perhaps due to the industry's application of AI for customer service, including chatbots and Natural Language Processing (NLP).

Those with smaller teams see more of a risk – 49% of smaller organisations (<500) believe this, compared to 28% of businesses with 500+ employees, who likely have more capacity and resource to deal with any issues that could arise with the use of ChatGPT.

4.4 AI tools could make the job easier for PRs

- 78% of business decision makers agree that ChatGPT will help PR become more creative by freeing up time. Only 4% disagree.

- 47% of business decision makers believe ChatGPT would be useful in improving productivity and 41% would make use of it in customer service. Only around 1/4 believed it would be useful for cost cutting and/or addressing employment shortages/skill gaps.

- 55% of business decision makers expect to increase their PR budget this year, 42% expect it to remain the same. Only 2% are planning to decrease it.

- 77% agree that ChatGPT will transform communications and most others remain neutral. Only 3% don't believe it will.

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Compared to the other industries, business decision makers in the Transport and Utilities industries see ChatGPT being more useful in addressing employment shortages/skill gaps (44% and 43% selected this option respectively).

This potential to free up time for PR practitioners is an exciting prospect for many considering the applications of AI at work – more time for creation and big-thinking, less on administrative tasks. With this could come negatives for the workforce, however. Those early in their comms career, or graduates looking to take the first step on the career ladder, could find their job options in PR diminishing as AI is applied to handle the responsibilities previously given to trainees and new recruits.

Alternatively, AI could provide assistance while companies seek out the right recruits to avoid rushed hiring and training. It's human decisions, according to the business leaders polled, that will determine the course.

Partly, this will depend on budget. 72% of Utilities plan to increase their PR budget, with 70% in Media planning the same. Will this extra money go to AI technology integration?

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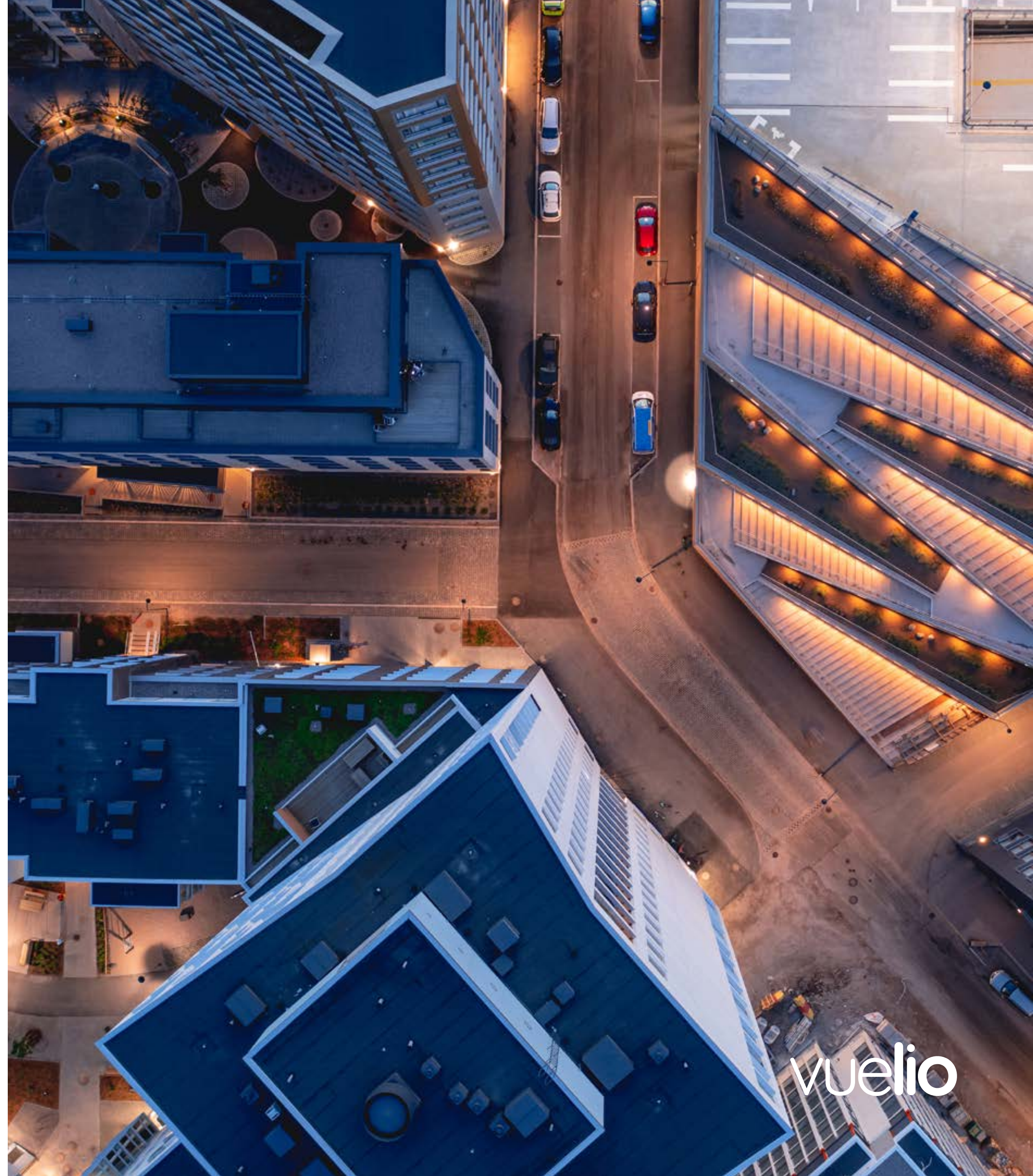
Chapter 5: How worried is the UK media about AI?

Following the rise of ChatGPT, the Metaverse, and NFTs, the ways publishers engage with AI and other tech innovations have rapidly evolved. While profit and data preservation are some of the proposed benefits, job security and misinformation are some of the biggest concerns in the sector.
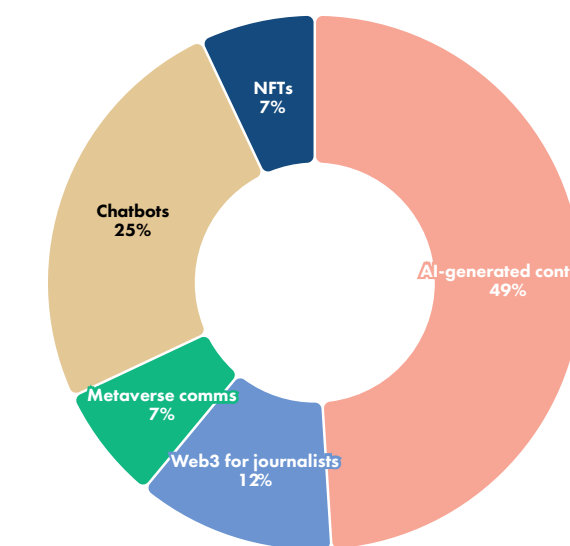
Key Takeaways

- Among the 2.5k articles analysed over the study period, 38% mentioned job losses and 32% mentioned concerns around misinformation.

- Several trade and regulation bodies from around the world have released media statements around the risk of revenue loss tied to AI.

- Approximately 12% of coverage explored how the Metaverse can offer profitable opportunities for publishers, whereas 15% mentioned how AI bots run the risk of overriding paywalls.

- The publications discussing AI in relation to publishing were wide-reaching: 36% were general news outlets, 30% were tech outlets, 20%

business and finance, and 14% publishing. In 2021, Microsoft president Brad Smith told a US congressional hearing that tech companies had 'not been sufficiently paying media companies' for the news content that helps fuel search engines like Bing and Google.
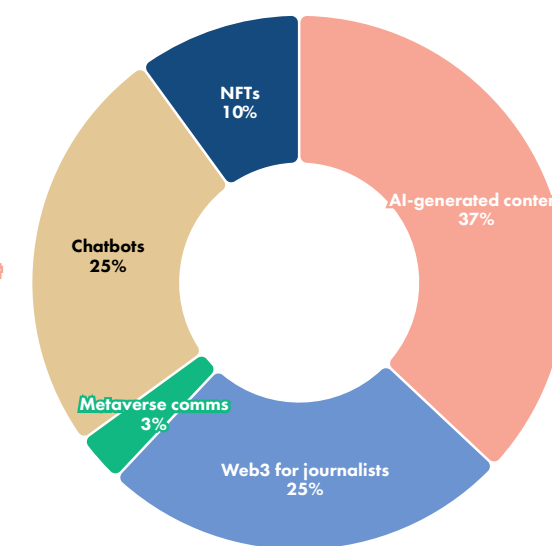
Flashforward to 2023, and Microsoft's ChatGPT competitor Sydney is under as much scrutiny as other AI chatbots in the publishing industry. Trade and regulatory bodies are sharing their concerns with the press on a global scale — Danielle Coffey, VP at News Media Alliance, described the launch of such services as 'highly problematic for [our] industry', adding that there's 'no revenue coming back to news publications' unless specific agreements are to be put in place.
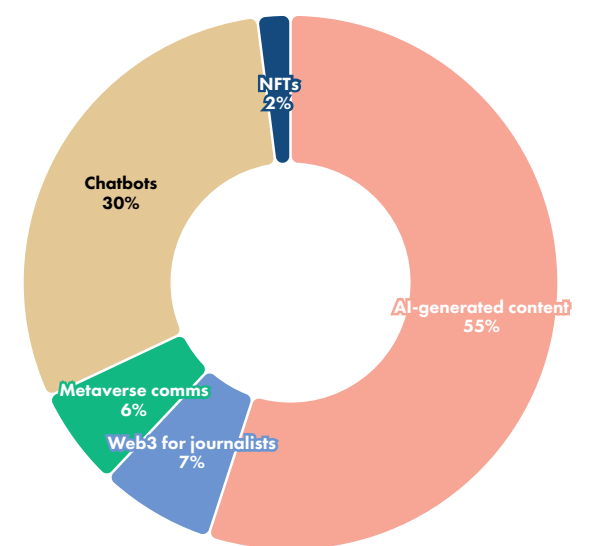
What themes are leading the conversation?

Tech Publications

- AI-generated content 49%
- Web3 for journalists 12%
- Metaverse comms 7%
- Chatbots 25%
- NFTs 7%

Business/Financial

- AI-generated content 37%
- Web3 for journalists 25%
- Metaverse comms 3%
- Chatbots 25%
- NFTs 10%

News Publications

- AI-generated content 53%
- Web3 for journalists 7%
- Metaverse comms 6%
- Chatbots 30%
- NFTs 2%

Data shown above was collected between 1 December – 20 March 2023. 100% equates to all content discussing progressive technology in relation to the publishing sector (2,433 articles). Publication types focused on general/PR news, tech/publishing/business and finance publications.

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Over the past four months, the leading topic of conversation across all publication types has been AI-generated content. Forbes predicted 'AI in the publishing industry' as one of the major trends of 2023, while What's New in Publishing (WNIP) reported that AI as a whole will become 'an essential and necessary media tool' that could 'significantly improve efficiency and effectiveness'.

Another common theme has been Web3. As the core concept of Web3 is decentralisation, discussion in the press has been largely focused on how journalists can use this to get more direct recognition and reward for the work they produce.

NFTs play a central role in the structure of Web3, which has already been adopted by several publishers. Pearson, Time, and Le

Parisien are some of many to have received international coverage last year for their successful experimentation with the digital currency.

AI models in publishing
The second-highest topic of conversation across all publication types has been the launch of ChatGPT, the new OpenAI model, as well as the competitor bots that followed. The vast capabilities of such technology have taken the potential of AI-generated content to a whole new level – an opportunity that hasn't been discussed positively across creative trade publications.

Job losses and fake news
Among the 2.5k articles the Vuelio Insights Team analysed over this study period, 38% warned of the risk of job losses that could

come from AI in publishing. Coverage has remained consistently high since 22 Dec 2022, with a slight increase when OpenAI released Jasper in February — a business-specific, subscription-based model that can be tailored to strategic needs.

An additional 32% of media coverage expressed concerns over misinformation and lack of transparency if human journalists are replaced. Toby Walsh, Professor of AI at UNSW Sydney, was quoted in a WNIP article warning publishers that excess discretion has been a 'trigger for bad behaviour in tech spaces' many times before.

Similarly, Paul Deegan, President and CEO of Trade Body News Media Canada, was quoted in a high-reaching Wired article, saying they and other trade groups are 'very concerned

about the role this revolutionary technology, which has the potential to do good, can play in the exponential proliferation of misinformation'.

Potentially profitable for publishers?
Approximately 12% of coverage explored how the Metaverse can pose several profitable opportunities for publishers, whereas 15% mentioned how AI bots run the risk of overriding paywalls.

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What are the top stories?

Specific to publishing, the leading story since December has been about job losses as AI evolves. Coverage has been consistent over this time, as new studies looking into the reality of the risk begin to emerge.

Coverage peaked between 27 February and 4 March when German media group Axel Springer publicly announced its belief that AI will be making 'major cuts' to journalism in the near future. Several quotes from CEO Mathias Doepfner, originally published in an internal letter to employees, were mentioned in 62% of the 93 national and regional articles that covered this story. One – AI as having the potential to 'make independent journalism better than it ever was – or simply replace it'.

Publication Type	Top Story	Volume	Sentiment
General news/Tech/Publishing	The jobs under threat from AI, robots and big data	284	
General news/Tech/Publishing	ChatGPT has the potential to spread misinformation 'at unprecedented scale'	268	
General News/Tech/Publishing	Apple quietly launches AI-narrated audiobooks	143	
General news/Sciences	Science Fiction Magazines Battle a Flood of Chatbot-Generated Stories	128	
General news/Tech	BuzzFeed to use AI to 'enhance' its content and quizzes	112	
Education/Publishing	AI, publishers and translation of research	103	

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Within the body of the text, approximately 90% of these articles referenced how BuzzFeed has been trialling AI as a content creation tool. This came after the news publisher was widely mentioned in the press between 24 – 28 January, declaring AI will 'enhance' both its content and quizzes.

Shh, quiet: AI-narrated audiobooks launch
Slightly more unique in comparison, Apple made national headlines between 4 – 8 January when it 'quietly' launched its new audiobooks read by text-to-speech AI software.

The term 'quietly launched' was used in 79% of coverage across all publication types, while an additional 10% mentioned it in the body of the text. Apple describes the new 'digital narration' feature on its website as making 'the creation of audiobooks more accessible to all', by reducing 'the cost and complexity' of producing them for authors and publishers.

Alongside BuzzFeed's content 'enhancements', this was the only other top story to have a high positive/neutral sentiment and a low negativity score.

A ban on bots
Between 21 – 26 February, prestigious science-fiction magazine Clarkesworld was mentioned across national and international news headlines when it had to close writing submissions due to unprecedented volumes of bot-authors. 92% of this coverage mentioned that in February alone, it banned nearly 500 bot-authors from submitting again.

Where is this discussion happening?
Between December 2022 and March 2023, the pros and cons of AI in publishing has been widely discussed across general news, publishing and tech publications.

WNIP drew on the widest array of topics and demonstrated the largest diversity of authors, while Fintech Times came closely behind but focused most of its efforts on Web3 and NFT content.

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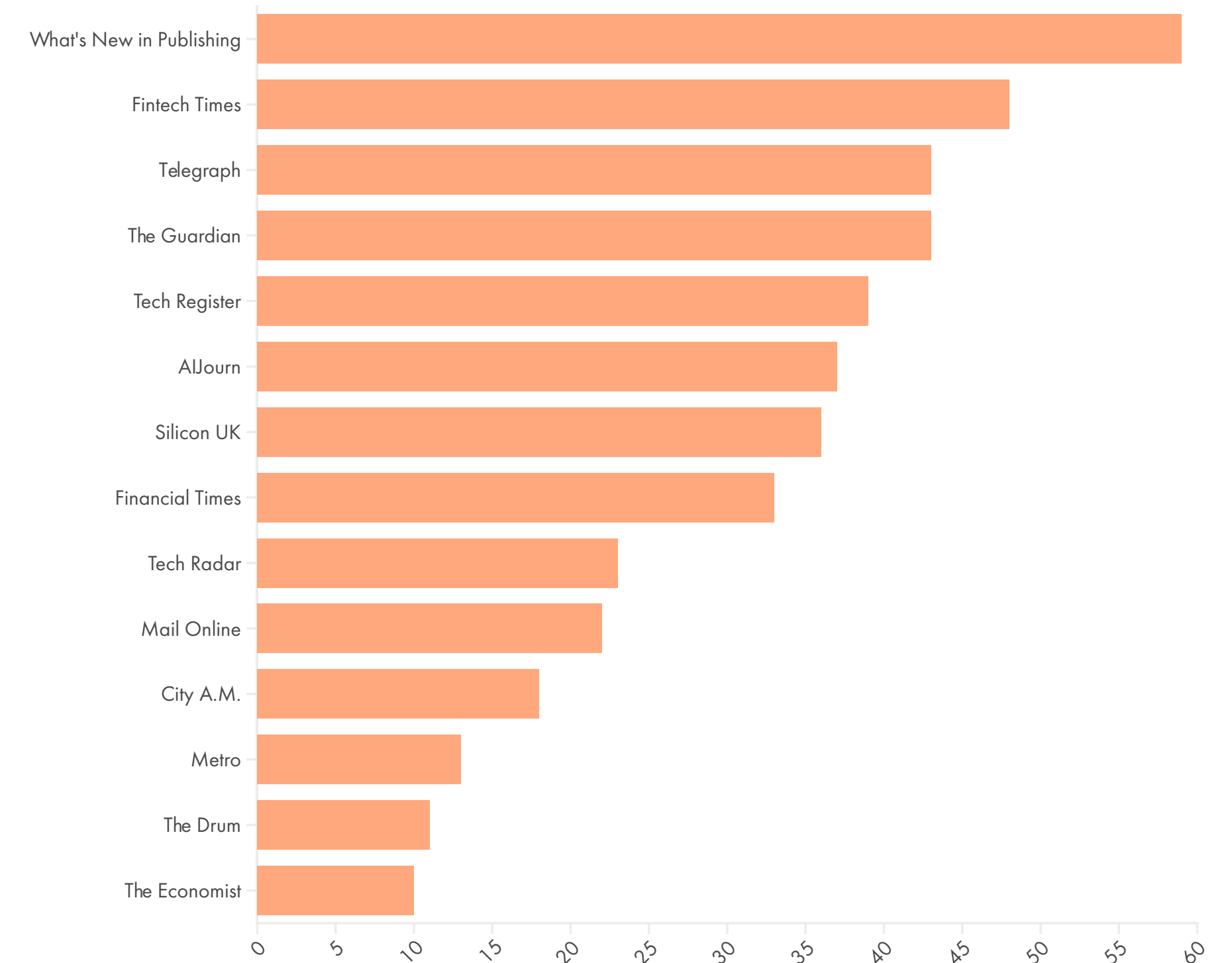
Overall, 36% were news outlets, 30% were tech outlets, 14% publishing, and 20% business and finance.

What does the future of AI journalism look like?
On 20 December, shortly after the ChatGPT launch, Bloomberg described the service as 'just another Silicon Valley effort to churn out mediocre, disposable content'. Between trade regulation bodies and international news outlets, the overarching opinion towards AI as a tool for content creation appears largely pessimistic. We can see this reflected in the sentiment of the top stories, where three out of five have a negative sentiment score above 70%.

A few months later, on 9 March, Press Gazette was one of many to continue echoing this opinion in an article that started with 'ChatGPT just got fired'. The piece outlined the extensive misinformation that emerged when AI chatbots were tested as a journalist replacement. Given that most of the technologies leading the conversation are in their early stages, the ways they'll impact the publishing industry will likely continue to be of interest in the press as major innovations emerge within each of them.

Tech publications are strongly encouraging investors and other media sources to begin researching the Metaverse and Web3 at the very least. While both may lack the necessary software right now, it's widely speculated that more evolved models of the future will generate 'substantial economic value' for all media types.

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Chapter 6: Eight takeaways on the impacts of AI on reputation management

1) A pro: AI is supporting the work of journalists (and helping the bottom line)

'Over the last few years, we have seen the use of AI increasing because it's valuable to support the journalists in different areas; in news gathering, in news production, but of course most importantly with the audience and the way in which you can enhance that and raise revenue.'

Charlie Becket, founding director of Polis and leader of the LSE Journalism and AI project

2) A con: AI could hinder the work of journalists to inform when applied incorrectly

'We have to think about where we can use those tools, and when we shouldn't. One of the things I want us to do is to demonstrate where our articles are coming from. People are using AI and putting together information without that source to show where that information came from.'

Jo Adetunji, editor at The Conversation

3) PRs need to be ready to fight AI-assisted PR disasters

'We cannot escape conversations around ChatGPT at the moment – any activist or online troll could use that technology to spread all sorts of content on social media to trash the reputation of a corporation. If you are a bit more sophisticated, you could use deep fakes to impersonate senior figures in business to create a PR disaster. For a listed company, bad actors could move their share price.

'And I am not making this up. *The Eurasia Group* has forecast this as a possibility in 2023. PRs must be aware of the reputational challenges posed by actors harnessing tech for malicious ends.'

Thomas Barton, founder and CEO of Polis

4) AI may not revolutionise comms, but it could streamline the way we work

'Although ChatGPT is expected to continue to revolutionise the way we do PR and marketing, I still believe it won't lead to smaller teams and massive layoffs.

'Instead, the tool will further streamline PR processes to help PR professionals become more productive. So, the tool will only get better at proofreading your press release, refining your PR pitch, and helping you come up with ideas for a PR brainstorming session or social media posts. The tool will also get better at ensuring consistency across your PR (and marketing) material.'

Chris Norton, founder of B2B PR agency Prohibition

5) Entry-level jobs in the creative industries could disappear

'Probably in lots of different sectors it is the 'bottom rung' that will be impacted — people who have just started their job.

'I'm sure it's the same in PR as in journalism — when you start out, you're doing the unglamorous jobs. That work could be done better by AI, potentially. The bottom rung could be in a difficult position.'

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William Turvill, associate editor for Press Gazette and media correspondent for the New Statesman

6) An increase in AI assistance means a need for more personalisation and authenticity (AKA humans)

'With the rise of AI-generated content, storytelling will become even more relevant. Increased AI-powered content production will create more content, which will be more general as AI is not incentivised to be bold. This means personalised, unique voices will become more powerful, as it will help companies stand out from the crowd.'

Jan Bohnerth, CEO of Life Size

7) In the absence of regulation, PRs must hold themselves to account

'Everything's happening so fast — there needs to be big thoughts about regulation. At a firm level, there's a lot you can do with making sure you don't rip people off.'

Helena Pozniak, independent journalist writing for the Telegraph, The Guardian, the Institution of Engineering and Technology as well as various universities and specialist sites

8) Don't be alarmed, but be realistic about the impact AI will have on you and your work going forward

'I saw someone tweet that AI is going to kill us all in five years. I'd be so wary of any bold claims like that, because there is so much money behind this stuff, in doom-mongering or overexaggerating.

'Future prediction is always a murky area — that's something I would be hugely vary of.'

Amelia Tait, freelance features writer for outlets including The Guardian, New York Times, Wired, the New Statesman, and VICE.

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About the survey
For further information about this report, please contact:

Phoebe-Jane Boyd
Content Marketing Manager
Vuelio

The Johnson Building
79 Hatton Garden
London
EC1N 8AW

Pj.boyd@vuelio.com

Paul Stallard
Director
Danebury Research

2 Clarendon Terrace
High Street
Stockbridge
SO20 6EY

PaulS@daneburyresearch.com

Using an online methodology, Danebury Research conducted 300 interviews with UK based business decision makers in Financial Services, Utilities, Pharma, Media, Retail, and Transport. All respondents worked at organizations with 50+ employees and participants are aged 18 and over. Fieldwork was conducted from 4 and 20 February, 2023.

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About Vuelio

Vuelio helps organisations make their story matter providing monitoring, insight, engagement and evaluation tools for politics, editorial and social media in one place. We help you determine who and what is most influential to your audience and brand. With a wealth of reporting and relationship management options, you get real-time feedback to create even more effective communications.

From journalists, social media influencers to MPs, we provide PRs, public affairs and political professionals with the relevant data, insight and connection for your communications to have impact. Our technology is used by organisations across the world, from international brands, large enterprises and communications agencies to public sector bodies and not-for-profits in the third sector.

We're part of the Access Intelligence Group that includes ResponseSource, a network that connects media and influencers to the resources they need fast, Pulsar, an audience insights and social listening platform, and Isentia, the media intelligence and award-winning insights company headquartered in Sydney, Australia.
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About Danebury Research

Danebury Research is a global full-service market research company based in Stockbridge, Hampshire. It works with both agencies and clients on a global level. With access to a panel of over 200 million respondents, Danebury Research is dedicated to empowering brave decisions through the provision of reliable, accurate, and representative data. Services offered by Danebury Research include market research, brand research, customer satisfaction surveys, employee surveys, and PR surveys.

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