MEDIA ETHICS AND AI-GENERATED IMAGERY

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Abstract

The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on human society is indisputable. This paper explores AI's influence on the media industry, with a particular focus on understanding the effects and implications of generative imagery and other AI integrations across various dimensions of the media landscape. A methodical literature review highlights key themes, including content creation, curation, visual media, privacy concerns, and evolving media ethics. The findings demonstrate that AI-generated imagery serves as a powerful creative tool, yet remains in constant evolution and demands a well-defined legal and ethical framework for responsible use in journalism and media. The results also emphasize the need for professional guidance, continuous skill development, and the implementation of ethical AI practices within the industry.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, media, ethics, AI-generated images, journalism*

Introduction

In the era of technological development where technology is advancing rapidly, media ethics has become a critical area of study, especially with the use of AI and the display of images created by it. Media ethics focuses on the principles and standards that guide responsible and fair practices in the media industry, such as journalism, advertising, entertainment, and other forms of communication. As artificial intelligence becomes a powerful tool for creating and manipulating visual content, it raises profound ethical questions about authenticity, copyright, representation, and social impact.

AI-generated images refer to visual images produced or captured using artificial intelligence techniques, such that they can modify the content of the visual

image and create other content for the audience. These can range from realistic portraits of people to completely fabricated landscapes or alterations of existing photographs. Technologies such as generative adversarial networks (GANs) underpin much of this innovation, enabling AI to create images that are nearly indistinguishable from real photographs.

While these advances offer exciting opportunities in creativity, education, and design, they also present significant ethical challenges, including:

Authenticity and misinformation: AI can generate highly realistic fake images that can be used to spread misinformation or propaganda. The consequent difficulty in distinguishing truth from falsehood undermines trust in the media. It also makes it even more difficult to distinguish which of these images is real and which media can be trusted.

Consent and privacy: Using AI to generate images based on existing photos without permission may violate privacy and individual rights, i.e. violate copyright.

Cultural and social bias: AI systems trained on biased datasets risk perpetuating stereotypes or excluding underrepresented groups, raising concerns about fairness and inclusion.

Liability: Determining liability for the consequences of AI-generated images—whether developers, users, or distributors are the responcible party—remains a contentious issue. The integration of AI into visual media requires a reassessment of ethical frameworks. It calls for collaboration among technologists, ethicists, policymakers, and media professionals to establish guidelines that balance innovation with social responsibility. Addressing these challenges effectively is essential to maintaining trust and integrity in an increasingly AI-driven media landscape.

Reassessing ethical frameworks for online media is essential in the era of rapid technological advances, especially with the integration of AI, augmented reality and immersive technologies. A summary of the main considerations and strategies for a comprehensive ethical reassessment includes the requirement of collaborative efforts. Public institutions, technology companies, academia and civil society must work together in creating adaptable ethical standards. Regularly updating frameworks to keep pace with technological innovations. Public engagement also plays a very important role, for instance the incorporation of public data to ensure that frameworks match social values and expectations. The re-evaluation of the ethical frameworks in the media, and especially in the online media, is a continuous process that requires balancing innovation with the protection of human rights and social well-being.

In this context, it is very important to research and address issues that are sensitive and require immediate solutions from those responsible, both institutionally and from the industry, because the advancement in the use of AI

puts the professionalism of many journalists in an unfavorable position of feeling threatened by their colleagues who use AI to create generative images, thus affecting the speed and veracity of images and information.

Theoretical framework

Ethical issues in artificial images

Respecting journalistic principles and norms is a challenge for journalists and media operators for many reasons. For one technology and the opportunities offered by AI have made journalistic content quite attractive and productive both in terms of volume and quality. The media industry, which has historically and traditionally relied on human creativity, i.e. the human side of story content and information transmission is visible, is experiencing a seismic upheaval as a result of the integration of AI technology, (Khan, 2023). This raises concerns about adherence to codes of ethics. The integration of ethical codes and frameworks is essential and inevitable to assess the moral dilemmas faced by AI in the media sector (Hagendorf, 2020). Generative image platforms have the ability to design unique and original illustrations, acting as tools to facilitate artistic creation and the development of creative strategies and their modification as if they were real (Verosky, 2023). The collection of data and its use in the modification and production of generative images can acquire the identity of a person without the right to use the image (Bolter, 2023). The lack of transparency and limited public understanding have resulted in significant ethical concerns. As Li (2023, p. 2) notes, "AI systems, which are capable of amplifying biases and privacy concerns, present complex ethical challenges. Issues related to transparency, debates over job displacement, and global disparities in AI development exacerbate these ethical dilemmas". However, "regardless of how much data and computing power is available to machines, there are tasks that are still difficult for machines to perform but remain too easy for humans. When the audience shifted online in the age of social media and platformization, the gulf amongst journalists on what constitutes news today grew (Saliu, Çipuri & Izmaku, 2024).

Visual media are complex and shape collective memory by describing how the world is experienced. The representation of reality in the media must be comprehensive and reflect the full context of an event's development. It should not marginalize or omit any part of that reality. Since media images often present an idealized portrayal of events, they inherently carry ethical implications. Therefore, the principle of inclusiveness of all parties involved in a news report must be upheld (Gasnier, 2024). In journalism, and especially in online media, the use of images, particularly real photographs, created to illustrate articles is politically attractive for online newspapers as it serves informative purposes, supporting textual narratives and contributing to the description of past or future events (Schröter, 2023). The ethical concern behind

fabricated realistic images in journalism is to depict authentic situations that may mislead information. In addition to realistic design connotations, the data used (origin of resources, image rights and copyright issues) in generating images also raises ethical dilemmas because the public is not informed that the image is processed for informational or illustrative purposes (Brantner & Saurwein, 2021). The impact of generative AI models extends beyond image publishing, with applications in areas such as text-to-image production, where these models excel at producing authentic, realistic images based on textual data, but the impact of these images is even wider. They have a part in creating awareness and collective attitudes about a given event, and consequently can determine the actions of the public, which are actually based on generative images, and not on real images (Liu et al., 2021). Even more concerning is that, through image generation and various AI tools, individuals can be depicted as performing actions they never actually carried out. Such fabricated visuals shape what audiences perceive and can significantly influence their understanding of reality. Generating realistic images based on textual descriptions is an important advance in increasing user intelligence. "Visual mental imagery, or 'seeing with the mind's eye', plays a crucial role in various cognitive processes such as learning, memory retention and logical reasoning" (Yadav et al., p.1 2024). The ability to create a system that understands the relationship between vision and language and can produce images that convey the meaning of textual descriptions has great potential for revolutionizing many industries, including image editing and image content. AI generative technology is a type of generative technology that allows us to create images with nothing more than a few words. The AI engine takes each word in a text description as an instruction and builds the image based on the combination of words and their relations with each other. And this is precisely where the ethical dilemmas lie when these images are used by the media in order to inform the audience as quickly and completely as possible. "There are also ethical and legal issues: since with the use of machine learning all stereotypes can be reproduced (for example more images of men when the text does not mention a specific gender), there is a risk of fake news (for example images of politicians who do something they didn't do)", (Coeckelbergh, 2023).

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionized the creation of images through technologies such as generative adversarial networks (GANs) and text-to-image models like DALL·E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion. These systems can produce highly realistic images based on textual prompts, blurring the line between real and synthetic visuals. While these advancements offer significant benefits in fields like entertainment, education, and design, they also raise numerous ethical concerns. These include misinformation, consent and privacy violations, intellectual property infringement, and potential social harms such as deepfakes and the reinforcement of bias.

One of the most pressing ethical concerns related to artificial images is misinformation. AI-generated images can be nearly indistinguishable from real

photographs, making them powerful tools for spreading false information. Deepfakes—realistic but fabricated media, often involving public figures—have been used to manipulate public opinion, influence elections, and damage reputations (Chesney & Citron, 2019). As synthetic images become more accessible and convincing, the risk of their misuse in propaganda and fake news escalates. This undermines public trust in media and complicates efforts to verify authentic content.

Another critical ethical issue is consent and privacy. AI models often train on large datasets scraped from the internet, which may include personal photos or copyrighted images without the original creators' or subjects' consent (Carlini et al., 2023). When these models generate images based on real individuals or use their likenesses, they can infringe on privacy rights. For example, using AI to create fake pornographic images of real people, especially without their knowledge or permission, constitutes a severe violation of personal autonomy and dignity.

Intellectual property (IP) concerns also emerge as AI-generated images draw upon existing works. Many artists and photographers have expressed frustration over their work being used to train AI models without attribution or compensation (Andersen, 2023). Since AI does not "create" in the human sense but synthesizes from existing inputs, questions arise about who owns the resulting images and whether their use constitutes plagiarism or fair use. The legal framework surrounding this issue remains unclear, as intellectual property laws struggle to keep pace with rapidly evolving AI capabilities.

AI-generated images can also reinforce social biases. Training data often reflect historical inequalities and stereotypes, and without careful curation, AI models may replicate or amplify them. For instance, image generators might produce gender or racial stereotypes based on biased datasets, reinforcing harmful representations (Bender et al., 2021). These biases can perpetuate discrimination, especially when AI is used in domains like advertising, hiring, or law enforcement.

Moreover, there is a risk of dehumanization and over-reliance on artificial imagery. As synthetic images become more integrated into society, there is a concern that they may replace authentic human expression, reducing the value of real experiences and contributions. In creative fields, this can lead to a commodification of art, where originality is supplanted by algorithmic imitation.

In response to these challenges, several strategies have been proposed. These include developing AI watermarking and detection tools, enforcing transparency in data collection, and implementing stronger legal frameworks to protect individual rights and intellectual property. Ethical AI development also requires inclusive and diverse training datasets, as well as collaboration between technologists, ethicists, and policymakers.

In conclusion, while artificial images created by AI present exciting opportunities, they also raise profound ethical questions. The challenges of misinformation, privacy, intellectual property, bias, and dehumanization must be addressed proactively. Society must balance innovation with responsibility, ensuring that AI serves the public good without compromising individual rights and social trust.

Artificial intelligence

The European Commission's Communication on Artificial Intelligence (European Commission, 2018a) defines artificial intelligence as follows: "Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to systems that exhibit intelligent behavior by analyzing their environment and taking action – with some degree of autonomy – to achieve specific goals". Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines designed to think, learn, and act like humans. It encompasses a broad range of technologies, including machine learning, natural language processing, robotics, and computer vision. AI is transforming various aspects of society, from healthcare and education to business and entertainment. As it continues to evolve, AI presents both vast opportunities and significant ethical, social, and economic challenges that must be addressed thoughtfully. AI also plays a crucial role in automation, allowing machines to perform tasks that previously required human labor. This includes everything from self-driving cars to automated customer service chatbots. While automation can increase efficiency and reduce costs, it also raises concerns about job displacement. According to Frey and Osborne (2017), a significant percentage of current jobs could be automated within the next few decades, particularly in manufacturing, transportation, and administrative roles.

The rapid advancement of AI also brings ethical challenges. Issues of bias in AI systems are particularly concerning. Since AI learns from data, if the data used to train an AI model is biased, the resulting system can perpetuate or even amplify existing social inequalities (Binns, 2018). For instance, biased facial recognition systems have shown higher error rates for people of color, raising concerns about their use in law enforcement. Another ethical concern is privacy. AI systems often rely on large datasets that include personal information. If not properly managed, this can lead to unauthorized surveillance or data breaches. Moreover, the use of AI in military applications, such as autonomous drones, raises questions about accountability and the moral implications of delegating life-and-death decisions to machines.

To address these challenges, researchers and policymakers are increasingly advocating for responsible AI development. This includes ensuring transparency in how AI systems make decisions, promoting fairness in data collection and algorithm design, and establishing regulations to protect

individuals' rights. The goal is to create AI that benefits humanity without compromising ethical standards or societal values.

In conclusion, artificial intelligence is a powerful technology that holds great promise for improving lives and solving complex problems. However, its potential risks and ethical implications must not be overlooked. Balancing innovation with responsibility is key to ensuring that AI is developed and used in ways that are fair, transparent, and beneficial for all.

One of the most profound impacts of AI is its ability to enhance productivity and decision-making. In healthcare, AI algorithms assist doctors in diagnosing diseases more accurately and quickly, sometimes detecting conditions that may be missed by human eyes (Topol, 2019). In business, AI is used to analyze large volumes of data to predict consumer behavior, optimize logistics, and personalize user experiences. For example, recommendation systems on platforms like Netflix and Amazon are powered by AI, improving customer satisfaction and boosting sales.

The technical basis for AI systems is machine learning to implement what the user asks (Veale & Brass, 2019). AI-based systems can be purely software-based, operating in the virtual world (eg voice assistants, image analysis software, search engines, speech and facial recognition systems) or AI can be embedded in hardware devices (eg advanced robots, autonomous cars, drones or Internet of Things applications)'. Within this report, we consider both software-based AI and intelligent robots (i.e. robots with an embedded AI) when exploring ethical issues, as intelligent robots are a subset of AI (whether they use machine learning or not).

The challenges of using generative imagery in journalism

Visual journalism has been defined as "the narrative elements of the story that can be seen or seen" such as photographs, visualizations and graphics always in the function of information (Gynnild, 2019). The use of generative images in journalism is quite challenging, not only for the media but also for the audience because the ethical rules of using the image must be respected and other images might be generated from this image. These changes also change the ontological characteristics of the images, which now show a certain variety: The digital image is a code and it is also visible, but for this there must be transparency from the operator (Vasconcelos & Barbosa, 2024). It is photographic and also digital, this without delving into the details of the multiple versions of images encompassed by the categories of code, information or algorithm (Mintz, p.90, 2019). Since these types of images are not only photographs but also journalism and must be grounded, realistic and not created by the mind of the individual (Baetens and Sánchez-Mesa 2024), they are subject not only to the changes that occur in the photographic act , but

also the changes that occur within journalism itself due to its presence in digital media and the effect of being as attractive as possible to the reader.

Visual communication and illustration has long been a key component of journalistic meaning-making, despite being generally ranked secondary to text in the study and professional practice of journalism (Thomson, 2019). Technological developments, including generative AI, reiterate the tensions between, on the one hand, discourses of journalistic objectivity supported by evidence-based photorealism and "mechanical objectivity", (Carlson 2019), and, on the other, the subjectivity of the use of images in journalism for illustration (Thomson et al, 2024).

The discourse on AI ethics is active as challenges surrounding privacy, bias, and accountability in machine output continue to seek solutions, and new considerations have emerged alongside advances in autonomous technologies such as language models. Floridi (2018) argues that contemporary digital technologies pose several ethical risks: (1) machines that enable large-scale fraud and disinformation; (2) AI systems capable of producing vast amounts of low-quality yet seemingly credible content; and (3) technologies that diminish direct engagement among key stakeholders. All of this is facilitated by online communication, which accelerates the dissemination of content that often bypasses traditional media's ethical filters. For media organizations, the appeal of such tools lies in their efficiency—they can obtain or generate images at little to no cost, though often at the expense of quality and professional standards. Consequently, fewer skilled individuals are required to perform tasks that would traditionally demand professional oversight, thereby weakening the media's role in delivering factual, contextual, and ethically grounded representations of events.

Most of these debates have addressed the ethical dimensions of digital journalism in today's online society without much change in the codes of ethics of professional associations and bodies, despite growing pressure to adapt self-regulatory mechanisms to better define the ethical boundaries of online journalism. and the regulation of online media as media already established in social use, which is obliged to respect ethical principles like traditional media (Mateus, 2019). The use and application of technological and innovative developments are a normal part of journalistic practice. However, these innovations can also introduce ethical challenges. As new technologies enter the newsroom and journalists adopt them, ethical standards must evolve accordingly. This creates the need for continual review and revision of professional guidelines to address the concerns that emerge alongside technological developments (García-Avilés, 2021).

The rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced a new era of content creation, where images can be generated from text prompts with impressive realism. Tools like DALL·E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion allow for the rapid production of visual content that can support storytelling

across media platforms. In journalism, where imagery plays a crucial role in informing and influencing public opinion, the use of AI-generated images presents both opportunities and serious challenges. These include issues of authenticity, trust, ethical responsibility, copyright, and potential misinformation.

One of the most critical challenges is the threat to journalistic integrity and public trust. Journalism is fundamentally grounded in the principles of truth and accuracy. When news organizations use AI-generated images, especially without clear labeling or disclaimers, they risk misleading audiences. A viewer may interpret a synthetic image as a photograph of a real event, leading to confusion or false beliefs. According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2023), public trust in news media is already fragile in many countries, and the introduction of potentially deceptive imagery can exacerbate skepticism about media reliability.

Closely tied to this issue is the difficulty of maintaining transparency and clarity. Journalists must make it explicitly clear when an image is AI-generated, not captured from real-life events. However, as generative tools become more sophisticated, the line between real and artificial becomes increasingly difficult to detect, even for trained professionals. This raises ethical questions about the responsibility of journalists to verify and disclose the origins of their visual content. Without clear guidelines, newsrooms may inadvertently blur fact and fiction, damaging their credibility.

Another major concern is the risk of misinformation and manipulation. Generative imagery can be exploited to create realistic but entirely fictional scenes, which can then be used in disinformation campaigns. In politically sensitive contexts, such as conflicts or elections, synthetic images can mislead the public, provoke outrage, or falsely attribute actions to individuals or groups. Chesney and Citron (2019) warn that such technologies can be weaponized to sow discord and distort democratic discourse. Journalists must therefore be cautious not to amplify or validate manipulated content.

The use of generative imagery also poses legal and copyright challenges. Many generative AI tools are trained on vast datasets of publicly available images, often without the consent of original creators. When journalists use these AI-generated visuals, they may unknowingly infringe on intellectual property rights or violate licensing agreements. This raises concerns about the ethical sourcing of content and the rights of artists and photographers whose work has been absorbed into training data without compensation (Andersen, 2023).

Moreover, there is the issue of editorial standards and professional accountability. Traditional photojournalism adheres to strict codes of conduct—images must not be digitally altered to change their meaning, and photojournalists are expected to document reality. Generative imagery, by its nature, is synthetic. Its use challenges these long-held norms and necessitates

the creation of new standards for visual verification and ethical storytelling in the digital age.

To address these concerns, leading media organizations and journalism schools are beginning to establish ethical frameworks for AI use in newsrooms. These include requiring labels for AI-generated content, promoting media literacy among audiences, and developing internal policies on when and how synthetic visuals can be used. Some advocate for the use of AI watermarking and detection technologies to ensure transparency and authenticity.

While generative imagery offers journalists new tools for visual storytelling, it also introduces significant ethical, legal, and practical challenges. In a media landscape already strained by misinformation and declining trust, journalists must approach the use of synthetic visuals with caution, transparency, and a strong commitment to truth. Navigating these challenges is essential to preserving the credibility and public service role of journalism in the age of AI.

Online media journalistic standards and professional ethics are two concerns that have accompanied digital media since their initial emergence thirty years ago. As a consolidated professional and academic reality in digital journalism (Salaverría, 2019), these appear in debates promoted by professional organizations, as well as being the focus of many research projects. AI has an urgent need for ethics, with new approaches from a technological perspective (Tzachor et al., 2020) and with renewed proposals and perspectives from a journalistic approach, with the aim of increasing the degree of transparency in the eyes of the audience.

The ability of AI-generated images to elicit emotional responses in humans depends on several factors, such as the quality of the generated image, the context in which the image is being presented, as well as individual differences that influence the emotional interpretation of the image by the audience (Paik et at., 2023). While AI-enabled image generators are said to be used at present just for fun (Wilson, 2023), it is important to consider their potential trajectory, especially as there is an imminent prospect of AI images mediating public perceptions of events of the real world, including political developments, conflicts and wars. Where the scale of manipulation and misinformation is very large and to the detriment of the audience and with consequences for them. The emergence of generative visual media challenges our understanding of representation – the first key moment in the cultural circuit (Hall, 2013) – by reconfiguring the ways in which we understand the world outside our immediate reality. Because the images presented to us by the media are increasingly constructed and manipulated, what we receive is often a form of fabrication rather than an accurate, interference-free reflection of reality.

To understand how AI-generated images position viewers in relation to the subjects (or represented participants), the dataset should first be annotated for three key elements of visual composition—gaze, frame size, and angle (both

horizontal and vertical)—using a notation scheme adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2021). Then you can create a generative image, which may have no relation to the actual reality.

Copyright and AI generated images

Artificial Intelligence (AI), and more specifically Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), was initially celebrated as the most innovative technology since the advent of smartphones (Barqaw & Abdallah, 2024). GAI platforms provide a variety of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) tailored for content production, offering services such as content analysis, sentiment analysis, event extraction, summary generation, personalized recommendations, content editing, and visualization (Yi & Sun, 2024). The intersection of copyright law and AI-generated content presents unique challenges and raises important questions regarding the ownership, protection, and legal status of content generated by AI systems (Werzansky-Orland, 2024). Copying is prohibited (as it means that the work is not original), while inspiration is not only allowed but also encouraged (Abdus Salam, 2022). Even if the copied part is incorporated into a larger work or presented in a slightly altered form, it can still be considered infringement if the essential elements that define the original work are reproduced (Scheffer et al., 2022). Open AI has claimed that it is impossible to have an AI tool as advanced as ChatGPT without infringing on copyright materials and that the training material embedded in its GPT-4 model is protected material (Milmo, 2024). An important risk is that the fundamental principles of journalistic ethics, including truth, accuracy, objectivity and accountability, may face unprecedented challenges in this evolving paradigm (Ouchchy & Dubljevi´c 2020).

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) tools capable of generating images from text prompts, such as DALL·E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion, has sparked a revolution in digital creativity. These technologies enable users to produce realistic or stylized images within seconds, without the need for traditional artistic skills. However, the widespread use of AI-generated images presents complex challenges to existing copyright frameworks. The core legal questions center around authorship, intellectual property ownership, and the rights of original content creators whose work may have been used in training data.

One of the most fundamental legal challenges concerns questions of authorship and ownership. In a broader sense, a crisis refers to a situation in which an organization is unable to function normally, hindering the achievement of its objectives and threatening its very survival (Abrashi & Reçi, 2023). Traditional copyright law, particularly in the United States, is based on the notion of human creativity. According to the U.S. Copyright Office (2023), works created solely by non-human entities, such as AI systems, are not eligible for copyright protection. This means that images produced by an AI, without significant

human input, may fall into the public domain or exist in a legal gray area. As AI-generated content becomes more prevalent in creative industries, the lack of clear ownership may lead to disputes over rights and usage.

Another significant concern is the use of copyrighted materials in AI training datasets. Many generative models are trained on massive collections of data scraped from the internet, which frequently include copyrighted images, raising legal and ethical issues regarding authorship and intellectual property. This process occurs without the consent of the original creators, raising ethical and legal questions. Artists and photographers argue that their intellectual property is being used to train systems that could potentially replace them or devalue their work (Andersen, 2023). The New York Times filed a lawsuit against OpenAI, claiming its AI models were trained on copyrighted articles without permission. The case challenges the use of media content in AI, raising legal and ethical questions about copyright, fair use, and intellectual property. The outcome could reshape AI training practices and journalism licensing (The New York Times, 2023).

The lack of transparency in training data further complicates matters. Users generating AI images often have no way of knowing whether the output is derived from protected works. If an AI-generated image closely resembles a copyrighted image or replicates a distinctive artistic style, the legal liability is unclear. This has led to concerns about style appropriation, where AI models mimic the work of living artists without their permission, potentially infringing on their moral rights or diluting their brand.

As a response, some artists and organizations have called for the creation of opt-out mechanisms that allow creators to exclude their work from AI training datasets. Additionally, watermarking and digital fingerprinting are being explored as tools to identify and trace AI-generated content.

Watermarking and digital fingerprinting are techniques used to identify and trace digital content. Watermarking involves embedding visible or invisible markers directly into an image, video, or text to indicate its origin or authenticity. Digital fingerprinting creates a unique, hidden signature from the content's properties, allowing tracking and verification without altering the original file (Chesney & Citron, 2019). Both methods help detect AI-generated or manipulated content and protect intellectual property.

In conclusion, the intersection of copyright law and AI-generated images is a developing legal frontier. Current frameworks are struggling to adapt to the rapid pace of AI innovation, leaving artists, developers, and users uncertain about their rights and responsibilities. As AI continues to reshape creative industries, it is essential to develop clearer legal standards that balance innovation with respect for intellectual property.

Disinformation from AI-generated images

There is a growing concern that the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technology may produce fake photos, which may create confusion and decrease trust in photography (Zeyu et al., 2023). In digital media, the impact of AI in reshaping content creation and user interaction is profound (Califano & Spence, 2024). "The migration of the public unto online platforms, the full mediatization of everyday life, the transformation of individuals into media entities via social media, the emergence of new forms of bottom-up censorship, and the involvement of non-human actors (such as AI) as media communicators and producers, have profoundly reshaped contemporary society" (Saliu, 2024). The availability of information and its quality have a proportional relationship with decision-making (Raman et al., 2024). The generation of fake news, in text, image and video formats, seems to be increasing every day, reaching such levels that citizens may, at times, face difficulties in being accurately informed about what is happening in the world (Vericad & Vállez, 2022). Disinformation is a longstanding problem, but given that AI techniques present in the digital ecosystem create new opportunities to manipulate individuals effectively and at scale, numerous ethical concerns arise or worsen (Bontridder & Poullet, 2021). Deepfake video generators continue to be refined, seamlessly inserting any face into movies with nuanced expressions and lip movements. Deepfakes are synthetic media that have been manipulated to deceptively change an individual's appearance, voice, and mood (Helmus & Chandra, 2024). Deepfake technology has advanced and can now create convincing images (Hejase & Hussein, 2022). Those so inclined may use them for political, financial or ideological purposes to spread lies and undermine opponents (Baker, 2024). However, as of 2022, Diffusion Models (Rombach et al., 2022) and more common publicly accessible models such as Stable Diffusion and Midjourney have become the most popular choice for generating a variety of realistic images using text stimuli (Rombach et al., 2022). One condition is that many people today have social media as their main source of information. These platforms tend to dilute awareness of information sources, blur the distinctions between more or less reliable sources, and often have a business model that promotes not only negative but also improbable or "clickbait" stories at the expense of more honest ones and balanced news (Hausken, 2024). Malicious actors pose another threat by generating fake images and videos to represent fictional phenomena as fact (Park et al., 2024).

Conclusions

Addressing this issue shows that the impact of AI-enabled image and photography fraud and de-authentication undermines audience trust and poses a serious challenge in the field of media ethics. The ability of AI to create highly realistic images has raised the level of significant concerns about image authenticity and integrity. Difficult to detect methods, low cost of their use,

availability and ease of use of image generation models become major sources of threats to authenticity and copyright. The ongoing confrontation between emerging technologies and anti-plagiarism or content-detection measures is likely to become a persistent and complex challenge, making it increasingly difficult for audiences to discern authentic content from manipulated or AI-generated material. Particular focus should be given to future developments that include: ethical and transparency considerations: developing frameworks that prioritize ethics, considerations in image placement and classification technologies, including transparency in decision-making processes and respect for privacy and principles of justice, and copyright. Addressing these ethical concerns and finding professional solutions would contribute and ensure a coexistence between technological innovation and its use for social and material benefit and would demonstrate high performance in distinguishing the subtle differences between real and fake images created by AI. Then we would have the transparent announcement from the media about the generative image published and a good information for the audience about the interventions made in the generative image by AI.

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