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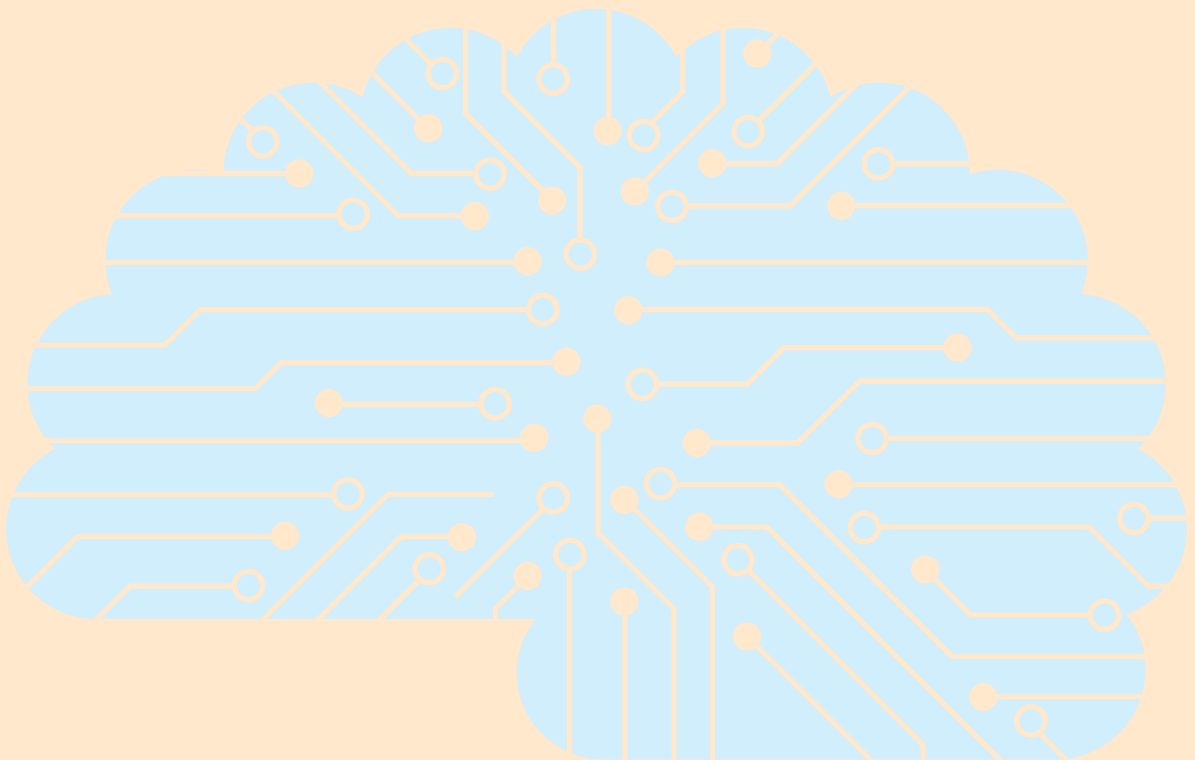
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Artificial intelligence in news production: perception and acceptance among the Swiss population

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Summary

With the launch of ChatGPT, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism has become a defining issue in the media industry. Our study examines the perception and acceptance of the use of AI in journalistic news production for the first time with a representative survey of the population in German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland. The study shows that acceptance of wholly or partially AI-generated articles in journalism is low among the Swiss population. While just 29.1% of the respondents indicated that they would read news content that was entirely generated by AI, the figure for news generated without AI was 84.3%. However, acceptance varied by topic: it is greatest for routine reporting, i.e., on weather or stock market developments (61.2%), followed by soft news reporting on celebrity gossip. Almost half of the respondents (48.6%) expressed a desire to read AI-generated news content in these sections, if nowhere else. However, in hard-news areas like culture (27.7%), science (25.9%) and national (16.4%) and international politics (15.9%), acceptance of AI-generated content is lower. Regardless of this, there is a broad consensus among those surveyed that AI-generated and AI-assisted content in journalism must be declared and made transparent. Furthermore, the impact of AI on the quality of journalistic content tends to be viewed somewhat negatively at present. All in all, 61.3% of respondents agree with the statement that the quality of reporting would deteriorate as a result of the use of AI. What is striking here is the finding that AI is (still) seen as having little potential when it comes to stopping the spread of misinformation. By contrast, 67.1% are of the opinion that the use of AI in journalism is increasing the prevalence of fake news. Furthermore, willingness to pay for AI-generated journalism is low. Only a few respondents are generally willing to pay for journalistic content created entirely by AI, but many more would generally pay for journalistic content produced without AI. A clear majority of respondents (72.6%) thinks that the increased use of AI is a way of cutting costs for media companies. Overall, the data suggests that an increased use of AI in journalism would have a negative impact on the Swiss population's willingness to pay for news. A majority (61.3%) also believes that providers of AI tools should compensate media companies for using journalistic data for their automatically generated responses. This is an important finding in view of the current media policy debate around a proposed copyright law.

1 Introduction

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in news production is currently one of the defining issues in the media industry. AI tools have been used in journalism and other areas of society for several years now (Carlson, 2015; Hepp et al., 2023) – including in Swiss media companies, for example for research purposes, text translations, transcriptions of audio-visual material, the distribution of content, and for writing articles (Fürst & Grubenmann, 2019; Porlezza et al., 2022). «Generative artificial intelligence» makes the automated creation of articles possible. This is the area that is seeing major upheaval and innovation at the moment. Since the launch of ChatGPT in autumn 2022, also a form of «generative

AI», there has been a heated public discussion about AI and the associated opportunities and risks (Schäfer, 2023).

This article focuses on the production of journalistic articles with the help of AI. Here, algorithms are developed to automatically generate articles in a specific text form from structured, machine-readable data (Carlson, 2015; Graefe, 2016). The latest developments (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing, Bard) see journalists given access to AI tools that use training data and machine learning to create new texts (Dörr, 2023; Schäfer, 2023). AI is already used for text production in some areas of journalism (Dörr, 2023; Porlezza, 2020), but rarely for sophisticated news formats, instead primarily for routine reporting, which has repetitive and

clearly structured forms. Typical examples are reports on the weather, stock market developments and election or sports results (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020).

In Switzerland, major media outlets have been using automated text production in these areas for several years (Beck, 2023). Tamedia has been using the text robot Tobi to automatically compile reports on votes at municipal level since 2018 (Fürst & Grubenmann, 2019). Lena, the news agency Keystone-SDA's text robot, automatically produces multilingual short texts on the results of national and cantonal referendums (Fürst & Grubenmann, 2019). And CH Media uses AI to generate texts on news from municipalities or results from regional sports (Aargauer Zeitung, 2021). In most cases, the use is complementary to the content created by journalists, as such articles only describe the results without any journalistic contextualisation. However, without the use of AI on these topics, there would generally be no written media reports, instead only data provided by other organisations.

AI-assisted text production poses both opportunities and risks for journalism. As a result, the interpretation of automation initiatives in the media industry varies (Graßl et al., 2022; Schapals & Porlezza, 2020). On the one hand, there is potential for significant resource savings. In the work process, routine activities can be replaced with AI tools or made more efficient. The resources freed up could then be used for high-quality journalistic formats, for example for intensive on-site research. Or they could be used to manage the ever-increasing number of channels and platforms that need to be fed specifically edited media content. But discussion has also centred on the risks, for example when AI-produced texts have clear shortcomings in terms of quality. As in other sectors, media professionals fear that their work will be replaced by AI processes and that they might lose their jobs.

The use of AI to produce journalistic content entails both opportunities and risks from the readers' point of view, too (Montal & Reich, 2017; Porlezza, 2020). Current research on use and impact focuses on the recipients' perception of automatically generated articles (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020). For example, it would be interesting to know whether or not automatically generated texts are recognised as

such (Jung et al., 2017). Furthermore, questions of perceived (content-related) quality and credibility are front and centre (Clerwall, 2014; Graefe et al., 2018; Kieslich et al., 2021; Tandoc et al., 2020; Wölker & Powell, 2021). Studies show that the labelling of a text, i.e., whether it has been produced by AI or journalists, influences this evaluation (Haim & Graefe, 2017; Jang et al., 2022; Jung et al., 2017). These results are often attributed to general, fundamental attitudes towards AI, such as skepticism or fears, but also euphoria towards new technologies. When it comes to the perceived quality of journalistic content, the research reveals two key perspectives, the first of which is a critical one, which focuses on the more negative impact of AI on the quality of news (Moran & Shaikh, 2022). This includes the manipulation or bias of algorithms, poor readability of the texts or other content shortcomings. The second, a positive perspective, regards AI as an opportunity to increase the quality of journalistic content. For example, AI could be used to avoid bias caused by journalists' presumed political attitudes or errors in texts (Waddell, 2019; Wu, 2020). However, a survey in Germany has shown that very few media users assume that AI will improve the quality of news (Kieslich et al., 2021).

The general feeling in Switzerland has yet to be investigated. Overall, there have been hardly any studies that examine readers' acceptance and perception of AI in journalism and combine this with questions about interest in use and willingness to pay.

The extent to which audiences accept the use of AI in the production of news largely determines the extent to which AI can be used in news production and, at best, monetised. This study examines this acceptance by means of a representative survey of the Swiss population. First of all, we analyse whether people know that AI is being used to produce news content and whether they believe they have already used such content. This involves asking about the acceptance of journalistic news created with AI and to what extent this varies depending on the subject area. Second of all, we examine what impact AI has on the quality of news from the respondents' point of view. In a third stage, we look at the financing of AI-assisted journalism: we look at the question of how much people are willing to pay for news content

created with AI. In addition, we analyse to what extent a requirement for providers of AI tools to pay media companies money for use of journalistic content in their tools would be accepted.

2 Method

For this study, a representative online survey of the population of German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland was conducted. The survey was programmed in Qualtrics software. Data collection took place from 14 July to 25 July 2023. It took participants approximately 15 minutes to answer the questions. The participants were recruited via the panel of the market research institute Bilendi. All in all, 1,254 people completed the questionnaire in full. The survey population was defined as the populations of Swiss residents in the two language regions who use the internet and are between 16 and 74 years old. In order to represent the structure of this resident population, quotas were generated for language, region, gender, age and education. The aim of the study is to determine the attitude of the Swiss population towards artificial intelligence (AI) in news production. In order to ensure that the respondents understood the subject matter of the study, they were shown a definition at the beginning: «This survey is about artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism. In journalism, artificial intelligence is used, among other things, to write media articles. This means that the media articles are not written by journalists, but by algorithms. The media articles referred to include national, international, regional/local news and other up-to-date information.»

All survey items used in this study were measured on scales of 1 to 7. In the evaluations, the values 1 to 3 were defined as opposition to the respective item («Generally not»), and the values from 5 to 7 as approval («Generally yes»). Respondents who chose category 4 («Neither») or the «Don't know» option are reported separately.

For the purposes of this study, we differentiate between content created entirely by AI (AI-generated), content created by journalists with the assistance of AI (AI-assisted), and content written by journalists without the help of AI (without AI). The exact question formulations and answer options can

be viewed in the questionnaire, which is available online (<https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-235608>).

3 Results

First of all, we examine whether people in Switzerland are aware that AI is being used in journalism and whether they would use such articles. In the second part, we show the impact AI has on media quality from the respondents' point of view. In the third part, we analyse whether people are willing to pay for AI-produced media content.

3.1 Use

First of all, we asked the participants unaided, i.e., with an open question, to tell us which areas of society they thought AI would have the greatest impact on. In response to this open question, roughly one in ten respondents (10.1%) made a reference to journalism, media and communication, i.e., they viewed these areas as being significantly impacted by AI. A total of 73.7% of those surveyed think these impacts are more likely to be felt in other areas of society, such as medicine, education or IT, while 16.1% did not respond. The participants were then asked about their experiences with AI in journalism (see Figure 1). Almost two-thirds of respondents (59.6%) said they had heard that AI was being used to produce texts in journalism. Almost half of the people surveyed (48.8%) stated that they had already read texts

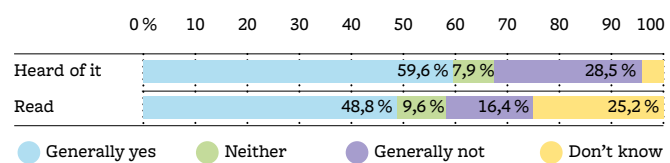


Figure 1: Perceived prevalence in journalism

The figure shows whether or not respondents have heard of media articles being generated with AI, and whether they think they have already read such articles (n = 1,254).

Reading example: Overall, 59.6% of those surveyed said they had heard of AI being used to produce journalistic content; 48.8% said they had already knowingly read such articles.

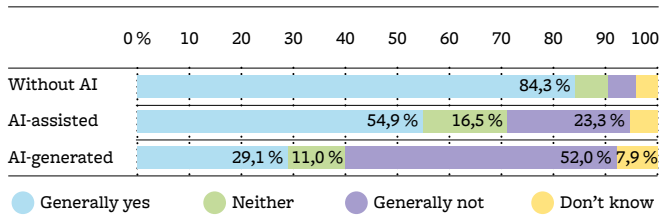


Figure 2: Intended use

The chart shows the extent to which the respondents are willing to read news content written without AI, with the assistance of AI and wholly by AI (n = 1,254).

Reading example: Overall, 84.3% of respondents would read news articles written by journalists without the assistance of AI; 29.1% of respondents would read media articles written wholly or in part by AI.

that they thought were written with AI; a quarter (25.2%) chose the answer option «Don't know». With regard to the authorship of AI-generated news content, there is obviously a high degree of uncertainty among parts of the Swiss population, i.e., people sometimes find it difficult to detect the use of AI in journalism.

Almost half (45.0%) agreed with the statement that AI is already being used to produce content in Swiss media outlets. However, there is a high degree of uncertainty among the respondents on this topic too – «Don't know» was frequently selected (34.8%). This backs up the view that many citizens currently find it difficult to judge how prevalent AI-produced content is in Swiss journalism.

The results demonstrate a clear user preference for news articles written without AI.

Next, we asked what texts the respondents would use: texts written without AI, with the assistance of AI and written wholly by AI (see Figure 2). The results demonstrate a clear user preference for news articles written without AI. A total of 84.3% of respondents would read articles generated without AI, while 54.9% of Swiss people would read news articles created by journalists with the assistance of AI. Only 29.1% of respondents said they would read texts created entirely by AI. This suggests that the work of journalists is still held in very high regard by the

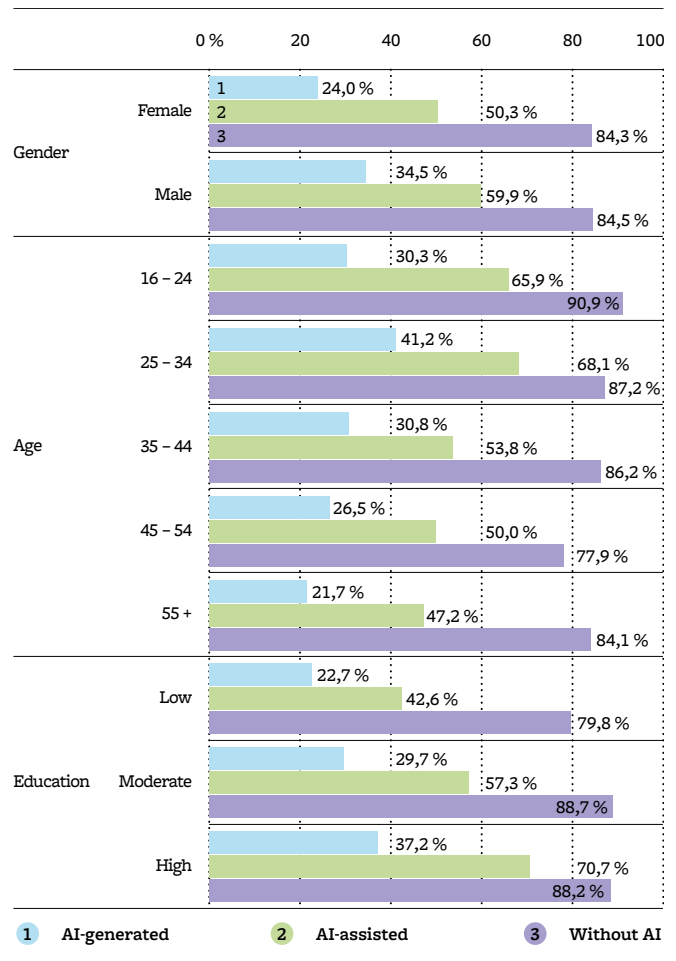


Figure 3: Intended use by target group

The chart shows, for various sociodemographic attributes, the extent to which respondents are willing to read news content written without AI, with the assistance of AI and wholly by AI (n = 1,254).

Reading example: All in all, 34.5% of male respondents would read news articles written wholly or in part by AI. Among female respondents, this figure was 24.0%.

Swiss population. On the other hand, acceptance of articles written entirely by AI is low.

In other words, acceptance of AI-produced journalistic content is low. However, this differs depending on socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and education (see Figure 3). Acceptance of content created without AI is by far the highest across all groups. Men are more likely to use AI-generated (34.5%) and AI-assisted (59.9%) con-

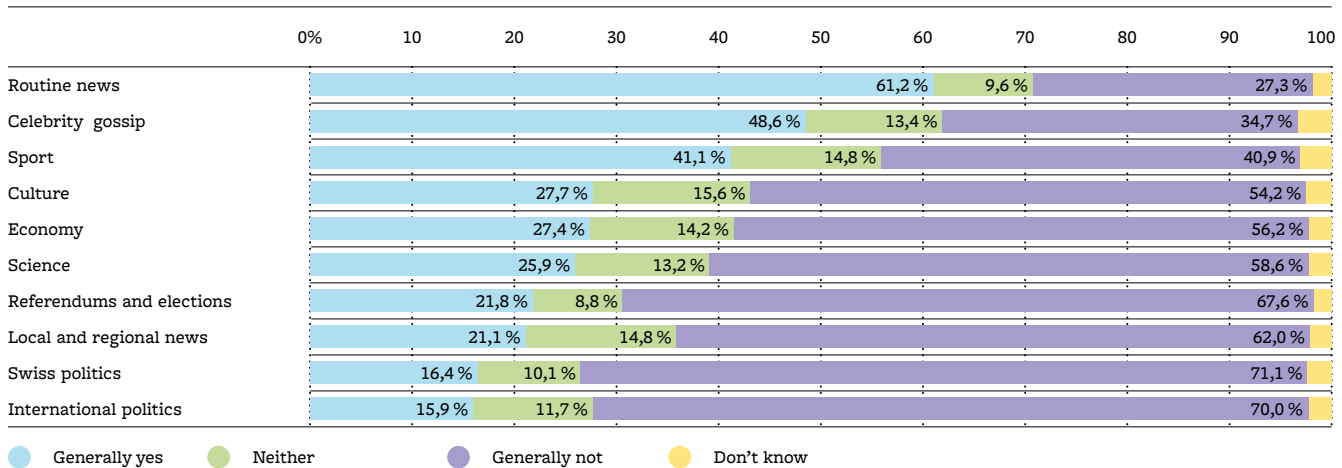


Figure 4: Intended use of AI-generated content by subject area

This figure shows, for various topics, the extent to which respondents would be willing to read news content written wholly by AI (n = 1,254).

Reading example: A total of 41.1% of respondents would read news articles on sports written wholly by AI. For international political issues, the figure was 15.9%.

tent than women (24.0% and 50.3%, respectively). Younger people are generally more open-minded about AI content than older people.

Acceptance of both AI-generated (41.2%) and AI-assisted content (68.1%) is highest among 25- to 34-year-olds. It is lowest among the over-55s (21.7% and 47.2%, respectively). Level of education also plays a role. Acceptance of AI-generated (37.2%) and AI-assisted content (70.7%) is highest among people with a higher level of education, and lowest among those with a low level of education (22.7% and 42.6%, respectively). Highly educated young men aged 25 to 34 are therefore the most receptive to content generated wholly by AI or with the assistance of AI.

Whether the Swiss are prepared to read AI-generated texts is heavily dependent on the subject matter of the text. We asked participants in which subject areas they deemed it acceptable to have media articles written wholly by AI (see Figure 4). Acceptance is highest for routine reporting like weather or stock market prices (61.2%). Acceptance is therefore highest in those areas where Swiss media is already using AI for text production. Likewise, there is also a relatively high degree of acceptance of the use of AI for reporting in soft-news categories, i.e., celebrity gossip (48.6%) and sports (41.1%). Acceptance of

AI-generated news content is significantly lower in the hard-news fields of culture (27.7%), economy (27.4%) and science (25.9%). The figure is lowest in international politics (15.9%), Swiss politics in general (16.4%), local and regional news (21.1%) as well as referendums and elections (21.8%). This finding is noteworthy because Swiss media already uses AI to produce text in reporting on municipal referendums.

There is broad consensus that AI-generated (87.0%) or AI-assisted (83.0%) content should be transparently declared as such by the media.

Acceptance of journalistic AI text production also depends on whether and how the use of AI is made transparent in the media. There is broad consensus that AI-generated (87.0%) or AI-assisted (83.0%) content should be transparently declared as such by the media (see Figure 5). Of those surveyed, 68.3% also felt that the media should declare when their articles were produced by journalists without the aid of AI. So, the more heavily AI is involved in the production of journalistic content, the greater the transparency expectations of users. This could be

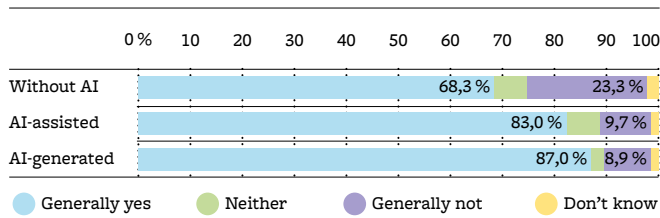


Figure 5: Expectation regarding the labelling of content

The figure shows to what extent the respondents expect the media to declare when news content has been written without AI, with the assistance of AI and wholly by AI (n = 1,254).

Reading example: In total, 83.0% of respondents expect media outlets to indicate when their news articles have been written with the assistance of AI.

declared with an acronym at the end of the article, for instance.

3.2 Assessment of the impact on media quality

We then asked participants how they assessed the impact of AI on the quality of journalistic content. Overall, those surveyed took the view that the use of AI in text production would have minimal positive and more likely negative effects on the quality of journalism. In total, 61.3% of respondents agreed with the statement that the quality of reporting would deteriorate if journalists started to use AI more often to write media articles in future. Two thirds of those surveyed (67.4%) believed that this would result in a decline in diversity of opinion. What is striking is that AI is seen as having very little potential when it comes to stopping the spread of misinformation: 67.1% of Swiss people believe that an increasing use of AI in news production would result in an increased proliferation of misinformation in reporting. This could be an expression of (ongoing) widespread skepticism towards the veracity of AI-generated content. We also asked which quality dimensions would make the respondents assess an increasing use of AI in news production positively (see Figure 6). The majority of respondents could only imagine the use of AI resulting in quality gains in two dimensions: respondents believe AI could lead to less emotion in the news (65.0%) and content more tai-

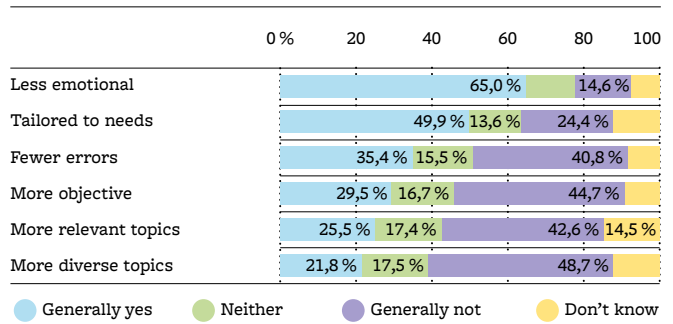


Figure 6: Assessment of the positive impact of AI on media quality

The figure shows how those surveyed assess the increasing influence of AI on various quality dimensions (n = 1,254).

Reading example: Roughly 65% of respondents believe that the use of AI in the production of news content is leading to less emotional reporting.

lored to the needs of users (49.9%). Across all the other quality indicators surveyed, only a minority saw any positive effects associated with AI. Just over a

The Swiss have somewhat limited interest in the use of AI-generated articles and also exhibit limited willingness to pay in this respect.

third (35.4%) believe that the use of AI in text production leads to fewer errors; 29.5% of respondents see a positive impact with regard to the objectivity of reporting, and roughly a quarter (25.5%) with regard to relevance. Just one in five (21.8%) assume it would have a positive impact on diversity in reporting. There is therefore little positivity among those surveyed in their assessment of the future influence of AI on key quality indicators such as relevance, objectivity and diversity in reporting.

3.3 Financing

If you ask the Swiss whether or not they are willing to pay for AI-generated or AI-assisted content, striking differences emerge (see Figure 7). Willingness to pay for journalism produced without AI is significantly higher than it is for journalism influenced by the use of AI. The Swiss thus have little interest in

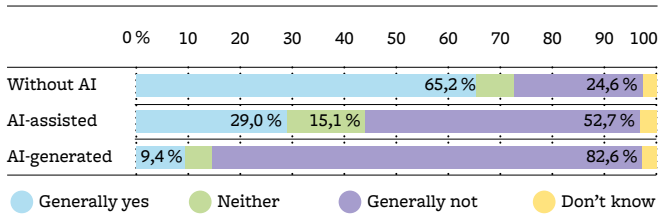


Figure 7: Willingness to pay for AI-generated content

The chart shows the extent to which the respondents are willing to pay for news content written without AI, with the assistance of AI and wholly by AI (n = 1,254).

Reading example: A total of 65.2% of respondents would pay for news articles written by journalists without the assistance of AI; 9.4% of respondents would pay for news articles written wholly by AI.

the use of AI-generated articles (see Figure 2) and exhibit a low willingness to pay in this regard (see Figure 7). Only one in ten (9.4%) would be willing to pay for texts generated entirely by AI. In contrast, 65.2% of respondents disclosed that they would generally be willing to pay for content produced without the assistance of AI. Meanwhile, 29.0% would be willing to pay for media content produced with the assistance of AI. Accordingly, demand for journalism produced by journalists ranks highest. At the same time, however, some expressed a willingness to pay for content created with the assistance of AI. These figures are to be interpreted in relation to one another. The figure of 65.2% refers to the respondents' stated willingness to pay for journalism in general. This is significantly higher than reported payment behaviour regarding online news queried in the Digital News Report (Reuters Institute, 2023) (17.2%, see Chapter XI.3 in Information Media Funding).

Further analysis shows that those who would pay for AI in journalism would also pay for «normal» journalism. Only 2% of all respondents would generally pay for AI-generated content, but not for journalism produced entirely without AI. In addition, 3% of all respondents would pay for AI-assisted journalism, but not for journalism produced without AI. So, as it stands, there is currently no critical mass of people willing to pay whom media outlets could win as new customers through AI-generated media content.

In terms of willingness to pay, there are also some variations between sociodemographic groups (see Figure 8). Men are slightly more willing to pay

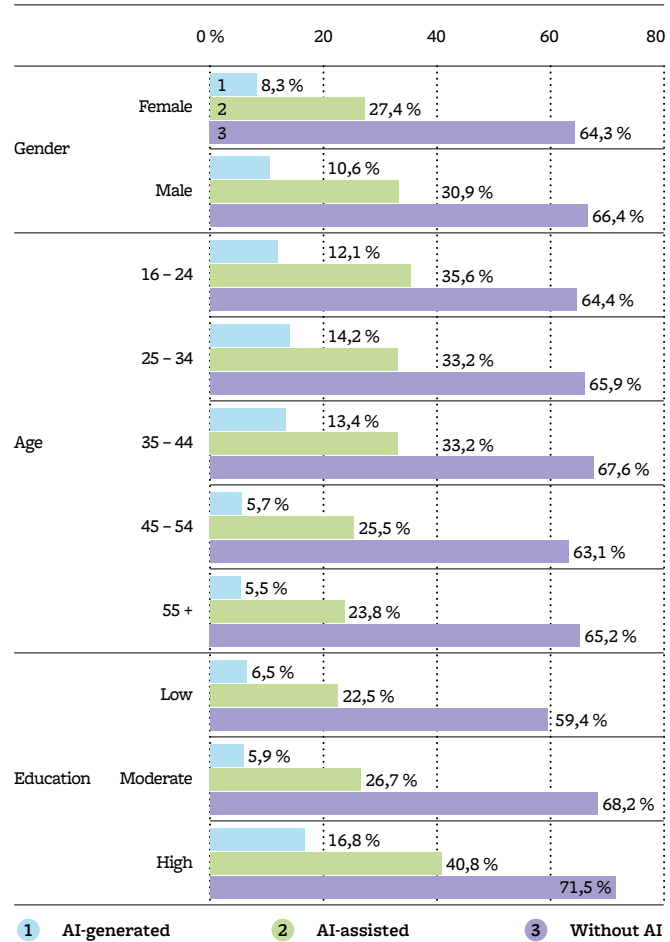


Figure 8: Willingness to pay for AI by target group

The chart shows, for various sociodemographic attributes, the extent to which the respondents are willing to pay for news content written without AI, with the assistance of AI and wholly by AI (n = 1,254).

Reading example: Overall, 14.2% of 25–34-year-olds would be willing to pay for news articles written wholly or in part by AI. Among those in the over-55s group, the figure is 5.5%.

for AI-generated (10.6%) and AI-assisted (30.9%) content than women (8.3% and 27.4%, respectively). When it comes to age, the differences are more striking. Willingness to pay for AI-generated and AI-assisted content is more than 6 percentage points lower among people aged 45 and over than among younger age groups. People with higher levels of education are significantly more willing to pay than people with medium or low levels of education. Overall,

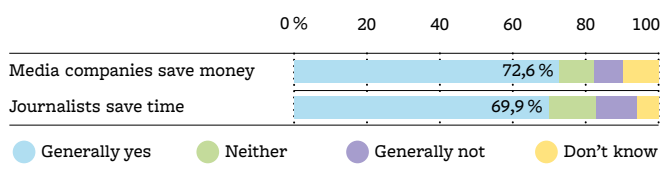


Figure 9: Perception of impact on journalistic resources

The figure shows how those surveyed perceive the influence of AI on journalistic resources (n = 1,254).

Reading example: A total of 72.6% of respondents believe that media outlets save money when they use AI to produce news content.

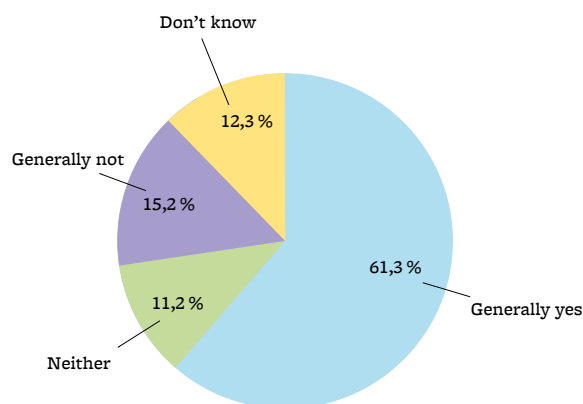


Figure 10: Acceptance of compensation for the use of news content for AI tools

The figure shows whether respondents believe providers of AI tools should compensate media outlets if they use their content (n = 1,254).

Reading example: Overall, 61.3% of respondents believe that providers of AI tools should compensate media and journalists if they use news content for their tools.

it shows that younger, well-educated people would be more willing to pay for journalistic content produced with AI. However, approval figures are somewhat low across all sociodemographic groups, especially with regard to content generated wholly by AI.

Willingness to pay also depends on the perception of the costs incurred in the creation of a product. With regard to the perceived influence of AI on efficiency in editorial offices and media outlets, the study finds high levels of approval (see Figure 9): 72.6% of respondents believe that media outlets save money with AI-generated content. Meanwhile, 69.9% also agree with the statement that journalists save time by using AI. The data shows that users strongly associate the use of AI in journalism with efficiency gains and reduced costs. Such a perception may not necessarily relate to the actual situation in media companies or editorial offices. But if users have the impression that media outlets are saving costs by using AI, they presumably want to benefit from this themselves. We therefore expect users to be unwilling to pay as much for content created entirely or with the assistance of AI. The currently rather low willingness to pay for online journalism would presumably continue to deteriorate (see Chapter XI. Information on the Financing of the Media).

When it comes to funding journalism, it is not just the relationship between media outlets as providers and media users as paying consumers that plays a role. Media outlets also have a relationship with the tech companies that offer AI tools. On the one hand, they benefit from the potential efficiency

gains that AI enables. On the other hand, media companies' journalistic content also serves as raw material and training data for AI providers. To be specific, AI tools or so-called large language models like ChatGPT rely on content from news media, among others, for their answers. We therefore also asked whether, from the perspective of the Swiss population, AI tool providers should compensate media outlets for using their content (see Figure 10). This question is also linked to the media policy discussion around copyright, an issue where the Federal Council proposed a law in May 2023. To date, AI tools have

Those surveyed are predominantly of the opinion that media should be compensated if their content is used for AI tools.

been excluded from the draft law. The results of our study show that those surveyed are predominantly of the opinion that media should be compensated if their content is used for AI tools (61.3%). Just 15.2% oppose this view, 11.2% are somewhere in between, and 12.3% don't know. Acceptance of a copyright law

aimed at AI providers is also high in different population groups and degrees of acceptance are relatively similar across the board.

4 Conclusion

This study presents comprehensive data on how the Swiss population assesses and accepts the use of AI in journalistic news production. While AI is a hot topic in the media sector, it has not yet hit home with the wider public to the same extent. As this study shows, there is still limited awareness regarding the link between AI and journalism. Although a majority of the population has already heard that AI is used for the production of journalistic content, only half of those surveyed say that they have already knowingly used AI texts. There are also a number of people read such texts. This uncertainty may be one

With this in mind, in future there will be a need for transparency with regard to the use of AI, but also more self-reflective reporting as to how journalism uses AI.

reason why a clear majority of respondents expect media companies to declare AI-generated or AI-assisted content as such, i.e., to make it transparent (with similar results in Germany: Kieslich et al., 2021). With this in mind, in future there will be a need for transparency with regard to the use of AI, but also more self-reflective reporting as to how journalism deals with AI. Journalism can help to raise awareness of the topic of AI, especially with regard to changes in news production, and to contextualise and explain it to its own readers.

Although there are clear transparency expectations on the part of readers, Swiss media outlets are still reluctant to label AI-produced content. According to Ringier's internal guidelines, the labelling of content created entirely with AI is mandatory. However, this obligation does not apply if AI tools are only used to provide assistance (Ringier, 2023). SRF content is currently subject to mandatory labelling «where the use of such systems is not obvious to us-

ers» (SRF, n.d.). As examples, SRF mentions the use of artificially generated or cloned voices or avatars. Heidi.news does not specify any requirements for the declaration of AI-produced content in its guidelines for dealing with AI. The outlet merely states that «each published article is signed by one or more journalists who continue to vouch for the veracity and relevance of the information it contains» (Heidi.news, 2023). Some examples from abroad are more restrictive when it comes to the use of AI. For example, The Guardian, Aftonbladet and de Volkskrant only allow the use of AI-generated content in exceptional cases – all of which must be clearly labelled. At de Volkskrant, journalists must also ensure transparency if they use AI as a tool, e.g., for research. However, it is not clear from the various guidelines how this is to be implemented in practice (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2023; de Volkskrant, 2023; Schori, 2023; Viner & Bateson, 2023). Based on the results of our survey, Swiss media outlets should attach greater importance to declaring the use of AI and focus on the transparent and clear labelling of authorship involving AI – for both AI-generated and AI-assisted content. Corresponding guidelines could also be developed regarding the declaration of AI for the Swiss Journalists' Code of Conduct.

Acceptance of AI-generated content is still low at the moment. Acceptance is slightly higher for texts written by journalists with the assistance of AI. It follows from this that it is still important to users that responsibility for quality is attributable primarily to the journalists themselves and not AI. Media companies can therefore set themselves apart by investing in journalistic resources and expertise, while a strong (or overly strong) focus on AI-generated texts is currently meeting with little public interest or willingness to pay. The significance of traditional journalism is also evident when it comes to the assessment of quality. People in Switzerland tend to have a negative view of the future influence of AI on the quality of content. This obviously has consequences when it comes to the willingness to consume any AI-generated media articles in general. For topics that are socio-politically relevant, acceptance of AI articles is low, i.e., only a few people would use these articles in the first place. The use of AI for routine reporting, for example on weather and stock market prices, is accepted. For coverage of soft news

topics, such as celebrity gossip or sports, acceptance is also relatively high.

The respondents are unanimous in their assessment of the possible efficiency gains for journalism and media companies through AI. A clear majority agrees with the statement that the use of AI in journalism can save money and time. This narrative poses dangers in terms of people's willingness to pay. The overall stagnation in the willingness to pay for journalism could be further exacerbated by the prevailing narrative in public debates that AI enables large efficiency gains. This is because, according to the results of our survey, willingness to pay for journalistic content created with AI is extremely low – significantly lower than the willingness to pay for journalism that does not use AI. The media therefore have a responsibility – also for their own benefit – to better explain the use of AI with all of its advantages and disadvantages to users.

There is also a clear result with regard to the question of whether providers of AI tools like ChatGPT, which rely on news content for their answers, should compensate journalists and media companies for this. This is supported by a clear majority. This is an interesting finding, not least in relation to the current media policy debate on copyright, according to which social media platforms and search engines should pay media companies and journalists money for the use of news content.

Ultimately, the question is whether the use of AI in journalism might save resources but could result in further stagnation or a decline in a willingness to pay among readers. Whether the willingness to pay for AI-generated content is so low owing to perceived cost savings, the presumed negative effects on media quality or for other reasons would be an interesting research question for future analyses and studies.

Not all social groups perceive AI in journalism in the same way. Willingness to use and, if somewhat less pronounced, willingness to pay for AI-produced articles is highest among younger men with a high level of education. Older people and people with a lower level of education, as well as women, tend to be skeptical of the use of AI to produce news content. The shortcomings or dangers perceived by these groups will have to be analysed in depth in future studies. In this context, it should also be emphasised

that the present study was conducted at a comparatively early stage when some people do not yet have a strong opinion on AI in journalism. Further surveys will and must therefore follow to see how growing experience with automatically generated content and the public discourse on AI affect its perception and acceptance.

Online Supplement

Der dieser Studie zugrunde liegende Fragebogen ist online verfügbar: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-235608>

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