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AI-Generated Images in Digital Media: *A Comparative Analysis of News and* *Technology Websites*

Abstract

This study explores the integration of AI-generated images in digital media, with a specific focus on Slovak news and technology websites. It examines the extent to which AI-created visuals are used in articles covering artificial intelligence-related topics. The research selects three leading websites from both categories and analyzes articles published in October, November, and December 2024. These articles are identified through keywords such as “artificial intelligence,” “Gemini,” “Copilot,” “ChatGPT,” and “machine learning.” A key aspect of the study is determining whether the lead images accompanying these articles were generated using AI tools like Midjourney. The research employs a comparative analysis to highlight potential differences in the prevalence and application of AI-generated visuals across news and technology platforms. It is hypothesized that technology websites, due to their focus on innovation, are more likely to embrace AI-generated imagery, whereas news websites may rely on traditional visuals or

stock photography to preserve journalistic integrity and audience trust. The study also explores the ethical, professional, and aesthetic implications of incorporating AI-generated images into digital journalism. It assesses how these visuals influence storytelling, audience perception, and the broader representation of AI-related themes. By highlighting the role of AI in visual content creation, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of AI’s impact on modern media practices. The findings offer valuable insights for journalists, editors, and media organizations, emphasizing the need for responsible and transparent use of AI-generated imagery in digital news environments.

Key words

AI-Generated Images. Artificial Intelligence. Digital Media. News Websites. Machine Learning. Midjourney. Technology Websites.

Introduction

The integration of AI in media production has revolutionized content creation across various formats, including text, audio, images, and video (Arul Aram & Anita Juliana, 2024). AI-driven systems can now generate multimedia content from textual inputs, utilizing natural language processing, image generation, and text-to-speech technologies to create visually engaging and conceptually rich representations. This transformation extends to journalism, marketing (Pátík et al., 2024), and education, enhancing accessibility and audience engagement (Jadhav et al., 2024). AI applications in digital media enable personalized experiences, automated data analysis, and advanced editing techniques. Implementing AI tools can also adapt to the conditions of a changing environment; that is, it can flexibly identify problems and offer solutions in the media industry (Pravdová et al., 2024). While AI offers advantages in efficiency, customization, and creativity, it also raises concerns about privacy, job displacement, and algorithmic bias (Faeq Kakbra, 2024). Mirek-Rogowska et al. (2024) also argue that although AI technologies have transformative capability in enhancing communication and personalisation, they also bring ethical concerns that necessarily call for stable theoretical frameworks and models of control to ensure responsible integration.

The media industry faces both opportunities and challenges with the adoption of generative AI images, necessitating careful consideration of ethical guidelines and skill-updating techniques (Arya & Sharma, 2023; Faeq Kakbra, 2024). Generative AI represents an evolution of digital media algorithms, using neural networks to combine and interpolate visual patterns from large datasets. These AI models, trained on vast internet datasets, can produce high-quality artistic content across various media forms (Manovich, 2024; Epstein et al., 2023). The field encompasses various techniques, including GANs, VAEs, and autoregressive models, with recent advancements in diffusion models yielding particularly impressive results in image generation (Sakirin & Kusuma, 2023). However, AI-generated images are disrupting existing approaches to verifying visual media trustworthiness, raising concerns about authenticity, manipulation, bias, attribution, transparency, and ethics (Bushey, 2023).

While AI presents opportunities for cost reduction and process optimization, it also raises concerns about the future of journalism as a profession (Horska, 2020). The responsible and ethical use of AI in media is crucial, with a focus on building trust and managing potential risks (Sančanin & Penjišević, 2022). As AI continues to evolve, it is reshaping the media landscape, challenging traditional practices, and necessitating a balance between human judgment

and AI capabilities (Chan-Olmsted, 2019). Generative AI is poised to revolutionize creative processes in the media industry, particularly in producing illustrative images. The adoption of generative AI in creative industries raises important questions about creativity, originality, and ownership, necessitating interdisciplinary research to guide policy decisions and understand its broader societal impact (Epstein et al., 2023; Minni et al., 2024). As this technology continues to advance, it challenges our understanding of digital media integrity and necessitates further research into its implications across various fields.

This study focuses on the prevalence and application of AI-generated images across Slovak news and technology websites, examining their use during October, November and December 2024. By analysing three leading websites from each category, the research investigates whether AI-generated visuals are more commonly employed in technology reporting, where familiarity with AI-driven tools like Midjourney may be higher.

The study aims to identify patterns in the adoption of these images, uncovering differences between the two types of platforms and exploring their implications for audience engagement and media ethics. While technology websites are expected to exhibit a greater reliance on AI-generated visuals, news websites may prioritize traditional visuals to uphold their credibility.

Through this comparative analysis, the research sheds light on the evolving role of AI in visual media, contributing to the ongoing dialogue on the ethical and practical considerations of AI-generated imagery in journalism and digital content creation.

1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The arrival of artificial intelligence among the public has affected us as individuals, but also the entire society and various industries. The media is no exception and is faced equally with various challenges as well as benefits of this new-age technology.

Artificial intelligence has been with us since the 1950s when it was first introduced at a conference (Cordeschi, 2007; Amisha et al., 2019) which was initiated by a proposal by John McCarthy and his team (McCarthy et al., 2006). They were the first to use the term “artificial intelligence” and thus launched a new era of AI. It didn’t take long for AI to overcome various obstacles and challenges. One of them was the creation of art. In the late 1960s, Harold Cohen created a program called AARON, which ranks as the first AI-driven program in the art world. AARON was given knowledge of basic subjects, basic drawing techniques, and physics (Cohen, 1988). Based on this, it was able to create various works of art. AARON has evolved over several decades, from generating simple shapes to creating complex three-

dimensional figures and botanical scenes (Waxman, 1992). This is also the main difference from the AI tools used for generating paintings nowadays – they do not draw their creations from scratch, but generate them based on their database (Cengel, 2024).



Figure 1: Harold Cohen: AARON
Source: Whitney Museum of American Art (n.d.)

However, it wasn’t until 2022 that OpenAI kicked off a major change in society by making its AI tools available to the general public. This big change was started by OpenAI by making its ChatGPT language model available in November 2022. In a very short time, it became popular, mainly due to social media users who immediately shared its capabilities and limitations (Marr, 2023). In 2022 the OpenAI company also made available an AI tool for image generation called DALL-E. At first it used a waitlist, but in September 2022 it removed the waitlist, thus giving access to the tool to the entire public (Knight, 2023). Other examples of image generation tools made available in 2022 are Midjourney (Biddlecombe

& Village, 2024) and Stable Diffusion (Stability AI, n.d.). Other tools followed later that are still popular today, such as Adobe Firefly in 2023 (Still, 2024) or Copilot Designer in 2024 (Chauhan, 2024). The arrival of these tools raised various issues in the field of art, authorship, and ethics. In addition, they have an impact on various industries, including media, advertising, and graphic design (Pise et al., 2024). There are increasing concerns about the potential rise of disinformation (Thomson et al., 2024) and “deepfakes”, which are fake images and videos, for example Pope Francis in a big white jacket (Ellery, 2023). Other major challenges include fears of job loss to AI (Brewer et al., 2024). While these tools present different challenges, they also offer opportunities for innovation and transformation in journalism and content creation (Arya & Sharma, 2023).

2 Methodology

The focus of our paper is to explore the use of AI tools to create image content in the digital environment, focusing on news and technology websites for the October, November, December 2024 time period. We will first be looking at the cover image, that is intended to attract the reader. The sites were selected based on a search for “best Slovak sites” on medialne.trend.sk, which is presented as a site about marketing, advertising, and media in general. Readers can find various articles on it, especially

current news and analytical articles. We chose this ranking because it was the most up to date as of January 2, 2025. The website offers a ranking of the top 10 websites in Slovakia. For our analysis, we selected sites for the news sites category to meet the following criteria: 1) they have the highest visitor counts, 2) they are of news character. For technology sites, we followed these criteria: 1) they have the highest visitor counts, 2) they have technological content. Given that the technology website offers only actuality.sk and startitup.sk, we added another website after entering the keyword phrase “technology website in Slovakia”. Based on this, we selected the following news sites:

- 1) aktuality.sk,
- 2) sme.sk,
- 3) pravda.sk.

Technology websites:
1) fontech.startitup.sk,
2) zive.aktuality.sk,
3) techbox.sk.

We selected articles from the sites as follows: we searched for them by entering keywords and phrases: “umelá inteligencia”, “artificial intelligence”, “AI”, “ChatGPT”, “Gemini”, “Copilot” and “strojové učenie”. Using this, we were able to identify 458 articles.

To create a detailed quantitative content analysis, we identified the analytical categories:

Category A – Images created by an AI tool: we will focus on images

that are created by a specific AI tool for generating images. For example, it could be images by Midjourney.

Category B – Images that contain AI-created content: these are cover images that contain images created by AI but were not created by a specific AI image generation tool. For example, these may be screenshots of other AI creations.

The search was conducted for the period October 1, 2024 – December 12, 2024.

For our research and to define its focus more precisely, we formulated the following research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent do Slovak news and technology websites use AI-generated images in articles about artificial intelligence?
- RQ2: Are AI-generated images more prevalent on technology websites compared to news websites?
- RQ3: What tools are predominantly used to create these images, and how are they utilized?
- RQ4: What ethical and professional implications arise from using AI-generated visuals in digital media?

3 Results

The availability of AI tools to the public currently offers various positive as well as negative uses of the technology. Our aim was to investigate the occurrence and use of images that have been

generated by AI tools on Slovak news and technology websites. We focused on the periods of October, November, and December 2024. For more precise identification, we identified two categories: category A, which includes images created directly by AI tools, and category B, which includes images that were not created by image generation tools but contain content created by AI. In this case, it could be, for example, a screenshot of a video generated by AI. Over this period, we found that news sites contained 1.27% of Category A images and 2.12% of Category B images out of a total of 236 articles.

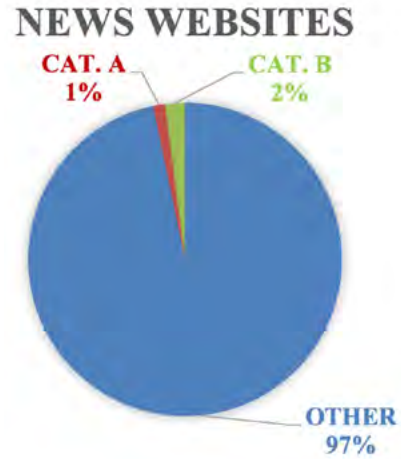


Figure 2: News websites
Source: own processing, 2025

As for technology-focused sites, we identified 7.66% of images in category A and 1.8% of images in category B out of a total of 222 articles.

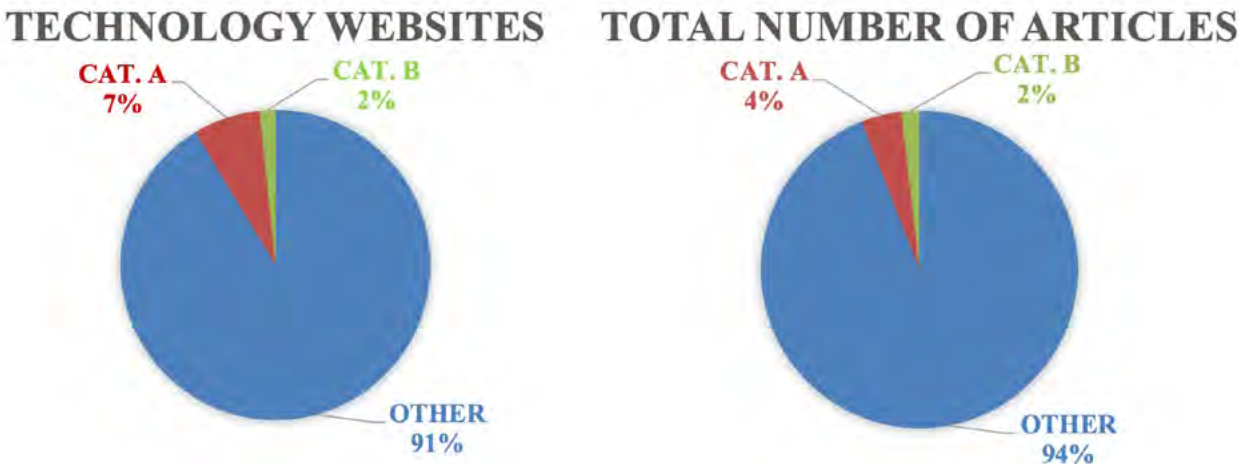


Figure 3: Technology websites
Source: own processing, 2025

Figure 4: Total number of articles
Source: own processing, 2025

Overall, 4.37% of the images were from category A and 1.97% from category B of the examined sample of 458 articles that contained the keywords “umelá inteligencia”, “artificial intelligence”, “AI”, “ChatGPT”, “Gemini”, “Copilot” and “strojové učenie”.

In addition to how many articles contain the given category A and B images, we also identified the answers to our research questions.

RQ1: To what extent do Slovak news and technology websites use AI-generated images in articles about artificial intelligence?

Slovak news and technology sites use AI-generated images in articles containing the keywords mentioned above to a relatively small degree, with technology sites having a higher proportion of use of these images than news sites. News sites have a very low rate of use of AI-generated images (only 1.27% of articles contain directly AI-generated images). These images

appear to be less popular, possibly due to the reliance on traditional visuals or a lower need for AI-generated visuals. Technology websites are more likely to use AI-generated images (7.66% of articles with category A images), which may be due to the focus on innovation and new technologies, where these images serve as illustrative elements directly related to the topic.

RQ2: Are AI-generated images more prevalent on technology websites compared to news websites?

Yes, AI-generated images are significantly more common on tech sites compared to news sites. AI-generated images (category A) are almost six times more common on technology sites (7.66%) than on news sites (1.27%). The overall share of AI-generated visual content (A+B) is nearly three times higher on technology sites (9.46%) compared to news sites (3.39%).

RQ3: What tools are predominantly used to create these images, and how

are they utilized?

Midjourney (6.76%) is the main tool used to generate AI images on technology sites, while news sites generally refer to the source of images as “AI” only, without specifying a concrete tool. Technology sites seem to place more emphasis on specifying exactly which tool is used and prefer tools which are known for their flexibility and high-quality output, like Midjourney.

RQ4: What ethical and professional implications arise from using AI-generated visuals in digital media?

On news sites, AI-generated images are referred to by the source only in general terms as “AI”, indicating a low level of transparency about what tools or technologies have been used. Another potential risk is the mass use of AI tools such as Midjourney. It may replace traditional illustrators and graphic designers, changing the demand for creative professionals. AI-generated visuals also raise questions

about who the images belong to – the authors of the ideas, the users of the AI tools, or the AI providers themselves.

4 Discussion

The use of AI-generated images in digital media, specifically in journalism, is a relatively new topic that presents both opportunities and challenges. Our research focused on Slovak websites, specifically news and technology websites. It covered the periods of October, November, and December 2024. It provided us with valuable insights into the extent of the use of the AI tools in question, but also the implications of the use. Our results suggest that the use of these AI tools is still in its early development and their use is limited in this digital environment. There were only 1.27% of articles on news sites that directly used an AI tool to generate a cover image (category A), and only 2.12% contained content that was AI-generated but not directly created by an image generation tool (category B). On the other hand, technology sites contained a slightly higher number of AI-generated images, specifically 7.66% of articles used AI tools, such as Midjourney, and 1.8% contained AI-generated content. With this, we can see a significant difference between these sites. While news sites rely heavily on traditional visual posts, tech sites are more open to using AI-generated images. News sites may have different reasons why this is the case. For example, news sites often prioritize the accuracy of fact-based images, which may lead them to be more cautious about using AI-generated images that could be perceived as misleading. Technology

sites, on the other hand, are more focused on a public that is familiar with the technology and therefore may perceive the images in question more openly. On these sites, these AI-generated images serve not only as illustrative tools, but also as demonstrations of what the article is reporting to the reader. An important difference between the two sites is also the difference in the use and sourcing of the AI tools in question. While the technology sites use the relatively well-known and popular tool Midjourney (6.76%) or Copilot Design (1.35%) and source them properly, which is how we were able to identify this information, the news sites source such content simply by “AI” (1.27%) without specifying which tool it is. This lack of transparency suggests a low emphasis on the origins of AI-generated images. Based on this, our research highlights the importance of transparency and thus a balanced approach to incorporating AI-generated content, not only in the field of visualizations. Media organizations should adopt policies that prioritize transparency, accuracy, and ethical use of AI specifically. The finding of low use of AI-generated illustrations and visualizations reassures the social concern in the takeover of the profession by artificial intelligence. However, it is not excluded, which is why it is important for the media to collaborate with professions that are in potential danger or create others.

Conclusion

The use of AI-generated images on Slovak media is still in its infancy. Technology websites are more inclined to do this than news websites. Our

analysis of 458 articles from six Slovak websites for the quarter 2024 revealed that images generated using AI tools (category A) were present in 4.37% of the cases, while images that had only AI-generated content (category B) were 1.97% of the total number of the studied sample. Technology sites showed a higher dominance in AI-generated image content, specifically 7.66% of the articles contained category A out of the total 222 articles from technology sites. On the other hand, news sites contained only 1.27% of the total post 236 articles identified from news sites. These differences highlight the differing priorities and audiences of each site. Technology sites focus mainly on innovation, whereas news sites favour a traditional approach and visual authenticity. Another finding is the use of specific AI tools and their sourcing. Technology sites primarily use Midjourney, which is well-known and popular among users mainly for its high-quality outputs. On the other hand, news sites label AI-generated images only as “AI”, indicating less interest in the provenance of the AI tools that generated the image. This is poor transparency, and it may indicate possible unfamiliarity with the tools in question. Based on this, our research highlights several ethical and professional consequences of using AI-generated visuals. Lack of transparency on news sites increases concerns about audience trust. In addition, the increase in the use of AI tools to generate content poses a challenge to traditional creative professions, and also raises issues of ownership. These issues require more space and oversight. There is a need for education in the field and the development of ethical

frameworks to guide the disciplined use of AI in the media. Considering that AI is constantly evolving and advancing at an incredible speed, it is essential that these actions are implemented as soon as possible. It is essential for media organisations to adopt practices that prioritise transparency and accountability to be able to use AI tools to their full potential. This study offers a basis for understanding the position of AI-generated visuals in Slovak media, but further research is needed to explore the long-term implications of the trend. Future studies could therefore focus on other types of media, to explore audience perceptions or the impact of AI tools on the creative industry. Through such research, we can better navigate the complex issues of integrating AI into digital media environments and ensure that its use complies with ethical and professional standards.

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