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# Breaking the News? Generative AI's Impact on Journalism and Its Implications for Disinformation

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Generative AI (GenAI) is mostly seen as a risk factor for simplifying the creation and spread of disinformation. However, in addition to being a useful tool for bad-faith actors, the increasing uptake of GenAI also transforms the media ecology in other, more structural ways. Focusing on the democratic institution of journalism, which is crucial for providing public access to high-quality information, this study establishes how GenAI is reshaping journalistic workflows and how this might affect journalism's capacity to effectively counter disinformation. To this end, we conduct a literature review on the impact of GenAI on journalism and synthesize key insights across the journalistic value chain to identify the following four key disinformation risks: (1) loss of editorial control and epistemic authority, (2) decreasing journalistic quality, (3) exacerbated economic pressures, and (4) eroding audience trust. We close with a research agenda on how to assess, mitigate, and prevent these risks.

*Keywords: journalism, generative AI, literature review, disinformation, AI disclosures, automated journalism*

Disinformation, which we understand as "false information that is created, promoted, or de-contextualized with the intention to make profit or cause harm" (Hameleers, 2025, p. 3), is not a new phenomenon. However, the emergence of generative AI (GenAI) changes the opportunity structures for the creation and dissemination of disinformation (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). GenAI "refers to computational techniques that are capable of generating seemingly new, meaningful content such as text, images, or audio from training data" (Feuerriegel, Hartmann, Janiesch, & Zschesch, 2024, p. 111). What sets GenAI apart from previous forms of AI is its "ability to very quickly generate plausible and appropriate output in response to user prompts, and to adjust this output on the basis of further prompts" (Attard, Davis, & Main, 2023, p. 15). This differs considerably from nongenerative AI models, which are predominantly used for analytical tasks such as content classification or recommendation, and makes creating and spreading misleading content at scale increasingly easy (Feuerriegel et al., 2023; Kreps, McCain, & Brundage, 2022).

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Ideally, journalism constitutes a counterforce to such developments and supplies the public with accurate information that it can trust (Strömbäck, 2005). However, journalism has long been a business under pressure and may be vulnerable to the negative impacts of new technologies (Attard et al., 2023). Seeing opportunities for increasing workflow efficiencies, many news organizations have already begun to experiment with GenAI for various use cases (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024; Oh & Jung, 2025), but there are also valid concerns about editorial, reputational, and business risks (Attard et al., 2023; Borchardt et al., 2024). Moreover, GenAI uptake in journalism might lead to significant changes in how news is gathered, produced, verified, and spread (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). These changes may not be negative per se, but they could have much more far-reaching consequences for shared journalistic roles and practices than earlier technologies (Lewis, Guzman, Schmidt, & Lin, 2025) and could lead to developments that weaken journalism's capacity to counter disinformation.

Accordingly, we argue that GenAI's disinformation risks must be examined in the broader context of its impact on the democratic institution of journalism. To better understand the implications of journalistic GenAI adoption for journalism's capacity to counter disinformation, we pose the following research question:

***RQ**: How does GenAI impact the gathering, production, verification, and dissemination of news, and how do these changes relate to concerns around the creation and spread of disinformation?*

To answer this question, we review literature on the impact of GenAI on journalism and relate key insights on potential disinformation risks to broader literature on disinformation. This is done through the lens of institutional journalism theory (Reese, 2022). Our study contributes to extant literature by (1) providing an overview of what (research on) journalistic GenAI adoption currently looks like, (2) discussing the implications of journalistic GenAI adoption for journalism's capacity to counter disinformation, and (3) providing a brief research agenda centered around four key disinformation risks that future work could help prevent or mitigate.

## Scoping GenAI Impact on Journalism and Disinformation

Ideally, journalism is not just a business, but should also play a crucial part in safeguarding public access to quality information and take on a critical watchdog role to hold those in power accountable (Strömbäck, 2005). As such, journalism can be understood as a democratic institution. According to Reese (2022), institutions are "complex social structure[s]—formed by an interlocking network of rules and activities, roles, technologies, norms, and collective frames of meaning—which work together to sustain its coherence, endurance, and value" (p. 257). In the case of journalism, this involves the interplay among audience demands, journalistic practices, and role perceptions, as well as normative expectations. This interplay is continuously reimagined and renegotiated, particularly in light of technological innovations that change how journalists understand and perform their roles (Carlson & Lewis, 2019).

### *Automation in Journalism*

Journalism is no stranger to the impact of technological innovation. Indeed, according to Dodds, Zamith, and Lewis (2025), "for three decades, the story of journalism and digital technologies has been one

of hamster-wheel acceleration, marked by increasing expectations to do more with less" (p. 2). The emergence of automated journalism in the 2010s serves as a good example. Although largely limited to structured news formats, where facts (such as earning calls or sports results) were automatically embedded in existing article templates (Caswell, 2024), automating core aspects of journalism suddenly became more than just a theoretical possibility (van Dalen, 2024). This triggered questions about the impact of automation on journalistic role performance and perception (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020).

However, journalistic GenAI adoption may have much more far-reaching implications because it "intervenes in the core creative processes of journalism, challenging traditional norms of authorship, originality, and professional identity" (Lewis et al., 2025, p. 1). Accordingly, a crucial question is to what extent GenAI will transform, rather than just augment, existing journalistic practices and norms (van Dalen, 2024) and—in extension thereof—what these changes imply for journalism's capacity to counter disinformation.

### *Generative AI, Journalism, and New Opportunity Structures for Disinformation*

Disinformation, which we understand as "false information that is created, promoted, or de-contextualized with the intention to make profit or cause harm" (Hameleers, 2025, p. 3), potentially affects a wide range of societal groups, ranging from consumers to voters (Loth, Kappes, & Pahl, 2024). GenAI makes it easier to create and spread disinformation than ever before (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). For example, GenAI can be used to automatically generate fake news, propaganda, and deepfakes and spread them through coordinated networks of synthetic personas that amplify such content by driving up social media engagement (Ferrara, 2024).

Deepfakes, which refer to "synthetic media created using AI technology to make real persons (targeted persons depicted in the deepfake) say or do things that they have not said or done in real life" (Hameleers, van der Meer, & Dobber, 2024, p. 2), are often considered particularly concerning because they are high in both technological sophistication and modal richness (Dan, 2025) and might thus be more effective and better remembered (Weikmann & Lecheler, 2023). Deepfakes are far from being the only relevant concern, but they highlight the threat of GenAI for the broader information environment. Deepfakes could be used strategically to garner attention (e.g., publicists trying to attract news attention) or discredit particular individuals or organizations (Guzman & Lewis, 2024). If, as often argued, GenAI leads to a proliferation of mis- and disinformation, this might further increase the burden on journalists to navigate an increasingly polluted information environment (Lundberg & Mozelius, 2024).

What makes this even more concerning is that GenAI facilitates not just the creation but also the dissemination of disinformation (and similar influence operations). A field experiment by Kreps and Kriner (2023) shows this can have real political consequences, as legislators are almost as likely to respond to AI-generated content as to human-written emails. Thus, the primary impact of GenAI on opportunity structures for disinformation currently appears to be its ease of access and volume of output (Kreps et al., 2022): GenAI offers significant shortcuts for any actor who wants to create and disseminate disinformation, no matter how advanced or for what purpose.

Moreover, as we show below, GenAI also indirectly impacts the opportunity structures for disinformation, namely by changing journalistic norms and practices in ways that could undercut journalism's capacity to effectively counter disinformation. Below, we discuss how this may play out through the lens of institutional theory (Reese, 2022).

### *GenAI's Disinformation Implications Through an Institutional Lens*

Institutional theory ascribes importance to the shared norms and practices of individuals within social institutions (Reese, 2022). According to Lewis et al. (2025), the emergence of GenAI constitutes not merely a new tool that changes how journalists do their work but may also disrupt some of its key norms and values—and, with that, core tenets of what constitutes "good journalism." In their analysis, Lewis et al. (2025) describe GenAI as a "central driver of institutional change" (p. 13) because of how it changes editorial decision making and newsroom dynamics. Indeed, as GenAI tools are becoming increasingly powerful, they can "enter into roles previously associated with humans in communication and media work" (Guzman & Lewis, 2024, p. 348). As such, GenAI adoption threatens to renegotiate journalistic roles in ways that outsource at least part of the creative work and editorial decision making onto machines (Lewis et al., 2025).

This renegotiation is likely not universal. On one hand, recent years have seen the publication of various journalistic codes of conduct that often foreground values of human control and transparency (Becker, Simon, & Crum, 2025; de-Lima-Santos, Yeung, & Dodds, 2025), while newsroom studies indicate that journalists try to uphold journalistic standards in the face of GenAI (Wu, 2024). However, some studies do indicate a shift. For example, Brigham, Gao, Kohno, Roesner, and Mireshghallah (2024) find that journalists use ChatGPT in ways that do not align with ethical codes, for instance, using sensitive materials as inputs or publishing generated news articles with only very minor edits. Their findings suggest "some journalists will prioritize convenience and efficiency while neglecting journalistic integrity, data security, and privacy—if they are even fully aware of the complexity of these issues at all" (Lewis et al., 2025, p. 12).

With core journalistic tasks being partially outsourced to GenAI, journalistic GenAI adoption may thus undermine editorial control (e.g., if black-box GenAI models take on crucial tasks at the news gathering and production stages) and renegotiate standards for what constitutes good journalism (Lewis et al., 2025). As we describe further below, this could have important implications for journalism's ability to control the flow of information, set public agendas, and provide high-quality information that the public can rely on.

Importantly, GenAI's implications for journalistic workflows cannot be viewed in isolation from other GenAI effects that may exacerbate challenges journalists already face. For instance, GenAI-driven proliferation of disinformation across the web could increase journalists' verification burden while simultaneously lowering audiences' general trust in information (Lundberg & Mozelius, 2024). Similarly, GenAI might exacerbate existing economic pressures, as traditional revenue models are upended by new intermediaries (e.g., chatbots and AI summaries; see Savage, 2025) and as news organizations grow increasingly reliant on tools that external tech companies provide (Simon, 2024a).

Thus, despite its potential benefits, we argue that journalistic GenAI adoption may have profound implications for the norms and practices that constitute the democratic institution of journalism and help

guarantee high-quality news reporting. The potential impact of these changes may be further compounded by GenAI's influence on journalistic business models and the overall information environment. Next, we explore the extent and implications of this.

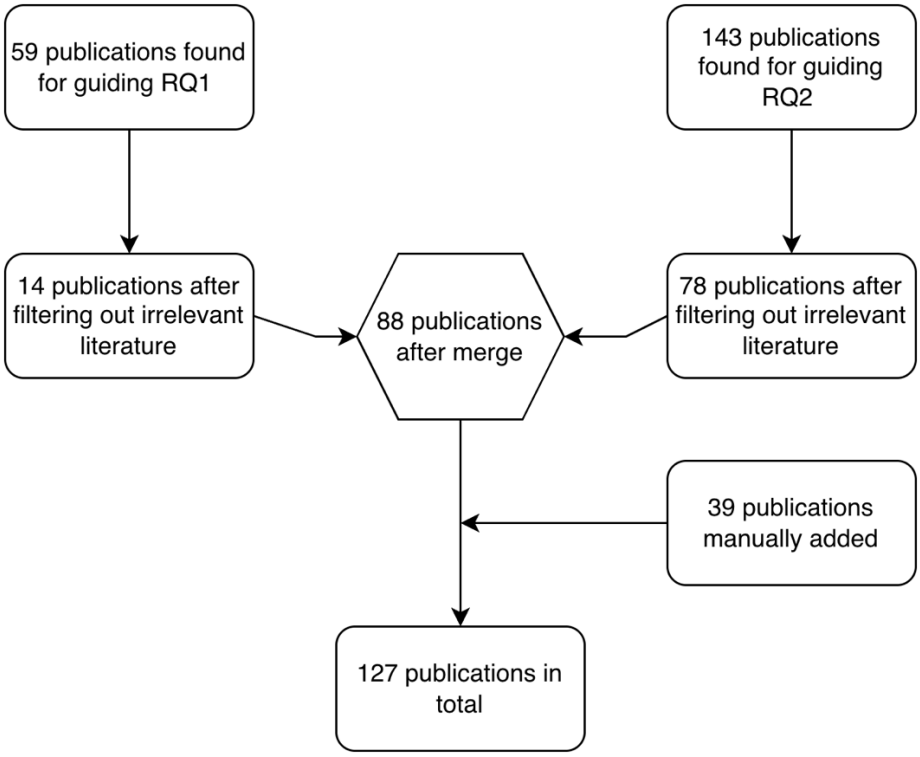


***Figure 1. Overview of literature search process for guiding RQs 1 and 2.***

**Methodology**

Our investigation into the impact of GenAI on journalism and disinformation follows a two-step approach. First, we review recent academic work on how journalists use and disclose GenAI to map their GenAI adoption and the possible implications thereof. Next, we synthesize insights from this literature review to identify key disinformation risks across the journalistic value chain. Our literature search was informed by the two guiding sub-research questions below:

*Sub-RQ1: How does GenAI affect newsroom processes?*

*Sub-RQ2: How do news organizations disclose the use of AI, and what are the effects of such AI disclosures?*

Applying our search strings (see Appendix A) on Web of Science and Scopus resulted in 143 studies related to RQ1 and 59 related to RQ2, with frequent overlap between the two. The main author categorized the articles in terms of methodology, briefly summarized the topic, and then determined whether the study was relevant to answering the sub-research questions. We then further enriched the results with 39 recent (conference) publications, preprints, and technical reports, leaving us with 127[1] relevant publications for assessing the impact of GenAI on journalism (see Figure 1).

Importantly, our goal was not to provide a complete overview of existing research on the intersection of (Gen)AI, journalism, and disinformation. Rather, we aimed to inductively identify key research lines and provide a comprehensive overview of GenAI adoption in journalism to allow for a discussion of its potential disinformation risks. To this end, we assigned each relevant publication to one of the following four research lines that emerged:

1. Public perceptions of GenAI in journalism
2. Current adoption, risks, and opportunities of GenAI in journalism according to news media professionals
3. Practical applications of GenAI in journalism
4. Broader discourse and debates around GenAI in journalism

These research lines were not mutually exclusive. However, since an in-depth analysis of research lines was not our main goal, we only report the most prominent research line as judged by its appearance in the abstracts and discussions. We also categorized studies in terms of their methodological approach to get a better understanding of different research lines. We distinguish the following categories:

- ***Computational methods***: predominantly computational work, either to analyze journalistic output and public discourse or to develop new AI-driven tools
- ***Experiments***: any form of lab and field experiments with human participants
- ***Literature reviews and technical reports***
- ***Mixed methods***: studies that explicitly combine various methodologies (e.g., combinations of surveys and interviews or legal analyses and experiments)
- ***Qualitative methods***: interviews, ethnographies, and qualitative content analyses
- ***Survey research***: survey questionnaires (excluding survey experiments)
- ***Other***: opinion/theory papers, essays, quantitative content analyses, legal analyses, and practice-based research

## Results

Our results are organized as follows: We begin with a brief description of four key research lines and their methodological focus (see Figure 2) to answer sub-RQs 1 and 2. This enables us to map the current state of, as well as potential blind spots in, research on GenAI adoption in journalism and informs our research agenda for the intersection of GenAI, journalism, and disinformation. We then synthesize key insights from

[1] See https://osf.io/afmbh.

this review along the following four stages of the journalistic value chain: news gathering, production, verification, and dissemination (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). For each stage, we discuss key disinformation risks and aspects that determine journalism's capacity to prevent or mitigate them (see Table 1).

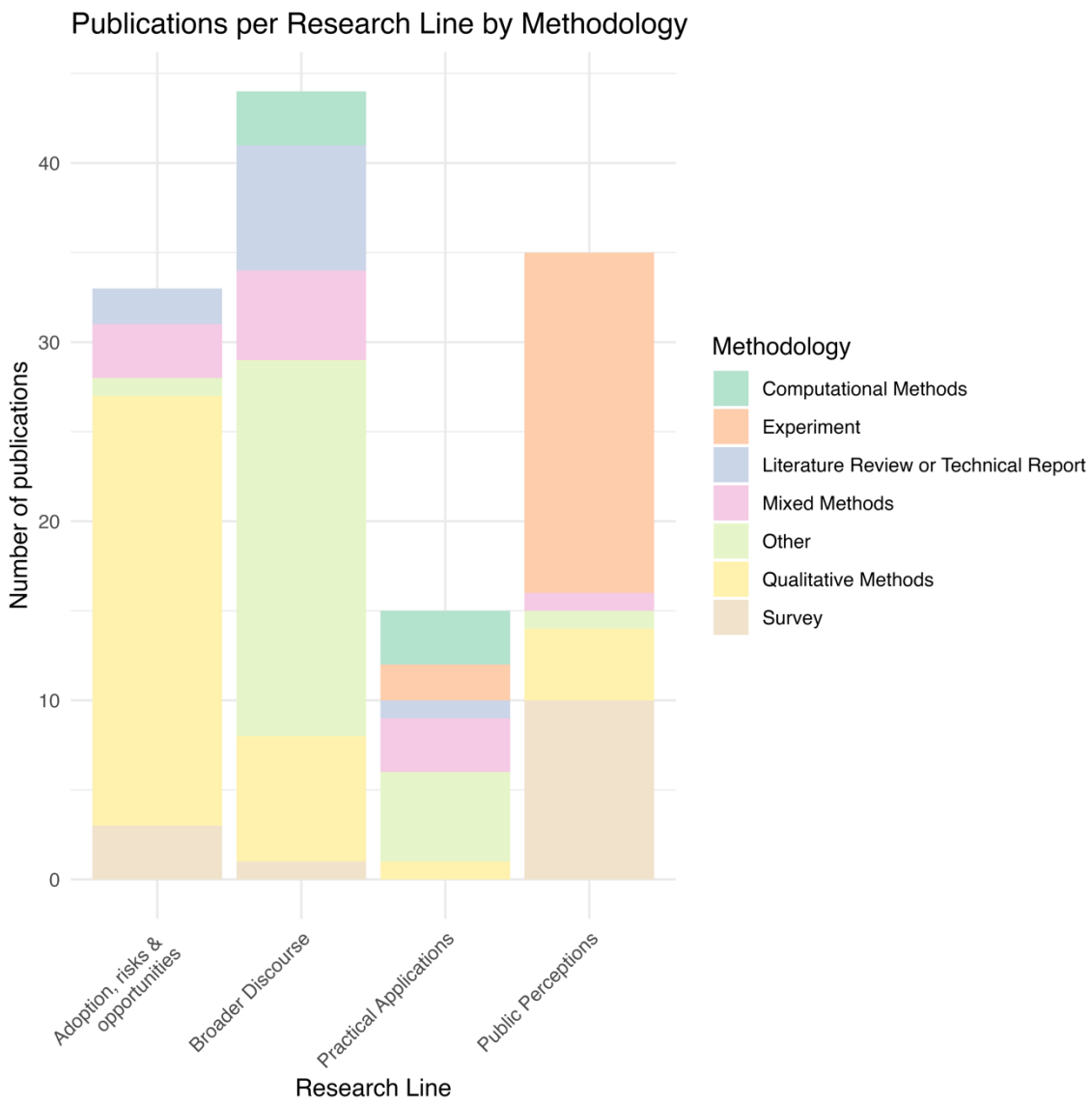


***Figure 2. Overview of key research lines and methodological approaches.***

## *Journalistic GenAI Adoption: A Brief Synthesis of Key Research Lines*

### *Public Perceptions*

One line of research predominantly focuses on public perceptions of GenAI in journalism, mostly either using surveys to probe general attitudes toward journalistic GenAI use (e.g., Azrout et al., 2024; Banerjee et al., 2023; Fletcher & Kleis-Nielsen, 2024; Gondwe, 2025; Morosoli, Resendez, Naudts, Helberger, & de Vreese, 2025) or employing experiments to test causal effects of AI disclosures on readers' trust and credibility perceptions (e.g., Altay & Gilardi, 2024; Longoni, Fradkin, Cian, & Pennycook, 2022; Mattis, Kieslich, & de Vreese, 2025; Toff & Simon, 2024). Overall, this work suggests that public concerns about the impact of GenAI on journalism currently seem to be the default across various countries (Fletcher & Kleis-Nielsen, 2024; Newman & Cherubini, 2025), although this varies depending on people's attitudes toward GenAI, prior experience, and political orientation (Azrout et al., 2024; Toff & Simon, 2024). Accordingly, readers generally want to see journalistic AI use disclosed (Piasecki, Morosoli, Helberger, & Naudts, 2024; Toff & Simon, 2024). In theory, such AI disclosures may build trust (Banerjee et al., 2023). However, despite increasing attention to AI disclosures and their effects (e.g., Altay & Gilardi, 2024; Toff & Simon, 2024), and recognition of the importance of transparency in journalistic guidelines across the globe (Becker et al., 2025), news organizations still struggle to effectively implement transparency (Cools et al., 2025; El Ali et al., 2024).

Taken together, this research line provides important insights into how different audiences perceive GenAI in news. Of particular relevance for our discussion of disinformation risks are the somewhat critical attitudes toward GenAI in journalism that point to potential backfire effects of AI disclosures as well as worries about the factuality of GenAI-(co-)generated news.

### *Adoption, Risks, and Opportunities*

A second line of research specifically focuses on journalists. This line of research mostly employs qualitative methods to explore how journalists use GenAI in their everyday work and to probe their hopes and fears connected to its adoption (e.g., Adjin-Tettey, Muringa, Danso, & Zondi, 2024; Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024; Møller, van Dalen, & Skovsgaard, 2025; Simon, 2024a, 2024b; Sirén-Heikel, Kjellman, & Lindén, 2023). Findings are nuanced, but largely revolve around several common hopes and concerns: On one hand, journalists often view GenAI as a tool that makes existing workflows more efficient and thereby frees up time for more meaningful tasks. However, news media professionals also recognize various (1) editorial risks (including concerns about bias and inaccuracy as well as less editorial control), (2) business risks (including walled gardens, platform dependence, and increasing competition), and (3) risks to the information environment (including fragmented news consumption and the proliferation of low-quality information; Attard et al., 2023; Simon, 2024a; Sirén-Heikel et al., 2023).

Overall, this line of research provides nuanced insights into how journalists use and think of GenAI and points toward potential guardrails that could be put in place to prevent unwanted outcomes such as a loss of news quality or editorial independence. A notable commonality across many studies is that journalists

worry about automating tasks that sit at the essence of journalism, fearing this might further compromise journalism's epistemic authority.

*Practical Applications*

Choosing a more practice-oriented angle, some research is predominantly concerned with developing and testing GenAI applications that journalists can use in their day-to-day work. This line of research draws on various methodologies, depending in part on (1) whether tools are developed, tested, or both; and (2) whether this takes place at news organizations or in academic research departments (see Figure 2).

Among the more common methodological approaches are participatory research methods, where researchers are actively collaborating with media partners (e.g., Quinonez & Meij, 2024; Stenbom, Wiggberg, & Norlund, 2023), reports by media organizations themselves (BBC, 2025), or rather technical work at computer science departments (Cruz-Filipe, Kostopoulou, Montesi, & Vistrup, 2023). Oftentimes, this kind of research employs mixed designs, for instance, to first develop a tool and then later elicit reflections from the news media professionals who use it (e.g., Stenbom et al., 2023; Tseng, Young, Quéré, Rinehart, & Suresh, 2025). Examples of tools that have recently been developed and/or evaluated include a news lead generation tool (Cruz-Filipe et al., 2023), in-house tools at Bloomberg (Quinonez & Meij, 2024) and the BBC (BBC, 2025), and a large language model that helps journalists with data collection (Cifliku & Heuer, 2025).

With its wide methodological scope, this research line can produce multifaceted insights into the development, implementation, and evaluation of journalistic GenAI tools and highlights key considerations for, among other points, safeguarding editorial independence and journalistic quality. At the same time, some of this research also points toward potential unwanted side effects of GenAI adoption (e.g., accuracy issues; BBC, 2025) and the need to further improve fake news detection methods.

*Broader Discourse*

Finally, a fourth research line engages with broader ramifications of GenAI in journalism. This line of work often takes more of a meta perspective and engages with important legal, ethical, economic, and epistemic questions (e.g., Becker et al., 2025; Caswell, 2024; de-Lima-Santos et al., 2025; Dodds, Zamith, & Lewis, 2025; Guzman & Lewis, 2024; Kuai, 2024; Lewis et al., 2025; Newman & Cherubini, 2025). This research line is relatively broad but can help establish important links between different disciplines or paradigms and point toward aspects that may otherwise be missed.

### ***Journalistic GenAI Adoption, Disclosure, and Implications***

Regarding sub-RQ1, the reviewed literature suggests an increasing adoption of GenAI at all stages of the journalistic value chain. This has important implications for journalistic practices and role perceptions, as new technologies force journalists to renegotiate their shared norms and practices. As such, GenAI may

transform the democratic institution of journalism from within and potentially compromise its capacity to effectively counter disinformation.

Concerning sub-RQ2, we see a significant amount of ambiguity when it comes to the disclosure of GenAI use. While journalistic guidelines often champion transparency, translating this into concrete explanations that cater to users' needs remains a challenge (Cools et al., 2025), even more so as AI disclosures generally seem to compromise rather than build trust in labeled news (Longoni et al., 2022; Mattis et al., 2025). This highlights the complexities of navigating transparency in GenAI adoption.

### *Generative AI and Disinformation Risks Across the Journalistic Value Chain*

Having answered sub-RQs 1 and 2, we now turn to the potential disinformation risks of journalistic GenAI. To this end, we synthesize the reviewed literature along four stages of the journalistic value chain and discuss potential disinformation risks for each of them (see Table 1). Following Cools and Diakopoulos (2024), we distinguish news (1) gathering, (2) production, (3) verification, and (4) distribution. While many disinformation risks apply to several of these stages, discussing disinformation risks in relation to specific journalistic tasks has two advantages. First, it allows us to show how GenAI increasingly permeates the entire news value chain. Second, focusing on concrete GenAI use cases enables us to discuss potential disinformation risks and aspects that codetermine journalism's capacity to respond to them more concretely.

#### *Disinformation Risks of GenAI Use in News Gathering*

At the news-gathering stage, journalists frequently point to GenAI's ability to make sense of large amounts of data as a key enabler to identify newsworthy stories, for example, by means of automated content aggregation and trend analysis (Attard et al., 2023; Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). For instance, in 2024, Bloomberg began developing in-house tools that summarize large documents and charts to help journalists make sense of large data sets or to detect trends relevant to a story they are working on (Quinonez & Meij, 2024). Similar tools are already in use in other news organizations as well (Shi & Sun, 2024; e.g., News Tracer at Reuters), and more are being developed as we write this (e.g., Okereke, 2025).

However, while GenAI tools enable research and workflow efficiency improvements (Attard et al., 2023), their use during news gathering is not without risks. For instance, AI is known to perpetuate biases in its training data (Bender, Gebru, McMillan-Major, & Shmitchell, 2021), while the black-box nature of most models makes it nearly impossible for journalists to understand their inner workings and gauge existing biases, especially in the case of third-party software (Simon, 2024b). This threatens to compromise editorial control and opens avenues for targeted propaganda efforts, for example, if bad-faith actors were to systematically push particular hashtags or narratives that, if left unchecked, could be picked up by automated trend analyses and might be amplified rather quickly. Moreover, at times, the output of GenAI models may be plainly wrong. For instance, a report by the BBC (2025) shows that half of all responses from large language models trained on their data had issues, with 19% of responses that directly cited BBC news, including factual errors.

***Table 1. Key Disinformation Risks Across the Journalistic Value Chain That May Result From Journalistic GenAI Adoption***

| Production stage | Aspects codetermining journalism's capacity to counter disinformation | Disinformation risks |
|---|---|---|
| ***News gathering*** | Extent and accuracy of automated news gathering with GenAI tools | ***Loss of editorial control*** *as core journalistic tasks related to searching for information (e.g., sourcing, data exploration) are outsourced to automation*<br>***Decreasing journalistic quality*** *if GenAI news-gathering tools amplify mis- and disinformation* |
| | GenAI-driven proliferation of mis- and disinformation | ***Decreasing journalistic quality*** *due to increased verification burden* |
| ***News production*** | Extent and accuracy of automated news production with GenAI tools | ***Loss of editorial control*** *as core journalistic tasks related to the organization of information (e.g., structuring, writing) are outsourced to automation*<br>***Decreasing journalistic quality*** *due to model biases, errors, and hallucinations* |
| | Knowledge silos that cause gaps in GenAI adoption | ***Decreasing journalistic quality*** *if journalists neglect traditional standards and ethical codes in GenAI-assisted news production due to lack of skills / critical awareness* |
| ***News verification*** | Extent and accuracy of automated news verification with GenAI tools | ***Loss of editorial control*** *as core journalistic tasks related to the verification of information are outsourced to automation, including human editor challenges* |
| | GenAI-driven proliferation of mis- and disinformation | ***Decreasing journalistic quality*** *due to increased verification burden* |
| | Knowledge silos that complicate automated news verification | ***Decreasing journalistic quality*** *due to misuse of GenAI news verification tools* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***News dissemination*** | Amount of news that is automatically hyperpersonalized with GenAI | ***Loss of editorial control*** *in an increasingly fragmented and personalized news landscape* |
| | Audience reception of AI disclosures | ***Decreasing audience trust*** *due to critical attitudes toward journalistic GenAI use* |
| | General trust implications of increasingly "polluted" information environments | ***Decreasing audience trust*** *due to lower general trust in (online) information* |
| | Amount of "pink slime" journalism | ***Exacerbated economic pressures*** *due to additional competition* |
| | Extent to which GenAI-driven products (e.g., chatbots, AI agents) serve as intermediaries | ***Exacerbated economic pressures*** *due to decreasing profit margins from search-driven web traffic* |
| ***Applicable to all stages*** | Reliance on external GenAI tools with limited insight/control | ***Loss of editorial control*** *due to black-box nature of external GenAI tools*<br>***Exacerbated economic pressures*** *due to lock-in effects* |
| | Prevalence of cost and speed incentives that drive (irresponsible) GenAI adoption | ***Loss of editorial control*** *due to black-box nature of external GenAI tools*<br>***Decreasing journalistic quality*** *due to foregrounding economic considerations over journalistic values* |

*Note*. For each production stage, we identify aspects that codetermine journalism's capacity to counter disinformation and describe implications for their disinformation risks. This is not an exhaustive list, and not all aspects fit neatly into the production-stage model.

Thus, at the news-gathering stage, GenAI adoption could render journalism susceptible to targeted propaganda efforts and may potentially compromise accuracy in news reporting. With more source material stemming from user-generated content, GenAI and its potential to pollute information environments may also lead to an increasing burden of verification on the side of journalists (Attard et al., 2023). Taken together, these aspects might contribute to key disinformation risks, including loss of editorial control, lower news quality, and, as a result thereof, decreasing trust from audiences who feel that journalists fail to live up to normative ideals of factuality and objectivity (see Table 1).

*Disinformation Risks of GenAI Use in News Production*

GenAI use cases during news production include tasks such as summarization, transcription, translation, news headline optimization, image generation, and data analysis and visualization (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). Several reputable news organizations are already using GenAI to add bullet points to their articles, optimize headlines for search and engagement, translate existing content into English for greater international reach, or generate images (Newman & Cherubi, 2025; Simon, 2024b). Currently, the development of these tools seems to be largely left up to tech companies (Simon, 2024b). While understandable from a business perspective and in light of limited access to relevant resources, this reliance might further increase journalism's platform dependence (Simon, 2024b).

In addition to automating relatively menial tasks, GenAI can also be used to fully automate news production. Despite its potential benefits, automated content creation is perceived as the most pressing reputable risk among GenAI applications in journalism (Newman & Cherubi, 2025), not least because of the previously mentioned accuracy issues (see BBC, 2025). Accordingly, many news organizations are hesitant to fully automate news writing and highlight the importance of having a human in the loop (Becker et al., 2025). For example, the German regional tabloid Express.de has automated the creation of "more than 5% of published stories on a wide range of subjects" (Newman & Cherubini, 2025, p. 28), but all output still undergoes human review before publication. At the same time, some studies suggest journalistic GenAI use may not always adhere to journalistic norms and ethical standards (Brigham et al., 2024).

Thus, although GenAI holds the promise of increasing the efficiency and scalability of various news-production processes, news organizations that use it must grapple with the risks of (1) undermining their own editorial control, (2) reshaping established journalistic norms and practices in ways that automate previously essentially human aspects such as creativity (Lewis et al., 2025), and (3) facing issues with accuracy and bias. Finally, differences in AI literacy and their implications for responsible use practices in newsrooms also come into play at the news-production stage (Brigham et al., 2024).

*Disinformation Risks of GenAI Use in News Verification*

GenAI can alleviate and speed up every stage of news verification[2] and fact-checking, but there are also concerns about its accuracy and the upholding of ethical standards in fact-checking organizations (e.g., transparency being compromised by the black-box nature of most GenAI models (Attard et al., 2023). In a recent literature review, Dierickx, van Dalen, Opdahl, and Lindén (2024) name various GenAI applications, including but not limited to social-media monitoring, audiovisual content verification, transcription, translation, trend analysis, and data summarization. Many fact-checking organizations are already using GenAI in similar ways as news organizations do and work toward novel applications such as live fact-checking (Wolfe & Mitra, 2024). Moreover, given the complexity of verifying, especially social-media content, "the application of open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods and tools, which leverage publicly available resources such as geolocation data, facial recognition technology, and web archives, has significant potential" (Dierickx et al., 2024, p. 4) for future applications.

However, several potential issues remain. In addition to the aforementioned bias and inaccuracy problems, which apply just as much to fact-checking organizations as to news media (Dierickx, Lindén, & Opdahl, 2023), there are questions about the trust implications of automated fact-checking. Indeed, our literature review shows that audiences are often critical of (Gen)AI use in news (Fletcher & Kleis-Nielsen, 2024), which appears to be particularly pronounced for fact-checking (Mattis et al., 2025). This points toward a conundrum where journalists may need to weigh the benefits of using (and disclosing) automated fact-checking against the risk of decreasing audience trust.

In addition, there are also important practical challenges, such as knowledge silos that complicate the adoption of GenAI tools (Dodds, Vandendaele, et al., 2025) or technical shortcomings ranging from low-quality training data to the lack of access to real-time information (Dierickx et al., 2024). Thus, the aforementioned challenges at the news-verification stage could further contribute to decreasing audience trust and increase journalists' verification burden, which in turn may lead to less high-quality news (Lundberg & Mozelius, 2024).

*Disinformation Risks of GenAI Use in News Distribution*

Finally, GenAI also affects (personalized) news distribution. Admittedly, AI already played an important part in news distribution, including AI tools for content moderation, user segmentation, news recommendation, personalization efforts, and preference elicitation (Simon, 2024b). However, GenAI can also be applied to these tasks. Among other areas, it might help with search engine optimization, automated content distribution, social-media posting, hate-speech detection, and user engagement analysis (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024).

[2] Extant literature tends to distinguish between news verification (before publication) and fact checking (after publication). However, since the affordances offered by GenAI apply to both, we discuss these two applications in conjunction.

Still, arguably the main novelty that GenAI brings to news distribution is a greater capacity to personalize or repurpose existing content. By rearranging or synthesizing news, GenAI may enable modular forms of journalism where news is deliberately repackaged and (hyper-)personalized to fit varying audience demands (Mattis, 2025), for instance, by turning text to audio to cater to news consumers with visual impairments (Attard et al., 2023). If current innovation efforts prove successful, GenAI might help create more flexible and personalized news experiences. This could add great value by, for example, making news more diverse and accessible (Lin & Lewis, 2022) or prolonging its shelf life.

Nevertheless, hyperpersonalization could lead to a more fragmented news landscape with significant knowledge gaps and differences in perceived issue salience within democratic societies (Mattis, 2025; Resendez, Araujo, Helberger, & de Vreese, 2023). Depending on their nature, such knowledge gaps might leave entry points for targeted propaganda efforts that capitalize on limited knowledge. Interestingly, users seem aware of the potential downsides of personalization, frequently voicing concerns about it (e.g., Morosoli et al., 2025). Indeed, audience attitudes are especially important at the distribution stage, as concerns about (hyper-)personalization or rising cynicism due to a proliferation of mis- and disinformation online could make it harder to reach potential readers.

Other risks include threats to journalistic business models if they rely on external tools for their personalization efforts or backfire effects of AI disclosures that may further compromise readers' trust in established news brands, thereby contributing to greater cynicism or opening doors for less trustworthy information sources (see Table 1). Moreover, there are risks of bad-faith actors making use of GenAI's affordances to fill local news deserts with so-called "pink slime" news outlets that may, whether for ideological or economic reasons, spread mis- and disinformation (Brewster, Fishman, & Xu, 2023; Kermer, Reviglio, Blagojev, 2024) and add additional economic pressure to already struggling news providers.

## Journalism and Disinformation Challenges

Given the speed with which GenAI continues to develop, its impact on both journalism and our overall online information environment is likely to grow considerably. As we have shown, GenAI uptake is already happening across the whole journalistic value chain and may have important implications for journalism's capacity to counter disinformation. While tensions between new technologies and journalistic norms are nothing new (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020), we argue that GenAI threatens to fundamentally change the shared norms and practices that make up the current essence of journalism (Lewis et al., 2025). As such, the proliferation of GenAI could not only help bad-faith actors "pollute" the overall information environment (Attard et al., 2023) but may also contribute to weakening the democratic institution of journalism from within. This is not to say that all journalistic GenAI adoption is inherently problematic, but rather that it is important to be keenly aware of the potential disinformation risks it may bring about.

In our review, we identify four key disinformation risks, as well as aspects that codetermine journalism's capacity to counter them across the journalistic value chain (see Table 1). Some aspects apply to all stages (e.g., the potential implications of platform reliance), while others are more specific (e.g., hyperpersonalization and pink-slime journalism predominantly affecting the news-dissemination stage).

Nonetheless, all aspects that we identify contribute to at least one of the following disinformation risks:[3] (1) loss of editorial control and epistemic authority, (2) decreasing journalistic quality, (3) exacerbated economic pressures, and (4) decreasing audience trust.

From an institutional lens, the risk of losing editorial control may be where GenAI's impact is most profound. This is because GenAI adoption threatens to fundamentally change the shared norms and practices that make up what we currently think of as "good journalism" (Lewis et al., 2025). In other words, as GenAI becomes more integral to journalistic work (and potentially automates tasks that lie at its core), shared practices and norms may be transformed or undermined, while the power to determine what people get to see continues to shift to algorithms, online platforms, and technology firms. As a result, the democratic institution of journalism might be weakened, leading to less or lower-quality output and the inability to effectively counter disinformation.

This could be worsened by declining audience trust and new economic pressures. For instance, platform reliance may not only undermine editorial independence but can also pose economic risks, as it creates powerful lock-in effects and renders news organizations vulnerable to sudden price hikes (Attard et al., 2023; Simon, 2024a). Similarly, new intermediaries such as chatbots or AI summaries could further reduce the search-driven web traffic that many news organizations rely on (Savage, 2025), while potentially being more error-prone yet less transparent and accountable than most news organizations.

Accordingly, there is an urgent need to keep a close eye on the intersection of journalism, GenAI, and disinformation and to explore avenues toward strengthening the institution of journalism such that it can effectively counter disinformation. In the following passages, we briefly discuss how future research can map, mitigate, or even prevent the four disinformation risks we identified at different stages of the journalistic value chain.

While there is ample room for improving journalistic workflows at the news-gathering and production stages, GenAI adoption threatens to transform tasks that lie at the very core of journalism, potentially with far-reaching implications for journalists' editorial control. However, since many of the risks we describe here are only beginning to materialize, more work is needed to further map the extent and implications of GenAI adoption in journalism. This will naturally involve more qualitative newsroom studies, but future work should also aim to quantify the extent of GenAI-driven proliferation of mis- and disinformation or the impact of GenAI use on adherence to journalistic norms and standards (e.g., see Brigham et al., 2024).

Given the additional verification burden that an increasing pollution of the general information environment may bring about (Lundberg & Mozelius, 2024), the development of detection tools should take central focus at the news-verification stage. There is already a significant amount of technical work (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024), but more will be needed to keep up with recent developments that may render previous detection methods ineffective (Feuerriegel et al., 2023). Here, the applied research we reviewed (see Figure 2) can serve as a useful starting point. In light of increasing dependence on a few U.S. tech companies

[3] This is not an exhaustive list, but is meant to foreground key risks of journalistic GenAI adoption.

(Simon, 2024b), it is also worth considering who should develop and provide these tools. Ideally, news organizations should have meaningful choices between different providers or the capacity to (co-)develop tools themselves.

When it comes to news dissemination, issues around hyperpersonalization and audience trust are particularly pressing. Accordingly, future work should aim to explore the extent and prevalence of personalized news supply and its reception, as well as the democratically relevant outcomes thereof (e.g., fragmented news consumption, differences in perceived issue salience; see Resendez et al. [2023]). For instance, there are interesting questions about modular journalism, which may be a promising way of engaging new audiences, but could also undermine editorial control (e.g., if journalists cannot influence what form personalization takes) and factual news reporting (e.g., if tools used to personalize content provide inaccurate output). In addition, future work must also grapple with the transparency puzzle that we identified in response to sub-RQ2 (Toff & Simon, 2024). That is, if news organizations want to unlock the potential of GenAI while adhering to transparency norms, they must find ways to disclose GenAI use that cater to different groups of individuals and prevent unwanted backfire effects (e.g., lower trust).

Finally, some outcomes that may follow from increasing GenAI adoption, such as platform dependence and new economic pressures, permeate the entire news value chain. To address them, future research should explore which (macro and organizational) conditions help journalism flourish, as well as how journalists can engage new audience segments without straying too far from their democratic gatekeeping function. Only if sustainable business models can be found moving forward will journalism be able to effectively counter disinformation. Another important aspect here is AI regulation. In the European Union's AI Act, for instance, journalism and news are exempted as long as there is a human editor at the end of the chain. This may safeguard some level of human control, but, depending on how and to what extent GenAI permeates the news value chain, it may be insufficient for addressing the disinformation risks we identified.

In summary, GenAI changes the opportunity structures for disinformation in ways that go beyond alleviating the creation and spread of disinformation by bad-faith actors. This, we argue, might affect journalism's capacity to counter disinformation by (1) challenging journalism's editorial control, (2) compromising news quality standards, (3) exacerbating economic pressures that may lead to irresponsible GenAI adoption and other negative downstream effects on the availability of high-quality news, and (4) further decreasing general trust in journalism (see Table 1). From pink-slime journalism, platform dependence, and large-scale propaganda efforts to improved detection tools and promising newsroom innovations, we identify developments that are often interconnected. The future will tell if they contribute to undermining or strengthening journalism's capacity to combat disinformation.

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## Appendix A. Search Strings

- RQ1: (AB=(gen* ai) OR AB=(generative artificial intelligence)) AND (AB=(news production) OR AB=(newsroom*) OR AB=(news recommend*) OR AB=(news organisation*) OR AB=(journalis*)) AND (PY==("2025" OR "2024" OR "2023" OR "2022" OR "2021") AND LA==("ENGLISH"))
- RQ2: (AB=(gen* ai) OR AB=(generative artificial intelligence) OR AB=(AI)) AND (AB=(label*) OR AB=(disclos*)) AND (AB =(journalis**) OR AB =(news)) AND (PY==("2025" OR "2024" OR "2023" OR "2022" OR "2021") AND LA==("ENGLISH"))