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Shifting Job Expectations in the Era of Generative AI Hype - Perspectives of Journalists and Copywriters

Abstract

Purpose - This interview study examines Hungarian journalists' and copywriters' expectations of generative AI's impact on their professions and factors influencing these views during a period of hype.

Design/Methodology/Approach – While acknowledging the specialized knowledge of journalists and copywriters relative to the general public, the study employs the sociology of expectations framework to interpret their anticipations not as objective forecasts of the future, but rather as phenomena shaped by diverse influences. The research comprises 30 semi-structured interviews conducted in spring 2023 to explore these expectations and their contributing factors.

Findings – Results reveal ChatGPT's media coverage as pivotal, encouraging the professionals interviewed to experiment with AI, reassess their roles, and cause a shift in their job expectations. At the same time, this shift was limited. Skepticism about hyperbolic media formulations, their own experiences with ChatGPT and projecting its constraints into the future, contextual factors, and optimism bias contributed to moderating their expectations. They perceived AI as an enhancer of efficiency and quality, not as a radical disruptor. Copywriters were more open to integrating AI in their work, than journalists.

Originality - The study uniquely contributes to the sociology of expectations by highlighting how a complex interplay of factors can shape professionals' anticipation of the impact of AI on their careers, including optimism bias and media hype.

Research implications - The results underscore the importance of further research to explore subjective experiences associated with technological change, particularly considering their complex social, psychological, and cultural influences.

Key words: future of work, artificial intelligence, sociology of expectations, journalists, copywriters
Paper type: research article

Introduction

The transformative potentials and dangers of artificial intelligence have pervaded the public discourse in many countries in recent years, stimulating an array of visions, expectations, and uncertainties. Since the end of 2022, media content and public discourse on AI have increased dramatically, with generative AI, especially ChatGPT at the center. Not only has AI become a hot topic, but expectations for its future potential have greatly increased. A significant proportion of this hyperbolic discourse focused on the potential implications of generative AI for labor markets, encompassing a broad range of occupations, including those involved in text production, such as copywriters and journalists.

Drawing on the sociology of technological expectations, this study investigates, with 30 interviews, the expectations and strategies of Hungarian journalists and copywriters in relation to work and generative AI. We examined the characteristics of their expectations for their professions and for their own career prospects in the late spring

of 2023. Our aim was also to examine what could have shaped their answers. We discuss the consequences of their visions as well as the similarities and differences between the responses of the members of the two professions. The research situates the discourse around AI's impact on expectations within the broader context of media hype, contributing to the understanding of the complex relationships between anticipatory practices and media hypes. By grounding our analysis within the sociology of expectations, the study seeks to contribute by exploring how AI's anticipated futures are constructed, understood, and navigated by those who are affected.

Empirical studies before the launch of ChatGPT and the respective media frenzy (Beckett, 2019; Ellekrog, 2022; Macková and Mařík 2023) indicate that journalists believed the necessity for human creativity, the "human touch," and oversight over AI outputs ensured their irreplaceable role in the profession's future. At the same time, a survey (Breen, 2019) has shown that 23% of US marketing expert respondents thought that AI could replace copywriting. There is not so much research on *generative* AI and anticipations of copywriters or journalists; rather, creative professionals or knowledge workers in general are in focus (Inie et al., 2023; Woodruff et al., 2023). These research projects showed that even after 2022, many respondents were still skeptical that AI could do their jobs. There is a knowledge gap concerning the expectations of journalists and copywriters in the ChatGPT era.

Our research differs from the earlier projects as it concentrates on copywriters and journalists after the launch of ChatGPT, amidst the hype about generative AI. The unique approach of our study is based on the sociology of expectations. Accordingly, we do not suppose that people of these professions objectively see the future and discuss it as disinterested actors without vested stakes in the matter (in contrast to Noain-Sánchez 2022, for example). Rather, while acknowledging their greater familiarity with the field under investigation and their access to direct information compared to the general population, it's important to recognize that their perspectives are still shaped by specific cultural values, identities, and social psychological phenomena. An important contribution of our analysis lies in also investigating the factors that may have shaped the discourse of the investigated copywriters and journalists. Our study also enriches the existing literature on the future of work, which largely concentrates on Western countries like the United States and the UK, by introducing empirical results from a country located in Eastern Europe, which is in a peripheral position in terms of AI development. When discussing factors that seemed to have influenced the answers, we include amongst them factors connected to the country context.

In the next sections, we introduce some aspects of the Hungarian context.

According to a representative survey conducted in September 2023 (Sági, 2023), 19% of Hungarian adults have tried ChatGPT, and the proportion of regular users can be put at 4%. 58% of all respondents agreed with the statement that AI "will replace the work of many people." At the same time, only 8% of the working population specifically

fear that AI may take away their jobs over time, and 20% feel that it is a realistic option, but they are not afraid. The observation that participants anticipate automation will lead to job losses yet do not foresee it affecting their personal employment to such a degree is also observable in some other international survey results as well (e.g., European Commission, 2017). This phenomenon has been described as a form of 'optimism bias' in some articles in the US media (Matthews, 2017).

The subject of generative AI and its implications for the future of their careers has sparked significant interest within both the journalistic and copywriting communities in Hungary, as evidenced by the appearance of professional events and trainings dealing with the topic and the appearance of AI-related articles in the Hungarian professional media.

In Hungary, the media landscape in which journalists work is deeply influenced by state intervention and bias, marked by the government's control over independent outlets, market manipulation, marginalization of dissenting journalism, and the facade of press freedom. Despite this, Hungarians have access to a variety of media products and services, presenting journalists with crucial decisions regarding their employment and the political slant of their work (Polyák et al., 2022).

Within Hungary, copywriting plays an important role both in the presence of Hungarian clients on global digital channels and in the creative portfolio of agencies (MRSZ, 2023). At the same time, according to our interviewees, Hungarian SMEs are already looking for alternative ways to reduce costs related to marketing, which affects copywriting activities; hence, they face challenges due to the development of AI.

Background

Sociology of Expectations and Hypes

While the founding fathers of sociology have addressed future-oriented themes, it has been argued that the discipline has frequently neglected studying the future, including how visions can influence the present (Shulz, 2016). Recently, there has been some growth in interest within sociology about future anticipations. For example, the sociology of (technological) expectations posits a significant role of anticipatory beliefs in the context of technological advancements within modern capitalist societies (Borup et al. 2006). Building on this perspective, we emphasize the importance of examining anticipations about the future, their possible consequences, and factors that can shape expectations.

Expectations can exhibit shifts over time. Temporal patterning (Borup et al. 2006) of expectations can be characterized by phases of hype followed by periods of disappointment. Within the sociology of expectations, extremely high expectations and widespread visibility with high media coverage are associated with periods of hype (Van Lente et al. 2013). From certain academic and non-academic viewpoints, hype is regarded

as a flawed prediction that stands in contrast to real trends. Operating from a sociology of expectations perspective, we regard hype, however, as a phenomenon that has a performative role, i.e., it does something in the present, influencing actions; among others, it can attract investments and foster the formation of new networks (Van Lente et al. 2013). Nevertheless, the elevated promises intrinsic to such phases also bear the risk of falling short of fulfillment and are often followed by a disappointment phase (Ruef & Markard 2010, Borup et al. 2006).

The term 'hype' is used in different ways in the literature. In some writings, 'hype' is utilized as an umbrella term encapsulating both supremely positive and starkly negative expectations (Smith, 2020). The sociology of expectations mainly operates with a positive envisioning of the future in the discussion of hype (Nerlich & Halliday, 2007).

In our research, we work with the umbrella term, as we argue that even extreme negative expectations can have performative roles and thus can be studied from the perspective of the sociology of expectations. This role does not necessarily need to be considered negative either; it can provide certain checks and balances to the overt techno-optimism of positive hype. Thus, the main condition of hype for our research was: 1. high media attention; 2. very high expectations: it is anticipated that the technology will develop extremely quickly and that it will have extremely great effects.

We hypothesize generative AI to fulfill the above criteria of being in a hype in the investigated period of 2023 spring, based on the statements of experts (both outside and inside Hungary) that it is in a hype and their assertions that attention and expectations have greatly increased (Heaven, 2023; Fahrland, 2023). Certainly, the number of media articles on the topic has exploded, and one can find many articles that use the terms revolution, breakthrough, etc., which are associated with hype within the sociology of expectations. Although we did not conduct a systematic media analysis, we have seen a wide range of media content in this period that emphasized great effects both in the international and in the Hungarian media. Out of this, some argued that generative AI would take over certain jobs, while others emphasized that it would help improve work in certain professions and even create new jobs. Our interviewees also argued that media coverage at that time was hyperbolic.

Sociology of expectations focuses on the performative role of hypes, mainly for industrial actors. However, it can also be useful to examine the performative roles they might play for other actors, for example, in our case for shaping the expectations and actions of copywriters and journalists.

Future of Work and AI

Fears and anxiety about automation and the replacement of humans by machines are centuries old. The latest wave before the hype about generative AI appeared with the spread of big data, robotics, and AI in the last decade (Kelly, 2022: 2).

There has been an intense debate about the future of work and automation since the 2010s (Pulkka, 2019; Kelly, 2022; author 2021), with two major perspectives emerging:

This time is the same: there are authors who argue that while a substitution effect is expected in the short term, in the long term AI will create more jobs than it eliminates, similar to the automation in the industrial revolution. The approach also contends that the changes may lead to more interesting work and rising prosperity in the future (Bessen, 2016, Miller and Atkinson, 2013; Peters, 2017).

This time is different: other authors assert that "this time it's different" compared to the industrial revolution (Kelly, 2022). They assume that, unlike in the industrial revolution, this time mass technological unemployment in the long term is inevitable. This approach has two directions:

Techno-pessimists expect a dystopian future (Ford, 2015; Harari, 2018) and warn of high-level permanent unemployment, increasing inequality and poverty (Pulkka, 2019).

Techno-optimists expect a utopian future and hope that widespread automation coupled with policy solutions such as universal basic income will free workers from the compulsion of work and that a prosperous post-work society may emerge (Bastani, 2019; Srnicek and Williams, 2015).

Despite the differences, all approaches agreed that there would be a degree of job displacement, predominantly affecting jobs with routine tasks. Within white-collar work, jobs that are at the junior or entry level were emphasized as being in greater danger. All perspectives expected that new jobs would be created, which would necessitate retraining. The different perspectives, however, disagreed on the proportions of new jobs being created versus jobs displaced. Most experts argued that there will be radical, transformative changes.

The 'this time is the same or different' debate was criticized for being too simplistic, as it sees the relationship between AI and the labor market in a rather black-and-white way, i.e., it focuses only on whether or not machines will take our jobs or will certain professions completely disappear. Subsequently, it has been underscored that researchers should avoid framing this as a zero-sum scenario of humans versus machines, differentiate between immediate and long-term impacts, and acknowledge the intricacies of human-machine collaboration in the workplace (Boyd, 2021: 76). While the emphasis on joint efforts between AI and humans in enhancing work processes is important, this approach often neglects to address the implications for employment levels. Specifically, if tasks are completed more efficiently and effectively through human-AI collaboration,

the resultant impact on the workforce needed to perform these jobs must be carefully evaluated.

Journalism, Copywriting, and (Generative) AI

In the 2010s, as the popularity of AI research grew, it seemed that some jobs were still protected from the displacement of AI for a long time. It was anticipated that that broadly defined creativity could protect a significant part of jobs (Frey-Osborne 2013). Generative AI solutions such as ChatGPT gave rise to renewed debates linked to creative work and AI.

Both copywriter and journalistic work contain creative elements, although copywriting might have a more overt display of creativity as it often requires catchy, emotive, or persuasive language (Landa, 2021). Both professions have been discussed in the international and Hungarian media by experts in connection with the issue of the possible impact of generative AI on the field (Caswell, 2023; Lizor, 2023; Tarr, 2023).

Within journalism, AI is used by more and more media for news gathering, news production and distribution, image recognition, and real-time transcription (Pavlik, 2023). Before ChatGPT, AI in journalism appeared mainly as automated data collection from online sources and crafted articles using human-prepared templates, typically for routine stories like economic reports or statistic-based sports articles (Caramiaux, 2020).

The use of AI in journalism may have several potential advantages: "the ability to quickly analyze large amounts of data, generate news stories automatically, or improve the accuracy and fairness of reporting" (Pavlik, 2023: 8), and "gives journalists time to analyze information, conduct interviews, and discern what to investigate". But AI in journalism has risks and can also have disadvantages: "introducing bias or errors into reporting, the need for careful oversight and editing of AI-generated content, and the potential impact on jobs and the media industry" (Pavlik, 2023: 8). Hallucinations—information that is fabricated or confabulated by generative AI but presented as mere facts—pose a very serious problem for journalism. The effect of AI on journalist jobs is debated, similarly to how it is present in the general future of work debate. There are those who suppose that it may pose a threat to jobs (Pavlik, 2023), while others argue that AI is creating jobs for journalists (Broussard et al., 2019.).

As for marketing, authors emphasized even before ChatGPT that AI is transforming the field by enhancing analytics, personalizing messages, improving campaign efficiency, and increasing productivity (Kumar et al. 2019).

Copywriting is similar to journalism in many respects, as both professions focus on writing texts, which is why we chose to examine both professions in our research. At the same time, copywriters typically do not write texts under their own names, and the texts are more diverse in length and genre. Some copywriters used text-generation tools even before the appearance of ChatGPT to increase their productivity. Based on the empirical research of Davis and Grierson (2021), copywriters were much more open to

generating text with the help of AI tools than creative writers, supposedly because they write impersonal text to order.

Some authors argue that text generation tools such as ChatGPT may radically transform marketing: they can create text faster, help to condense consumer data, understand consumers' vocabulary, perceptions, and attitudes toward products and marketing messages, and create personalized messages, and thus lead to job losses (Rivas-Zhao, 2023). Other experts highlight (Roetzer & Kaput, 2022) the effective but still human co-creation process of copywriting with AI. Hence, they believe that AI will significantly transform the creative process in marketing, but it is unlikely to replace the human element entirely.

Data and Methods

The research involved semi-structured interviews with 15 journalists and 15 copywriters in Budapest, Hungary. The professionals represented a heterogeneous sample, consisting of 15 women (7 journalists and 8 copywriters) and 15 men (8 journalists and 7 copywriters), with ages ranging from 27 to 50, 6 juniors (below 35 years) and 9 seniors among journalists and 8 juniors and 7 seniors among copywriters. Interviews were conducted in April and May of 2023. The sample included respondents who had already experimented with generative AI and those who had not. We selected individuals working in both small and large companies, as well as freelancers. Various media genres were represented, including news media, entertainment, sports, the economy, politics, and lifestyle.

The interview guide included inquiries about their perceptions of generative AI through media and possible personal experiences. The subsequent section focused on their expectations regarding their professions and their own careers. Finally, questions centered on their activities and proactive measures concerning generative AI. On average, the interviews lasted an hour.

In this study, we employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework to rigorously examine the qualitative data gathered. This methodological approach was used to identify, analyze, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data using the software NVivo. The procedure contained the following steps: First, the data was thoroughly examined through repeated readings to ensure a comprehensive understanding. Initial codes were systematically generated across the data set, and data pertinent to each code were collected. These initial codes were grouped into potential themes, and the coherence of these themes was reviewed against the coded extracts and the entire data set. The themes were then refined and clearly defined, creating a structured and nuanced interpretation of the data that supports the research objectives.

Findings

This section first examines interviewees' anticipations regarding professions, then explores their own career expectations, and finally highlights the variations in perspectives across the two professions.

Expectations on the level of the field

Shifting job expectations: ChatGPT and the hype around it as a milestone

Prior to the emergence of ChatGPT in 2022, most interviewees had not extensively engaged with artificial intelligence and its potential impacts on their profession or broader societal realms. Earlier, there was a belief among them that automation would primarily affect blue-collar jobs. Before 2022, AI appeared more akin to distant science fiction than a tangible reality for many. However, hearing about ChatGPT in the media marked a shift in their expectations.

> "It was the year 2022 when I became aware of how much this would change our existence." (I07-J)

Participants retrospectively acknowledged that their expectations were elevated when news of ChatGPT emerged. However, upon trying out ChatGPT themselves, their expectations lowered, leading to a sense of relief as they realized that the capabilities of AI were lower than anticipated. These lowered expectations also remained at the time of the interviews. Still, their opinion has shifted compared to earlier, when they thought that automation was only an important factor for blue-collar workers, now they felt that AI could impact creative white-collar professions in a relatively short period. Some blame was directed towards experts and HR professionals for not adequately preparing the creative industry for such changes, as they felt media attention prior to ChatGPT primarily focused on shifts in the blue-collar realm.

AI is not a unique, revolutionary change regarding the future of journalism & copywriting

Participants in the research anticipated that in the short term, the transformations in their work would not be drastic or revolutionary. To rationalize this perspective, they often drew analogies to previous smaller technological shifts (such as the advent of social media or smartphones) rather than comparing it to something as monumental as the industrial revolution or a similarly significant social change. This demonstrates their perception of the changes not as revolutionary transformations but rather as something less exceptional or truly distinctive.

> "[My work] is constantly changing with user needs; when social media came in, that's why I had to go there, when the influencers came in, because of that. Now artificial intelligence has arrived, now it is necessary because of that, my work is constantly evolving." (I30-CW)

They contended that GenAI lacks creativity, analytical skills, and human intuition—qualities that journalists and copywriters deemed essential and valued in proficient professionals within their respective fields. They emphasized that human interactions, such as engaging with interviewees or clients, will retain their significance in the workplace, even as AI potentially gains the ability to replicate such communication over time. Consequently, the human element is anticipated to become even more indispensable in their work.

> "I can't imagine even in 15 years that it can replace human creativity." (I22-J)

According to the interviewees, AI will encounter limitations in its capabilities in the future as well, with journalists highlighting the challenge of hallucination as a particularly difficult problem to address. Consequently, they assert that human supervision will remain crucial. Additionally, journalists maintain that AI will never possess the capacity to investigate in the same manner as human journalists do, uncovering secrets.

However, they felt that AI offered distinct advantages, notably in enhancing efficiency through tasks such as transcribing oral interviews automatically and expediting the retrieval of background information. They mentioned that it also excels at facilitating brainstorming sessions and refining linguistic content. Our interviewees envisioned a future characterized by co-creation, where AI supplements rather than replaces proficient professionals. They emphasized the importance of cultivating the skill to collaborate effectively with AI as an essential aspect of future work dynamics:

> "They will not replace human work, but they will be rather capable of augmenting it and optimizing work processes." (I03-J)

There was notable apprehension and pessimism regarding the trajectory of AI development being exploited for malicious or malevolent ends, such as the propagation of disinformation through deep fake technology. While acknowledging that AI itself is not inherently malevolent, they viewed it as a tool capable of facilitating negative outcomes. The anticipated proliferation of disinformation and misinformation imposes additional burdens on journalists, elevating their responsibilities within the media landscape. We believe this can also be correlated with the condition of Hungarian media and politics, wherein the constrained trust in these institutions is projected onto the utilization of AI.

> "In the west, it will mainly be used by the market as a tool, and in the east, power will use it as a tool. In the east, it will be more of a propagandist tool" (I29-J).

Why the expectation that it is not a very radical transformation?

One reason why the interviewed copywriters and journalists did not see the changes as fundamental, or as a radical transformation, was that they did not just passively accept what was in the media as truth. Rather, they rejected the hyperbolic aspects of the media portrayal. They expressed skepticism towards the media portrayal of AI as heralding a radical transformation:

> "The media also tries to translate this into this bipolar world, and there is one side that predicts the coming of the Messiah from AI, and there is the other side that predicts the devil and the Antichrist. I think, as in all cases, somewhere between the two will be the middle ground that will be the truth." (I25-CW)

They offered critical feedback on both Hungarian and international media coverage, including journalists who sometimes expressed even more negative sentiments toward Hungarian media outlets, despite their affiliation with them. They perceived media coverage of generative AI as often driven by clickbait tactics and characterized by superficial analysis.

We observed a somewhat static view of technology among the participants. Despite their awareness of the rapid development of AI, they tended to project the current limitations of AI into the future. This outlook is influenced by their personal experiences with platforms like ChatGPT, which demonstrated limited capabilities within their professional domains when they used it. Journalists placed particular emphasis on concerns regarding hallucinations. Journalists were especially skeptical about AI encroaching on their roles. These limitations contribute to their view of AI not as a creative entity in itself but rather as a tool for co-creation alongside humans. However, a minority of respondents entertained the possibility that advancements may reduce hallucinations over time, potentially enabling AI to replace journalists in certain genres, such as news or PR articles, but not across all domains.

An additional reason for seeing a not so fast, not so radical change was rooted in the Hungarian context. The Hungarian context mainly softened and seldom intensified the transformation in their discourse. It was emphasized that in Hungary, technological development tended to proceed at a slower pace, with the country often lagging in technology adoption. Participants also underscored the inadequate linguistic capabilities of generative AI in relation to Hungarian. Additionally, several participants noted the absence of widespread education focused on collaboration with AI in Hungary, leading to a less pronounced shift in practices. Furthermore, the transition was seen to be hindered by the Hungarian media's lack of resources, both in terms of finances and human resources, which they argued constrained its capacity to experiment with and adopt AI solutions.

Participants perceived the changes and the impact of AI with considerably less radicalism compared to the portrayals in the media and even compared to certain predictions of experts. Nonetheless, they do foresee a degree of transformation within the field, anticipating a certain purification process. This entails potential threats for less proficient professionals, routine tasks, and simpler assignments like short news or PR articles, as well as for junior members of the profession. However, they emphasized that those who are professional enough and who can adapt swiftly are unlikely to be left behind. Simultaneously, the prospect of a purification process within the field is met with some degree of approval, reflecting dissatisfaction with the current state of professional practices in Hungary.

Long-term expectations

There was difficulty among participants in articulating distinct and concrete long-term expectations or predictions. This is intriguing, considering their perception that the changes induced by AI are not overly radical. This hesitation may stem from their surprise at the current change's speed and direction, as well as their attention to AI's ongoing shortcomings. Nevertheless, despite the uncertainty, there is a widespread belief that AI will continue to progress:

> "This is a constantly developing technology, and there are a lot of other things too; it is very difficult to say in advance what will happen, there is a very serious uncertainty yet behind artificial intelligence" (I09-CW).

For those able to envision a 15-year future, several key expectations emerged. They anticipated that qualities such as creativity, personal relationships, human interaction, and physical presence would continue to hold value. In journalism, fieldwork such as reporting and broadcasting was expected to persist, albeit with a reduced need for a large number of journalists. Simpler writing tasks, typically desk-bound, were anticipated to diminish in necessity. However, participants emphasized that the authentic journalistic role, characterized by investigative depth and ethical reporting, would remain essential. In contrast, there were less definitive ideas regarding the future of copywriting. Representatives of the profession suggested that copywriters would still exist in five years' time, but they may undergo significant transformations over the following 15 years due to the influence of AI. This evolution might result in them undertaking entirely different roles, possibly under different titles.

Some participants envisioned an apocalyptic long-term future, while their concerns were not specifically tied to their profession but rather based on sci-fi scenarios such as fatal wars, the accidental extinction of humanity by AI, or ambitious space exploration endeavors. However, participants admitted uncertainty about the long-term future, citing the unpredictable nature of AI even in the short term.

Expectations and feelings about the future on the individual level

Lack of personal fears and strong faith in adaptability

Most participants in the sample exhibited confidence and portrayed themselves as resilient professionals capable of adapting to new situations. They expressed optimism about their work, anticipating higher quality, increased enjoyment, and enhanced creativity as AI handles repetitive and mundane tasks, leaving them to focus on more meaningful aspects of their profession.

The attitude of the interviewees with respect to their own future situations was marked by a tempered sense of optimism, devoid of too much enthusiasm about the envisioned AI-embraced future. While they held optimistic views about anticipated changes, they did not foresee radical shifts in their future. This outlook was accompanied by a sense of disappointment stemming from first personal experiences with generative AI.

For many, generative AI represented a form of liberation for themselves, yet they acknowledged its potential to devalue the work of others. However, they remained personally unafraid, as they trusted in their own analytical and creative skills, which they viewed as essential assets in their profession, and thought that generative AI lacked these qualities. They were confident that their expertise would enable them to prevail, even amidst potential changes in the industry. Critically evaluating the current state of their field, they anticipated that skilled professionals, like themselves, will benefit from the integration of AI, as it enhances the value and human touch of their work.

They discussed how AI poses a threat to junior professionals and early career activities, such as routine tasks and learning through experience. They speculated that valuable junior skills may evolve, shifting from being skilled writers to adept critical reviewers, good prompters of AI, for instance. Interestingly, participants in our research did not perceive themselves as juniors, even those who only had a few years of experience in their field and were young.

Our participants conveyed a strong belief that those, like themselves, who can adapt swiftly will not be left behind. They planned to learn and adapt early, drawing from their experiences with similar technological changes in the past. They anticipated success based on their ability to adapt to numerous changes in the past.

It is intriguing to observe that while participants emphasized the importance of studying and learning for survival, only a few have actively pursued acquiring new skills. Despite this, the majority expressed confidence in their ability to adapt and thrive. Those few respondents who anticipated falling behind often mentioned considering leaving the field altogether.

Why most of them are not afraid – why do they see themselves better than others?

They did not anticipate such a radical degree of change for the entire field, as previously discussed. Trying out AI themselves, they recognized its limitations, leading to a reduction in their anxiety levels.

> "Well, after I tried it, I wasn't as scared as I was before. I saw roughly where the limits are that it can be used for, and I'm not so worried." (I04-J)

It is unlikely that the reduced anxiety stemmed from exclusively interviewing early adopters or top professionals in our sample. Many participants did not consider themselves early adopters of generative AI, as confirmed during interviews. Instead, their

diminished anxiety appears to stem from their confidence in their abilities or a disillusionment with the proficiency of their peers in the field, coupled with a somewhat static and underestimated view of AI technology itself.

As for being the top professional, it was not a criterion for selection, and it is unclear why individuals perceived themselves as such. It is plausible that the social-psychological mechanism of optimism bias is at play here. In this variant, their high self-evaluation relative to others in their field fosters the belief that they possess superior capabilities, excel in their profession, are more creative, and possess greater adaptability. This optimism bias may contribute to their reduced anxiety about potential job losses or significant changes brought about by AI.

Differences based on profession – not seniority, age, or gender

After analyzing participant responses across age, gender, and seniority, no significant differences were found. With respect to the two professions: besides similarities, we could also observe differences between the answers of the representatives of the two professions. The primary discrepancy between journalists and copywriters lies in their exposure to AI, with copywriters already actively utilizing it in their work, finding it more useful, and facing expectations from their agencies to use it. Copywriters also expressed the belief that AI will assume repetitive and boring tasks, thus paving the way for an "artisan copywriter" model characterized by co-creation where talented individuals will remain and have more time for creatively fulfilling tasks.

We also observed that journalists were more hesitant to acknowledge the benefits of technology, focusing instead on the negative aspects such as hallucinations, errors, and data inaccuracies, which they believed would prevent AI from fully replacing their jobs. They emphasized the necessity of human understanding and creativity for complex, analytical journalistic pieces while acknowledging that certain tasks could be automated. The negative influence of political and economic factors in Hungary was emphasized in the media sphere but not in the marketing sphere in the interviews.

The final disparity between the two professions is that more individuals could envision the potential disappearance of copywriting as a profession in the distant future (even if it was a minority opinion). Conversely, this scenario was deemed impossible in the case of journalism.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study contributes to the sociology of expectations by discussing the visions of Hungarian journalists and copywriters concerning generative AI's impact on their professions and their own careers during a technological hype period. Media coverage surrounding ChatGPT prompted participants to reassess their career roles and to expect an extent of change that they had not anticipated earlier. Their jobs expectations shifted. At the same time, surprisingly and in contrast to the media portrayal and the significant

part of expert narratives, participants viewed generative AI not as a revolutionary force but as the latest in a series of smaller technological advancements. They argued from a co-construction perspective for AI as a tool for augmentation rather than replacement. While positing that generative AI solutions enhance efficiency and aid in routine tasks, respondents highlighted the irreplaceable value of human creativity, intuition, and the intricacies of interpersonal interactions.

Our research revealed a prevalent "this time is the same" mindset among participants. However, whereas this perspective within the academic literature meant that transformation is radical but similar to the industrial revolution, with the interviewees, the situation was different. Drawing from past experiences where the field successfully weathered technological shifts such as the advent of social media and smartphones—but technological changes that were less comprehensive and transformative than the industrial revolution—they anticipated that it would similarly adapt and endure in the face of current changes. They argued that historical patterns suggest continuity in adaptation.

Their perspective on a less radical change in their professional fields was seen to be shaped by skepticism toward hyperbolic formulations of the media coverage, disappointment when trying out ChatGPT, a relatively static view of the limitations and capabilities of the technology, as well as belief in slower technological adoption and the unique language challenges of generative AI models in Hungary. They identified hallucinations as a significant limitation, which they expected to persist. However, newer models like GPT-4 have shown a significant improvement in performance and a reduction in hallucinations across various tasks compared to ChatGPT (Moshirfar et al. 2023), suggesting their predictions about these limitations might have been overly pessimistic. When our interviews were conducted, GPT-4 had just been released, so their assessments likely relied primarily on their experiences with ChatGPT.

On a personal level, they expressed cautious optimism and claimed that they were not afraid, as, on the one hand, they did not feel the changes would be that radical, and on the other hand, because of high self-evaluation relative to others in their field. They regarded themselves as excelling in their profession and being able to adapt better. Thus, they felt that AI would help them, as opposed to many others who are not good enough in their field.

For many answerers, this might potentially lead back to a social psychological phenomenon: a variation of optimism bias. It was also interesting that everyone felt that technological change is mainly a problem for the juniors, but nobody felt themselves to be a junior, even those whom we designated as junior based on our sampling criteria and those who had less work experience than four years.

In one of the previous research projects of the first author of this paper, similar social-psychological mechanisms were found to be at play in anticipatory narratives. In a research project with Hungarian university students, we found a version of optimism bias where they emphasized that the profession they are studying cannot be automated,

compared to other similar professions that they felt might be in danger of automation. Students came from diverse majors, and each had faith in their own prospective fields compared to other fields (author 2022). They believed their future profession required too much human perspective and was too complex to automate. This phenomenon can be called between-professions optimism bias. In contrast, in our current sample, we could see a within-profession optimism bias where almost everybody feels they will benefit from AI, whereas others working within the same field might be losers. It is important to mention that in the current research, we did not ask interviewees to compare their profession relative to other similar professions, in which case a between-professions optimism bias might have emerged, but we cannot know.

Optimism bias is discussed in the literature as a cognitive bias where individuals overestimate the probability of positive events happening to them and underestimate the probability of experiencing negative events (Sharot 2011). While optimism bias is widely discussed in psychology, economics and behavioral finance, public health, and work on organizational behavior (Sharot 2011), within academic work about the future of work expectations and automation, it has been neglected. We argue, based on the results of the current study and the above student study (author 2022), that social psychological mechanisms, such as different versions of optimism bias, have to be considered when trying to grasp how people anticipate the future with respect to the future of work and AI and should be included in the focus of future academic work on expectations.

The sociology of expectations literature argues that hype is performative as it influences actions and perceptions in the present. It has, however, so far been a neglected topic how such hype can influence professionals whose future work is at stake with respect to technology. As we have seen, hype has indeed influenced the actions and perceptions of the interviewed professionals: it has spurred them to try out ChatGPT, discuss it with others, critically evaluate their roles, and anticipate some changes within their profession. Before hearing about ChatGPT, both copywriters and journalists thought that automation was mainly an issue for blue-collar workers. The media coverage of ChatGPT caused them to reevaluate this belief and shifted their job expectations to include the possibility that it would influence their future as well.

At the same time, there were constraints on the effect of the media hype: interviewees rejected the hyperbolic formulations of the media portrayal; they thought it was too extreme and did not accept the radical revolutionary transformation narrative of the media. This was based, amongst others, on the argument that media coverage often relies on clickbait tactics and exaggeration, and thus the extremes depicted in the media cannot be trusted, and also on their experiences with the technology and projecting their experiences out into the future in a relatively static way. Consequently, this research highlights the active engagement of individuals with media hype, manifesting a discerning approach that encompasses both acceptance and rejection of different facets of media representations. This aligns with perspectives in media effects literature, that

have argued for the active role of individuals in interpreting media content (Livingstone, 2003).

It is important to mention that while looking at the media coverage, it might seem that ChatGPT appeared from nowhere. In fact, earlier versions of the large language model behind it have been available for some years and have also shown significant capabilities, albeit of course less than what ChatGPT 3.5 is capable of (Cao et al., 2023). However, as in that earlier period, we argue that AI was not in a hype, there were not that many media articles written, and there were not so high expectations in the media with respect to AI. Consequently, many people did not know how the capabilities of AI were increasing, including the interviewees of the current study. It only came to their attention with the media hype, and it came as a shock for them. They felt previous media representation or HR discourse had not prepared them for this development.

Besides the many similarities, there were some distinctions in how journalists and copywriters perceived the impact of AI on their professions. Journalists were more concerned about the integrity and depth of reporting, emphasizing the challenges AI poses to investigative journalism and ethical reporting. Copywriters, on the other hand, were more open to integrating AI into their workflow, seeing it as a tool for enhancing creativity and efficiency in content creation. This divergence reflects the unique demands and values of each profession, with journalists prioritizing accuracy and depth while copywriters focus on creativity and engagement.

The study discussed visions of generative AI within the unique socio-political and media landscape of Hungary, revealing how contextual factors such as a perception of technological lag, language barriers, and the state of media freedom influenced professional expectations. The apprehension about AI's potential to spread disinformation reflects a broader concern about the ethical implications of technological advancements, emphasizing the need for sustained human oversight. This concern, particularly acute in the Hungarian media context, emphasizes the enduring value of journalistic integrity and the critical evaluation skills that professionals can bring to their work.

The future of jobs is a complex issue and not a zero-sum game between humans and machines (Boyd, 2021). In many instances, AI will collaborate with professionals, while in other cases, it might replace them, for example in situations where professionals might not be hired because contractors may opt to use AI to create content. Various mechanisms can come into play, such as the potential growth in demand for certain tasks if collaborating with AI tools makes them cheaper and more effective to perform (Nelson, 2022). However, if the demand for journalistic and copywriting tasks does not increase, and AI makes these tasks more efficient, these jobs could be at risk. Liu et al. (2023) observed a notable decline in transaction volumes for text-based freelance jobs on a preeminent digital labor platform, attributing this trend to ChatGPT's capacity to undertake simpler creative tasks, particularly in contexts with lower quality requirements. Meanwhile, individuals in the copywriting and journalism sectors who effectively

incorporate AI into their workflows may secure a competitive edge. As the roles within these fields evolve, there will be a greater emphasis on supervising and enhancing AI-generated content Biswas (2023).

Our study is not representative; however, the consistency of responses hints at the significance of the potential insights beyond the specific interviews. The results highlight the importance of future studies investigating subjective experiences connected to technological change, considering their complex social, psychological, and cultural dimensions, including phenomena such as optimism bias and the effects of technological media hype. Future employment and education policies should consider diverse factors, including social psychological factors that may hinder people from adequately preparing for or fully benefiting from technological advancements in their respective fields.

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