

THE GLOBAL MEDIA TREND HUNTERS

ChatGPT: Should It Be Feared or Reversed?

1 No new application has generated as much buzz in recent memory

If you aren't familiar, ChatGPT is an AI tool created by OpenAI to instantly generate natural language replies to human queries. Some futurists predict it will make obsolete writers, reporters, and designers in content generation and newsgathering, which further fuels the intense interest and speculation.

But in journalism, AI generated content isn't new. AP and Reuters have used basic AI for years to write simple, repeatably formulaic stories like earnings reports. CNET also recently said it used an "internally designed AI engine" (not ChatGPT) to write 77 full articles, though each story was edited and fact-checked by a human before publication.

The FleishmanHillard Global Media Trend Hunters have tapped into their media network to better understand the current state of play and where this might be headed.

QUICK TAKE



News moves fast and at an unpredictable pace. So does life in the newsroom and how reporters work.

The Quick Take from FleishmanHillard's Global Media Trend Hunters provides a pulse check on the media landscape and key topics PR professionals can be aware of and act on in our fast-paced work environment.

2 The State of Play in Newsrooms

We asked a number of reporters and editors how, if at all, they plan to use tools like ChatGPT in their work. Based on the responses we received, only a tiny number of publications are experimenting with AI software at all, let alone for writing full, non-templated stories. None are currently using generative AI, and those that are considering it foresee using it only for very specific tasks – like assisting in research – and are always overseen and fact-checked by editors.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM REPORTERS

- **One reporter:** “I don’t see ChatGPT playing a role in my work, at least in the short term, but Bing’s version of the tech could – not to write stuff for me, but as a starting point for certain kinds of research.”
- **One medium-sized digital reporting outlet:** “Newsroom leadership seems against it. They had an internal meeting not too long ago and SEO specialists mentioned leveraging it and they were rebuked.”
- **A German journalist in local news** said that ChatGPT is not used at all, because it attacks the core of what journalists are doing and performs tasks that should not be done by a computer.
- **From a UK journalist:** “In my (admittedly very limited) conversations with journalists on the topic, they are interested in it from a story perspective, but there is a lot of hesitancy and cynicism around its application – understandable, if they think it might well end up replacing their job. Main issues seem to be the ethical and legal considerations at play. One journalist I spoke to said that it’s difficult to see how quality media would ever use it – most of the traditional outlets are trying to have a real point of distinction with their content, so something that by its nature is culled from other sources isn’t something that would be helpful for them.”
- **An editor at STAT News:** “We are closely monitoring the implications for the media business. We are looking for opportunities to collect data and try some experiments though we are a bit gun shy about content generation. We pride ourselves on the authority and experience of our reporters. If we ever do try ChatGPT, we’ll certainly be transparent about that with our readers. So, the bottom line is this is something we’re monitoring and are mulling some experiments but have no plans to integrate deeply in our reporting.”
- **USA Today reporter:** “I see it being good for background, basic research, sentence structure and basic listicle tips – but will really need a human editor and fact-checker.”

3 Our Perspective: For Media Relations, No Change in Our Work

Some AI forecasts have been provocative – one predicts that 90% of web content will be AI generated by 2025. While legitimate use cases will likely be found in newsrooms and other media outlets, human supervision will be critical for their responsible use. We have no reason to see ChatGPT or similar tools having an immediate effect on how we interact with reporters.

THE TAKEAWAY

Like the reporters we queried, we also recommend a cautious approach to these applications. For the time being, generative AI tools should only be used for clearly delineated tasks, and when used, done so with full transparency. FleishmanHillard has early-stage guidelines on content we develop and other applications as well. We will continue to closely monitor the development of these tools and will continue to provide a POV as they evolve.

WHO ARE THE TREND HUNTERS?

FleishmanHillard’s Global Media Trend Hunters is a dedicated work group of media experts who have developed deep insights into the shifting ecosystem of today’s newsroom. The team regularly conducts training courses, insight sessions and custom research for account teams and clients. For more information, please contact Tony Ho Loke, Trend Hunter Lead, at tony.holoke@fleishman.com.