

Is blockchain the solution to AI deepfakes in PR? A provisional outlook

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Introduction and research question. In recent years, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionised various industries, including public relations (PR). The impact of AI on PR strategies is profound, reshaping how public relations professionals engage with audiences, analyse data, and craft their narratives, especially in terms of content creation, as it assists PR professionals in strategising, summarising, writing, and editing. However, the essence of public relations still revolves around human touch and emotional intelligence, none of which is peculiar to any AI tools that serve as powerful allies, but don't supplant the strategic acumen and relational skills of PR experts. The real magic happens when AI's analytical and automation capabilities are combined with the nuanced understanding and creativity of PR professionals.

Methodology and literature review. AI's rapid evolution has led to its widespread adoption, with applications ranging from automating mundane tasks to enhancing productivity and enabling new forms of human-computer collaboration across various sectors (Agrawal et al., 2019; Autor, 2015, pp. 237–260; Chui et al., 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2021). The technology offers significant potential for businesses and society by improving efficiency, reducing costs, and providing better decision-making capabilities (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Ransbotham et al., 2017). Combined with big data, AI has the potential to surpass human decision-making and abilities across industries (Liu & Zeng, 2021). In the communication world, AI's ability to analyse and interpret large volumes of data enables more targeted and personalised content, aligning more closely with audience interests and behaviours.

Results. In PR, the balance between AI-driven efficiency and human creativity is crucial. The roadmap guides PR professionals on how to maintain this balance, ensuring that AI is used as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, human skills and insights. Among the myriad concerns surrounding AI, one particularly unsettling claim is that it might lead to a world in which it's impossible to distinguish truth from fabrication. One significant issue is the potential for misinformation and deepfakes, which can spread misinformation and cause significant reputational harm, leading to widespread misinformation and potential crises for those individuals and organisations. To mitigate this risk, it is crucial to establish stringent verification processes to review AI-generated content and use AI detection tools to identify and counteract manipulated media.

Conclusions and implications. PR professionals should be transparent about their use of AI-powered tools and technologies. Moreover, they should invest in training and education to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively leverage AI-powered tools and technologies. As a matter of fact, the rise of sophisticated technologies like deepfakes and generative AI has democratized the creation of deceptively realistic content, putting powerful tools of manipulation within reach of the average user. AI can also undermine the credibility of true information by making us wonder if it's really a lie. So, there's obviously some truth to the

claim that AI can blur the boundaries between truth and fiction. However, on close inspection, it's often possible to detect where manipulation has taken place. While the technology used to create deepfakes will undoubtedly become more sophisticated, so will the tools capable of detecting them, such as blockchain, which provides secure and un-hackable ways to store client information. Blockchain technology allows PR professionals to validate the identity of website visitors, and when combined with machine learning, it creates a protocol that helps PR professionals identify and filter out bots when validating their data and get a clear idea of their human engagement numbers.

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