AI and automation: New challenges for media professionals in Hong Kong and mainland China

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Abstract
Algorithms and natural language generation (NLG) technology – the automatic creation of text from digital structured data – increasingly play an influential role in the social, economic, and cultural spheres (Bucher, 2018; Dörr, 2016). For example, 'Xiao Nan', the robot reporter of Southern Metropolis Daily since 2017, advises readers when is the best time to book train tickets, whereas 'Heliograf', the robot of The Wall Street Journal, has published more than 1,000 stories in 2018. Whilst media production and consumption become more automated and algorithmically dictated (Napoli, 2014), these two technologies can be both empowering and disturbing to the everyday experiences and psychological wellbeing of those working in the creative industries, especially media professionals (Carlson, 2018). Indeed, research studies suggest media professionals in Hong Kong and China are increasingly affected by automation and anxious about the transformations this process will bring to their career development (e.g. Li & Yu, 2018). The wellbeing of information and narrative gatekeepers (e.g. reporters, editors, copywriters, public relations officers) in our future 'smart cities' is vital for the communities they work in. This paper aims to critically analyse how algorithms and automated technology impact media workers' psychological wellbeing and how they go about their media production operations - newsgathering, production practices and dissemination.