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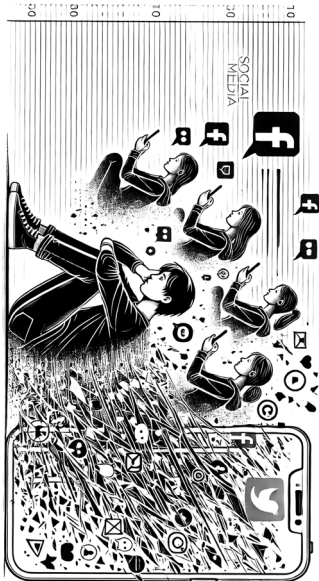
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Dear Readers,

We have witnessed the situation that the Tofflers foresaw in the last three decades of the 20th century. They claimed that only a few decades would pass before a third wave of civilisation would engulf humanity on a planetary scale as a result of the digital revolution. The previous two waves of civilisation – agricultural and industrial – were symbolised by hoes and assembly lines. The third wave of civilisation was brought about by the birth of the digital age and symbolised by computers. In 2011, when German researchers began looking for strategies to implement advanced digital technologies in industrial production, they coined the term Industry 4.0. The fact is that the fourth Industrial Revolution has not only radically changed production processes but can also be said to have brought about a paradigm shift in all areas of social practice. In the course of just over a decade, a multitude of intelligent companies have emerged in which virtual and physical production systems cooperate with each other. Nowadays, it is already common to encounter fully automated production, smart technologies, the Internet of Things, cloud servers, and 5G networks, etc. Advances in digital technologies have prompted the emergence of Industry 5.0 at the end of the second decade of the 21st century. In reality, however, this is not a new industrial revolution, but rather a process of even closer cooperation between artificial intelligence (AI) and humans.

AI is becoming an important phenomenon in almost all areas of human activity because it can permanently acquire knowledge by imitating situations and learning from experience. Within communication practices in the media space, technologies and processes typical of Industry 4.0 can be identified in conjunction with AI. These can be discussed not only in terms of production processes, but also in association with problems related to modes of communication and reception practices. Digital communication and information technologies both facilitate and dynamize our lives. Metaphorically speaking, they can “clothe” print, auditory and especially audiovisual production in an attractive, spectacular “garment” embellished with a range of images that capture the attention of the recipients. At the same time, they offer the possibility of interactive entrances into a world of creative self-realisation that only a few decades ago was the preserve of a select handful of academically educated professionals. It is clear that, thanks to the cognitive abilities of artificial intelligence, these modes of media production can also be considered as a model that has grown into the archetypal practice of contemporary pop culture, shaping the aesthetic awareness of its users and co-creators.

The problems raised correspond directly to the themes of the studies published in this issue of *Communication Today*. In relation to the implementation of AI, questions of the emergence of social risks, the transformation of the function of cultural patterns, and the violation of social norms are posed. The authors also formulate research problems in which they address the modification of the representation of reality through media content, the importance of balancing technological innovation in the context of consumers, and the need for greater transparency in the development of AI. The studies also address issues of manipulation of information and its use for image, material or political gain, the limits of educational digital games created by independent developers, or questions about images created by AI. Dear Readers, I have no doubt that these and the other research topics that you will find in the pages of this journal will inspire you to think further about the contemporary media world and its future development.

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