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An Analysis of Artificial Intelligence Policies in Fortune 50 Companies

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The wave of changes brought to industries by generative artificial intelligence necessitates communication about how organizations are approaching ethical and responsible AI usage. Disclosure of where the human element and machine element meet is essential for stakeholders to evaluate the information they receive. This article benchmarks how many Fortune 50 companies have AI policies on their websites for stakeholders to find. Only 15 of the 50 had policies on their websites that users could find using internal and global search engines. Transparency, fairness, and accountability were the most mentioned principles in the AI policies. Recommendations are included to help PR teams enhance transparency with organizational AI approaches and embrace disclosure for practitioners' AI use in content creation.

Keywords: AI, GenAI, artificial intelligence, generative AI, policy, transparency

While artificial intelligence is not a new phenomenon, the advent and availability of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) applications over the past year have moved AI into conversations for all types of industries and among the public relations practitioners who share their stories. Artificial intelligence reflects the use of computers and machines to perform tasks that require human intelligence; generative AI is used to characterize artificial intelligence applications (e.g. ChatGPT, Gemini, Midjourney) that create human-like writing, code, or visual and audio products. According to a MuckRack survey, AI usage among public relations practitioners jumped from 28% to 64% in just nine months, from March to December 2023 (MuckRack, 2024). The speed of adoption of generative AI has outpaced former technological advances. ChatGPT, a chatbot powered by a large language model from OpenAI, reached 100 million monthly active users in just two months, making it the fastest-growing app in history (Hu, 2023). For comparison, it took TikTok nine months and Instagram 2.5 years to reach the 100 million user mark (Hu, 2023). *The Financial Times* projected that 2023 would be the year “generative AI changed everything” (Waters, 2023).

Debate continues regarding the need for policies and legislation that provide guardrails, but also leave room for innovation and development (Thierer et al., 2017). While AI technology shows what users could accomplish, discussions are happening at multiple levels to decide what should be accomplished using generative AI. The White House issued the Blueprint of an AI Bill (White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, 2022) and the EU issued the AI Act (European Parliament, 2023). The Public Relations Society of America issued its guidance in the 2023 report, *Promise & Pitfalls: The Ethical Use of AI for Public Relations Practitioners*. Ryan-Mosley et al. (2023) predict that policies will solidify in 2024. Companies are updating or creating their policies, aligning with guidelines provided by industry associations, university think tanks, and the federal government. Policies include the ethics of using artificial intelligence and how and when usage should be disclosed to stakeholders. “Decisions about how our organisations use AI will have reputational and relational impacts” (Valin & Gregory, 2020, p. 6) and makes the study of policies significant for the public relations field.

Companies adopting transparent communication practices should provide stakeholders with easy-to-find information on their AI stance and usage. This paper aims to benchmark how many Fortune 50 companies currently have AI policies on their websites for stakeholders to find. The purpose of this study is to evaluate how these companies are disclosing their adoption and use of AI and if the information is displayed with an internal website search or a larger Google search.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Galloway and Swiatek (2018) called for a critical understanding of AI's use in public relations. It is important to understand how public relations is used to disseminate a company's AI stance to better equip stakeholders to evaluate content provided by the company. Bourne (2019) suggests that public relations practitioners are cheerleaders for the tech innovation of artificial intelligence. This study is based on the premise that they should also be stewards for ethical implementation and explainable transparency for stakeholders. The background literature begins with an overview of AI's use in public relations and is followed by the intersection of AI development, responsible communication, and the public relations foundations of transparency and disclosure.

AI and PR

The Census' Business Trends and Outlook Survey estimated only 3.8% of businesses are using AI to produce goods and services, but noted the variance between industries such as those in the information sector at 13.8% and professional, scientific, and technical services sector at 9.1% (Breux & Dinlersoz, 2023). Of businesses using AI, more than half are employing AI to assist with cybersecurity and fraud management and just under half use AI to craft communication (Haan, 2023). Before using generative AI for public relations work, public relations practitioners were pitching stories about how their clients and organizations were utilizing automation and digital intelligence. They have also managed reputations impugned by AI mishaps — as the use of AI creates new potential for crises for organizations (Pahl & Goh, 2021). According to the 2023 Stanford's AI Index Top 10 Takeaways, the number of AI incidents of misuse has increased 26 times since 2012 (Maslej et al., 2023).

Various forms of AI such as chatbots (Cheng & Jiang, 2021) and tools embedded within industry-popular software like Hootsuite became commonplace in public relations work in recent years. AI is now used for tasks such as monitoring client stories, analytics, logo recognition (Yan, 2023), social media monitoring and responses (Panda et al., 2019), and improving writing with tools like Grammarly. Generative AI opened the door to time-saving applications that could prepare presentations, write news releases, craft social media content, draft pitches, edit for AP Style, create graphics, produce visuals from a text description, and animate artwork. Practitioners are deciding what work can and should be automated and what work necessitates human direction and creativity. Edelman is using AI to enhance its annual Trust Barometer and WeberShandwick uses AI to gauge public sentiment (Yan, 2023). FleishmanHillard is using generative AI for “inspiration rather than work,” until policies are in place (Yan, 2023). “The healthy symbiosis of human-AI in the PR industry is essential for both to coexist successfully” (Panda et al., 2019, p. 210).

Galloway and Swiatek (2018) ask “who (or what) is to be held accountable for the outcomes” of public relations tasks performed by automated systems (p. 738). If PR practitioners are to involve stakeholders in their client's AI development and use their AI-enabled products, awareness and trust will be key to adopting this and future new technologies (Sartori & Theodorou, 2022). MuckRack (2024) reports that 19% of practitioners at agencies always disclose the use of AI to their clients and 21% never report usage. This is at odds with the 35% of brands that believe AI use by agencies should be disclosed at all times. When it comes to reporting, brands and their agencies agree on one area – disclosure “depends.” Brands (39%) and agencies (36%) surveyed viewed disclosure as situational (MuckRack, 2024). Policies would help define these situations and clarify when disclosure is needed. Only 21% of PR practitioners say their workplaces have policies regarding AI use and another 22% say plans are forthcoming, leaving 7% who do not know about an organizational policy, and 50% without one (MuckRack, 2024).

AI Policy

Collections and analyses of policies showcase similarities among them regardless of institution type, location, and year developed. Policies discussed in this section were drafted before the advent of mainstream generative AI usage, but offer context for how organizations have approached AI. Jobin et al. (2019) reviewed 84 AI policies from organizations and companies worldwide, noting that 88% of those were released after 2016. Of the major principles included, transparency was featured in 73 of the 84 policies, followed by justice/fairness (n=68), non-maleficence (n=60; included security, safety),

responsibility (n=60; included accountability), beneficence (n=41), freedom/autonomy (n=34), trust (n=28), sustainability (n=14), dignity (n=13), and solidarity (n=6). A year later, Ulnicane et al. (2020) reviewed 49 AI policy statements from governments, think tanks, and other organizations. With a lens on framing governance, the study found a theme of public engagement and dialog (Ulnicane et al., 2020). Public engagement is desirable in order to align the AI policies equitably with societal needs and is prescribed as a solution to AI concerns such as bias, lack of diversity, and concentrations of power (Ulnicane et al., 2020, p. 170). Corrêa et al. (2023) identified 17 principles in their study of 200 policies originating from 37 countries and found that 2018 was a peak year for policies. They also noted a shift in top-referenced principles. In 2014, the concerns were fairness, reliability, and dignity; 2016 lauded accountability, beneficence, and privacy; 2017 moved to accountability; and then 2018 adopted transparency as the top principle.

Much of the recent literature related to policymaking for artificial intelligence is situated at the nation-state level. Countries have and are adopting policies that provide guardrails for ethical usage and space for innovation and business development. Policymaking data in recent reports has focused on legislation, such as the AI index report from Stanford (Maslej et al., 2023). Drawing from an analysis of governmental AI policies, Guenduez and Mettler (2023) found six common narratives, of which some apply to the current study such as creating ethical and trustworthy AI, educating AI professionals, and advancing the deployment of AI in practice. The remaining national narratives were less oriented to individual businesses and attended to more societal needs like building an AI marketplace that supports and enables businesses.

PR Principles and Relationship Management Theory

The concepts listed in the AI policies above coincide with the major tenets of the PRSA Code of Ethics, the special report PRSA issued providing additional guidance specific to artificial intelligence, the PR Council's guidelines, and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' approach. PRSA's Board of Ethics and Professional Standards report about the ethical use of AI in public relations outlines how professionals should use AI with regard to the free flow of information, competition, disclosure of information, safeguarding confidence, and enhancing the profession (Staley et al., 2023). The PR Council Guidelines on Generative AI prioritize protecting client data as stewards of information, not creating or spreading disinformation or misinformation, prioritizing accuracy, disclosure to clients if generative tools are used in the creative process, valuing diversity and inclusion, watching for bias, and establishing clear guidance and regular training (PR Council, 2023).

In the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' document, the group outlines ethics as decision-making and focuses more on the process instead of guiding principles, but the report identifies macro issues in public relations: social change, change in the nature of work, power, algorithms, privacy control/transparency issues, and bias (Valin & Gregory, 2020). The collective body of public relations practitioners agree on most points to include in their guiding documents. The core of the current study is guideline distribution to organizational stakeholders. As the stewards of information and a company's reputation, transparency and disclosure about human work vs. machine-created work is necessary and expected to build and maintain trust and sustain relationships. Public relations, at its core, is an advisory role – some liken it to the conscience of an organization – based on critical thinking, research, judgment, empathy, anticipation and consideration of audiences, deliberation of implications, and helping

organizations make brand-aligned choices (Harris, 2021). The advisory role is to help organizations build and maintain relationships with their publics.

Maintaining the organization-public relationship (OPR) as a motivation for publicizing AI stances and policies, this study finds its foundation in relationship management theory (e.g., Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham, 2021; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Relationships management theory emphasizes the public perspective and the relationship between publics and organizations. ORPs depend on core dimensions for successful relationships, including trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Similarly, openness, understanding, involvement, and investment are factors used to build and maintain relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Ledingham (2003) suggested that relationship management required both communication and “organizational and public behaviors” (p. 194). The creation of an AI policy represents communication and the public posting and enacting responsible practices represents the behavior piece of relationship management theory. The purpose of publishing AI policies is to provide transparency and disclosure to stakeholders.

Transparency is at the heart of organizational “trust, credibility, and engagement” (Men et al., 2022, p. 7). Transparency is a key foundation to trustworthy artificial intelligence (Micheli et al., 2023). This includes providing pertinent information to support stakeholders’ understanding of AI systems and explaining in terms the audience will understand. In a world of misinformation, disinformation, and deep fakes, stakeholders demand and deserve to know what to expect from communicators, especially those related to brands they trust. “If the entire weight of the PRSA Code of Ethics could be loaded into a single word, that word would be Disclosure” (PRSA, 2018, p. 1). PRSA defines disclosure as an “intentional release of information” to facilitate “transparency, openness, access, and accountability” (PRSA, 2018, p. 1). Disclosure of how and when AI is employed can aid stakeholders in their media literacy efforts of evaluating content. Consistent disclosure can build trust with stakeholders who can rely on the organization to be clear with attributions.

With the foundations of the guiding public relations principles of transparency and disclosure and relationship management theory, the following research questions were posited:

R1. How many Fortune 50 companies have a publicly available AI policy on their website?

R2. For companies with a published AI policy, where is the AI policy located on their website, and is it discoverable by local and global search engines?

R3. Which guiding principles (transparency, fairness, accountability, security, etc.) are prioritized in the AI policies?

METHODS

The websites for the top 50 companies of the Fortune 500 list were examined for their presentation of a company AI policy. The top 50 companies on the most recent Fortune 500 list were identified and a coding process was developed to systematically review websites for artificial intelligence policies conducted between January 4 - 22, 2024. The Top 50 were selected as the sample to begin this investigation, consistent with previous studies (Davis-Walling & Batterman, 1997; McCorkindale, 2010). The review procedure of the Fortune 50 company websites was based on Lambiase’s (2018) study of city websites.

Using a Chrome browser, the review started with the website on the Forbes’ list. If a splash web page asked for a country designation to enter interior website pages, the US was selected and only

English-language information was reviewed. After checking the website URL listed, the corporate site was consulted. For example, walmart.com is the customer-facing sales-oriented portal and corporate.walmart.com presents the business information of the company. First, the “find on page” feature was used in Google Chrome to check the home page for mentions of “artificial intelligence”, “AI”, “generative ai” or “genAI”. Next, the page was reviewed for other possible mentions of AI. The Walt Disney Company used “innovative technologies,” but it did not link to an AI policy or position statement, and therefore was not considered. The newsroom page on each website was checked for a policy and two recent news releases were reviewed for disclosures of using generative AI for content creation. The intent was to capture disclosures about using generative AI in news release writing or editing. Two were selected as the number to check to mitigate the chance that one news release was simply missing an AI disclosure and not representative of the company’s news release style. This was not the main part of the study, so more news releases were not checked. The researcher reviewed the online corporate newsroom and the investor relations pages. Photos on pages reviewed were also checked for source lines with mention of AI usage for image generation. Using the internal search engine for the company’s site, “artificial intelligence”, “AI”, “generative ai” or “genAI” were terms used to see if the search would produce the company’s policy for a website visitor. Then, a larger global search was conducted by using the company name and artificial intelligence and AI on the Google search engine. The first page of the search results was checked for selections on the company website. Sponsored content was not included. Although databases like AlgorithmWatch contain AI policies, this study sought to examine how findable AI policies are for stakeholders going directly to the company website or conducting a Google search.

The study focuses on policy and position statements of disclosing AI use so general stories and news releases about AI or promotional pieces were not included. For example, Verizon’s website had articles about how their products could help users with their generative AI work, but this was not the company’s official approach to its own AI usage rules. This project sought the company’s approach to AI and either guidelines, policies, or standards they agree to support and enact. The location of the policy and its name were noted. Policies or position papers were captured for analysis. In Ulnicane et al.’s (2020) schema for inclusion, policy documents had to be stand-alone and self-contained documents. This study deviates from that parameter and includes policy statements that were included in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reports, but they had to contain elements of how the organization approached and managed AI.

AI policies were reviewed and coded for themes and major concepts. Like Ulnicane et al. (2020), policy documents for this study were “treated as vehicles of messages, communicating or reflecting official intentions, objectives, commitments, proposals, ‘thinking’, ideology and responses to external events” (Freeman & Maybin, 2011, p. 157). Content analysis was selected because it offers a way in this exploratory study to analyze the variety of ways companies might present their AI positions. Some opted for mentions in ESG reports, some created graphics, and other published position papers on their newsroom sites. Each policy was considered the unit of analysis and was reviewed multiple times for major concepts included. Most policies included a listing of core principles or guideposts. These were collected and compared. If principles were mentioned as a pair, each principle was coded as a tie. For example, Amazon listed Security and Privacy as its second principles, so each was counted as a second principle.

FINDINGS

Of the Top 50 Fortune companies, 15 had guidelines that stakeholders could find about the company's stance on AI (answering RQ1); 10 industries were represented (see Table 1). Of the 15 companies with AI policies, 9 could be found using the company website search feature (answering RQ2). The other 6 were not identified by a company search engine but were found using a broader Google search on the open web. Four additional companies had slight mentions of their approach to AI, but these were either single statements on other documents or resembled working papers as opposed to finalized policy statements. No news releases reviewed disclosed any use of a generative AI application to create the writing of the release in part or whole. No photo credits or artwork reviewed showed source lines crediting AI.

Table 1
Fortune 50 Companies with AI Policy on Website by Industry

Industry (Companies and Rank on Fortune list)	No. of Policies
Healthcare: insurance and managed care (United Health Care, 3; Elevance Health, 22; Humana, 42)	3
Internet Services and Retailing (Amazon, 2; Alphabet, 8, Meta Platforms, 31)	3
Pharmaceuticals (Pfizer, 38; Johnson & Johnson, 40)	2
Commercial Banks (Citigroup, 36)	1
Computer Software (Microsoft, 13)	1
Computers, Office Equipment (Dell, 34)	1
Diversified financials (Freddie Mac, 45)	1
General Merchandisers (Walmart, 1)	1
Healthcare: pharmacy and other services (Cigna Group, 15)	1
Telecommunications (AT&T, 30)	1

To answer RQ3 about how principles were prioritized in AI policies, the main principles for guiding decisions were cataloged for the 15 companies with policies, and their frequencies were tallied. No single principle was the first mentioned in a majority of policies; 12 different principles held the top mention. Consistent with previous findings, transparency was the most-mentioned principle across the sample (Corrêa et al., 2023).

Table 2
Frequency of the Most-mentioned Principles in AI Policies on Fortune 50 Company Websites

Principle	No. of Policies
Transparency	12
Fairness	10
Accountability	9
Privacy	8
Security	7
Safety	5

AI policy language was handled in different ways. Some companies opted for a full report as a PDF download while others tucked policies into codes of conduct or ESG reports (see Table 3). All of the policies below were discoverable by a search on the company website search engine or a global Google search.

Table 3
Characteristics of AI Policies for Fortune 50 Companies Organized by Rank

Company	Title of Policy	Document Type	Date	URL
Walmart, 1	Responsible AI Pledge	News release	10/2023	https://corporate.walmart.com/news/2023/10/17/our-responsible-ai-pledge-setting-the-bar-for-ethical-ai
Amazon, 2	Responsible AI	Web page	n.d.	https://aws.amazon.com/machine-learning/responsible-ai/
United Health Care, 5	Responsible Business Practices	Section of a Responsible Business Practices, a web page	2023	https://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/sustainability/responsible-business-practices.html
Alphabet, 8	AI Principles Progress Update	Entire pdf report	2023 (2018 was first)	https://ai.google/static/documents/ai-principles-2023-progress-update.pdf

	2023		edition published)	
Microsoft, 13	Microsoft Responsible AI Standard, v2	Entire pdf report	06/2022	https://blogs.microsoft.com/wp-content/uploads/prod/sites/5/2022/06/Microsoft-Responsible-AI-Standard-v2-General-Requirements-3.pdf
Cigna Group, 15	The Cigna Group's approach to ethical AI practices	New release	n.d.	https://newsroom.thecignagroup.com/the-cigna-group-approach-to-ethical-ai-practices
Elevance Health, 22	Responsible Artificial Intelligence	Two-page spread in annual report	2022	https://www.elevancehealth.com/annual-report/2022/responsible-business/
AT&T, 30	Artificial Intelligence at AT&T: Our Guiding Principles	Blog post and graphic	2019	https://about.att.com/innovationblog/2019/05/our_guiding_principles.html
Meta Platforms, 31	Responsible AI	Web page	n.d.	https://ai.meta.com/responsible-ai/
Dell Technologies, 34	Dell Technologies Principles for Ethical Artificial Intelligence	Inside ESG report; link and description on web page	2022	https://www.dell.com/en-us/dt/corporate/social-impact/upholding-trust.htm
Citi Group, 36	Artificial Intelligence: An Ethical Stance	One-page graphic	2021	https://www.citibank.com/mss/solutions/pfss/solutions/fund/fiduciary-services/assets/docs/complexity/innovation/Securities_Services_Ethics_of_AI_infographic.pdf
Pfizer, 38	Three Principles of Responsibility for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Healthcare	News article	n.d.	https://www.pfizer.com/news/articles/three_principles_of_responsibility_for_artificial_intelligence_ai_in_healthcare
Johnson & Johnson, 40	Doing the right thing: AI & ethics	Pdf download in ESG section of website	n.d.	https://www.jnj.com/about-jnj/policies-and-positions/doing-the-right-thing-artificial-intelligence-and-ethics
Humana, 42	Statement of AI Principles	Two-page document	n.d.	https://humana.gcs-web.com/static-files/8060a8b7-214d-471b-b2a2-c5d3f495a065
Freddie Mac, 45	Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning (ML)	Mention in employee code of conduct	2023; revised 03/2024	https://www.freddiemac.com/governance/pdf/code_of_conduct.pdf

DISCUSSION

Only 15 (30%) of the Top 50 Fortune companies had AI policies that a stakeholder could access via a search on the web. This is lower than the percentage of the Fortune 50 that published environmental reports in 1994 (48%) (Davis-Walling & Batterman, 1997). The number of companies with published AI policies is likely to grow as the popularity of generative AI continues and applications become more commonplace. Some companies have opted to align with existing policies instead of creating their own. Wells Fargo (2023) and CVS (2023) endorsed the White House AI Bill of Rights,

PepsiCo aligned with Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (2023), and Bank of America aligned with the Harvard Kennedy School (2018). Some industries are likely waiting for guidance from other associations and regulatory bodies before publicizing their own AI policies. The Walt Disney Company created a task force in late 2023, but a policy could not yet be found; the industry is struggling to outline responsible AI use in part because it could threaten creative jobs and exploitation of technology (Chmielewski & Hu, 2023). A 2018 study found that communication professionals thought the AI impact would be greater on the overall industry than it would be in their organizations (Zerfass et al., 2018). This disconnect may explain some reasons why corporate-specific policies are missing and why some companies opted to share industry news about AI developments rather than pen a policy statement.

The companies with policies represented various industries, with “internet services and retailing” and healthcare (insurance and managed care) as the most represented. Given their technological foundations, companies in the “Internet services” category seemed likely to have AI policies. The healthcare companies represented in the Fortune 50 showcased news, articles, and whitepapers about the influence artificial intelligence is having in healthcare. Policies ranged from one-page overviews to second versions of full reports. CitiGroup and AT&T used graphics to convey their principles. Most used subheadlines to denote the key principles and some used numerals to denote priorities. CitiGroup said the principles it selected were to be considered equally. Most companies boiled their policies into 5 (n=6) or 3 (n=5) core principles. One policy boiled its policy down to one principle and the policy with the most principles was seven principles.

The corporate AI policies in the current sample did not include all of the principles found in Corrêa et al. (2023); children and adolescents’ rights, labor rights, and sustainability were missing. The absence of children may be tied to the fact that businesses primarily target adult customers. The Corrêa sample included governmental and association policies that could have children as direct stakeholders. Sustainability and labor rights may have been omitted because they are covered in other parts of the ESG. One policy used the term “explainable.” This alluded to the fact that transparent but confusing does nothing to help stakeholders and further a relationship. This coincides with Sartori and Theodorou’s (2022) warning that simply making all information transparent without context could overload users. When and how to present AI information to stakeholders will require a savvy communicator to determine what is relevant and make it meaningful to particular audiences. Several policies mentioned fairness of representation, mitigating bias, and even ensuring all stakeholder demographics were considered.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on relationship management theory, this study categorized a moment in time for how Fortune 50 companies communicated to publics their intended behavior related to artificial intelligence. Relationship management theory views the relationship between organizations and publics as the main goal of public relations, which requires both communication and behavior. Publishing a forward-facing policy fulfills the communication and intent toward behavior. Additionally, such an action showcases transparency and disclosure, which help build and maintain relationships.

As for practical implications, policies should find a stable and expected home on their company websites. The internal search engines were not as reliable as a global Google search and at times statements were buried in ESG reports that the general public may not open and search. AI policies

could join privacy policies on the footer of the main landing page for the organization. Policies should also include common search tags like “artificial intelligence” and “AI.” Companies used words like “digital technologies” or branded products that a user may not recognize as AI. For example, Disney kept information on its Accelerator page, which consisted of new technologies, but a general stakeholder would have to drill down to find a policy. The omission of policies from corporate newsrooms needs remedying. As representatives for content creation and information distribution, public relations practitioners could include a preamble or guiding statement about how the PR team uses generative AI in messaging on either the newsroom page, journalists’ resource page, or the team contact page. Teams need to discuss how and if they should include AI use on individual news releases like other mandatories, disclosures, and disclaimers. Artwork, photography, and graphics should include source lines that credit any AI tools. This ties back to the PRSA Code of Ethics and the free flow of information and call for transparency. PR practitioners can model exemplary practices by being overt with credits and citations. If organizations want to truly embrace disclosure and transparency, they could designate and publicize an AI point-person for external audiences to contact with feedback, concerns, and questions.

For organizations without an AI policy, the principles found in the Fortune 50 are similar in many ways and provide a good starting place for discussions. Bourne (2017) cautioned against cheerleading for AI without considering dissenting voices because these voices offer resistance to the prominent discourse. A variety of stakeholders should be included in the policy-making process because adding this “participative transparency” optimizes organization transparency, which is more than simply posting information for stakeholders (Men et al., 2022, p. 7). Policies should also prepare for AI disruptions and disinformation (Karinshak & Jin, 2023). Given the current pace of changes in AI, policies should be revisited at least annually or more frequently based on advancements. Discussions of transparency and disclosure should be ongoing and include stakeholders.

Limitations and Future Research

Data were collected during January 2024, and some companies were busy with task forces and policy development. Thus, data collection should continue in order to monitor for updates and data can be compared to the current study’s benchmark. For example, Walt Disney announced in August 2023 that a task force was created to help the company develop its stance (Chmielewski & Hu, 2023). Expanding this study to all Fortune 500 companies would provide a census of top corporations. While every effort was made to conduct a thorough search, AI policies may have been buried in documents, images, or chatbots that search engines could not scan. Given that the study was focused on the ease of a stakeholder being able to locate the AI policy, this concern is minimal. Broader terms like “digital” and “technology” could be added to expand to companies logging all of their digital policies into one space and not specifically identifying AI. “Machine Learning” and “AI/ML” were used in some documents. It will also be important to review AI policies for public relations firms in particular. For example, FleishmanHillard shared its philosophy and guidance for business in a recent white paper (Rogers, 2023). As the technology continues to unfold and regulations are levied, researchers could ask PR practitioners how they are documenting and disclosing usage. In this study, the two most recent news releases were reviewed for disclosure of AI usage and none was found. According to MuckRack, 58% of practitioners said they are using AI to assist with writing news releases yet no news releases reviewed in

this study acknowledged AI usage. How and when the generative AI assistance is disclosed in PR writing is an area for investigation.

Conclusion

Hurley (2023) suggested corporations continuously build “trust and credibility” with stakeholders to “strengthen overall digital resilience.” PR as an industry should apply principles of transparency and disclosure to AI policies for their own work as well as counsel their organizations in a similar vein. An easy-to-find explanation of a company’s digital approach, including artificial intelligence use, is one step to this end. In conclusion, this project surveys the landscape of AI policies in a section of top U.S. companies to provide a benchmark and a foundation for future study on AI policy in public relations.

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