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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE STUDIES, JOURNALISM &  
COMMUNICATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**Analysis of Public Relations in the New Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Case  
of Selected Public Relations Professionals in Addis Ababa**

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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Mahder Haddis, entitled — Analysis of Public Relations in the New Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Case of Selected Public Relations Professionals in Addis Ababa, is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication, complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Addis Ababa University

June, 2024

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

## **Declaration**

I, Mahder Haddis, declare that this thesis entitled “Analysis of Public Relations in the New Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Case of Selected Public Relations Professionals in Addis Ababa,” is my own original work.

I conducted it independently with the guidance and suggestions of my research advisor Abdulaziz Dino (PhD), and has not been presented in Addis Ababa University or any other universities.

All the sources of materials used for the thesis have been accordingly acknowledged.

Mahder Haddis \_\_\_\_\_

## **Letter of Certification**

This is to certify that Mahder Haddis has carried out her thesis on the topic “Analysis of Public Relations in the New Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI): Case of Selected Public Relations Professionals in Addis Ababa,” under my supervision. This work is original in its nature and is suitable for submission in partial fulfillment of the requirement to earn Master Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication.

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Abdulaziz Dino (PhD)

(Advisor)

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- Mahder Haddis.

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## Abstract

*AI (AI) is swiftly remodeling many industries and promising to significantly affect the sphere of public relations (PR). While AI gives new capabilities that might enhance the work of PR experts, its integration additionally introduces challenging situations that practitioners ought to cautiously cope with. The overarching purpose of this research is to conduct an evaluation of both the opportunities and challenging situations associated with adopting AI technologies in the PR industry. The researcher employed a qualitative method, conducting interviews with 20 PR specialists who are currently using numerous AI tools in their day-to-day work. Additionally, a review of academic literature was on established PR theories in relation to modern AI capabilities. Findings from the interviews revealed major areas where AI is proving beneficial by using big data, to conduct media monitoring, sentiment analysis of large datasets, 24/7 content generation and rapid response capabilities. Professionals noted these applications have allowed them to dedicate more efforts to relationship building and strategic planning. However, challenges associated with AI adoption were also identified through the discussions. Issues such as potential bias in algorithms due to lack of contextual understanding, loss of the human touch in communication, and ethical concerns around data privacy emerged as areas requiring address Based on these qualitative findings, a number of key recommendations were proposed. It was advised that PR practitioners develop expertise in AI to avoid over-reliance, carefully select tools proven to avoid bias, and continue focusing on essential human qualities like empathy which technology cannot replace. Ethical guidelines for data use and strategies for human-AI collaboration were also suggested. Areas for future research identified include more rigorous testing of AI tools before adoption, studies on job disruption versus enhancement, as well as education programs to build practitioner competencies working with AI.*

**Key Words:** AI, Public Relations, Big Data

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence

PR: Public Relations

NLP: Natural Language Processing

B2B: Business to Business

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Artificial Intelligence" (AI) term was first used by John McCarthy 1950s in Dartmouth College (Yongjun, 2021) and described it as the pursuit of developing a machine that could reason like a human (Bourne et al., 2019). AI is a sophisticated and highly complex application of technology in which a machine imitates human cognitive abilities like learning and fixing problems through analysis (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

AI systems can study from experience, become aware of styles and make choices with very little human input. AI is powered via giant quantities of records and complicated algorithms, it's the age of information 4.0 (Suciati et al., 2021). As AI is exposed to a greater amount of data, the more it will comprehend different type of information and have greater output. Many AI apps nowadays make use of machine learning, which permits systems to learn from data without being explicitly programmed called deep learning. Deep learning is a section of machine learning that makes use of artificial neural networks, inspired through the human mind to create and analyze information therefore giving rise to AI. This enables AI structures to examine complicated tasks via illustrations (Schroer, 2023).

The emergence of AI has converted the manner organizations perform and engage with their customers (Majumder, 2023) . In the Public Relations (PR) practice, AI has the potential to revolutionize the way PR practitioners create, distribute and measure the effectiveness in their messages (McGovern, n.d.). AI can also help PR practitioners understand and set a pattern to the behaviors of their target audiences, craft customized messages that resonate with particular segments of the target audience, and in measuring the effectiveness of PR campaigns in real-time (Falkow, 2023) . However, the integration of AI in PR practice additionally provides numerous challenging situations, including the capacity lack of human touch, moral concerns, and the need for upskilling (training and familiarizing of PR professionals with the technology) (Fister, 2023). This research paper aims to study the opportunities and challenges AI poses in the PR practice, with the intention of offering insights which can guide PR practitioners in efficiently using the benefits of AI at the same time as mitigating the risks.

## 1.1 Background

Currently, AI has come to be the top chosen tool by specialists especially in the developed world, to craft customized messages, and grade the effectiveness of PR / Marketing - Associated campaigns. AI also helps in regular tasks which includes sentiment analysis, content production, and media follow-ups and tracking (Middle Georgia State University: News Bureau, 2023).

The use of AI in the PR discipline also comes with several challenging situations. One of the concerns is the possibility of loss of human touch. Professionals are expected to build sentimental relationships with stakeholders, and as process would have it, the use of AI can erode this relationship via time. Many are concerned this may cause a loss of personalization and lack of empathy in communications that PR worthily values.

Moreover, the use of AI raises ethical questions relating to the usage of personal data for public purposes and the possibility for bias in decision making based on big data. PR practitioners should make certain that using AI in their practice is reasonable and ethical (Hameedi, 2023).

Another cause of concern for professionals is the ability of AI to potentially replace the jobs of PR professionals. Although humans are capable of critical thought, some PR tasks are in danger because AI can take their place. This is marked by a recent study conducted by a team of researchers from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

AI implementation in professional practice calls for awareness education for the professionals and stakeholders. PR practitioners need to recognize and correctly use AI technology to use it to their gain. However, this is with expectation not all PR practitioners may be acquainted with AI technology, as the adoption of such technologies can be rendered impossible for inaccessibility or refusal of specialists to integrate their work with PR (Fister, 2023) .

Considering the benefits and feasible challenging situations presented by means of implementing AI in PR, it appears essential to conduct additional studies to research the advantages and disadvantages related to integrating AI into PR practices. This study pursues to analyze the opportunities and challenges exhibited through AI in PR exercise, with the aim

of providing insights that may help PR practitioners in successfully implanting the advantage of AI at the same time as mitigating the foreseen/ unexpected risks of it.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

AI has the ability to revolutionize the manner of the way PR practitioners engage with their target audiences, and the manner they create, distribute and grade the effectiveness in their messages. However, the mixing of AI in PR practice additionally brings numerous tough situations, referring to functionality (lack of human touch, privacy of data and moral worries) (Dwivedi, 2023).

The problem is that there is a lack of comprehensive studies on the opportunities and challenges presented via the use of AI in PR (Everything PR News, 2023) and the way PR practitioners can efficaciously leverage the benefits of AI while minimizing the dangers. In Ethiopia, though awareness on the tools of technology is growing, there is no comprehensive study that is based on AI's application in the practice of public relations. This research has an intention to deal with this hassle by investigating the opportunities and drawbacks furnished by the means of AI in PR by analyzing the case in Addis Ababa.

Practical gaps such as limited number of studies on applying AI tools in an ethical manner while protecting confidential information, lack of skills and knowledge regarding available AI technologies to properly adopt them, and uncertainty around properly understanding AI's limitations and whether it will replace or enhance jobs has a vague reality eluding academicians and practitioners to this day.

Existing literature has acknowledged issues such as "AI anxiety" (fear of the stability and the capabilities of AI) (Johnson, 2017), but provide limited conclusions on how to resolve them. There is a need for studies that examine AI's role and constraints, while recommending balanced approaches to avoid over-reliance on AI or potential for biased and discriminatory outcomes from flawed data or algorithms.

This research aims to address these important problems by conducting an investigation of opportunities and challenges presented by AI in the PR field. Based on an analysis of current practices and risks, the objective is to offer insights that help direct practitioners on how to strategically and ethically deploy AI to its fullest potential in their work. This could help allay

widespread fears and better prepare professionals to use developing technologies in a responsible manner.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

### 1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to analyze the advantages and downsides of AI in the Field of PR and communications practice in Addis Ababa, and as a result provide practical guidance to local PR professionals.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- 1) To examine the current-day state of AI in the local PR exercise;
- 2) To analyze the opportunities PR experts get from AI tools;
- 3) To examine the challenging situations of AI presents PR applications;

## 1.4 Research Questions

- 1) What are the current applications and functions of AI in the PR practice?
- 2) What kinds of opportunities are PR professionals harvesting from AI?
- 3) What are the challenges are PR professionals currently facing from the use of AI?

## 1.5 Scope of the research

The study's purpose is to guide professionals and academics to the positive and challenging situations that AI presents for the Public Relations industry. The research devises qualitative research methodology, allowing for a thorough analysis of available data on organizational practice evaluations and instructional studies on the application of AI in PR. Moreover, interviews with PR experts working for Governmental and Non-governmental institutions in Addis Ababa, using AI in their daily tasks is a part of the study as they share their subjective experiences on the course of data collection.

The study covers an examination of the modern-day state of AI in PR, regarding to its benefits and challenges, which include media monitoring, sentiment analysis, and predictive analytics for organizations. This enables to provide recommendations for PR specialists in ways to efficiently use and what to expect AI in their practice.

The research only looks into the possibilities and challenges of AI inside the PR practice in regards to professionals residing in Addis Ababa, and therefore not cover the wider packages of AI in other industries or fields. The study is also limited to a qualitative research method and did not involve quantitative analysis. The selection of professionals for the interviews is decided on the knowledge of local PR professionals who possess the know-how of applications of AI on PR tasks, and therefore didn't include the views of all PR professionals who hasn't still been introduced to the concept of AI or residing outside Addis. Though, the study may not include facts and opinions from all PR professionals, it aims to offer knowledge in the realm of AI in PR and offer practical guidelines for PR professionals to correctly comprise AI into their procedures.

### 1.6 Significance of the research

The significance of this research is to somehow embark upon the new journey of the ever-advancing knowledge of AI in PR. The study looks into the possible ways for AI to aid PR practitioners to best use it without causing much of ethical dilemmas and misuse of personal data violating the legal rights to privacy. In every task of PR, professionals struggle with redundant tasks that could be handled by AI, therefore channeling their energy to create new campaigns and strategies for the organizations they are hired in needs a new way to deal with.

On this note, the study attempts to provide practical pointers for PR specialists on ways to successfully comprise AI into the practice by examining the current practical state of the technology's application in local PR practice, looking through the possible benefits and pitfalls of it blending with the profession, exploring ways to discover and therefore deal with moral considerations and by presenting foreseeable insights into how AI will shape the PR industry, the research is deemed to assist PR professionals prepare for the ongoing impact of AI on their practice.

### 1.7 Limitations of the study

The limitation of this research paper stems from the methodology of research used to collect and analyze data. This study in its qualitative nature, takes into focus an interview and writings of PR and technology professionals who have a working knowledge about the use of AI in the PR world. Therefore, this study does not incorporate the views insights and

academic works of PR professionals in the data collection process that are not literate or familiar to AI 's tools in the PR discipline.

The study uses a qualitative research method, which includes analyzing records through interviews. This method does not contain statistical evaluation / experimentation, which can also limit the potential to draw calculated results on the subject matter.

The study focuses specially on the usage of AI in PR and does not cover a wider application of AI in different fields. Therefore, its findings might not be generalized and applied to other related/non-related fields. Additionally, the use of AI in PR raises moral issues related to privacy, bias, and the capability of AI in replacing human interactions. While the study aims to discover ways to address those moral considerations, there can be limitations to the extent to which they may be fully addressed.

## 1.8 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters in total. Areas such as the background of the study, the statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, and more that lay the basis of the whole study are discussed herein the first chapter. The literature review in chapter two reviews existing academic literature related to key PR theories and how they relate to current AI applications.

Following the review of the literature section, the third chapter will elaborate on the research methodology, research design, methods, and procedures discussed in this section.

The subsequent chapter will present the results of data collection by discussing emerging themes on current AI uses, opportunities, risks, and advancements of AI based on the collected data.

In the final chapter, conclusions will summarize the main findings by revisiting the objectives and questions the researcher sought to find. Recommendations will be provided for key stakeholders in regards to adopting best practices and mitigating the problems stated in the research paper.

The organization of this thesis strives to progress from introducing the research problem through reporting results and delivering practical outputs.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to summarize previous literature on AI's role in the public relations discipline. The structure of this chapter is formed first by discussing the involvement of AI in the field of public relations and tasks it could assist with while employed. The second part will discourse through significant purposes of AI that are identified by scholars relating to important theories of public relations. The chapter then goes on to list and explain the main challenges identified by previous works of literature on AI in public relations, still connecting the drawbacks with theoretical concepts developed by professionals and academicians in the field. Afterwards, there are sections explaining important insights on what PR professionals should look forward to once they become familiar with the concept of AI and what skillsets they need to develop personally and professionally based on previous literature and scholarly recommendations. The remaining parts will discuss academic literature reviews on best practices to adopt AI in PR while avoiding the challenges posed by it in real-life practices and briefly explain the glimpse of AI involvement in the discipline for the foreseeable future.

AI (AI) technologies are beginning to transform the public relations (PR) industry through new abilities (The Atticism, 2023). As technologies like machine learning advance, they enable computerization of routine PR tasks previously done by humans (Lutevich, 2023). This raises concerns about job losses, but also presents opportunities to redefine PR practice (Fifi Ee En Liew, 2021).

Several studies have explored the potential benefits of AI for public relations. AI has the ability to systematize routine tasks such as monitoring, reporting and analyzing, buying PR professionals more time to take in strategic tasks where they are needed the most (The Atticism, 2023). Chatbots and virtual assistant technologies supply information to big data therefore crunching and analyzing numbers is handled by AI in real time (Lutevich, 2023). They can also analyze sentiment and engagement across multiple platforms for organizations providing needed data that can be used as an input for PR and communications strategy (Fifi Ee En Liew, 2021).

However, challenges also exist around reliance on AI systems, job security concerns, and ensuring technologies are responsibly designed and developed (Fifi Ee En Liew, 2021). There are also open questions about how AI may influence key PR theories like two-step flow of communication and agenda-setting as technologies shape information flows (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). More research is still needed to fully understand AI's overall impacts and roles in various PR contexts (Fifi Ee En Liew, 2021)

As AI's capabilities progress, public relations must thoughtfully navigate both opportunities and challenges to leverage new technologies in an ethical manner aligned with the communications discipline (The Atticism, 2023). Continued research exploring AI applications and impacts can help guide responsible innovation and smooth transformation of the PR industry.

Scholars have pointed out that AI has come to stay and it's not actually going anywhere (Marfousi, 2023). Some current AI tools have been listed to help PR professionals with their day-to-day tasks on media monitoring, creating press release, sentiment analysis and generating visuals are; ChatGPT, Midjourney, Brand watch, Looka, Canva, Scribbl AI, Beautiful AI etc. These tools are selected due to the ability of natural language processing ability, machine learning and pattern adaptation. These features aid AI to learn the current way of human communications and adopt necessary traits that can successfully mimic human touch (Marfousi, 2023).

## 2.2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

Several studies highlight AI's ability to help automate routine PR tasks and free up human resources for more strategic work. Content creation and distribution are areas primed for automation using AI. Chat bots and virtual assistants respond to basic media inquiries 24/7 (Kietzmann et al, 2018). AI tools can also scan large amounts of data to monitor brand mentions, identify issues and crises early, and help with reputation management (Neff & Nagy, 2016). Such capabilities enable PR teams to efficiently track conversations, understand stakeholder perspectives, and proactively shape narratives (Taguimdje et al., 2020). In this section, the paper will discuss on relevant Public Relations theories in regards to the current

applications AI and the opportunities it brings upon the field. In this section, advantages of AI are explained in adjacent to theories of Public Relations practice.

### 2.2.1 Situational Theory of Publics

The Situational Theory of Publics, created by of James Grunig, establishes a framework to distinctive audiences relevant to public relations. Its objective is to assist PR specialists discover strategic stakeholders and plan effective programs (Aldoory et al., 2007). Rather than regarding the population as an entire, this concept perspectives “public” as unique issue-centered community interested by an organization’s movements. Grunig studied 4 forms of publics - all-issue publics, apathetic publics, single-issue publics, and hot-issue publics each with varying levels of activity and attention to different problems (Rheey, 2004). It also distinguishes between stakeholders and publics, with stakeholders being general categories of people affected by organizational decisions, and publics being specialized groups that may communicate actively, passively, or not at all about organizational decisions that affect them. Similar to market segmentation, the principle parts standard populations in relevance of PR practitioners. This gives PR professionals a strategic method for comprehending various audiences (Gruning, 2005).

In sum, the Situational Theory offers a framework for knowledge exclusive varieties of publics based on their interests. With this insight, corporations can better discover with strategic stakeholders on precise issues.

### 2.2.2 Excellence Theory

The Excellence Theory, developed by James Grunig and his colleagues, is a theoretical framework within the subject of public relations. It defines public relations as a management role aimed towards managing organizational behaviors to build beneficial relationships and build a reputable organizational recognition (Gruning, 2005).

It moves public relations closer to a strategic behavioral paradigm emphasizing the participation of public relations practitioners in strategic decision-making to help guide organizational conduct. Additionally, the theory highlights how PR can make a contribution to

organizational effectiveness in different levels through different factors like organizational structure, environmental conditions, company subculture and the skills/knowledge of individual practitioners. (Grunig e. a.).

The Excellence Theory has included thoughts from various theories, which include psychology, economics, co-orientation model, relationship principle, rhetorical principle, and feminism. The theory is criticized for being western ideology-biased, but, however scholars have replied by suggesting that the concept helps management decisions that balance the interest of organizations and publics (Vercic, 2008).

### 2.2.3 Data-Driven Public Engagement

Large-scale monitoring and analysis of earned, owned, paid and shared media is central to issues/crisis management and reputation cultivation endorsed by the Situational Theory of the publics (Kriyantono, 2012). AI easily tracks hundreds of online mentions, conversations and engagement metrics in real-time across multiple channels and languages. Identifying sentiment, themes and potential reputational risks early aids proactive narrative shaping recommended in Excellence and Virtue theories (Gregory, 2001).

This may significantly aid the situational theory of publics get into practice since the theory explains how publics are formed and their levels of involvement in issues based on problem recognition, constraint recognition, and reference criterion (Kriyantono, 2012). AI could analyze large datasets to better understand and segment publics to effectively engage them as per their situational factors.

AI also offers powerful analytics capabilities that can benefit social media strategies. This provides deep insights into what content and messaging resonates most with target audiences. With its predictive analytic abilities, AI can also anticipate future trends by reviewing real-time social data patterns. It gives organizations the ability to tailor their strategies proactively based on AI predictions. Armed with these customer insights and predictive analytic powers, PR teams in charge of communications can create highly optimized campaigns and content tailored for maximum engagement with the right audiences (Brogan, 2023).

### 2.2.4 Co-Oriented Model of the Publics

The co-orientation model of public relations is developed by way of James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt of their book “Managing Public Relations” in 1984. However, the version is based totally on an interpersonal model of communication proposed by McLeod and Chaffee in 1973, which they called the co-orientation model (Verčič et al, 2007).

The model is derived from psychology and communication and is used to understand how organizations and their publics perceive and examine each other’s different attitudes towards a certain subject (Verčič et al, 2007).

The model assumes that human beings choose settlement to war and that they could use communication to attain this goal. The key variables of the model describe how near or distant the perspectives of organizations are with their publics and vice versa. (Verčič et al, 2007).

#### 2.2.5 Achieving Co-Oriented Model Analysis with AI Assistance

Analyzing big unwieldy data sets with AI reveals nuanced insights into what organizational stakeholders truly care about by surfacing actionable topics, hashtags and influential voices. Careful analysis therefore enhances strategic planning as advised in Excellence and Co-Oriented models (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). AI augments rather than replaces human judgment, interaction and empathy considered crucial for building the trust and relationships emphasized in two-way symmetrical communication (Garibay et al., 2022). So by combining the humanized and AI analysis PR professionals can bring a massive development in seeing through stakeholder perspectives.

#### 2.2.6 Two- way symmetrical model of PR

The two-way symmetrical model of public relations communication focuses on fostering mutual understanding and resolving conflicts between an organization and its communication stakeholders.

As described by Grunig and Hunt, it emphasizes attaining balance and harmony in organization-public relationships through open dialogue and exchange of ideas (Theunissen & Rahman, 2010).

The goal is to provide stakeholders with equal opportunities to express themselves and ensure a fair and equitable communication process. This cultivates positive relationships between an organization and its stakeholders through open and balanced engagement. It seeks to balance the interests of both parties through transparent exchanges that allow shared learning and communication (Theunissen & Rahman, 2010).

A problem arises when emphasis on achieving agreement in two-way symmetrical communication has sometimes led practitioners to prioritize accords over genuine dialogue, which may involve persuasion rather than true dialogue (Theunissen & Rahman, 2010) .

Therefore, a mutually beneficial communication should be set as a priority by professionals for a fair and reliable results.

### 2.2.7 Automating tasks in AI and Two- way symmetrical model of PR

The Two-Way Symmetrical theory advocates open communication, mutual understanding and harmonious relationships between organizations and publics through respectful collaboration (Grunig & Grunig, 2008).

While AI streamlines processes, human judgment remains paramount. Automation should enhance human skills rather than replace them. Professionals must validate ideas from AI and ensure personalization and emotion cannot be misconstrued. Two- way symmetrical model emphasizes building mutual understanding through respectful dialogue (Grunig & Grunig, 2008). Optimizing human-AI interfaces could aid informational exchange aspects while respecting human judgment central to model. The professionals' oversight is still needed where nuance and discernment are required. However, by automating mundane work, AI enables PRs to allocate quality time on strategic tasks. It acts as a starting point for inspiration when developing thoughtful, engaging communications (Rodsevich, 2023).

### 2.2.8 Strategic Communication Theory

Strategic communication theory examines organizational communication from an integrated, multidisciplinary perspective by encompassing ideas and issues found in various disciplines

such as management, marketing, public relations, technical communication, political communication, and information/social marketing campaigns (Hallahan et al, 2007).

The theory recognizes that purposeful impact is the fundamental goal of communications by organizations; it also takes an integrated approach by considering an organization's communications activities from a strategic perspective, rather than examining individual communication functions in isolation. It sets boundaries in the communication environment driven by technology and media convergence that make it difficult to differentiate between traditional communication genres and activities (Hallahan et al, 2007).

The strategic communication theory provides a unified framework for analyzing organizational communication from an integrated, multidisciplinary perspective (Hallahan et al, 2007).

#### 2.2.9 Generating Content and Strategic Communication Theory

AI tools can rapidly produce first drafts of materials like press releases, social media posts, newsletters etc. that PR pros can refine (Meyer, 2023).

The strategic communication theory views PR as a strategic management function involving analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation (Smith, 2021). AI may aid data-driven understanding of situations, issues monitoring, scenario modeling to support strategic decision making to realize this superb content on mainstream and social media platforms need to be released periodically. AI content generators are capable of writing new content based on parameters provided by the user. One enters topics, instructions, and desired tone for a piece of content. The AI tool then analyzes similar existing content from across the web to generate a fresh, original piece tailored to the guidelines (Patel, 2023). This allows professionals to increase content production by automating routine writing tasks. As the use of AI in communications has increased, many businesses now utilize AI tools to their advantage in content creation. AI has proven valuable for optimizing website texts for search, developing data-driven results, and predicting how content might perform. These generators analyze large pools of online data, streamlining processes and freeing up professionals' time spent on strategic work rather than basic content drafting (Patel, 2023).

### 2.2.10 Image repair theory

A theory known today as "image repair theory" examines how individuals and organizations can respond when accused of or suspected of misconduct. The theory suggests that one's reputation may be able to be improved following an alleged transgression, even if it cannot be fully restored to its original state (Benoit, 2015). It addresses the question of what types of communication strategies can be employed to repair or rehabilitate a damaged public image in the wake of wrongdoing or controversy. Some common techniques discussed in image repair theory for addressing accusations include denial, reducing offensiveness of the act, corrective action pledges, and expressing remorse (Benoit, 2015). AI can quickly analyze large volumes of social media data to gauge public sentiment and attribution of responsibility, informing the optimal response strategy (Strawser, 2023).

AI algorithms can analyze past campaigns and data to predict successes and guide strategy (Market Wavegen, 2023). Predictive analytics using algorithms provides professionals a powerful tool for uncovering future opportunities. By leveraging historical data patterns across sources like sales, social media, web searches, and more, algorithms can forecast forthcoming trends, audience behaviors, and shifts. This allows businesses to proactively anticipate changes in consumer preferences at a granular level. Knowing what customers may demand in the near future equips companies to strategically allocate resources toward emerging trends (Market Wavegen, 2023).

Whether adjusting products, services or inventories, businesses can make calculated moves aligned with predicted wants and needs rather than reacting after the fact. Beyond optimization, predictive algorithms also surface opportunities to engage lucrative customer segments or introduce offerings not yet widespread (Market Wavegen, 2023). Since AI can collect and crunch big data to make predictive analysis, this can help in focusing on understanding each audience's point of view through co-orientation to build mutual trust between the organizations and the public (Taylor, 2016).

### 2.2.11 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a model used for predicting user acceptance of technology. TAM was developed by Fred Davis in 1985 to explain computer use among mass population. It builds on the Theory of Reasoned Action, which suggests that beliefs and attitudes influence intentions and behaviors (Ma & Liu, 2004).

The core premise of TAM is that two particular beliefs (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) also known as the fundamental determinants of user acceptance. Perceived usefulness, is the level a person believes that using a particular technology would positively affect their job performance. Whereas, perceived ease of use is the level to which a person believes using the technology would be used free of effort. It is also assumed to indirectly affect intention to use through its impact on perceived usefulness. So a system high in Perceived ease is directly proportional with perceived usefulness, which will positively influence intentions and usage (Ma & Liu, 2004).

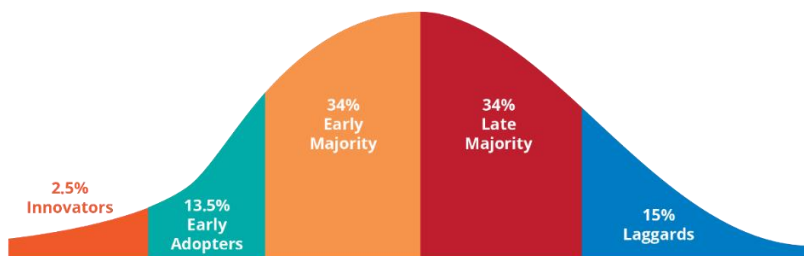
TAM is an extensively tested and validated theory across many different technologies, population, cultural and organizational settings. It is one of the most influential and commonly employed theories for research in information technology acceptance also relating to public relations and other social science disciplines. (Ma & Liu, 2004).

### 2.2.12 Diffusion of Innovations

Everett Rogers in 1962 proposed this theory (diffusion of innovations), which aims to understand the process of how new concepts and technologies disseminate and are adopted within societies over time. Diffusion of innovations explores how new innovations transfer through cultures, the reasons influencing their spread, and the variables which different members of societies embrace changes. The scholar proposed this framework to gain insight into the ever-growing adoption of innovations in the society from their introduction to deployment. The goal of the theory is to explain the processes affecting the spread of new inventions and ideas (Sahin, 2006).

This theory provides useful frameworks for understanding how new ideas and technologies spread. It defines innovation as any idea or practice that is perceived as new by an individual

or group. The degree of newness depends on one's perspective. Regarding communication, the theory explores how information about an innovation is shared between people over time through different channels. This can be via mass media outlets, interpersonal exchanges, or a blend of both. The adoption process also happens in stages as people accept the innovation at varying rates. Rogers categorized these groups as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (late adopters). Other factors within a community also influence diffusion, such as prevailing norms, social networks, authority structures, and demographic characteristics. Together, these concepts provide insights into what drives or hinders the spread of new ideas within social systems over extended periods. (Sahin, 2006).



*Figure 1: Diffusion of Innovation (JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, 2016)*

Rogers proposed a S-shaped curve to model the cumulative rate of adoption over time within a social system based on adopters characteristics. The theory aims to explain how, why, and at what rate both ideas and physical objects diffuse through cultures. It has been used extensively in multiple disciplines to understand factors that influence adoption of new technologies (Sahin, 2006).

### 2.2.13 Advantages of AI for PR Research and Planning

AI has the unique ability to ingest immense threads of unstructured data like published articles, reports, case studies and more to identify patterns and insights. By analyzing language and content at massive scales, AI can surface topics, trends, concepts and relationships that may elude human cognition alone (Dwivedi, 2023). Once it has comprehensively scanned relevant literature and information sources, AI can then distill its findings into clear and actionable recommendations. It can highlight best practices, predict

outcomes, provide risk assessments, and suggest optimization strategies. The speed and depth of AI's analysis far surpasses what is humanly possible (Dwivedi, 2023). Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) comes into play as it predicts how users come to accept and use technology based on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2023). In this context PR professionals (users) get an immense amount of benefit for their research by crunching literature, articles, periodicals and other materials that could be input for their strategic plans. Once they know how to manipulate AI in this sense its acceptance can alleviate their quality of work while aiding in efficient time management (Wang, 2023). Diffusion of innovations, tries to capture how new ideas spread through societies via communication networks (Halton, 2023). Algorithms can detect influential voices/channels online to understand who shapes opinions. Professionals can easily research and engage these leaders early to accelerate adoption of their organizations' products and services easily. AI also analyzes how information spreads on networks. In this way PR practitioners can successfully research and optimize distribution based on how ideas move from more aware to less aware groups (Halton, 2023).

## 2.3 Theories relating to challenges in adoption of AI

Main challenges of adopting AI in PR challenges include ethical concerns towards the use of data and analytics, overreliance on past data, and bias and opacity in algorithms (Das & Rad, 2018). PR requires contextual understanding and judgment not easily programmed. Data gathered from specific contexts may not generalize well. Bias in training data could negatively impact underrepresented groups. A lack of transparency in "black box" algorithms ( A black box AI refers to an AI system that operates as a "black box" in that its internal processes and design are not observable or understandable to those using the system or other interested individuals (Yasar, 2023)) erodes public trust essential for ethical PR practice (Gregory, 2001). In this section, the paper will discuss on relevant Public Relations theories in regards to the current applications AI and the challenges it brings upon the field. This section of the research will attempt to explain challenges of AI in PR based on literature review by mentioning theories related to public relations discipline.

### 2.3.1 Virtue Theory

Virtue theory in ethics places importance on character development and virtuous qualities rather than focusing solely on duties or consequence-based actions. In contrast to deontological and consequentialist approaches, virtue theory explores the question "What kind of person ought I to cultivate myself to become?" rather than "What is the right thing to do in this situation?" or "How can a good outcome be maximized?". It emphasizes being virtuous over doing virtuous acts by developing moral excellence and wisdom in one's personality, emotions and intentions. The underlying idea is that positively shaping one's character will in turn guide conduct and choices in a principled, compassionate manner (Tomlinson, 2012)

A virtuous person has the right emotions, in the right way, at the right time, toward the right people, for the right reasons, etc (Stark, 2001). Virtues shape how one feels and are developed over time through habituation deliberately practicing virtuous action. This reshapes one's character and default dispositions. Actions must be understood in light of their impact on the agent's developing character (Tomlinson, 2012).

### 2.3.2 Social Justice Theory

The theory of social justice was first introduced by the American philosopher John Rawls, widely regarded as one of the most important political theorists of the 20th century (Hage et al, 2019).

Social justice is defined as the fair and equitable distribution of powers, resources and responsibilities in society irrespective of characteristics such as race, age, gender, etc. The theory is relevant because research shows that the negative effects of social justice, such as poverty, discrimination and deprivation, have a disproportionate impact on society. From a social justice perspective, effective preventive measures aim to reduce inequality, empower communities, address individual and systemic factors, take into account various issues such as family and society, and encourage informed collaboration (Hage et al, 2019).

### 2.3.3 AI Bias versus Virtue and Social Justice Theory

Despite enormous amounts of data, AI systems remain narrow in scope and unable to match human flexibility, creativity or judgment. Machine learning perpetuates the biases of its human data labelers and programmers. Lacking full contextual comprehension, outputs risk misrepresenting nuanced real-world situations (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). This challenges PR's commitment to inclusiveness, responsibility and addressing the root causes of issues as supported in Diversity, Activism and Social Justice Theories.

Questions remain regarding automation biases, lack of emotion/contextual comprehension, and ensuring human discretion and judgment are not completely displaced as acknowledged in the Strategic Communication, Virtue, Citizenship and Activism perspectives (Demetrious, 2013). These consider PR an empowering and socially responsible practice requiring characteristics beyond what current AI is equipped to provide autonomously.

In regards to Social Justice and Activism Theories, they view PR as empowering citizens and addressing inequalities in society (Gregory, 2001). AI should augment not replace human care, protect vulnerabilities and uphold ethical principles as theories envision (Atewologun, 2018). Mitigating bias in data and algorithms becomes crucial to not undermine representative practices as theory recommends (Lee et al., 2019).

From open communication perspective, transparency and truth-telling practices are emphasized to build credibility in relationships (Kim, 2017). Biased algorithms may filter or promote certain views over others, unintentionally creating isolated "bubbles" that limit two-way communication.

Algorithms that reflect socioeconomic or other biases may inequitably target communication, leaving some groups out of important discussions. Without holistic insight, biased algorithms could generate tone deaf, insensitive or culturally inappropriate content that damages trust and openness (Borgesius, 2018). By privileging or addressing certain views disproportionately, algorithms risk intensifying divisions rather than common ground needed for open exchange. Bias undermines the representation and consideration of diverse life experiences (Borgesius, 2018), hindering PR's role in promoting inclusive, mutually respectful communication.

Mindfulness in PR emphasizes open-mindedness in relationships (Macnamara, 2017). Biases in data or algorithms run counter to being present, flexible mindsets espoused via this focused theory.

Algorithms may miss subtle cultural cues, emotional nuances and local sensitivities that mindful PR considers through empathy, active listening and being present with stakeholders. Bias could lead to superficial, impatient or closed-minded engagement lacking thoughtful consideration of others' views required for meaningful mindfulness (Borgesius, 2018).

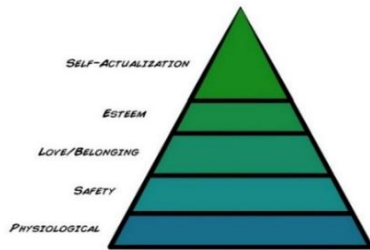
Black box algorithms also shadow the precise logic and factors behind a technology system's outcomes. Minimal transparency undermines accountability standards emphasized in Truth-Seeking and Open Communication perspectives. Citizens retain rights to understand and challenge automated decisions impacting them as acknowledged in Virtue and Citizenship communication visions for PR (Demetrious, 2013). Transparency issues may damage organizational legitimacy and public trust core to the Two-Way Symmetrical model (Grunig & Grunig, 2008).

#### 2.3.4 Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow, a renowned psychologist, developed the hierarchy of needs model in one of his papers back in 1943. The basic premise of the theory is that human beings are primarily driven to meet fundamental needs in order to stay alive first, before aiming for personal growth and development. Maslow proposed that our needs are layered, starting with the most basic at the bottom.

At the foundation are physiological requirements like food, water and shelter. Once those are reasonably satisfied, we seek security and safety. Next comes social needs for love, friendship and belonging (Mcleod, 2023).

## **MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS**



*Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Rosenblatt., 2016)*

AI tools could extensively track audiences' online behaviors, interactions and personal details without consent to develop detailed profiles for targeting PR messaging. This raises surveillance concerns (Dwivedi, 2023). Profiling individuals based on personal data like location, interests, purchases etc. collected without permission could violate people's reasonable expectations of privacy. PR practitioners may be tempted to collect extensive personal digital footprints and offline data far beyond what's needed for communications (Fister, 2023). This disregards privacy boundaries and warns about data collection eroding individual autonomy and creating power imbalances (Sannon, 2022). AI adoption in PR needs robust data governance and uses consent-based models respecting surveillance perspectives (Cardona, 2023).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests basic physiological and safety needs be met before people focus on higher order needs (McLeod, 2023). AI applications should consider how they may disrupt livelihoods and priorities at different need levels as theory advises. Precisely targeting vulnerable individuals based on personal health/financial data collected without consent could exploit basic survival/ safety needs for marketing gain. Profiles created through surveillance may be hacked or leaked, resulting in loss of financial or physical security if personal identities are stolen (Alawida et al., 2022).

### 2.3.5 Semiotics Theory

Semiotic theory refers to the study of signs and sign processes (semioses). It was originally proposed and outlined by philosophers and theorists working in different traditions, but it gained prominence in modern academics through the work of three main scholars, Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson (Mertz et al., 2019).

The theory provides a framework for analyzing all forms of communication and meaning-making, not just language. This includes gestures, symbols, images, rituals, etc. Saussure analyzed language as a system of signs, distinguishing the signifier (form of the sign) from the signified (concept associated with it). He saw meaning arising from relationships within the system (Mertz et al., 2019).

Peirce classified signs into icons (resemble object), indexes (causally linked to object) and symbols (arbitrarily linked by convention). This allowed analyzing how signs connect to social contexts. Semiotic anthropology seeks to integrate linguistic/symbolic analysis and study how communication mediates social life and cultural processes (Mertz et al., 2019).

Public relations relies heavily on the strategic use of signs, symbols, images and other communicative elements to represent organizations, brands, causes, etc. Semiotic analysis provides tools for understanding how these signs/symbols take on cultural meaning (Itanghi et al, 2023).

While AI augments many routine tasks, complex strategic PR requiring creativity, emotional intelligence and human judgment cannot be fully automated (Rigelsky inc., 2023). Optimal human-AI cooperation structures enabling respect, democratic participation and mutual understanding emphasized across PR theories have yet to be established (Macnamara, 2017).

AI holds promise but also risks for the PR profession depending on its development and deployment. Much remains unknown about optimizing human-AI collaboration and addressing algorithmic bias and opacity issues.

Furthermore, existing theories do not fully address human-AI collaboration. While Excellence Theory encourages open communication and two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig & Grunig, 2008), whether this is possible between humans and AI remains understudied. New blended models of human-AI partnership may be needed to responsibly leverage AI's capabilities within a PR context.

When discussing about human- AI collaboration, the inclination of how much humans must rely on AI still remains in question (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018). From the viewpoints of semiotics theory, it explores how signs, symbols and their interpretations shape meaning-making (Riera). Understanding cultural contexts and nuances in interpretations remain important as AI risks oversimplifying semiotics (Long & He, 2021).

## 2.4 Synopsis on theoretical review

The research questions aim to understand both the opportunities and challenges currently presented by AI integration in local PR practices. While capabilities like content generation and media monitoring discussed in relation to the excellence theory and situational theory of publics could provide benefits, the literature review also highlighted several challenges raised by theories like the virtue theory, social justice theory, and hierarchy of needs theory.

For example, potential bias in algorithms due to a lack of contextual understanding as suggested by virtue and social justice theories may present issues that PR professionals currently face in relation to the research questions. Additionally, surveillance and privacy concerns discussed through the lens of hierarchy of needs could create ethical obstacles for practitioners. Threats to loss of the human touch in communications as reliance to AI becomes higher strictly goes against the principles of semiotics theory, and undermines relationship building, a core function of PR.

## 2.5 Other insights

Scholars who study the PR industry offer mixed opinions on AI's potential impact. While possible advantages and challenges as discussed above are put, another dimensions of thought are circulating for instance; As AI continues to integrate into common business tools and functions, it has the potential to significantly lower the costs of providing PR services by automating routine tasks like content creation, distribution, and analysis (Rodsevich, 2023). New job roles may emerge centered on managing and interpreting AI tools and insights. Hybrid data scientist working alongside PR professionals could develop (Korolov, 2020). Ethical use of AI will become a big focus. PR pros may help develop policies and best practices for transparent AI use. Communication style and tone may evolve as companies adopt AI like chat bots (Lutevich, 2023).

## 2.6 Building Skillset

To leverage AI effectively, PR professionals will need expanded skillsets. As AI becomes more prevalent in PR, several new skills will be required of practitioners to maximize the capabilities of these tools (Manyika et al., 2019). Data literacy will be important for obtaining, processing, analyzing and applying data to business challenges. Understanding how to work with and interpret data will allow PR professionals to get the most value from AI systems (Manyika et al., 2019).

Analytics training in areas like statistics, predictive modeling and machine learning will also be needed. This will help PR practitioners properly interpret the insights and recommendations provided by AI. Technological fluency with basic coding and AI development skills will enable teams to either implement tools themselves or collaborate effectively with technical specialists (Dwivedi, 2023).

Even if data and analytics play a larger role, creativity will still be crucial. PR professionals will need to retrain their creative thought processes to maintain innovative thinking alongside data-driven insights. Creativity combined with analytics can lead to the most effective strategies (Rodsevich, 2023).

Strong strategic abilities will also be important to complement rather than compete with AI's analytical strengths are needed. Case studies can help refine strategic skills. Formal education, professional training and hands-on experience will all contribute to developing the mix of technical savvy and soft skills needed for PR professionals to thrive alongside AI (Dwivedi, 2023).

## 2.7 Best Practices for Ethical AI Use in PR

Since AI can propagate biases, inaccuracies and misinformation if not managed diligently, PR teams looking to adopt AI should adhere to certain best practices (Dwivedi, 2023).

When developing and deploying AI tools, PR professionals should take steps to address potential biases or errors. This includes conducting bias audits of training data and algorithms

to identify prejudices proactively. Data inputs should also be cleaned regularly to maximize accuracy and precision (Borgesius, 2018).

Outputs from AI systems should be validated through human review to catch any mistakes. It is also important to allow humans the ability to override model predictions to account for errors not captured by the technology. Employing transparency is also a key factor, requiring and availing documentation of data sources, methodologies and purposes aid to reconcile any mis and dis information that may be caused by AI (Kim, 2017).

Oversight procedures need to be established and the public notified if any issues arise. Strong cybersecurity measures are necessary to prevent data and model theft or manipulation. Cross-disciplinary teams with both PR and technical expertise will help ensure responsible AI development (Zhou, 2023).

Prior to real-world use, impact assessments should weigh the pros and cons of deployment. Adherence to industry codes of ethics and best practices can help mitigate risks. Certification through third-party auditing programs further demonstrates commitment to accountability and trustworthy practice. With diligence across these areas, AI's benefits can be maximized while minimizing potential downsides (Atewologun, 2018).

## 2.8 The Future of AI in Public Relations

The future of AI in public relations looks promising yet uncertain. AI technologies will continue disrupting traditional public relations practices by opening up new opportunities for strategic communication. It is noted that companies who embrace and leverage AI technologies will gain a competitive advantage over those who do not (Smith, 2023). AI can enhance a public relations professional's ability to do their job more effectively and efficiently (Smith, 2023).

While AI presents the concern of replacing human roles, integrating it requires human oversight to reduce such risks. As (Arun & Rad, 2020) stress, public relations will achieve the most by thoughtfully combining human qualities like creativity and ethics with AI's analytical nature. By capitalizing on each party's relative strengths through teamwork, the field can

increase advantages and address limitations to ensure AI enhancement helps - not harms - high-quality, socially aware work (Dwivedi, 2023).

For AI to positively impact public relations moving ahead, people and technology must collaborate supportively (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018). The key to benefiting while avoiding job replacement dangers lies in close cooperation between humans and machines. Only through respectful partnership can we shape responsible progress together.

## 2.9 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

### 2.9.1 Big Data and AI in PR

In 2020, researchers N. Nurlaela Arief and Aurik Gustomo published a study with a title “Analyzing the Impact of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence on the Communications Profession: A Case Study on Public Relations (PR) Practitioners in Indonesia.” This study analyzed the preparedness of PR practitioners in Indonesia for the impact of big data and AI. Through an online survey of 320 practitioners and interviews with 10, it explored understandings of how AI could automate and simplify PR work (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

The literature on AI’s role in PR was reviewed, identifying benefits like automating routine tasks but also challenges around bias, lack of contextual understanding, and ensuring human discretion (Galloway & Swiatek, 2018).

The study found 85% felt AI could automate PR tasks through tools for media monitoring, sentiment analysis and issues management (Arief & Gustomo, 2020) 98% felt it could simplify work (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). 96% believed human aspects would still be needed in the next 5-10 years (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

PR jobs seen as potentially replaced included news clippings (45%), media monitoring analyses (45%), and media relations (37%) (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). Competencies emerging included data analytics, social media management, influencer management and content creation (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

Interviewees provided insights into how current tools are used for media monitoring, content/release distribution and presentations (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). However, human judgment remains paramount – tools simply automate basic tasks (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

Challenges of adopting AI identified were potential bias in algorithms, reliance on past data, cloudiness of “black box” algorithms and unclear human-AI collaboration structures (Arief & Gustomo, 2020); (Das & Rad, 2018). Ensuring ethics and avoiding issues like biased outputs will be important (Kim, 2017).

The study verified competencies identified by researches, (Data Analytics, Social Media Management, Influencer Management and Content Creation) relevant for Indonesian PR today and future (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

As human judgment is still a necessity, bias audits, impact assessments and certification will be important to maximize benefits while minimizing risks of AI. (Arief & Gustomo, 2020); (Borgesius, 2018).

The study concluded humans will still be needed alongside AI due to skills like creativity, empathy and contextual understanding that cannot be replaced (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). Responsible innovation guiding ethical AI enhancement, not harming the profession, is key (Bourne & Clea D., 2019).

Close human-AI cooperation through respectful partnership was identified as important to leverage each party’s strengths (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018). Regular human guidance and discretion will still be required alongside automation (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). Ongoing research exploring applications and impacts will also help guide responsible AI practices (Munandar & Irwansyah, 2020).

Key implications are PR professionals must develop expanded data literacy, analytics, technological and strategic skills to work effectively with AI (Manyika et al., 2019); (Dwivedi, 2023). Continual skills development will be important to stay relevant in an evolving landscape (Dwivedi, 2023).

This study provided useful primary insights into Indonesian PR practitioners’ current views on AI capabilities and challenges (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). As one of the first examinations of this topic locally, it begins to address understanding gaps (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

However, conclusions are limited by the single case study scope (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). Further longitudinal research tracking evolving perceptions and skill needs over time would

strengthen understanding (McLeod, 2023). Comparative studies across cultures may also provide more nuanced insights (Long & He, 2021).

The identification of emerging competencies and practical tools currently in use provides a valuable foundation (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). Continued research and discussion involving practitioners, academics and policymakers can help guide responsible innovation, education strategies and technology adoption roadmaps (Panda et al., 2019).

Overall this study makes an important contribution towards illuminating AI's growing influence on communications as a profession in Indonesia and areas demanding focused attention (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). It also highlights themes warranting deeper exploration through future analyses (Bourne & Clea D., 2019).

Interview and survey results provide empirical data on views of Indonesian PR professionals (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). Insights into how various tools are used in areas like media monitoring, content distribution and presentations add context (Arief & Gustomo, 2020).

The proposal of 4 emerging competencies draws from literature linking skills and capabilities to preparedness for technological change (Arief & Gustomo, 2020); (Dwivedi, 2023). However, more examination is needed on optimal human-AI collaboration structures (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018)

While conclusions are limited in scope, as exploratory research this paper fulfils its aim of beginning to fill understanding gaps around AI's role and impacts locally (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). The identification of displacement risks for certain routine tasks and skills requires strengthening provides a foundation (Garibay et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, valuable primary data and reviewing of competency literature in relation to technological change sets a platform for ongoing exploration (Arief & Gustomo, 2020). This contributes empirical knowledge towards responsibly navigating AI's growing presence within communications fields (Zhou, 2023).

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

A research methodology outlines specific approaches and plans that will be followed to effectively address the research problem and objectives (Derek Jansen et al., 2020).

It's a method by which researchers plan their investigation to enable them to use the chosen research methods to accomplish their goals. It covers every crucial facet of research, such as the overarching framework for the study as well as the methodologies used for data collecting, analysis, and research design (Sreekumar, 2023).

Thus, to get the desired results for the research questions set on the first chapter of the study, the researcher selected an appropriate methodology of the research using data collection tools to gather information and present the findings.

### 3.2 Methodology

The aim of this study, in its exploratory manner aims to demarcate the challenges and opportunities that AI presents to Public Relations practice. The researcher used qualitative research methodology to get a deeper understanding of how local PR professionals assess the growing role of AI in their work.

### 3.3 Research Design

The research design was a phenomenological study, which aimed to understand the lived experiences of the participants around the phenomenon of AI's adoption. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' personal experiences, beliefs, and decision-making processes.

### 3.4 Population and Samples

A purposive sampling method was used to identify and recruit participants for this study. The target population was technology professionals working in federal and non-governmental

institutions who had experience with the adoption and implementation of emerging technologies in their organizations.

After conducting outreach and screening potential participants working as Communications officers, Communications Director, Digital Communications Coordinator and Specialist, and Senior Public Relations Officers the researcher delimited population size and candidates appropriate for the study. A total of 20 public relations professionals were selected to take part in the study. This sample size complies with phenomenological research guidelines, which require for 10–25 people in order to reach data saturation (Creswell, 2013).

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The methods used for data collection are structured and semi-structured interviews (George, 2022) with PR professionals who have experience working with or around AI technologies. The interview questions were open-ended enough so participants are encouraged to share their ideas and personal experiences.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Collected data from interview transcripts is analyzed thematically. Interview transcripts were coded thematically, based on topics discussed by participants. Analysis involved identifying current practice, key challenges and opportunities raised regarding AI's impact and integration within PR work. Thematic analysis is appropriate given the exploratory nature of this research and ability to surface significant patterns and meanings within the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Results provided insights into how PR professionals currently view and experience AI, both positively and negatively.

### 3.7 Data Gathering Procedure

Interviews were scheduled at a time and location most convenient for each participant. This was done to ensure a appropriate environment where participants could share their experiences and perspectives.

The interviews were primarily conducted either via Google Meet video call or in-person, depending on factors like the participant's location available means of communication. Video call interviews allowed for conducting interviews with participants situated in different locations, without requiring travel. In-person interviews were scheduled for those who were accessible and present in Addis Ababa during the process.\

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

In this research process, participants were provided with information about purpose of the study and their rights prior to agreeing to participate. They were informed on the overall purpose and procedures of the research. It also allowed them to ask any questions to help make an informed choice on their participation. The researcher also made clear their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

The confidentiality of participants and any data collected was strictly maintained. Personal or identifying information about participants was kept confidential by the researcher. Any data included in the analysis and reporting had all identifying details removed to protect anonymity. Participants' privacy and welfare were the top priority of the researchers throughout the study.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This study targeted to conduct an in-depth examination of interviews held with public relations and communications professionals to understand their views on the role of AI in the PR field. The interviews explored how AI has influenced jobs and daily responsibilities, important opportunities and risks presented, necessary skills for collaborating with AI, and ethical implications.

Key focuses of the interviews included how AI has impacted roles and common tasks, prospects and concerns introduced and abilities needed to work with AI systems. By discussing real-life applications where AI has been applied effectively as well as problems that have noted by professionals, this research seeks to provide different insights into the pros and cons of current AI applications within the public relations industry from the perspective of practitioners.

### 4.2 Current applications and functions of AI in the PR practice

The majority of interviewees had directly used AI tools in their PR work from 6 months to 2 years. Tools discussed included Canva, ChatGPT, OpenAI, and Google Bard (Gemni) which is presented in subsequent section verbatim from the respondents. Uses included content development, report writing, designing communication materials, and graphic design, media-monitoring and browsing for information. While some found AI helpful, Interviewees E, F and R preferred sticking to original work and saw flaws in over-reliance.

#### 4.2.1 Effects on Roles and Daily Tasks

AI was seen to streamline repetitive data analysis, content generation and optimization tasks. As Interviewee A noted, *"Even if our work is not highly reliant on AI, the emergence of AI tools is impacting our daily tasks a great deal"* (A, 2024).

Similarly, Interviewee C stated that AI has *"streamlined tasks like data analysis, social media monitoring, and content optimization allowing me to focus on more strategic aspects of communication tasks"* (C, 2024). However, Interviewee C also noted that *"AI needs to be managed ethically, legally, and socially."* (C, 2024)

As for the downsides, Interviewee F felt AI hinders strategic work stating that *"In terms of being strategic, it doesn't support me at all"* (F, 2024). Likewise, Interviewee G said AI *"limits my personal creativity and makes me lazy in my work"* (G, 2024). Daily impacts discussed included automating processes, as Interviewee A noted, providing data-driven insights, according to Interviewee C, and;

*"AI has helped me become more efficient and strategic in several ways to describe some Contextual Understanding Data Analysis and Insights Continuous Learning and Improvement and Speed and Scalability."*, as stated by Interviewee K (K, 2024).

Still, Interviewee E emphasized the need to *"maintain originality and strategic abilities"* (E, 2024).

Regarding current applications of AI in PR, many PR professionals have started using AI tools for content creation and development as noted by Interviewees A;

*"Canva AI, to develop communication materials that require graphics. Open AI, to look for any updated information pertaining to marketing and communications."* (A, 2024)

On a similar note interviewee T also mentioned Open AI (chat GPT) and other tools for editing pictures as;

*"I use Chat GPT and Clean up Pictures. I found AI to be really helpful especially when it comes translation, media monitoring, power point preparations and editing pictures."* (T, 2024).

Interviewee M also listed tools to undertake daily tasks by stating;

*"I currently use IBM Watson Analytics for data discovery and predictive analytics, Chatfuel, for chatbots in social media platforms, and Meltwater, for media monitoring and providing insights into brand mentions, sentiment, and trends, and Hootsuite social media planning, monitoring, and analytics"*. (M, 2024)

Though different tools were mentioned by all professionals, the common denominator tool was found to be OPEN- AI used by all of the participants.

AI is seen as beneficial when used appropriately to automate repetitive tasks and generate initial content/ideas, but as Interviewee C cautioned, human judgment is still needed for "*strategic thinking and relationship building*" (C, 2024).

When discussing about measuring the effectiveness of AI tools, interviewee C noted;

*“In our communication and PR work, we measure the effectiveness of AI systems through performance metrics, audience feedback, media coverage analysis, cost efficiency, and continuous improvement efforts.”* (C, 2024)

Interviewee D also stated that measuring effectiveness can be done through metrics like "*time savings*" and "*cost-efficiency*" similar to the core points raised by C (C, 2024).

The interviewees noted AI benefits while mitigating risks. As Interviewee G advised, skills in "*data literacy, critical thinking and understanding technical basics are important*" (G, 2024). They all provided valuable perspectives from diverse experience levels and sectors on current challenges, best practices and future directions regarding careful AI integration in PR work.

The interviews with PR professionals provided useful perspectives on how AI is currently being used and its impacts on their daily work. A common theme across interviews is that AI has simplified tasks like data analysis, content creation and social media optimization.

Tools that were frequently mentioned included Canva, and OpenAI for various graphics, automation and data-driven tasks.

When discussing measuring effectiveness, interviews suggested metrics like time savings, cost efficiency, performance indicators, audience feedback and media coverage analysis. This indicates quantitative operational metrics are combined with qualitative indicators of success.

Risk extenuation was also noted as vital to ensure AI integration is done responsibly and humans still lead strategic decision making.

Overall, AI is seen as a beneficial tool when appropriately utilized to boost efficiency and productivity. But interviews stressed the role of PR professionals should be application of human skills like judgment, strategy and relationship building rather than being replaced.

### 4.3 Opportunities of AI presents for PR

Several interviewees discussed opportunities that AI (AI) presents for the public relations (PR) industry. Specifically, Interviewee C stated that AI *"can help PR professionals create, communicate, manage, and measure their work more efficiently and effectively"* (C, 2024).

Additionally, Interviewee G noted that the *"biggest opportunity is content generation. As AI technologies can assist in content generation and curation, saving time and resources for communicators"* (G, 2024).

Similarly, Interviewee B highlighted that AI helps *"the professionals to minimize their time and cost"* (B, 2024). While Interviewee A saw potential for AI to develop *"engaging materials"* more simplistically (A, 2024), differences emerged between those more open to technological integration versus those prioritizing human abilities.

For example, Interviewee F downplayed opportunities, expressing an attitude *"I prefer to stick to my natural ways of doing my assignments instead. I see more of its bad side. It discourages people to use their imagination in doing something and depend on whatever it gives them."* (F, 2024).

Although individual preferences, concerns and challenging circumstances were raised and discussed, it's a common denominator that all agree on the potential opportunities of AI such as cost and time resource minimization, quality assurance, content creation and audience engagement.

#### 4.3.1 Key Advantages AI Presents to PR

Interviewees perceived several opportunities AI offers the PR practice. It can help produce quality materials and summarize information swiftly as one consultant utilized ChatGPT for the stated tasks. Others found it simplified collecting and analyzing large data volumes for timely decision making.

Interviewee C noted *"For instance, AI-powered language models like GPT-3 have allowed me to generate clear and coherent responses swiftly, facilitating seamless communication with users. These models help in crafting personalized messages, summarizing information*

*effectively, and providing relevant insights. Additionally, AI-driven chatbots have enabled me to engage with users in real time, answering queries promptly and offering assistance around the clock.” (C, 2024)*

To capitalize on AI's benefits, some interviewees took advantage of it for developing multi-media communications while one used it to generate personalized, relevant responses. Another coordinator employed AI-driven chatbots continuously assisting customers.

Interviewee I stated *“AI boosts my efficiency by speeding up tasks like analyzing data and refining content. Tools like Grammarly make writing smoother, while analytics help me understand what works. This efficiency allows me to focus on strategic aspects, like planning tailored communication strategies and adapting to changing trends in the PR landscape. It's like having a smart assistant that handles routine tasks, freeing me up for more thoughtful and strategic work.” (I, 2024)*

Interviewee T replied *“It helps me to be economical (word economy) in writing and preparing press release. In addition, I am able to edit documents as efficiently as possible.” (T, 2024)*

These responses exemplify how PR professionals are optimizing AI's automated and customized communication abilities.

Interviewees saw significant opportunities for AI to enhance PR work through automated content generation and curation, data analysis, and streamlined communication processes. This was highlighted by Interviewees C, G, and B who noted benefits like time and cost savings.

Participants utilized AI's benefits by taking advantage of its personalized responses, chatbot functionality for constant customer assistance, and automated content drafting. Differences emerged based on factors like experience level with AI tools, openness to new technology, and individual work styles that favor either human-based or automated approaches.

Overall, while most saw potential opportunities if used carefully, a sizeable minority expressed concerns around overdependence on AI and diminishing human resourcefulness in the PR field. Perspectives varied significantly on how extensively AI should integrate into the practice.

From what is gathered in the interviews, the personalized, fast and memorable experiences delivered through AI-powered chatbots align with excellence theory's focus on building mutually beneficial relationships with publics through dialogic communication. In addition, by understanding sentiments and interests through conversations, elements like chat bots are able to segment publics and tailor appropriate messages, showing they accounted for diverse perspectives as the co-oriented model suggests. Feedback from interactions helped continually refine the AI systems to better serve different publics, demonstrating the two-way influence highlighted in the co-oriented model.

AI engaged in open dialogue and information exchange with publics through natural conversations. The systems and their responses evolved to establish balanced, mutually acceptable communications over time - a key principle of various public relations theories.

#### 4.4 Challenges of AI Integration

Some interviewees discussed risks of over-relying on AI diminishing individuals' abilities and creativity. As Interviewee F stated, "*The risks are it minimizes peoples' capacities to create something original that it gives us whatever we asked it to provide. This in my opinion will kill the creative part in ourselves and our products will be more on AI*" (F, 2024).

Similarly, Interviewee E cautioned that AI "*kills original ideas and creativity and any development without creativity and originality for me is zero*" (E, 2024).

Regarding technical challenges, Interviewees B, D and G acknowledged issues with fully understanding how to provide the proper commands to AI. As Interviewee B noted, "*The integration process is fine but needs more time and understanding, since the Machine is not human, it will be so difficult to understand each and every thing we want*" (B, 2024).

Bias and inaccuracies were also warned of by all of interviewees. However, most participants emphasized the importance of AI not replacing but rather complementing human skills and roles. As Interviewee C stated, "*AI is a tool that can enhance and complement the human skills and creativity of PR professionals, but it cannot replace the strategic thinking, relationship building, and storytelling that are essential for effective PR campaigns*" (C, 2024).

#### 4.4.1 Bias and misrepresentation

The interviewees raised concerns about potential challenges with integrating AI into public relations (PR) practices, Interviewee H (2024) expressed worry that dependence on AI could lead to "*Overreliance, lack of human judgement, biased data and ethical consideration.*"

Interviewee I also flagged accuracy issues, stating that "*AI integration requires considering from my perspective, challenges include potential biases in AI algorithms, reliance on technology leading to reduced human touch, and concerns about data privacy. Addressing these involves regular algorithm audits to ensure fairness, maintaining a human-centric approach in communication, and implementing robust data protection measures.*" (I, 2024).

However, several mitigation strategies were proposed. Interviewee (D, 2024) recommended "*adding your own findings, not copy pasting at all, include your overall overview of the document with your own understandings.*" Interviewee G similarly suggested combining "*human expertise with AI*" (G, 2024). Comprehensively training professionals on AI was advised by Interviewee C (C, 2024).

#### 4.4.2 Ethical Issues Surrounding AI

Ethical considerations elicited mixed viewpoints the majority of respondents voiced their concerns on different aspects of ethical issues presented by AI to PR. Accuracy, privacy and security issues received focus from some PR experts. However, two questioned AI's inherent ethics and one saw no potential risks using it sensibly. This heterogeneity demonstrates ethics remaining a complex domain as human and machine modes converge. Further study will be required balancing benefits and drawbacks like loss of control or distorted representation.

Important ethical concerns were raised by the candidates regarding the use of AI in public relations. As Interviewee C noted, "*The use of AI in PR requires ethical considerations such as accuracy, truthfulness, bias, diversity, transparency, and privacy.*" (C, 2024). Similarly, Interviewee D emphasized that "*Since we are human beings, we can understand and know the truth around us than the machine on some specific things based on our documents so using its words without compromise could lead to detrimental ethical crisis.*" (D, 2024)

Interviewee F was more skeptical, stating that *"I don't believe AI has any ethical consideration from the beginning. How do you consider being ethical while using AI for your professional work? It's not even possible."* (F, 2024). This sentiment echoes the views of other interviewees who questioned the notion that AI inherently possesses ethics.

A thoughtful integration of AI with appropriate guidelines seems necessary to maximize its benefits for the discipline in an ethical manner. All agreed on the inevitability of adoption of the technology. Controlling unreliability of AI through with human oversight though was a common suggestion across interviewees A-T.

In findings of data collected through interview, it was pointed out there is a risk of losing personal touch and human creativity in communication work as AI focuses on automating routine tasks.

Over-reliance on AI can also cause discourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It can also diminish people's capacities to create original content if they solely depend on what AI provides. This leads to diminished human needs for self-actualization, esteem and accomplishment pointed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory also an encroachment to private data also violates ethical practices which violates personal safety also a basis for self-actualization. This also additionally undermines virtues of excellence, wisdom and autonomy when and if misused.

Bias and lack of diversity in data used to train AI systems can influence the outputs in an unfair or misleading way unless properly managed. Threats to justice, fairness and equitable treatment standing against the innate foundation of social justice theory can be produced and multiplied in a rapid pace if not controlled in timely manner. Concerns on privacy of data is also raised by respondents as AI can infiltrate user's confidential data. Data governance and user consent are crucial on this matter as safety at all times should be ensured as it is a base for building a stable person and society at large.

The responses from the interviewees in the data, 3 interviewees addressed the potential of AI replacing aspects of the PR professional's role in the near future as a concern Interviewee F said they have concerns about AI replacing "everything" from design to developing stories to producing videos and so on. Interviewee G noted they feel AI limits professionals' personal creativity and makes them lazy in their work (G, 2024). However, the majority of respondents

they don't think AI will replace professionals in the near future, but noted it will help the sector a lot especially in time management and assisting with repetitive tasks.

AI systems can be vulnerable to attacks and oversee important human ethical considerations. This points to main challenges of AI, while upholding human supervision to its performance and results is not a choice but a necessity.

#### 4.5 Advancements of AI in PR

Optimistic perspectives saw AI enhancing efficiency, but concerns were expressed by respondents about jobs being displaced or original work disappearing. F stated their opinion to tackle the challenges on originality as *“The solution to address this challenge is to put some AI management mechanism as an agency or government and we PR practitioners must not lose our original working ability and should develop our skills at least to deliver what is expected from us in good qualities impacts altogether undermining the involvement of AI in the field”* (F, 2024). Balancing human and AI abilities emerged as a consensus, otherwise risks of over-reliance, loss of personal touch and reduced creativity loomed large per interviewee discussions. Caution defined most visions.

Futuristic predictions carried optimism such as O stating *“I think, it will be technology efficient”* (O, 2024), and apprehension like F noting *“I don't want to speculate but it seems AI will fully swallow us.”* (F, 2024). However most anticipated AI transforming the industry positively via intelligent campaigns and data-driven communication. Overall, AI's role amplifying versus displacing human endeavors is supported by the majority depending how PR professionals intend to use the technology efficiently.

##### 4.5.1 Opportunities for Future Research

Interviewees underlined AI's personalization of messages requires investigation. Deepfakes posed challenges to trustworthiness as I flagged stating *“studying potential risks, like the impact of AI on job roles and the ethical implications of deepfakes in PR, would be valuable for a comprehensive understanding of the AI-PR landscape.”* (I, 2024) Another highlighted exploring AI impact on creativity and intuitiveness. These signify open questions on

balancing technology and humanity within communication remain unanswered. Continued multidisciplinary work jointly addressing technical, social and ethical is needed.

#### 4.5.2 Expanding the Scope of PR

Views emerged on PR's future scope with AI. B affirmed PR evolving into new domains like data analytics and graphics by stating “*Computer application and usage, data analytics, graphic design are the new skills PR professionals need to develop to work effectively with the help of AI.*” (B, 2024). This points to how PR professionals use AI responsibly and proactively shaping the field's long-term settings.

#### 4.5.3 Recommendations for AI Adoption

When asked for suggestion on AI integration, most emphasized careful adoption not engendering dependency. Learning applications before usage and recognizing boundaries received attention. A PR consultant advised practicing critical evaluation of AI outputs. A communication officer prioritized contextual understanding to steer AI productively. These imply prudent, needs based assimilation of AI by using human judgement rather than relinquishing it will optimize outcomes for both individuals and organizations.

### 4.6 Further Insights

#### 4.6.1 Skills Needed to Work with AI

Having technical abilities to issue proper commands to AI, as highlighted by three interviewees, was a key skill mentioned. Maintaining strategic, creative and imaginative abilities despite AI assistance was emphasized by two others. Others stressed data and computer application literacy (B et al, 2024).

When probed on skills enabling effective AI-human teaming, most highlighted relational abilities. A PR director advocated understanding provided instructions’ spirit, to steer AI helpfully. Others emphasized continuous learning, and critical thinking to counterbalance machine weaknesses.

#### 4.6.2 AI's Impact on Daily PR Tasks

Most interviewees acknowledged AI streamlining routine jobs. Two coordinators found it assisted content generation and media monitoring. A PR consultant utilized AI for evaluating output objectively. But an officer highlighted difficulty comprehending machine inferences totally. A specialist solely employed AI casually proofreading work rarely. Mixed adoption levels therefore exist, from complete reliance to nominal use depending on technical knowledge and role nature.

#### 4.6.3 Developing an Understanding of AI

On cultivating technical awareness, perspectives diverged. Two experts considered professional comprehension invaluable when advising clients technologically. But a specialist saw little usage hence disinterest exploring AI. A PR director prioritized practical know-how from a work context. Mixed stances exist depending how hands on one's role is with AI systems. Institutional support bridging the technical-social divide seems necessary for all professionals benefiting from emerging technologies.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

In the past few years, AI began to transform many professions, including public relations and strategic communications. The this study targeted to explore how AI influences local professionals working for various institutions in Addis Ababa from the perspective of practitioners through in-depth interviews based on the research questions it set out to answer.

In the first place, the researcher targeted to answer what existing current applications and functions of AI in the PR practice. Based on the findings of the research, current applications of AI include various automation tools that are assisting practitioners in performing routine tasks like developing content, analyzing data and aiding with graphic designs.

These AI-powered applications are enabling PR professionals to focus more of their time and efforts on strategic relationship building activities and planning functions that require human judgment and skills.

The second question the researcher set out to answer the kind of opportunities AI presents in the PR industry. Based on the findings, AI presents several promising opportunities for public relations if implemented appropriately, Interviewees mentioned how AI has enhanced their work by automating content generation and curation, facilitating large-scale data analysis, and reorganizing communication processes. Other highlighted benefits include time and cost savings from utilizing AI's capabilities for automated content drafting, summarization of information, and providing customized, responsive engagement through chatbots.

While AI can potentially enhance and support many public relations functions by handling mundane jobs, its incorporation within the industry also introduces some challenges that require addressing.

This was the third question the researcher set out to answer. Based on the findings, AI diminishes human creativity and creates over reliance, also risking job losses and that algorithms contain biases if used without proper oversight. More challenges include threats to ethical practice if user confidentiality is not protected and is vulnerable to encroachment on data privacy.

This highlights challenges of maintaining human qualities amidst technological advancement given risks of bias in algorithms and diminishing human creativity with overdependence on AI-generated content.

Based on the findings, the advancements of AI's role in public relations is promising provided professionals are able to keep up with the dynamic character of the technology. On one hand, some communication tasks currently performed by humans may get disrupted or replaced by AI.

However, new career opportunities and roles may also emerge to work alongside AI. Continuous research on evaluating AI's actual impacts on the PR industry and providing recommendations for how it can be responsibly applied will help practitioners and the field evolve successfully with this fast-growing technology available to enhance strategic communications.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the perspectives gathered from PR professionals through in-depth interviews, several recommendations can be made to help optimize the adoption and integration of AI in the field.

- PR professionals should focus on augmentation, not automation or substitution: AI should be leveraged to augment, not replace, the work of PR practitioners. It can help automate routine tasks to save time, but strategic planning, relationship building, and creative work require human experience, judgment and empathy that AI cannot fully replicate.
- Professionals must balance reliance with technical literacy: While AI can streamline many jobs, over-reliance risks diminishing strategic and soft skills. Professionals should strengthen their technical literacy to properly oversee and evaluate AI outputs. Tools should augment existing abilities, not hinder development of new skills.
- Organizations should prioritize ethics, bias mitigation and oversight: Initiatives like continuous staff training, input regulation and collaborative oversight can help address

risks like bias, privacy issues and reduced creativity. Institutional policies should prioritize responsible development and use of AI.

- Organizations and practitioners should consider both benefits and risks for adoption: A prudent, needs-based approach recognizes facilitation of certain tasks while protecting workers, clients and society from harms. Professionals and institutions should thoughtfully assess technical roles, knowledge levels and individual work styles before integrating new tools.
- Professionals to strengthen human-machine collaboration: Soft skills for productive human-AI interactions like critical thinking, empathy and continuous learning are as vital as technical literacy. AI adoption success depends on forging equitable, human-centered partnerships between people and technologies.
- Future PR academicians must continuously study evolving impacts: Both short and long-term implications on work, skills, organizational priorities and the discipline's nature require ongoing examination given rapid technology changes. Multi-stakeholder research can help proactively address emerging risks and maximize benefits.
- Organizations, education facilities and tech innovators to promote responsible leadership: Professional bodies, educators and employers should provide support bridging technical-social divides through resources, training, best practice guidance and open discussion. Leadership that prioritizes human welfare, responsibilities and inclusive progress establishes an ethical foundation for navigating change responsibly.
- Government and organizations should enable opportunities through due diligence: AI signifies both disrupting and transforming the industry positively if impacts are managed cautiously via humanistic design, use and oversight of innovations. With due diligence policies upholding human factors at core, emerging technologies can aid strategically in projecting communication's equitable and impactful course in line with societal evolution.

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# Appendix

## Interview questions

### A) Introduction and Background:

1. Name?
2. Job title?
3. A brief description of your organization and your role or responsibilities?
4. Years of experience working in public relations?

### B) Use of AI in PR Work:

5. Have you worked directly with AI (AI) tools in your PR practice? If so, for how long?
6. What specific AI tools or applications have you used? And for what purpose?
7. How has your role as a PR/communications professional changed with the emergence of AI?  
In what ways has AI impacted your daily tasks?

### C) Opportunities of AI for PR:

8. In your own view, what do you think are the greatest opportunities that AI presents for the PR industry?
9. How did you take advantage of AI's benefits?

### D) Measuring Effectiveness of AI:

10. How do you measure or evaluate the effectiveness of AI systems used in your PR work?

### E) Impact on Efficiency and Strategy:

11. How has this helped you to be more efficient and strategic?

### F) Challenges of Integrating AI:

12. In your experience, what are the main challenges or risks of integrating AI into PR practices?  
How can these be addressed?

G) Ethical Issues:

13. What ethical issues do you think need to be considered around the use of AI in PR? How should these be managed?

H) Job Impact and Replacement:

14. Do you have any concerns about AI replacing aspects of the PR professional's role? If so, in what areas of work?

I) Skills Development:

15. What kind of skills do you think PR professionals need to develop to work effectively with the help of AI?

J) Recommendations for Others:

16. What are your recommendations for other PR professionals seeking to integrate AI into their given tasks?

K) Understanding Technical Aspects:

17. In this day and age, how important do you think it is for PR professionals to develop an understanding of the technical aspects of AI?

L) Future Research:

18. Are there any other opportunities or risks regarding AI in PR that you think researches in the future should explore?

19. Do you think the discipline of PR will stretch beyond the realm it holds currently, now that AI is in the picture?

M) Closing:

20. Please share other important insights you believe are necessary.