

Amalgamation of the Role of Humans and Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations Practice

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Abstract: This paper examines the respective roles humans, Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well as their challenges, opportunities and trends in the field of Public Relations (PR). Previous researches revealed that while the adoption of AI in marketing and advertisement has been widely discussed in academics, the area of Public Relations is still not sufficiently covered. Existing studies on PR seems narrowed, particularly, to the question of topic creation and as to whether text-based AI systems are capable of writing a press release or official speech. While relying on both primary and secondary data however, this paper delved into these aspects to uncover the use of AI in other areas like crisis communication, online Public Relations, Media Relations, Community Relations etc. Findings reveal that AI is critical in the identification of trends that can be used in the creation of brand contents, monitoring media and social networks and evaluating sentiments, predicting potential crisis areas, defining data-driven practices for influencers and brand ambassadors, designing press releases, social media posts and other content. It was equally revealed that while modern Public Relations today is all about reputation, where humans play a pivotal role, since brand authenticity and credibility, which no AI tool can build is essential in the field.

Keywords: Public Relations, Artificial Intelligence, Crisis Communication, Brand Management.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Public Relations, as a field in communication, is vested with the responsibilities, among other things, to manage the reputation of an organization and foster peaceful co-existence between the organization and its public. This is done by ensuring that messages are well represented and passed accordingly to the right audience. In line with the Mexican statement, Public relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders and implementing planned programs of action, which will serve both the organization and the public interest (cited in Odoemelam, 2023). The implication of the above is that Public Relations is a Management function which serves as the engine room of the organization in managing and advising them of the pros and cons of their actions. Pranjić, (2023) opined that Public Relations as a field is vested with the responsibilities of relating with the media (Media Relations) engaging in Crisis communication, corporate communication,

strategic communication, community Relations, online relations amongst others.

As the field of Public Relations evolves over time, from its inception in 1924 where the practice was attributed to Basil Clarke, it has expanded in scope and outcome permeating various conditions, development, inventions and technologies. As part of the reactions to the revolution caused by the invention of Information and Communication Technologies across the globe, inventors started delving into this new normal. Hence, the invention of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Ayankoya, Calitz and Cullin opined that the AI has triggered and advancement and revolution in virtually every aspect of human endeavour including the field of communication.

Lee, (2021) describes a historical evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) and offers a brief overview of the transition in AI methodologies over several decades. Accordingly, artificial intelligence was first used in 1956, and over the next 60 years, it was able to make innovative progress by finding ways to

implement them. Until the early 2000s, the researchers implemented AI by making machines learn human-made knowledge. However, intelligence requires the ability to feel and learn new things on its own, and to define and answer problems according to their surroundings or contexts, on top of performing the processing functions for injected information. Through constant re-search, machines became able to analyze data and distinguish objects through self learning without having to inject prior knowledge in the 2010s.

With the rise of various graphical and verbal forms of AI, individuals started to recognize it more intensely from around November 2022. It was during this period that tools such as ChatGPT, Bard, Claude, Midjourney, and other content-creating engines were developed. This opened up the question of their usage in marketing in particular, where the opportunity to use them in terms of both visual and textual content creation was immediately presented.

This paper therefore examines the new opportunities, challenges and trends in the field of Public Relations triggered by the advent of Artificial Intelligence. The paper is broadly divided into four sections. The first section gives an overview of the study, states in clear times the problem which the research tends to solve, aims and objective of the study and the research methodology. The second sections reviews related literatures in the field of Public Relations and Artificial Intelligence and by extension information and communication technology while the third section presents data and analyse them according. This section also discusses the findings in the data. In the fourth section, emphasis is laid on summarizing the paper, making a concluding remark based on the findings and recommending possible way forward.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Previous studies revealed that while the adoption of AI in marketing and advertisement is being widely discussed in academics and its use is proliferated in everyday world (Matúšová, Načiniaková 2024). However, the area of Public Relations is still uncovered and the study of its impact and use has become a mirage. The use of AI in this noble field seems to be narrowed particularly to the question of topic creation, writing a press release, official statement or official speech. The use of AI is neglected in the areas of identifying trends that can be used in the creation of brand contents, monitoring media and social networks and evaluating sentiments, predicting potential crisis areas, defining data-driven practices for influencers and brand ambassadors, social media posts and other content.

➤ *Aim/Objectives of the Study*

This study aims to examine the impact of AI in the practice of Public Relations and to examine the workability of humans and AI in both fields. The specific objectives include:

- To examine if AI has been adopted as a tool in Public Relations

- To determine the areas in Public Relations practice where AI is used
- To evaluate the partnership between humans and AI in the Practice of Public Relations.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research relied on both primary and secondary data. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire were administered to staff of the four units of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations including Media Relations unit, Corporate/Strategic Communication Unit, Protocol Unit, and Community Relations Unit at the National Institute of Construction Technology and Management, Uromi and Igbinedion University Okada both in Edo State. 16 copies of the questionnaire were administered in all and each of the Institution got 8 of the questionnaire. Using the quota sampling, each of the units in both institutions were allocated 2 questionnaire making a total of 16 questionnaire. The questionnaire contains questions that borders on demography of the respondents, period of practice, role of AI in their area of operation.

In the same vein, the research also relied on secondary data, the works of these respondents for a period of one year were assessed. Thus, highlighting the input of AI in the works. Therefore, the conclusions presented here are based on the results of the analysis of the questionnaire as well as the analysis of the collected examples.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Artificial Intelligence generally is a product of a revolution in Information and Communication Technology. Lee (2021) describes a historical evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) and offers brief overview of the transition in AI methodologies over several decades. According to him, the word artificial intelligence was first used in 1956, and over the next 60 years, it was able to make innovative progress by finding ways to implement them. Until the early 2000s, the researchers implemented AI by making machines learn human-made knowledge activities and language. However, intelligence requires the ability to feel and learn new things on its own, and to define and answer problems according to their surroundings or contexts, on top of performing the processing functions for injected information. Through consistent, constant and rigorous researches and criticisms, these machines gradually became able to analyze data and distinguish objects through the process of self learning without having to inject prior knowledge between the periods of 2010 to 2019.

McKinsey & Company (2023) on their part conducted an analysis of the potential impact of generative AI in various industry sectors and outlined its financial benefits across specific sectors where it may have the most significant impact. Their research revealed that about 75% of the value generative

AI could deliver falls across four areas: customer operations, marketing and sales, software engineering, and R&D. Generative AI will have a significant impact across all industry sectors, with banking, high-tech, retail, consumer, and life sciences among those that may realize the biggest impact as a percentage of revenue.

With the rise of various graphical and verbal forms of AI, Many individuals started recognizing it more intensely from around November 2022. It was during this period that tools such as ChatGPT, Bard, Claude, Midjourney, and other content-creating engines were developed. This opened up the question of their usage in marketing communication, gatekeeping etc. where the opportunity to use them in terms of both visual and textual content creation was immediately presented. Matúšová and Načiniaková (2024) while studying the challenges and opportunities of using AI in Public Relations admits that modern Public Relations today is all about reputation, and thus, human input is needed in this regard. They categorically opined that AI does not have the ability to build this brand authenticity and credibility. However, AI may enhance efficiency and provide data-driven insights.

From the studies reviewed, it can be stated emphatically that while the human factor is the *primus inter peres* in Public Relations, the role of AI in assisting humans to achieving their goals in Public Relations cannot be over emphasized.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

As earlier stated, questionnaire were presented to 16 respondents of the Public Relations Division from two Institutions namely; Iginedion University Okada and the National Institute of Construction Technology and Management, Uromi both located at Edo State Nigeria. Also, their works for the past one year were also determined. Each unit of the Institutions were administered two copies of the questionnaire while the respondents were randomly picked amongst the staff members in these units. This form the basis for this analysis and subsequent discussions in this section.

➤ *Demographic Information*

Demographically, it was discovered that of the 16 respondents, 2 representing 12.5% of the population are between age 18 to 25 while 3 representing 18.8% of the population are between ages 25 to 35. 7 respondents representing 43.8 are between age 36 to 45, while 3 respondents representing 18.8 of the population are in the age bracket of 46 to 55. Age 55 and above has 0% representation. From the foregoing, it is discovered that majority of the respondents are between 36 to 46. This age bracket is believed to be the last batch of individuals to have experienced a transition from analog to digital world as seen in McLuhans prophecy.

Gender balance was also discovered in the distribution of the questionnaire to the respondents. Accordingly, 9 respondents representing 56.3% of the population are male

while 7 respondents representing 43.7% are females. Of these respondents, 6 are single whereas; 10 are married representing 37.5% and 62.5% respectively.

In terms of the number of experience respondents have garnered in the field of Public Relations, it was discovered that 6 respondents have between 0 to 5 years of experience while 3 respondents have between 6 to 10 years experience whereas, 7 have between 10 years and above which represent 37.5%, 18.8% and 43.7% individually. The implication here is that experienced Public Relations Officers served as respondents in this research.

➤ *Level of Use of AI in PR Practice*

In the second section of the questionnaire, questions relating to the respondents core responsibilities and method of delivering on their jobs were focused on. In the first question, the researcher sought to identify the department where the respondents belong. Four units in the directorate were presented namely: media relations unit, corporate and strategic communication unit, community relations unit and protocol unit. Results revealed that two respondents were selected from each of these units in each of the sampled Institutions. This signifies a fair representation of respondents in various specialties in the field of Public Relations.

In the second question, the research sought to identify the type of AI which respondents use the most. They were presented with samples of various AIs including ChatGPT, Meta, Jasper, Bard, Claude and Midjourney. Responses revealed that all 16 respondents make use of ChatGPT while additional 8 respondents adds Meta AI to the use of chatGPT. Equally 1 respondent uses Bard while no respondent uses both jasper, claudes and midjourney. While chatGPT, Meta, and midjourney are professional tools in word generation, summary, essay writing and expansion, press briefing and speech writing, Jasper specializes in content creating which may be a readily available tool for social media engagement. Claude on the other hand, since it has the ability to engage in conversational task, is useful in crisis communication and reputation management. Finally, Claude as an animation tool is useful in brand/reputation management. Going by the foregoing, it can be deduced therefore that since chatGPT is the most common AI use in Public Relations, the use of AI in this profession is restricted to writing, summarizing and word expansion.

On the question which borders on the extent to which AI assist respondents to write press releases, speeches and press briefing, 1 respondent representing 6.3% of the population insists that AI does everything for him, 4 respondents on the other hand representing 25% of the sample size argued that they make a little input while AI does the rest of the job. 6 respondents representing 37.5% of the sample size insist that they do most of the job while AI does least of the jobs whereas, 5 respondents representing 31.3% opined that they do the job themselves without the interference of AI. The implication here

is that while some few PR practitioners have not embraced the use of AI in writing briefings, speeches, press briefing etc, majority have seen the need of this new normal and have embraced it in their area of expertise.

On the question which borders on the extent to which AI assist respondents when managing reputation in an Institution, 1 of the respondents, representing 6.3% of the population insists that he makes little input while AI does the rest. Meanwhile, 14 respondents representing 87.5% of the population are of the opinion that they do most of the work while AI does the least of the job whereas, only 1 respondent representing 6.3% argued that he does not need AI to carry out his task. This implies that in reputation management, AI is sparingly used. We may agree with Belcic (2024) who opines that AI is attributed to enhancing efficiency and provide data-driven insights rather than becoming the ultimate worker in the field of Public Relations.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked the way and extent they use AI in the preparation and delivery of press briefings, 2 respondents representing a population of 12.5% argued that they deliver the brief while AI writes the brief whereas 14 respondents representing 87.5% are of the opinion that they make input in the writing the brief and while AI is also involved. However, they deliver the speech without the assistance of AI. From the above, it can be argued that AI in PR practice is connected with writing rather than speech making.

On the question whether AI has helped respondents in identifying trends, 5 respondents representing 31.3% strongly agree to this assertion while 11 respondents representing 68.8% agree. 0% each was the outcome of both disagree and strongly disagree. This implies that AI has become a readily available tool to inform humans on the current trend in the society which they easily key into.

On the question, whether AI is used in monitoring social networks, evaluating sentiments and predicting their potentials, 5 and 11 respondents representing 31.3% and 68.8% chose the option of strongly disagree and disagree respectively whereas, 0% of the sample size choose agree and strongly agree. Respondents equally toe the same line when asked if the use AI to design social media posts.

From the responses to these questions, it can be deduced that outside writing, AI seem not to be employed in other Public Relations areas including designing of social media posts, monitoring social networks, evaluating sentiments, predicting potential crisis, etc.

V. DISCUSSION

The result of the findings has shown that AI is a necessary tool in Public Relations Practice. However, their operations are determined by the PR personnel who make the right input to the defined subject while employing relevant AI tools to generate ideas related to the chosen subject. Again, AI conducts search

of previous outputs and prepares the relevant data for the enhancement of the PR assignment. This contribution of AI, not only saves time and resources but also improves the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the PR function. (Pranjić, 2023).

In media relations for instance, AI plays some roles as a form of assistance to the human factors. When we talk about media relations, we do not address it for the purpose of generating press releases or organizing media events, but also answering questions from journalists in the sector or conducting professional or profile interviews. However, we can argue that preparing for an interview is based on the personality of the interviewee and their experience, which AI is not able to simulate.

ChatGPT seems to have become readily available tool in crisis communication. This wonderful AI tool generates its content based on the amount of data at its disposal and, of course, this represents its overall advantage. It is found that as a result of this huge data base, AI models can predict potential PR crises or opportunities, enabling organizations to prepare or strategize accordingly. Notwithstanding its pivotal role however, we do not see a further impact of AI in crisis communications, especially, in terms of the knowledge of this discipline, as the transparency of the organization and a certain level of emotions play a key role. More over, a wrong application of AI tools in PR can lead to organisational crisis itself and the damage of its reputation.

One of the significant challenge posed by AI in the Public Relations industry is the potential for misinformation and the spread of fake news. A high percentage of researches has identified fake news as the top threat from AI, indicating apprehension around the potential misuse or manipulation of AI-generated content for spreading misinformation. The implications include damage to the credibility and reputation of their clients or organizations. The second concern about the loss of human touch suggests that PR professionals see their value as tied closely to their personal relationships, human intuition, and emotional understanding around effective communication and relationship building. There is perceived risk that AI-driven processes may lack human element and potentially impact authenticity.

PR professionals esteem highly their ability to think outside the box, adapt to specific circumstances or create inventive strategies. They are concerned that these attributes may be at risk in a more automated and standardized landscape. Given that new generative AI tools make it increasingly simple for individuals to create text, images, audio, and videos, there is a growing need to reevaluate and redefine the criteria for assessing authenticity in the first instance. In addition to the fact that AI presents opportunities, it also prompts some challenging inquiries. Balancing innovation with ethical considerations is essential to ensure that AI contributes positively to the preservation of authenticity in various contexts. Striking the right balance between authenticity and transparency is essential

to maintain trust. AI tools specifically in the field of Public Relations are gaining significance due to their valuable real-world applications. However, it is essential to keep in mind that these emerging tools ultimately function as our virtual aides.

Similar to any new assistant, AI is susceptible to errors that PR professionals have surpassed over time. While AI can emulate human intelligence and produce content at an unprecedented pace, it is our human experience that grants us the ability to discern.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From the objectives set for this study, we present below the summary of the findings.

- Evidence from the study has shown that AI is being actively used in the field of Public Relations
- The use of AI in PR practice is highly proliferated in text writing like in writing press briefings, speech, press releases etc.
- The presence of AI in PR further enhances and eases the job of a PR Officer.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study emphasized on the amalgamation of the roles of humans and artificial intelligence in public relations practice. After analyzing the questionnaires as well as the examples of tasks gotten from practice, we can conclude that the benefits of AI in PR cannot be over emphasized. It was discovered that AI helps in the identification of trends that can be used in the creation of brand content. It helps also to monitoring media and social networks and evaluating sentiment. More so, it helps in Predicting potential crisis areas and defining data-driven practices for influencers and brand ambassadors. Finally, AI helps in Designing press releases, social media posts and other content.

However, it must be taken into consideration that modern Public Relations practice today is all about reputation, where human input is needed. Since reputation is more concerned with brand authenticity and credibility, AI tool do not have the capability to earn trust from Public Relations and thus, cannot build such reputation and authenticity. AI may enhance efficiency and provide data-driven insights; however, the role of humans in public relations remains indispensable for authentic relationships building, reputation management, and the navigation of the multifaceted challenges of public communication.

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