



## Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Journalism in Nigeria: Threats, Opportunities, and Policy Implications

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into global media ecosystems has transformed journalistic practice and generated significant debate regarding its implications for media systems, particularly in developing countries.

**Objective:** This paper examines whether Artificial Intelligence constitutes a threat or an opportunity for journalism practice in Nigeria. It seeks to critically evaluate the multidimensional implications of AI adoption within the Nigerian media landscape.

**Method:** The study adopts a qualitative position paper approach based on the synthesis of existing empirical literature and theoretical perspectives. Drawing on Technological Determinism Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the paper analyses the opportunities, risks, and structural implications associated with AI integration in Nigerian journalism.

**Result:** The paper finds that AI presents significant opportunities for Nigerian media practice through automated content production, enhanced data journalism, audience analytics, accelerated fact-checking, and revenue diversification. However, the study also reveals major threats, including job displacement, misinformation amplification, algorithmic bias, widening digital divides, and the erosion of editorial autonomy.

**Conclusion:** The paper concludes that Artificial Intelligence is neither inherently beneficial nor entirely harmful to journalism practice in Nigeria. Its overall impact depends on deliberate policy choices, institutional adaptation, ethical regulation, and the capacity of media organisations to integrate AI in ways that uphold the public interest function of journalism.

**Unique Contribution:** This paper contributes to emerging scholarship on AI and journalism in Africa by providing a balanced and context-specific analysis of the opportunities and threats associated with AI adoption in Nigerian media practice. It further contextualises global debates within Nigeria's socio-political and technological realities.

**Key Recommendation:** The paper recommends the development of comprehensive AI regulatory frameworks, continuous professional training for journalists, investment in digital infrastructure, ethical guidelines for AI-assisted journalism, and collaborative policy initiatives aimed at ensuring responsible and inclusive AI integration within Nigeria's media industry.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Nigerian journalism, media practice, fact-checking, newsroom innovation



## INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has borne witness to a series of technological disruptions that have fundamentally reconfigured the architectures of journalism and mass communication. Among these disruptions, none has emerged with quite the velocity, breadth, or theoretical weight of Artificial Intelligence (AI). From automated news writing and predictive analytics to deep fake detection and robot reporters, AI is reshaping how news is gathered, processed, distributed, and consumed on a global scale (Diakopoulos, 2019; Thurman, Doerr, & Kunert, 2019; Nwafor et al., 2025). Within this rapidly evolving global context, Nigerian journalism historically characterised by resourcefulness, vibrant plurality, and persistent structural challenges now faces a defining inflection point.

Nigeria's media landscape is one of the most dynamic and complex on the African continent. With over 100 registered newspapers, more than 500 radio stations, scores of television broadcasters, and a rapidly expanding constellation of online news platforms, Nigeria possesses a media infrastructure of considerable scale (Nwafor & Ufuoma, 2020). Yet this scale masks profound inequities: digital access remains unevenly distributed across geographic, economic, and demographic lines; newsroom resources are frequently insufficient; and the structural conditions that sustain quality journalism editorial independence, financial sustainability, professional training are under constant pressure (Sobowale, 2020). It is into this already complex environment that AI is being introduced, with consequences that are simultaneously promising and deeply concerning. The central argumentative position of this paper is that Artificial Intelligence is neither inherently threatening nor inherently beneficial to Nigerian journalism; rather, its ultimate impact is contingent upon the frameworks professional, institutional, regulatory, and ethical within which it is deployed. This position resists both uncritical techno optimism, which tends to elide questions of power and access, and reflexive techno-pessimism, which obscures the genuine opportunities that AI offers for journalism in resource constrained environments. Instead, this paper adopts a critically constructive orientation, one that acknowledges the transformative potential of AI while insisting that the realisation of that potential requires deliberate, inclusive, and equity conscious policy and practice.

This paper is structured as follow: Following this introduction, a review of the relevant theoretical frameworks is presented, situating AI in journalism within established mass communication theories. A comprehensive review of literature on AI's in the specific Nigerian context is examined. The paper then advances its central position by systematically evaluating AI as both threat and opportunity before offering policy and professional recommendations. A conclusion synthesises the paper's arguments and reaffirms its core position.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the future of journalism practice in Nigeria, with emphasis on its threats, opportunities, and policy implications.



### **Specific Objectives:**

1. To examine the opportunities created by Artificial Intelligence for journalism practice in Nigeria, particularly in content production, fact-checking, data journalism, and audience engagement.
2. To analyse the threats and ethical challenges associated with the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in Nigerian journalism, including job displacement, misinformation, algorithmic bias, and editorial autonomy.
3. To evaluate the policy implications of Artificial Intelligence integration in Nigerian journalism and propose frameworks for responsible regulation and sustainable newsroom innovation.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative research design in the form of a position paper. It relies on documentary analysis of existing scholarly literature, policy documents, and empirical studies on Artificial Intelligence and journalism practice, with particular attention to the Nigerian media context. The paper draws on secondary data sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, industry reports, and relevant global and local studies published on AI in journalism. The analysis is guided by relevant theoretical frameworks, particularly Technological Determinism Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which help explain the adoption, use, and impact of Artificial Intelligence in media systems. Data were analysed using thematic and interpretive analysis, focusing on identifying patterns relating to opportunities, threats, and policy implications of AI integration in Nigerian journalism.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper draws on two complementary theoretical frameworks: Technological Determinism and Diffusion of Innovations Theory.

#### **Technological Determinism**

Technological Determinism, in its strong form, posits that technology is an autonomous agent of social change, driving cultural, economic, and institutional transformation independently of human agency (Winner, 1980; MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). Applied to AI in journalism, a hard-deterministic reading would hold that the adoption of algorithmic tools necessarily and inevitably transforms journalistic practice in predictable directions regardless of the social context. This paper rejects the strong deterministic position while acknowledging its heuristic value in drawing attention to the structuring power of technology. A soft or contextual determinism one that recognises the shaping influence of technology while preserving space for human agency and institutional response provides a more adequate theoretical foundation for understanding AI's contested role in Nigerian media practice (Flew, Martin, & Suzor, 2019).

#### **Diffusion of Innovations Theory**

Rogers's (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory offers a second theoretical lens, particularly valuable for understanding how and why AI tools are adopted at differential rates across media organisations and national contexts. Rogers identified five adopter categories innovators, early



adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards and outlined the role of perceived characteristics of an innovation, including relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability, in shaping adoption trajectories. Applied to AI in Nigerian newsrooms, the theory directs analytical attention to the structural and perceptual barriers that may impede adoption including resource constraints, skills deficits, and cultural resistance as well as the enabling conditions that may accelerate it (Osagie & Asemah, 2021). The theory also draws attention to the importance of change agent's journalism educators, professional associations, and pioneering newsrooms in catalysing adoption and managing its consequences.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Global Developments in AI and Journalism

The scholarly literature on AI in journalism has expanded rapidly over the past decade, generating a rich body of empirical and theoretical work that spans automated content generation, algorithmic curation, AI-assisted investigative reporting, and the ethical dimensions of machine-mediated news (Diakopoulos, 2019; Beckett, 2019; Pavlik, 2019). Automated journalism the use of natural language generation (NLG) systems to produce news articles from structured data represents one of the most extensively studied AI applications in media (Carlson, 2015). Organisations including the Associated Press, Reuters, and The Washington Post have employed automated writing tools to generate financial reports, sports summaries, and election results at scale and speed impossible for human journalists alone (Thurman et al., 2019). Beyond content generation, AI is being deployed across the journalistic workflow in ways that range from the mundane to the transformative. Machine learning algorithms facilitate the personalisation of content recommendation systems, raising fundamental questions about filter bubbles and the public function of journalism (Helberger, 2019). Computer vision tools enable the rapid analysis of large volumes of video and photographic evidence, supporting investigative projects of considerable scale and complexity (Diakopoulos, 2019). Sentiment analysis and social media monitoring tools allow newsrooms to track public discourse and identify emerging stories with greater efficiency than traditional monitoring methods (Beckett & Deuze, 2016).

The literature also documents significant concerns. Dörr (2016) and others have documented the risks of systematic errors and biases in automated content, particularly when training data reflects existing social inequities. Ufarte-Ruiz, Peralta-García, and Murcia-Verdú (2018) examined the implications of AI for journalistic roles and found that while some tasks are susceptible to automation, the core epistemic and ethical functions of journalism sense-making, accountability, investigation remain substantially human. The question of accountability for algorithmically produced content constitutes a significant gap in both scholarly and regulatory frameworks (Diakopoulos & Johnson, 2019; Ananny & Crawford, 2018).

### AI in Nigerian Journalism: State of the Evidence

The Nigerian-specific literature on AI and journalism is at an early but rapidly developing stage. Studies by Nwafor and Ufuoma (2020), Asemah and Osagie (2021), and Sobowale (2020) have begun to document the awareness, attitudes, and adoption patterns of Nigerian journalists with respect to digital and AI technologies. These studies consistently identify a significant gap



between awareness of AI capabilities and actual adoption of AI tools, attributable to a complex interaction of resource constraints, skills deficits, infrastructure limitations, and institutional conservatism (Asemah & Osagie, 2021). Research on specific AI-related applications in Nigerian journalism has examined the role of social media monitoring, automated content tools, and data journalism initiatives. Opeibi (2019) documented the growing significance of digital and data-driven journalism practices among Nigerian online media organisations, while Sobowale (2020) identified training and capacity-building as the primary determinant of successful technology adoption in Nigerian newsrooms. The phenomenon of AI-generated and algorithmically amplified misinformation has been the subject of growing scholarly concern in the Nigerian context, particularly in relation to electoral processes and public health communication (Nkwam-Uwaoma & Ihejirika, 2020; Agbor, 2021).

### **Artificial Intelligence As Opportunity For Nigerian Journalism**

This paper argues that AI presents a set of genuine and significant opportunities for Nigerian journalism, provided that the conditions for realising those opportunities are deliberately cultivated. The following subsections examine the most substantive opportunity domains. Automated Content Production and Workflow Efficiency: The deployment of automated content generation tools offers resource constrained Nigerian newsrooms a means of expanding their productive capacity without proportional increases in staffing costs. Natural language generation systems can produce structured data driven stories financial results, statistical summaries, sports scores, election returns at speeds and volumes impossible for human journalists alone (Dörr, 2016; Thurman et al., 2019). For a typical Nigerian newspaper or online platform with a small editorial team, the ability to automate routine reporting frees journalists to focus on investigative, analytical, and community responsive journalism that requires distinctly human skills of judgment, empathy, and source cultivation.

Workflow automation extends beyond content generation to encompass transcription of interview audio, automated translation between Nigerian languages and English, intelligent content management systems, and AI-assisted editing and subbing tools (Beckett, 2019). Each of these applications has the potential to reduce the time burden of routine tasks and to expand the scope of what small editorial teams can accomplish. For news organisations seeking to serve Nigeria's linguistically diverse population with over 500 distinct languages documented AI assisted translation and localisation tools offer particular promise, provided that the language technology challenges of underrepresented Nigerian languages can be adequately addressed (Skjerdal et al., 2022).

Fact-Checking and Misinformation Detection: Nigeria's information environment has been characterised by a significant and growing challenge of misinformation and disinformation, with particularly acute manifestations around electoral periods, public health crises, and inter-communal conflicts (Nkwam-Uwaoma & Ihejirika, 2020; Agbor, 2021). AI assisted fact-checking tools which can rapidly assess the veracity of textual claims, reverse-search images, and identify the origins of viral content offer a meaningful enhancement of the capacity of fact-checking organisations to respond to the scale and velocity of misinformation in digital environments (Funke & Flamini, 2020).



Nigerian fact-checking organisations including Africa Check Nigeria and Dubawa have begun to explore AI assisted verification workflows, though adoption remains at an early stage. The potential of AI to accelerate the fact-checking cycle from claim identification through evidence gathering to publication of verified findings is substantial (Opeibi, 2019). However, the effectiveness of AI fact-checking tools is critically dependent on access to reliable reference databases, the quality of training data, and the availability of tools specifically calibrated for the Nigerian information environment. Current limitations in these respects underscore the need for investment in Nigeria-specific AI tools and data infrastructure as a prerequisite for realising the fact-checking potential of AI.

**Audience Analytics and Sustainable Revenue Models:** The financial sustainability of Nigerian journalism is under severe stress, as advertising revenues that historically sustained commercial media organisations have been substantially redistributed toward global digital platforms, particularly Facebook and Google (Olorunyomi, 2019). AI powered audience analytics offer Nigerian media organisations enhanced capacity to understand their audiences, personalise content delivery, and develop revenue models that are more directly responsive to demonstrated audience needs and preferences. Machine learning algorithms can identify patterns in audience behaviour that inform editorial decision-making, advertising targeting, and subscription product development (Helberger, 2019).

AI tools also offer opportunities for revenue diversification through the development of novel information products and services. Chatbot based news services, AI curated newsletters, and intelligent notification systems represent formats through which Nigerian media organisations might develop more direct and monetisable relationships with their audiences. The successful application of such tools, however, requires investment in both technical infrastructure and editorial strategy, as well as a clear understanding of the ethical dimensions of audience data collection and use (Beckett, 2019).

### **Artificial Intelligence As Threat To Nigerian Journalism**

The same technologies that offer the opportunities described above carry significant risks and threats that, if inadequately addressed, could deepen existing structural problems in Nigerian journalism and create new ones. This paper identifies five principal threat domains. **Job Displacement and the Restructuring of Journalistic Labour:** The automation of content production tasks threatens the livelihoods of journalists engaged in forms of reporting most susceptible to algorithmic substitution. In a labour market context where journalistic employment is already precarious characterised by low wages, irregular employment, and limited social protection the displacement of routine reporting roles by AI tools could significantly worsen the economic vulnerability of Nigerian journalism practitioners (Asemah & Osagie, 2021). The concern is not merely about the quantity of journalistic employment but about its distribution: AI driven efficiency gains may accrue primarily to media owners and senior editorial staff while imposing disproportionate costs on entry level and freelance journalists whose roles are most amenable to automation.



Research in the global context suggests that AI adoption in journalism has to date tended to reshape rather than eliminate journalistic roles, with journalists increasingly required to develop competencies in working with, directing, and critically evaluating AI generated outputs (Ufarte-Ruiz et al., 2018; Pavlik, 2019). Whether this pattern of role transformation rather than elimination will obtain in the Nigerian context depends substantially on the availability and quality of skills development infrastructure, which, as documented above, is currently inadequate. Without deliberate investment in reskilling and upskilling programmes, Nigerian journalists risk finding themselves displaced by AI tools without the competencies required to work effectively alongside them.

**Algorithmic Bias and the Reproduction of Inequality:** AI systems are trained on data that reflects historical social patterns, including patterns of inequality, marginalisation, and discrimination. When such systems are deployed in journalistic contexts for content recommendation, source identification, newsworthiness assessment, or audience targeting they may systematically reproduce and amplify the biases embedded in their training data (Noble, 2018; Ananny & Crawford, 2018). For Nigerian journalism, which operates in a society characterised by significant ethnic, regional, religious, and gender-based inequalities, the risk of algorithmic bias is particularly acute.

The deployment of recommendation algorithms trained primarily on data from the dominant demographic groups and media markets risks systematically underserving minority communities, amplifying the visibility of already dominant voices, and rendering marginalised perspectives less visible within the media landscape. Similarly, AI-generated content trained on corpora that do not adequately represent Nigeria's linguistic and cultural diversity risks producing outputs that are culturally inappropriate, factually unreliable, or inadvertently discriminatory (Skjerdal et al., 2022; Noble, 2018). The challenge of algorithmic bias cannot be adequately addressed through technical solutions alone; it requires sustained critical engagement from journalists, editors, and regulators who understand both the technical dynamics of AI systems and the social contexts in which they are deployed.

**Amplification of Misinformation and Synthetic Media:** While AI offers tools for misinformation detection and fact-checking, it simultaneously provides capabilities for the production of increasingly sophisticated synthetic and manipulated media content. Deep fake video and audio technologies, AI generated text, and automated social media amplification systems have significantly lowered the barriers to the production and distribution of disinformation at scale (Chesney & Citron, 2019). In Nigeria's already challenging information environment marked by a proliferation of unverified content across WhatsApp and social media platforms the widespread availability of AI-powered disinformation tools represents a serious threat to the integrity of public discourse.

The implications for journalism are twofold. First, journalists themselves risk being deceived by increasingly sophisticated synthetic media, compromising their ability to perform the verification function that is central to the social value of journalism (Agbor, 2021). Second, AI-generated disinformation targeting journalists and media organisations including fabricated quotes attributed to journalists, manipulated images of editorial staff, and synthetic audio of journalistic sources may have a chilling effect on investigative journalism and source confidence.



Addressing this threat requires both investment in media literacy among the Nigerian public and in detection and verification capabilities within Nigerian newsrooms.

**Digital Divide and Unequal Access to AI Benefits:** The distribution of AI's benefits in Nigerian journalism is unlikely to be uniform. Media organisations with greater financial resources, more highly skilled editorial teams, and access to reliable digital infrastructure are better positioned to adopt and effectively deploy AI tools than their less well-resourced counterparts. These dynamic risks deepening existing inequalities within the Nigerian media landscape, creating a two-tier system in which well-resourced urban news organisations leverage AI to enhance their competitive position while smaller, community based, and rural media organizations are left further behind (Nwafor & Ufuoma, 2020).

The digital divide also has geographic and demographic dimensions. If AI powered news services primarily serve urban, educated, and relatively affluent audiences, the needs and perspectives of rural, less educated, and economically marginalized Nigerians risk being further under served by a media system that already struggles to adequately represent the full diversity of the Nigerian public. The risk is compounded by the language dimension: if AI tools are primarily calibrated for English language content production, the already limited availability of quality journalism in Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and Nigeria's other major languages may be further constrained (Skjerdal et al., 2022).

**Erosion of Editorial Autonomy and Journalistic Ethics:** A subtler but equally significant threat concerns the potential erosion of editorial autonomy and journalistic ethics that may accompany AI adoption. When editorial decisions about which stories to pursue, which sources to prioritise, which content to publish, and how to frame complex issues are delegated to or significantly shaped by algorithmic systems, the locus of editorial responsibility becomes diffuse and potentially unaccountable (Diakopoulos & Johnson, 2019). This concern is particularly acute in contexts where media ownership is concentrated and where algorithmic tools may be deployed to reduce editorial staffing rather than to augment editorial capacity. The speed imperatives associated with AI-driven content production may also create pressures that militate against the careful, reflective, and ethically deliberate journalism that investigative and accountability reporting requires (Pavlik, 2019). If the metrics by which AI-assisted content performance is evaluated page views, engagement rates, social shares diverge from the substantive criteria by which journalistic quality should be assessed, AI adoption may accelerate existing tendencies toward sensationalism, clickbait, and the prioritisation of virality over accuracy. These risks are not inherent to AI but are functions of the incentive structures within which AI is deployed, underscoring the importance of robust editorial governance frameworks for AI adoption in Nigerian newsrooms.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, this paper advances the following recommendations addressed to different stakeholder groups within and around Nigerian journalism.

1. For Media Organisations: Nigerian media organisations should develop explicit AI adoption strategies that are grounded in clear editorial values and public interest commitments. Such strategies should include policies for algorithmic transparency, mechanisms for editorial oversight of AI-generated content, and protocols for the responsible handling of audience data collected through AI-powered analytics systems. Media organisations should invest in training and development programmes to equip journalists with the digital and data literacy competencies required to work effectively alongside AI tools, rather than to be displaced by them. Collaborative models for sharing AI infrastructure and expertise among media organisations particularly smaller and community-based outlets should be explored as a means of democratising access to AI capabilities (Beckett, 2019).
2. For Journalism Educators: Journalism schools and training institutions in Nigeria must comprehensively revise curricula to incorporate competencies in data journalism, computational thinking, AI literacy, and digital ethics. The goal should not be to produce AI engineers but to cultivate journalists who are critically informed users and evaluators of AI tools, capable of harnessing their capabilities while identifying and resisting their limitations and biases. Partnerships between journalism schools and technology organisations including both domestic and international AI development initiatives could provide access to tools, training, and expertise that individual institutions cannot sustain independently (Osagie & Asemah, 2021).
3. For Regulatory Authorities and Policymakers: The regulatory gap in AI governance within Nigerian media requires urgent attention. NITDA, the NBC, and the NPC should collaborate to develop a coherent regulatory framework for AI in media that addresses algorithmic transparency, editorial accountability for AI-generated content, data protection, and the prevention of AI-enabled misinformation. Such a framework should be developed through a participatory process that includes media practitioners, journalism educators, civil society organisations, and the public, and should be periodically reviewed in light of the rapid pace of AI development (Asogwa, 2021). Policymakers should also consider investment in public digital infrastructure including reliable electricity, broadband connectivity, and open government data as a foundational prerequisite for equitable AI adoption across the Nigerian media landscape.



## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has argued that Artificial Intelligence represents both a significant threat and a compelling opportunity for media practice in Nigeria, and that its ultimate impact is contingent upon the deliberate choices made by media organisations, educators, regulators, and policymakers. The threats job displacement, algorithmic bias, misinformation amplification, deepening digital divides, and erosion of editorial autonomy are real and require serious, sustained attention. So too are the opportunities: expanded productive capacity, enhanced investigative potential, improved fact-checking, more sustainable revenue models, and the possibility of extending quality journalism to underserved communities.

The theoretical frameworks employed in this paper soft Technological Determinism, and Diffusion of Innovations Theory of the media, converge on a common insight: that AI's effects are neither predetermined nor uniform but are shaped by the institutional, regulatory, and professional contexts in which it is deployed. For Nigerian journalism, this insight carries an important normative implication: the sector has agency in determining the trajectory of AI adoption and its consequences. The exercise of that agency requires not passivity in the face of technological change nor uncritical enthusiasm for its possibilities, but rather the kind of critically informed, ethically grounded, and strategically purposeful engagement that is the hallmark of journalism at its best.

The stakes are high. Nigerian journalism serves vital democratic functions holding power accountable, informing public deliberation, giving voice to marginalised communities, and constructing shared frames of national identity and civic life. These functions will not be protected by AI alone, nor will they be destroyed by it. Their protection depends, as it always has, on the commitments and capabilities of journalists, editors, educators, regulators, and citizens who understand what journalism is for and are willing to invest in its future. AI is a powerful tool in service of that future; it must not become its master.

## **Ethical clearance**

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

#### Authors' Contributions.

Libba Samaila Moses and Ani Chinwe P. conceived the study, including the design, Libba Samaila Moses and Ani Chinwe P. collated the data, and Prof N., Okoro and Dr. B.C., Onuoha handled the analysis and interpretation, while all the author wrote the initial manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

#### Data availability statement.

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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