

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) ADOPTION IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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## Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is redefining all professional including public relations practice globally, the adoption of AI remains under studied, particularly in sub-national level such as Osun State. This paper investigates the perceived problems and prospects facing the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly among public relations practitioners in Osun State, Nigeria. Grounded in Diffusion of Innovation (DOI). A quantitative cross-sectional survey research method was adopted, using a census sampling technique to select 177 practicing members of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Osun State Chapter, while 175 valid responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage method). The study found that there is high awareness but relatively low practical adoption. While AI presents opportunities for efficiency, content development, and strategic communication, adoption is constrained by limited technical competence, high cost, managerial resistance, and ethical concerns. The paper recommends that tertiary institutions offering public relations related courses need to integrate AI literacy and automated tools, also, public relations body and companies should organise workshops and seminars regularly for their staff on the effective use of artificial intelligence (AI) in their daily routing.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Public Relations, Technology Adoption, NIPR, Technological Determinism.

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## INTRODUCTION

Emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as significantly redefined how virtually all sectors from medicine, agriculture, education, communication to public relations operates, what used to be manual or analogy when with other digital technologies, are now better calibrated through Generative AI (Njoku and Onyeonunam, 2025). AI is a technology step ahead of earlier advanced technologies such as digital email, blogging, website, social media, live streaming, webcasting and media monitoring tools which have already transformed public relations (PR) practice around the world (Indeed, 2025; Wright and Hinson, 2017). AI is improving the efficiency of communication, strategic planning and marketing to the audience in modern PR practice by using machine learning, natural language processing, and sentiment analysis (Kietzmann, 2018; BI Africa, 2024; Canhoto and Clear, 2020).

In Nigeria, the practice of PR has shifted towards the use of digital tools, becoming more and more important instead of relying on traditional means of communication, with AI being the new area of professional development (Russell and Norvig, 2021). Although it is increasingly becoming relevant, practitioners are not adopting it at a high rate because of the inadequate technological infrastructure, lack of awareness,

ethical issues and resistance to AI-powered solutions (Adeleke, 2020). Nevertheless, as much as the transformative potential of AI has been highlighted in the literature, there are growing empirical research focusing on perceived problems and prospects of AI adoption but relatively scarce literature on sub-national level.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the practice of PR in the world, and increasing evidence suggests that AI tools are associated with enhanced communication effectiveness, audience insights, reputation management and strategic decision-making. A lot of this scholarly work is however based on Western and Asian experiences where the technological infrastructure, organizational culture and regulatory systems are not similar to Nigeria. This results in a contextual gap in the perception and practice of AI adoption in the context of Nigerian PR. Despite the increasing awareness of AI in professional communication in Nigeria, there is little empirical research that analyzes the awareness of practitioners, their use, their perceived opportunities and barriers to adoption, especially on the subnational level. This knowledge gap limits evidence-based professional practice, policy development and AI integration ethical standards. What is more crucial, the lack of

localized evidence can lead to adopting AI-driven practices that could be ineffective in terms of operation or fail to match the context of the Nigerian communication. It is this empirical and contextual gap that has led to this study to determine the perceived problems and prospects of adoption of artificial intelligence among the public relations practitioners in Osun State, Nigeria.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- i. To examine the extent to which public relations practitioners in Osun State adopt artificial intelligence (AI) in their operations.
- ii. To ascertain the prospects of AI adoption among public relations practitioners practice in Osun State.
- iii. To identify problems associated with the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) among public relations practitioners in Osun State.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- i. To what extent do public relations practitioners in Osun State adopt artificial intelligence (AI) in their operations?
- ii. What are the prospects of AI adoption among public relations practitioners practice in Osun State?
- iii. What problem associated with the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) among public relations practitioners in Osun State?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Public Relations Practice in Nigeria before the Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

Prior to the emergency of artificial intelligence (AI) in public relations practice in Nigeria, the usual practice can say to be digitally advanced as many communication technologies were effectively integrated; it changes how stakeholders in public relations are reached and engaged; this resonates with premise of Technological Determinism Theory. Traditionally, public relations is a strategic activity which involves establishing mutual understanding between organizations and their publics, although, technologies impact differs from place to place as developed and less-developed nations face different technology gap. Several empirical studies on pre-AI technology in public relations practices specifically discusses mobile phones impact in enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of communication technology (Essienubong and Festus, 2010; Olayinka, 2023). The effectiveness of information, communication and technology is challenged by the cost, accessibility, expertness and technology gaps from firm to firm.

Without doubt, the emergency of the Internet, email, social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok), blog, website further redefined the instructiveness and instantaneous in

information sharing which led to digital press release, online press room among other digital media interfaces (Iwuagwu, 2016). Meanwhile, this development favours entity who are highly technological equipped with skilled man-power than those without because technology gaps play a significant role in how stakeholders relate. Although these affordances imply a transition towards more dialogic and participatory communication frameworks, the reality of the situation shows that most organizations still used these platforms in a rather one-way, promotional way. Liu, Xu, & Tsai (2020) write that the connectivity nature of social media platforms offered promising prospects for two-way, interactive communication between organizations and its various publics.

This brings up the critical questions on whether the interactive nature of social media came to bear on meaningful stakeholder engagement or just a mere extension of the functions of traditional publicity to the digital realm. Further evidence of a shift towards more professionalized and commercialized communication processes lies in the development of digital PR practices, such as search engine optimization (SEO), creating online content, and influencer engagement strategies (Nwafor, 2018). But these developments also predict the problems of authenticity, control of messages, and the sale of influence, especially in a media landscape that is defined by the influence of algorithms and audience fragmentation. In that respect, the pre-AI stage of PR in Nigeria may be regarded as the groundwork of data-driven and automated communications, at the same time revealing the structural constraints that put the ideals of symmetrical communications to the test. The pre-AI practice of public relations (PR) in Nigeria was not only marked by the technological progress, but also by a conflict between the expectation of improved communication and the unresolved structural and operational constraints. This tension is vital to comprehending the following rise of AI-powered PR, where it becomes clear that technological innovation is not a panacea to better communication results without some change in practice, ethics, and institutional capacity.

### **Emergence of Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations Practice**

Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is conceptualized as the ability of computational systems to simulate human cognitive processes, including learning, reasoning, and problem-solving (Duggal, 2025) is not just a technical innovation in PR, but a paradigm shift towards the data-driven and algorithmically mediated form of communication and practice. AI is described as a set of technologies, such as machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, robotics and deep learning capable of stimulating human activities, performance effectively and efficiently (Kumar, 2025). The expansion of AI tools

within PR practice reflects a broader shift toward automation, real-time analytics, and computational decision-making. Platforms such as Meltwater and Cision facilitate continuous media monitoring and sentiment analysis, enabling organizations to track public discourse with unprecedented immediacy. While these tools enhance operational efficiency, they also foreground a transition from reactive to anticipatory communication strategies, where predictive analytics increasingly informs decision-making processes. AI-driven data analytics further enables the identification of behavioral patterns and audience segmentation (Perifanis & Kitsios, 2023). However, the reliance on algorithmic pattern recognition introduces potential risks, including data bias and the reduction of complex human behaviors into quantifiable metrics. In this regard, the epistemic authority of AI-generated insights must be critically interrogated, particularly in culturally diverse contexts such as Nigeria, where standardized datasets may not adequately capture local nuances.

The use of AI in PR practice in Nigeria is still nascent and unequal which is indicative of larger structural and institutional limitations (Oduenyi and Williams, 2024). Although AI is often positioned as revolutionary in nature, altering audience interactions, strategic communication, and data analytics, its adoption is mediated by the constraints of infrastructures, organizational preparedness, and differences in technological literacy. This implies that the implementation of AI cannot be viewed as a homogenous process but as a heterogenous one, which is conditioned by local factors. In terms of the diffusion of innovations, the Nigerian PR practice seems to be at the stage of early adoption and early majority with huge disparities between the technologically advanced companies and the ones that have not yet implemented AI in their functioning.

### **Perceived Problems and Prospects of AI in PR Practice**

Despite its transformative potential, AI adoption in PR especially in Nigeria is accompanied by significant structural, ethical, and operational challenges. Key constraints include limited technical expertise, high implementation costs, infrastructural deficiencies, and concerns surrounding data privacy and security (Eke & Adeyemi, 2024). Beyond these practical barriers, deeper issues emerge, such as algorithmic bias, lack of transparency in decision-making processes, and anxieties regarding job displacement. These challenges underscore that AI integration is not merely a technical issue but a socio-ethical one that necessitates critical governance and regulatory oversight. In Nigeria, these barriers are particularly pronounced, limiting the extent to which AI can be effectively embedded within PR practice. The uneven distribution of technological resources and expertise suggests that AI may inadvertently reinforce existing professional inequalities.

Moreover, the opacity of algorithmic systems complicates accountability, raising questions about responsibility in cases of communicative failure or ethical breaches. Notwithstanding these constraints, AI presents significant prospects for enhancing PR practice. Its capacity for large-scale data analysis enables more precise audience segmentation, predictive communication, and automated content generation (Kietzmann, 2018; BI Africa, 2024). These capabilities can improve strategic decision-making and campaign effectiveness, particularly in data-intensive communication environments. However, the extent to which these benefits are realized depends on the alignment between technological capability and applicability.

Looking forward, the trajectory of AI in Nigerian PR practice is likely to be shaped by increasing adoption, growing emphasis on data-driven strategies, and the evolution of personalized communication models. Nevertheless, this trajectory will also intensify ethics, transparency, and accountability. Rather than replacing human practitioners, AI is more plausibly positioned as a complementary system that augments human expertise. As argued by Anani-Bossman, Nutsugah, and Abudulai (2024), the future of PR lies in a hybrid model where technological efficiency is balanced with human creativity, critical judgment, and ethical responsibility.

### **Empirical Review**

Empirical scholarship on artificial intelligence (AI) in public relations (PR) reflects a growing but still fragmented body of knowledge characterized by methodological diversity, contextual limitations, and a tendency toward techno-optimistic interpretations. A critical interrogation of existing studies reveals not only variations in research design and scope, but also deeper inconsistencies in how AI's role in PR is conceptualized, operationalized, and empirically validated. JiYeon and Nohil (2023), for instance, examine AI in PR through the Organization-Situation-Public-Communication (OSPC) model using a literature-based analytical approach. Their study concludes that AI enhances efficiency, personalization, and strategic communication. While this contribution is valuable at a conceptual level, its reliance on secondary data positions it within a largely interpretive and normative epistemology, limiting its empirical verifiability. More critically, the study reflects a techno-deterministic orientation, foregrounding the transformative potential of AI while underemphasizing contextual constraints, particularly those prevalent in developing communication environments. As such, its conclusions are better understood as theoretical projections rather than context-sensitive empirical insights.

In contrast, Chuddy and Etumnu (2024) adopt a qualitative methodology, conducting in-depth interviews with PR practitioners in Owerri,

Nigeria, to explore AI integration in practice. This approach provides contextually grounded, experiential insights into how practitioners perceive and utilize AI tools. However, the small sample size ( $n = 10$ ) situates the study within an exploratory interpretivist paradigm, prioritizing depth over breadth. While the findings affirm improvements in communication efficiency and operational effectiveness, they remain limited in representativeness and lack comparative variation across organizational types. Furthermore, the study's analytical focus is skewed toward functional benefits, with insufficient interrogation of structural barriers or contradictions inherent in AI adoption.

Similarly, Nnaemeka and Uchendu (2024) employ a quantitative survey design within Nigerian financial institutions to investigate AI and robotisation in customer relationship management. Their findings indicate enhanced service delivery through automation tools such as chatbots. Methodologically, the use of a survey allows for broader generalization within the sampled sector; however, it also constrains the depth of insight into practitioner experiences and organizational dynamics. More importantly, the sector-specific focus on banking limits the external validity of the findings in relation to general PR practice. The study does, however, introduce a critical dimension often overlooked in techno-centric narratives the tension between automation and persistent user preference for human interaction thereby complicating assumptions of seamless AI acceptance. Expanding the geographical scope, Anani-Bossman et al. (2024) conduct a quantitative survey of 275 communication professionals in Ghana to assess AI awareness and adoption. Their findings reveal a paradoxical pattern: while respondents recognize the strategic importance of AI, there remains a limited understanding of its practical applications. This suggests that diffusion is occurring at the level of awareness rather than competence. Despite its relatively robust sample size, the study adopts a broad focus on communication management, thereby overlooking the specific functional domains of PR practice, such as crisis communication, media relations, and stakeholder engagement. Consequently, its explanatory power for PR-specific dynamics remains limited.

Collectively, these empirical studies reveal several critical patterns. First, there is a persistent fragmentation between conceptual and empirical research, with literature-based studies advancing optimistic projections of AI's capabilities, while empirical investigations provide more constrained and context-dependent findings. Second, methodological approaches ranging from qualitative interviews to sector-specific surveys produce different kinds of knowledge that are not easily integrable, resulting in a lack of cumulative empirical coherence in the field. Qualitative studies offer depth but lack generalizability, whereas quantitative studies provide breadth but

often fail to capture contextual and experiential nuances. Third, there is a notable bias toward functional and efficiency-driven outcomes, with insufficient attention to the socio-technical complexities of AI adoption, including infrastructural limitations, ethical concerns, and organizational readiness. This reflects an implicit technological determinism across much of the literature, where AI is assumed to drive transformation irrespective of contextual mediating factors. Fourth, existing studies are either geographically generalized or concentrated in limited urban or sectoral contexts, leaving subnational dynamics particularly within Nigerian states significantly underexplored.

More fundamentally, the literature reveals a conceptual gap in how AI adoption is framed within PR practice. Existing studies tend to isolate either the benefits or the challenges of AI, rather than examining these dimensions as coexisting and mutually constitutive elements of technological integration. This fragmented approach obscures the inherent tensions, trade-offs, and negotiation processes that characterize real-world adoption. Against this backdrop, the present study addresses a multidimensional empirical gap. It moves beyond purely conceptual or sector-specific analyses by examining AI adoption within general PR practice, focusing specifically on practitioners' lived perceptions. It also integrates both perceived prospects and challenges within a single analytical framework, thereby capturing the dual and often contradictory nature of AI integration. Furthermore, by situating the study within Osun State, Nigeria, it responds to the underrepresentation of subnational contexts in existing research, providing a more granular understanding of how structural conditions, professional practices, and technological adoption intersect in localized settings.

In doing so, this study contributes to bridging the disconnect between techno-optimistic narratives and contextually grounded realities, offering a more balanced and empirically robust account of AI in public relations practice.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper is grounded in Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) developed by Everett Rogers in 1962. The theory explains how people share and accept new ideas and technology within a group as time passes. Scholars have observed that the speed of using new technology is decided by the paths of communication and five main features: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. The components create the logical ground for describing how public relations practitioners gain knowledge and use artificial intelligence. Awareness of artificial intelligence matches the stage of learning in the process of spreading ideas, where being around group meetings, professional instruction, and news sources decides how much someone knows about these digital instruments. It is believed by many

experts that practitioners who have better paths to news will show a bigger understanding. This matches the way Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) says that how information moves is very important for spreading new things. Seeing prospects in artificial intelligence among public relations practitioners mirrors the relative advantage mentioned in Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI). Gains like better speed, dividing the public into groups, sending automatic messages, and making choices using facts show that artificial intelligence integration is better than old public relations approaches. According to the framework, it is said that the likelihood of usage is increased when a person sees more benefits in a tool, and because of this, the person becomes more likely to use that tool in their daily operations.

However, the problems identified by this theory include the complexity and compatibility issues when for instance, the practitioners lack the required knowledge, skill to full integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into their daily operations, without doubt, this level of backwardness often limit the adoption and use of new innovation like AI. Other concern raised by DOI is not been able to explicitly cover the ethical issues concern with the use of AI in an organization like public relations in Nigeria where people often share sentiment on the integrity of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence is not solely determined by technology innovation but with several factors including avoidability. Knowledge, and perceived opportunities.

## METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey as a quantitative design was adopted, this enables a systematic collection and numerical analysis of quantitative data, while, offers key variables relationship at a single point in time. This approach is appropriate in assessing the problems and prospects of artificial intelligence (AI) including the awareness and adoption. The population of this study comprised all registered member of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Osun State Chapter particularly those who are actively engaging in professional activities, specifically, the population size is one hundred and seventy-seven (177), according to the official document available at the NIPR, Osun State (2025). The choice of NIPR member is due to its ability to offer informed perspective relevant to this study. However, the study is narrowed to Osun State Chapter because Osun State NIPR practitioners have similar characteristics across the federation, hence, the findings may be generalized. Sequel to the limited number of the study population (N=177), the research hence adopted a census sampling technique where all the members of the population is included in the study. This technique eliminates sampling error. This approach is appropriate usually involving small population.

The study used structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents who are actively

engage in public relations practice in Osun state. The instrument is divided into two (2) parts, section A involves demographic variables of the selected respondents such as age, gender, work experience. The section B measures the major research variables such as AI awareness, adoption, problems and prospects using five-point scale offering effective quantification of respondents' perception. Face and content validity was used to validate the data collection instrument with the help of public relations experts. This includes questions' clarity, relevance, alignment with objectives. The suggestions and review by the experts offer refinement and further reduce questions ambiguity.

Ensuring the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted among public relations related lecturers who are also member of Osun State chapter of NIPR. Cronbach's Alpha was used to analysis the result of the pilot using coefficients above 0.70 which informed internal consistency and reliability satisfactory of the measurement scales. The data collected were analysed in both the descriptive (frequency and percentage) to summarise and present the findings. Ethical principles were meticulously adhered to throughout the course of this study. The respondents were made fully aware of the purpose of this research and willingly participate on a voluntary basis. Prior consent for the collection of data was also sought. Participants' privacy was guaranteed by ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses; all data gathered were strictly for the purpose of this study, without any element of force or physical/psychological harm.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of data collected from the questionnaire administered to respondents, who were Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) member found at the Osun State Chapter secretariat. As described in the previous chapter, one hundred and seventy-seven (177) questionnaires were distributed, and one hundred and seven-five (175) were correctly completed and returned for analysis. The analysis here is thus based on these 175 completed questionnaires. The frequency and percentage method was applied to analyze the data, which is displayed in tables for clarity. The data is presented below:

### Analysis of Demographical Variables

Table 1 Demographic Information

Variables	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	105	59.9%
	Female	70	40.1%
	<b>Total</b>	175	100%
Educational Qualification	ND/NCE	35	19.8%
	HND/BSc	49	28.1%
	NIPR/PGD/MSc	81	46.4%
	PhD	10	5.7%
	<b>Total</b>	175	100%

Sector of PR Work	Government	70	40.1%
	Private	88	50.0%
	Non-profit	17	9.9%
	<b>Total</b>	175	100%
Years of Experience in PR Industry	1-5 years	47	26.6%
	6-10 years	58	33.3%
	11-15 years	35	19.8%
	16+ years	36	20.3%
	<b>Total</b>	175	100%

Source: Field Survey 2026

**Analysis:** The table sought the demographic variables of the respondents. The gender analysis indicated that substantial number of the respondents (59.9%) were male. On education qualification, many of the respondents were either NIPR/PGD or MSc degree holds. The data further pointed out that private sector accounted for most employers (50%). Also, a significant number (33.3%) have 6-10 years of experience. This implies that the respondents are balanced in terms of gender with highly educated and work experienced capable of offering perspective on the perceived problems and prospects of Artificial intelligence (AI) on public relations activities.

**Table 2:** Familiarity with AI among PR practitioners

Familiarity Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very familiar	41	23.4%
Familiar	52	29.7%
Somewhat familiar	58	33.1%
Not familiar	24	13.7%
<b>Total</b>	175	100%

Source: Field Survey 2026

**Analysis:** Table 2 sought professional public relations familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI). A substantial number of the respondents (86.2%) were somehow familiar with AI in public relations.

**Table 3:** Extent of AI Usage in PR Activities in Nigeria

Extent of Usage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High extent	16	9.1%
Average extent	81	46.3%
Not at all	67	38.3%
<b>Total</b>	175	100%

Source: Field Survey 2026

**Analysis:** The table sought the extent to which public relations practitioners are using AI in Nigeria. The data indicated that majority of the respondents (46.3%) admit partial usage of AI.

**Table 4:** Significant Challenges to Adopting AI in Nigeria

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
High costs	49	28.0%
Limited understanding	52	29.7%
Resistance from management	41	23.4%
Technical issues	20	11.4%
Lack of skilled personnel	13	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	175	100%

Source: Field Survey 2026

**Analysis:** The table 4 sought the major barrier facing public relations practitioners in adopting AI. Limited understanding (29.7%), high cost (28%) and resistance from management (23.4%) are the primary challenges facing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI).

**Table 5:** Has AI Improved PR Campaign Efficiency?

Level of Impact	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, significantly	58	33.1%
Yes, to some extent	29	16.6%
No impact	81	46.3%
Decreased efficiency	6	3.4%
<b>Total</b>	175	100%

Source: Field Survey 2026

**Analysis:** Table 5 sought the perceived benefits of AI in public relations operations in Nigeria. Significant number of the respondents (33.1%) perceived high benefit of using AI in daily operation.

**Table 6:** Concern About Ethical Implications of AI in PR

Level of Concern	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very concerned	89	51%
Somewhat concerned	53	30.2%
Not concerned	33	19%
<b>Total</b>	175	100%

Source: Field Survey 2026

**Analysis:** Table 6 sought the level of ethical implications to AI adoption. Nearly half of respondents (51%) are very concerned about ethical issues around the use of AI in public relations, this implies that ethical implication such as transparency and privacy among others are still major concern among practitioners.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results from the analysis revealed that education and experience of public relations practitioners in Osun State is high and it implies a professional with high educational background but does not translate into high adoption rate, though, as a new innovation with some concern, the current situation is still earlier adoption stage which corresponds with the DOI. The large difference between familiarity (86.2%) and actual use indicates a typical innovation adoption lag. The diffusion theory states that when people know about an innovation, they do not necessarily adopt it, they also need to feel that the innovation is useful, compatible, and user-friendly. In this research, it seems that lots of practitioners are merely superficially aware of AI, but they do not have the practical expertise to implement it. This is the reason why familiarity is very large but actual usage is very small.

The perceived attributes of innovation,

which is an essential element of diffusion theory, can also be used to interpret the results. The reason why the adoption is lower than it could be implies that AI is not yet seen by most practitioners as having distinct relative advantage over current PR tools, especially with the split perceptions towards improvements in efficiency. Unless practitioners can observe better results, incentive to adopt will be low. Likewise, the issue of complexity, as perceived by low levels of understanding (29.7%), suggests that the AI can be considered challenging to learn or adopt, thus slowing down its adoption. The issues of compatibility and organizational context are also indicated by cost and managerial resistance. The high price makes it less accessible and management resistance implies that AI might not fit the current organizational procedures or leadership agendas. These obstacles can be aligned with the argument of diffusion theory that innovations are more gradually diffused when they are not in harmony with the existing norms or when they involve tremendous structural changes.

This variable picture of the effect of AI on campaign efficiency can be attributed to the trialability and observability of the innovation. Practitioners might not be able to assess the effectiveness of AI tools where they are not popularly tested, and their outcomes are not easily observed within organizations. This restricts the transition between the persuasion phase to real adoption because people need visible evidence in order to legitimize change. There is an added dimension to the diffusion process with ethical concerns (82.9%). Although it was not initially a core part of the original formulations of diffusion theory, modern usage acknowledges that perceived risks can be very important in adoption choices. The perceived relative advantage of AI might decline because of concerns regarding privacy, bias, and transparency, which will decrease its adoption by practitioners who value professional credibility and trust in the public.

Adopter category-wise, the results indicate that a very few practitioners can be categorized as early adopters or innovators with most being part of early majority or late majority with their hesitations and their requirement of solid evidence before adoption. This is the reason why the process of diffusion was slow in the study area. In general, the results suggest that the adoption of AI in PR practice in the Osun State is at the early diffusion stage in that awareness is high, but adoption is limited due to perceived complexity,

ambiguous benefits, financial limitations, and organizational resistance. This supports the main idea of diffusion theory that the process of adoption of innovations is more of a slow, socially mediated process than a natural consequence of the availability of technology.

In the case of PR practice, the connotation of this is that promotion of AI adoption should not just be limited to raising awareness but instead focusing on capacity building, practical benefit demonstration, cost reduction strategies, and organizational support systems. Increasing the trial opportunities and demonstrating successful use cases will play a key role in transitioning the practitioners out of awareness to full adoption.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that while awareness of artificial intelligence among PR practitioners in Osun State is relatively high, its practical integration into professional activities remains low. The findings also reveal a gap between familiarity and actual adoption, as a significant number of the public relations practitioners are yet to fully integrate AI into their daily operations. Although tools like ChatGPT and social media analytics platforms are increasingly utilized for content creation and audience engagement, adoption is constrained by inadequate technical competence, cost concerns, and organizational resistance. The study therefore concludes that AI has significant potential to improve efficiency and innovation in public relations practice in Osun State, but its benefits remain underutilized due to structural, technical, and institutional barriers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Tertiary institutions offering public relations related courses need to integrate AI literacy and automated tools
2. Public relations body and companies should organise workshops and seminars regularly for their staff on the effective use of artificial intelligence (AI) in their daily routing.
3. Ethical and Regulatory Framework: Relevant regulatory agencies and professional associations should establish clear ethical guidelines addressing transparency, accountability, data privacy, and responsible AI use in PR practice.
4. Government and Institutional Support:

Government and innovation-support agencies should promote digital transformation through grants, subsidies, or incentives that enable PR firms, especially smaller agencies, to adopt cost-effective AI solutions.

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