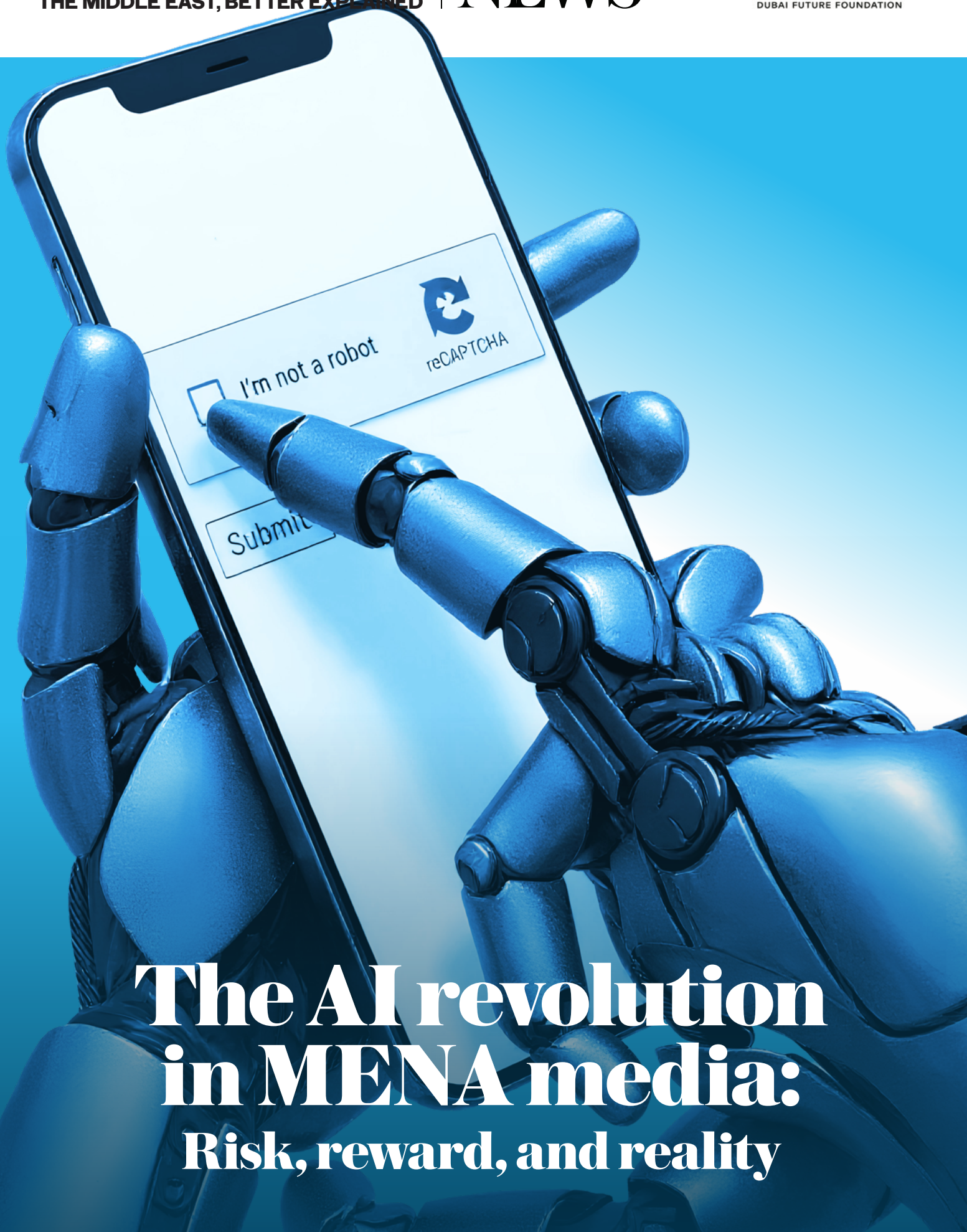




The AI revolution in MENA media:

Risk, reward, and reality

The AI revolution in MENA media: Risk, reward, and reality

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FOREWORD



KHALFAN BELHOUL
Chief Executive Officer
Dubai Future Foundation

Artificial intelligence has already entered the newsroom. What was once seen as an operational advantage has become a matter of institutional survival. Media organisations across our region are rapidly integrating AI to enhance speed, scale and storytelling — but these same technologies are also accelerating a crisis of credibility, accuracy and public trust.

This paper makes one point unmistakably clear: AI will not determine the future of journalism — strategy will. The choices media institutions make now will decide whether AI strengthens editorial purpose or erodes the foundations that uphold it.

Newsrooms are adopting AI at different speeds and for different reasons: some to compete, others to stay alive. Many recognize the remarkable opportunities ahead — greater efficiency, multilingual reach, richer content formats, deeper audience understanding. Yet they also acknowledge the threat: systems that generate errors at scale, platforms that obscure their sources, and content whose origins the public can no longer verify.

The most urgent risk is misplaced trust. If media organisations deploy AI without transparency, governance and strong human oversight, they will accelerate the very distrust they seek to overcome.

The roundtable hosted by Arab News in collaboration with Dubai Future Foundation during the fourth edition of the Dubai Future Forum — the world's largest gathering of futurists — revealed a shared regional conclusion: integration is inevitable — accountability is optional. And it is that optionality that will separate those who lead from those who lose control of their own relevance.

Our region cannot be simply a consumer of AI technologies designed elsewhere. If algorithms begin to shape editorial judgment more than journalists do, we risk outsourcing our informational sovereignty and cultural voice. This is why the region must invest not only in AI adoption, but in AI autonomy — models built around our languages, values and contexts.

For the UAE, this is a strategic national priority. A future-ready society depends on informed citizens. And that requires a media sector capable of protecting truth at the same speed that technology can distort it.

We cannot afford a future where misinformation scales faster than verification, where automation replaces accountability, or where trust becomes irretrievable. The media has long been the guardian of public understanding. Today, it must also be the architect of an information ecosystem worthy of the future.



FAISAL J. ABBAS
Editor-in-Chief
Arab News

As our industry undergoes rapid digital transformation, artificial intelligence technologies — commonly referred to under the shorthand AI — present unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges, reshaping the entire news cycle: from production to consumption and trust. As editor-in-chief of Arab News, one of the region's legacy dailies, it is my privilege to introduce this timely paper on the evolving role of AI in the MENA media landscape.

In the pages that follow, you will find insights drawn from leading regional voices, research, and case studies that explore AI's influence on journalistic integrity, editorial standards, and audience engagement. The report offers a balanced view — recognizing AI's potential to enhance efficiency and innovation, while underscoring the critical importance of ethical governance, transparency, and human oversight.

This paper is designed not as a final word but as a foundation for ongoing dialogue among journalists, policymakers, technology developers, and media consumers across the Middle East. It aims to stimulate thoughtful reflection on how we can harness AI responsibly, protect the core values of credible journalism, and future-proof our precious media institutions in a fast-changing world.

I invite readers to approach this report with an open but critical mind, ready to explore new possibilities while keeping sight of the vital role that human judgment, ethical standards, and cultural context play in shaping the news ecosystem.

As Arab News has repeatedly demonstrated with the launch of groundbreaking AI-led initiatives — from our 50-language translation service to the AI-generated podcast series produced in collaboration with Google — Saudi Arabia's leading English-language daily remains committed to leading this conversation, upholding the highest standards of quality journalism, and supporting the media industry's evolution with expertise and integrity.



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Elda Choucair has served as CEO of Omnicom Media Group (MENA) since 2021. She also chairs the Advertising Business Group, Endeavor UAE, and IAB MENA. In addition, she is a founding board member of the Unstereotype Alliance convened by UN Women, and serves on the advisory council of the Middle East Inclusion and Diversity Council.



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Julien Hawari is the founder and CEO of Million, a non-fungible token-powered social media platform. He previously served as an advisory board member at IdPlizz, an identity and credential validation partner. And he is a member of the board of directors at Akama Holding, a media and tech company, as well as Special Edition FZ LLC, a digital content creation company.



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Mamoon Sbeih is a strategic communications expert, guiding prominent government entities, corporations, and multinationals. He currently serves as president of APCO for the MENA region.



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INTRODUCTION: THE TIPPING POINT FOR NEWS MEDIA

Artificial intelligence has rapidly evolved from a buzzword to a defining force of global industry. Across sectors, organizations are rethinking their operations, processes and even business models, to fully harness the benefits of AI.

The Middle East alone is projected to gain up to \$320 billion from AI by 2030, with the greatest gains accruing to Saudi Arabia, which PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts will benefit by more than \$135.2 billion (about 12.4 percent of its gross domestic product), and the UAE, where AI is expected to contribute \$96 billion (13.6 percent of GDP).¹

Another PwC analysis recently forecast that in an optimal scenario, driven by widespread adoption of AI and decisive environmental action, the region's GDP is projected to reach \$4.68 trillion by 2035, up from \$3.57 trillion currently.²

According to research published in a recent white paper by market intelligence company IDC, "98 percent of surveyed organizations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia believe that AI will profoundly transform their businesses, driving them to prioritize AI-driven initiatives."³

Addressing fears that AI will put large numbers of people out of work, the World Economic Forum predicts that while 92 million jobs will vanish globally by 2030, 170 million new roles will be cre-

ated, a net increase of 78 million.⁴

With the advent of generative AI the technology has reached a new inflection point, marking a significant shift for individuals, businesses and governments alike.

Unlike traditional systems that analyze and classify existing data, generative AI can create entirely new content — text, images, audio, video, code and even design concepts — based on patterns it has learned. This shift has dramatically broadened the impact of AI, transforming it from a backend optimization tool into a driver of creativity, content production and decision-making.

Its ability to generate content at scale has created unprecedented opportunities for content-driven industries, particularly media and journalism.

Generative AI represents the biggest creative and operational opportunity the news industry has seen in decades, yet at the same time potentially poses a significant threat to credibility, integrity and the foundations of public trust.

This paradox raises profound questions for editors and newsroom leaders about accuracy, ethics, originality and verification; about the role of human judgment; and about what it will mean to preserve trust in a landscape where automation becomes inseparable from creation.

It was in this context that newspaper editors, heads of TV stations, media industry leaders and AI experts from the region gathered to discuss the future of media and news at a roundtable meeting organized by Arab News at the Dubai Future Forum in November 2025.



For the region's news media, AI represents something deeper than economic potential: a direct challenge to the foundations of credibility, trust and fact-based reporting.



Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, speaks on the future of artificial intelligence during a public discussion. AFP



Fedha, the AI newsreader unveiled by Kuwait News in 2023, delivers a segment from the outlet's virtual studio. AFP

ARAB NEWS

RESEARCH
& STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED



Moderated by Noor Nugali, deputy editor-in-chief of Arab News, the session underscored both the urgency and scale of change, emphasizing the need for media organizations to understand how generative AI will reshape newsrooms and business models, and the importance of developing robust regulatory frameworks within the region to ensure safe and sustainable adoption.

Participants expressed a shared belief that AI is no longer a distant concept but an active force already reshaping the way newsrooms operate. Several noted that transformation is not limited to workflow or processes but extends to long-term organizational survival.

Nayla Tueni, the CEO and editor-in-chief of Lebanon-based An-Nahar and An-Nahar Al-Arabi, spoke about the revitalization of the An-Nahar news brand, crediting the company's renewed success to its digital transformation.

"I don't think that journalism will end," Tueni said. "Journalism will continue, people will continue. But if they don't transform, they cannot continue because the world is transforming and changing every second."

Across the board, the media leaders agreed that the adoption of AI had shifted from a strategic advantage to a business imperative.

While 88 percent of organizations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia that have already invested in AI have reported improved business performance over the past two years, those still in the planning stages of

adoption have fallen behind, reporting considerably weaker results, a study found.⁵

"AI is here to stay, and the impact of AI overall is far bigger and deeper than anything we've witnessed before," said Mamoon Sbeih, public affairs and strategic communications consultancy APCO's president for the Middle East and North Africa region.

Just as digitization once determined whether legacy institutions would survive the first wave of disruption, AI will shape who thrives in the next.

As the roundtable discussion made clear, the industry is not asking whether it should adopt AI but how to harness it most effectively, and the first step is understanding where the greatest opportunities lie.

OPPORTUNITIES: A NEW ERA FOR MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

For news organizations, the first and most immediate opportunity arising from generative AI lies in the newsroom itself.

AI is already proving invaluable in news production, expediting time-consuming processes such as transcribing interviews, generating captions and subtitles, summarizing reports, monitoring information flows, and assisting with research.

One of the strongest opportunities identified during the roundtable discussion was the ability to integrate generative AI with the work of journalists, rather than using it to replace them.

Deepfake images of US Presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump illustrating the rising risks of AI-driven political deception. Supplied

Mina Al-Oraibi, editor in chief of Emirati newspaper The National, shared how her organization held a full-newsroom brainstorming workshop dedicated exclusively to AI.

Success, she noted, lies in ensuring that AI is not seen as an external directive but as a tool, the best practices and lessons of which are driven from within the newsroom itself. This approach enables journalists to “get ahead of the curve rather than be eaten up by the curve,” she said.

An-Nahar’s Tueni said adaptation equips journalists and news organizations to communicate in a multimedia world, build closer relationships with younger audiences and tell stories in formats that resonate.

From the UAE to Lebanon and beyond, journalists are increasingly using AI for routine tasks. One study, covering 76 markets, found that 81 percent of journalists now use AI in their work, with nearly half of them using it daily.⁶

The value of AI lies in handling routine tasks, giving journalists the freedom to focus on deeper, more creative work and significantly increasing their productivity, several of the roundtable participants said.

Journalists globally are already using AI for tasks such as improving content (55.3 percent), translation (51.8 percent), research and inspiration (48.8 percent), data analysis (42.9 percent), fact-checking (37.6 percent) and transcription (34.1 percent).⁷

They can apply the capabilities of generative AI to create richer explanatory articles, enhanced data visualizations, smarter distribution formats, and more personal-

ized audience experiences — all without compromising editorial integrity.

As Tueni said, journalists today are content creators in the same way they always have been. What has changed is the nature of content itself and the role of the journalist, who now needs to produce for multiple platforms in different formats to meet the needs of audiences wherever they are.

In some Western markets, only 12 percent of readers are comfortable with fully AI-generated news, while 21 percent are comfortable with a “human in the loop,” 43 percent are more happy when a human takes the lead with some AI help, and 62 percent still prefer entirely human-created news reports.⁸

However, a separate study found that residents of the UAE are more likely than the global average to trust AI-generated news. They are also more comfortable with the use of generative AI for writing news stories (55 percent), as well as for news in videos (54 percent) and audio (53 percent).⁹

This signals a media climate in the region that might allow news organizations to explore innovation more freely than in other markets where audience resistance remains high.

The opportunities AI offers newsrooms largely depends on how the technology is adopted. As Nabeel Al-Khatib, general manager of Asharq News Services, put it, the question is no longer what AI can do, given that it can be directed to do any task, but what it should do.

But to fully seize the promise of AI, media organizations must confront a



Despite widespread adoption, most journalists using AI have received little or no training.



Dubai Future Foundation, in collaboration with Arab News, hosts a roundtable on AI's impact on the regional media industry on the sidelines of the Dubai Future Forum. Arab News

parallel reality: the risks that, if unmanaged, it could undermine the very value the technology seeks to unlock.

**THREATS AND DANGERS:
NAVIGATING THE RISKS
THAT COULD UNDERMINE
THE PROMISE OF AI**

Technology news site CNET came under fire in 2023 after it was revealed it had published dozens of articles generated by AI systems without proper disclosure. Many of those stories contained serious factual errors; CNET issued lengthy corrections for 41 of 77 AI-generated articles.¹⁰

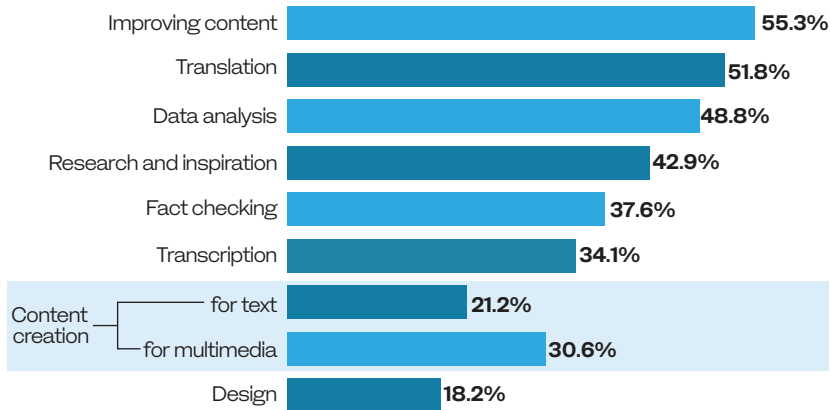
Later that same year, Sports Illustrated was accused of publishing articles under bylines tied to fake authors, with headshots and biographical details that appeared to be AI-generated¹¹.

These incidents raised serious red flags across an industry that now finds itself confronting the threats the rapidly developing technology poses to its core principles of journalistic integrity, accuracy, credibility and transparency.

While media outlets report some benefits from the use of AI, including increased operational efficiencies, multilingual accessibility, and enhanced content creation and creativity, journalists and editors have expressed major concerns about the adoption of AI in the newsroom.

These concerns include the spread of misinformation and disinformation, the ethical implications and the lack of accuracy and originality in AI-generated content, as well as the absence of adequate regulations and clear frameworks for transparency and accountability amid declining public trust in the media.

HOW JOURNALISTS USE AI



Source: "Journalism in the AI era: Opportunities and challenges in the Global South and emerging economies" by the Thomson Reuters Foundation (2025)

During the Arab News media roundtable discussion, industry leaders acknowledged that while the integration of AI into journalism is inevitable, its rapid adoption exposes newsrooms to profound structural risks that demand the urgent development of internal policies and ethical guidelines to protect foundational journalistic values and rein in the ever-evolving technology.

No threat is more urgent, or more universally acknowledged, than AI-driven misinformation and disinformation. This year's World Economic Forum Global Risks Report ranked this as the global No. 1 short-term threat for the second year in a row, and the fifth-most severe risk over the next decade.¹²

Besides enabling malicious actors to orchestrate the spread of disinformation at unprecedented speed and scale, AI also inadvertently generates misin-



A web browser window reflecting the look and feel of pre-AI web navigation. Shutterstock

formation through errors and inaccuracies that might enter newsroom workflows and ultimately reach the public.

Rashid Al-Marri, the CEO for the media regulation sector at Dubai Media Council, said mistakes by journalists or government officials who use AI to generate content can happen. And in an era when the public is confronted with a lot of AI-generated content, they turn to official sources and reputable media outlets as the “final source of truth,” so inaccurate information can cause serious damage, he noted.

An intensive international study in October 2025, coordinated by the European Broadcasting Union and led by the BBC, found consistent accuracy problems across four major AI systems: ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini and Perplexity.

The review found that 45 percent of AI-generated answers contained at least one significant issue, 31 percent had sourcing failures such as missing, misleading or incorrect attributions, and 20 percent included major factual inaccuracies, including fabricated details or outdated information.¹³

AI-powered search engines can also reinforce and recirculate misinformation, as they sometimes draw on unreliable or outdated sources, creating a feedback loop in which inaccuracies are repeatedly reproduced and amplified.

This is due to the enormous and uncurated data sets on which the large-language models they use are trained, including vast collections of books, articles, forums, news sites, social media posts and other publicly available text.

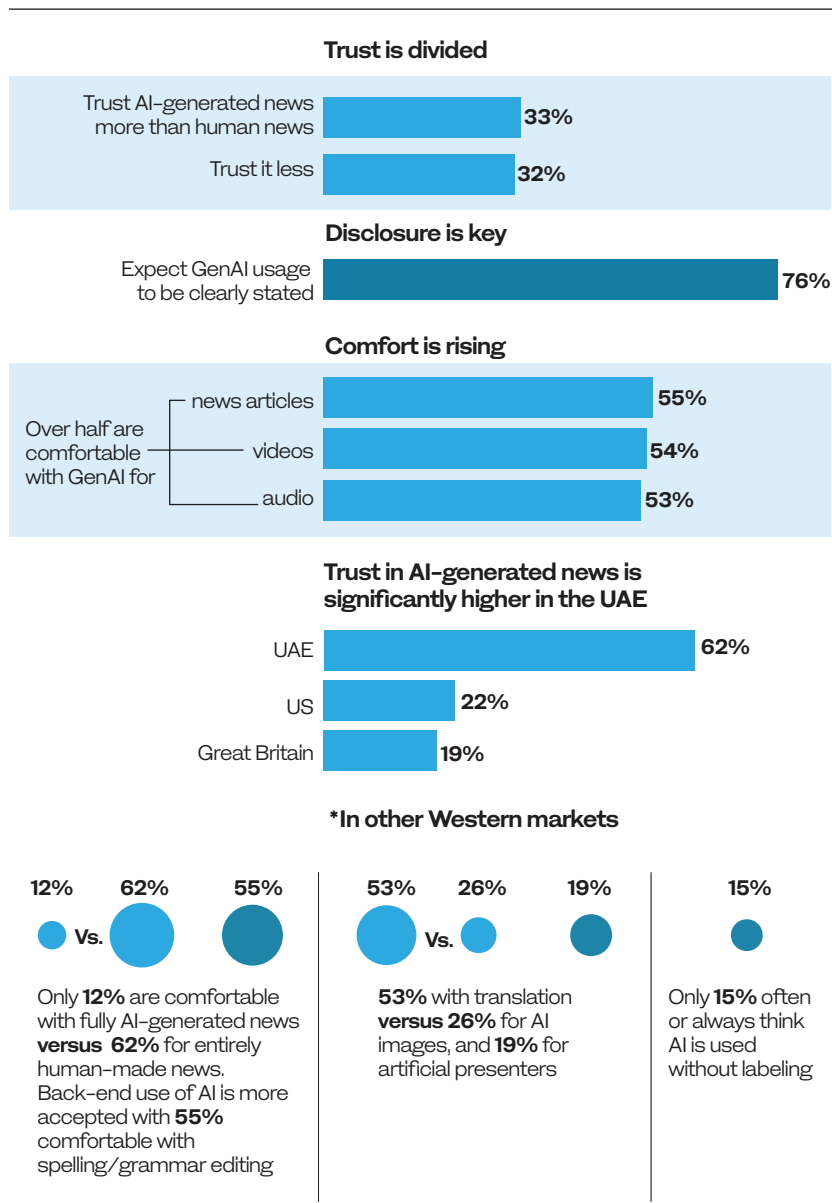
This AI-training process has direct implications for accuracy and reliability in the newsroom. AI systems can also reproduce or amplify any bias present in training data, an issue that is particularly dangerous in journalism, which must maintain fairness and accuracy.

The use of AI in the creation of news content sparked concerns among the roundtable speakers about originality and risk of lower-quality work, as well as the ethical implications around issues such as copyright infringement, plagiarism, inadequate attribution, and limited transparency about the ways in which media organizations deploy the technology — concerns made all the more complex by the absence of regional AI regulations.

Although nearly half of journalists reported using AI daily, in one study 53.4 percent expressed ethical concerns about its growing role in the newsroom, 54.3 percent feared a reduction in creativity and original reporting, 51.4 percent worried about erosion of critical-thinking skills, and 49 percent feared a long-term increase in misinformation as

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION OF AI IN NEWS

What UAE audiences think



Sources: “Trust or concern? Generative AI in media” by YouGov (2025).
Generative AI and News Report 2025: How People Think About AI’s Role in Journalism and Society” by the Reuters Institute and the University of Oxford (2025).
Argentina, Denmark, France, Japan, UK, US

a result of the increased adoption of AI.¹⁴

Asharq’s Al-Khatib warned that an over-reliance on the technology was shifting the power to define editorial policies and ethical guidelines away from editorial leadership toward “engineers.”

“Practically, it is not my engineer who created those agents,” he said. “It is the engineers who invented the tools where agents are connected to, and those tools are sitting in Silicon Valley in the cloud.”

Industry leaders at the roundtable reported difficulties in proving copyright infringement under current laws, especially as the black-box nature of AI obscures the sources of training data.



This global concern has prompted several news organizations to follow the example of The New York Times, which in December 2023 filed a landmark lawsuit against OpenAI and Microsoft, alleging that their AI models had been trained on millions of the newspaper's copyrighted articles without permission.¹⁵

Acknowledging these challenges, the participants called for the urgent adoption of internal ethical guidelines, in the absence of unified AI regulations, to control the use of automated tools in the newsroom.

They also stressed the need to train and empower newsroom staff to uphold rigorous editorial standards, and to use AI to enhance efficiency while avoiding an over-reliance on the technology that could lead to homogenized or inaccurate content.

Human oversight remains indispensable, they said, especially in the use of fact-checking and verification as a core journalistic principle. And as newsroom functions become increasingly automated, there is a need to preserve a strong “human in the loop” layer within the production process that prepares content for public consumption.

“We believe it’s human first, human last,” said An-Nahar’s Tueni. “We need to always fact-check everything, but at the same time we need to use all the tools.”

As AI-generated content becomes more widespread, media organizations are facing growing pressure to disclose how and when AI has been used in their workflows, as a response to declining public trust and heightened concerns about transparency in the production of news.

One study found that 70 percent of people globally were unsure whether online content could be trusted, an issue further exacerbated by the fact that more than half of people feel unable to identify AI-generated misinformation.¹⁶

The public also has limited confidence in routine human oversight of AI use in news. A study by the Reuters Institute and the University of Oxford found that only 33 percent of people believed journalists “always” or “often” check AI outputs before publishing, and about 15 percent said they often or always suspected AI had been used without this being disclosed.¹⁷

The roundtable participants called

Kuwait News’ AI anchor Fedha—launched in 2023—delivers a segment from the outlet’s virtual newsroom. AFP

for greater transparency and frameworks to ensure accuracy inside newsrooms, noting that the credibility of journalists is more crucial than ever in the fragmented media landscape.

Paradoxically, despite growing concerns about transparency, recent research suggests that as awareness of AI-driven misinformation grows, audiences are placing greater value on credible news brands, turning to trusted institutions to help them distinguish authentic information from fabricated content.¹⁸

The National's Al-Oraibi said that while Google's AI Overviews initially resulted in a reduction of search-engine traffic directed to the newspaper's website, more people later began to register for access to paywalled content, which "shows that the person who's doing the prompt is interested in deeper knowledge than we initially thought."

The rapid rise of AI, often fueling online misinformation in the process, is putting pressure on media organizations to publish and convey the truth more quickly while still maintaining high-quality reporting. In this environment, the roundtable participants said, automation can scale output dramatically but only human editors, copy editors and proofreaders can safeguard the quality of the content before it reaches audiences.

The most viable path forward in this tech revolution, they added, is to confront the risks and build guardrails to protect audiences, the journalism profession and the broader information ecosystem.

"Let's hope that people do believe that the truth is linked to journalism, to the industry of journalism. And that would protect the journalism in the future," said APCO's Sbeih.

PREPARING FOR AN AI-DRIVEN MEDIA INDUSTRY

The media industry now faces a strategic inflection point: regulation, education and technological sovereignty have become operational necessities.

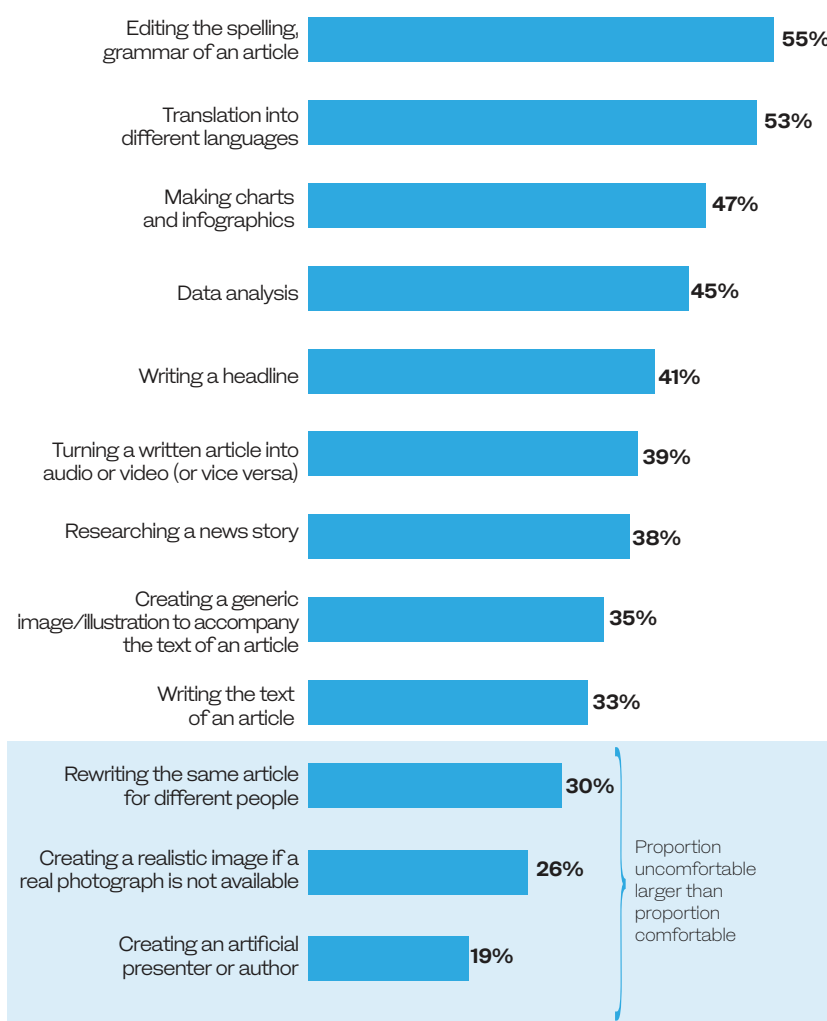
Avneesh Prakash, CEO of localization and translation business CAMB.AI, noted that AI, like any innovation, needs to be regulated.

Just as a car is designed with both an accelerator and a brake, AI must include a "kill switch" because it requires "human judgment, human creativity and human resilience," he said.

Pierre Choueiri, the chairperson and CEO of media representation company Choueiri Group, emphasized the need to adopt AI technology but warned: "We should not become slaves of the machine. The machine should be a slave to human beings. And this is where governments, or regulations, should come in."

The roundtable participants drew com-

AUDIENCE COMFORT WITH GENAI NEWSROOM TASKS



Sources: "Generative AI and News Report 2025: How People Think About AI's Role in Journalism and Society" by the Reuters Institute and the University of Oxford (2025)

parisons between the state of regulations in the region and in Western markets, such as Europe, which is heavier on regulation but slower on innovation, and in the US and China, which are attempting to strike a balance between innovation and regulation.

The MENA region, however, has yet to develop a robust, cohesive framework for regulation. Saudi Arabia has published several guides, such as the Saudi Data and AI Authority's "AI Ethics Principles" in 2023,¹⁹ and its guidelines for the public on generative AI in 2024.²⁰ The Kingdom also introduced its Global AI Hub Law earlier this year with the aim of strengthening its position as world leader in the technology.²¹

However, strategic advisor Mazen Hayek said the Middle East needs its own version of the General Data Protection Regulation, which is widely regarded as the toughest privacy and security law in the world and has been protecting consumer privacy and data rights in the EU and UK since 2018.

It would be “inconceivable” for Arab consumers to be left facing significant potential risks with no regulatory protections in place for such a strategically important sector, he said.

Similar laws do already exist in some parts of the region, including personal data protection laws in Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. However none of these are as stringent or comprehensive as the European GDPR.

Globally, legislative mentions of AI have rose by 21.3 percent across 75 countries since 2023, researchers found, with a nine-fold increase since 2016.²²

The EU AI Act,²³ which came into effect last year, is first-of-its-kind legislation that aims to promote the development of trustworthy AI while protecting fundamental rights and public safety.

In the US, federal agencies introduced 59 AI-related regulations in 2024, more than double the number in 2023 and covering twice as many agencies.²⁴

Experts and governments are not alone in their desire to regulate AI: 70 percent of respondents in one global survey said regulation was needed, ranging from 56 percent in the UAE to 86 percent in Finland.

The same study found that 87 percent of respondents wanted stronger laws to combat AI-generated misinformation, and expected media companies, including social media, to strengthen their fact-checking processes.²⁵

Hayek also called on the AI industry as a whole to create and abide by a “new social contract” that ensures transparency when AI is used in the creation of any content. Public sentiment seems to align with this view.

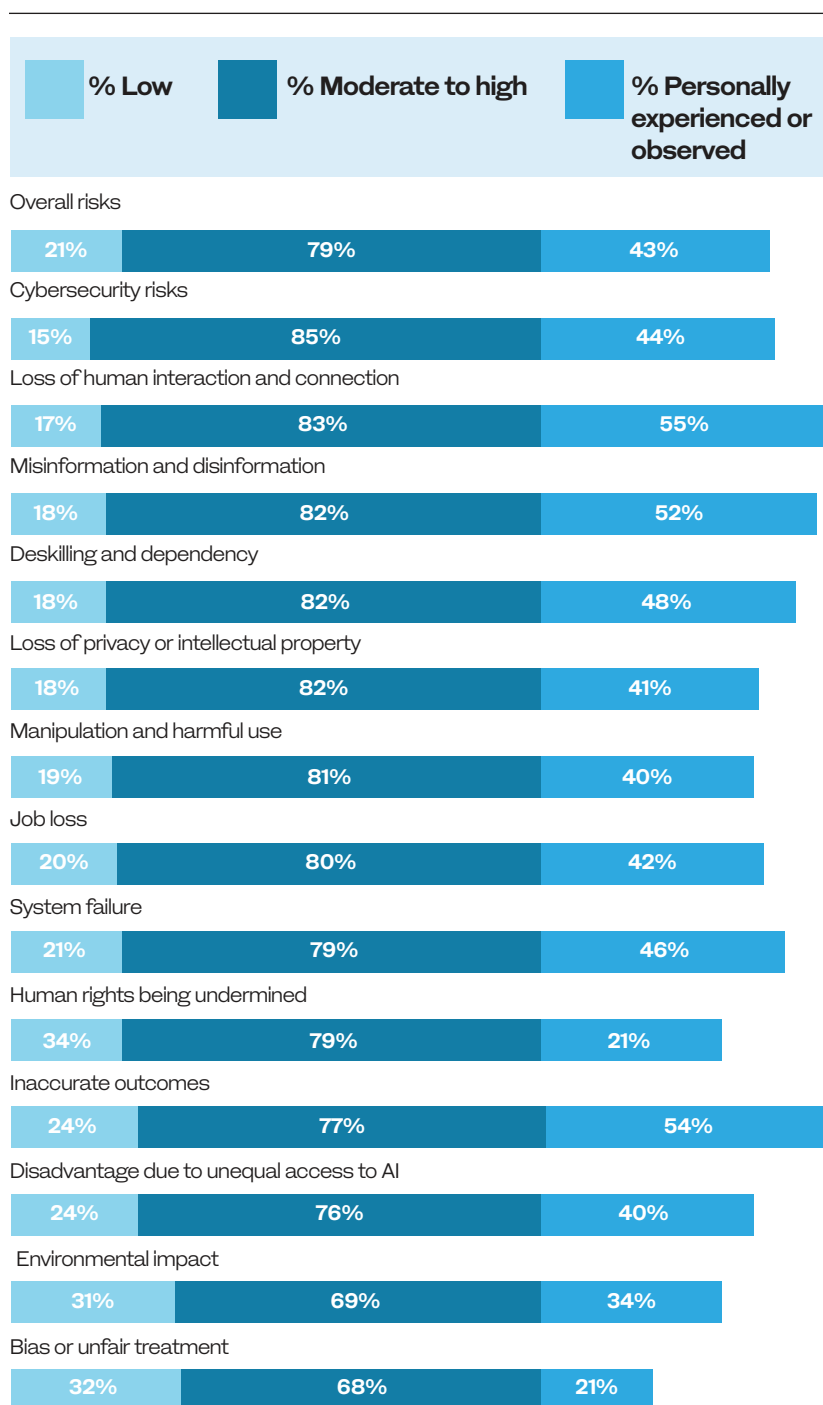
According to one study, 76 percent of UAE residents believe it is important to disclose the use of generative AI.²⁶ Other research found that 76 percent of Americans are of the opinion that the ability to tell whether pictures, videos and text have been created by AI or humans is “very” or “extremely” important.²⁷

APCO’s Sbeih said the issue is not simply a matter of differences in national policies, but rather the “stark absence” of a global, rule-based world order. In the absence of any unified global regulations, he urged participants to establish their own ethical guidelines and guardrails for the use of AI.

To maintain trust and editorial integrity, the experts argued, news organizations must retain full autonomy over the AI systems they use, from building their own large language models to monitoring and adjusting their outputs.

CAMB.AI’s Prakash said that journalists still have the ability to exercise meaningful control over AI systems by guiding them with clear instructions.

PERCEIVED RISKS AND EXPERIENCED NEGATIVE OUTCOMES FROM AI USE



Source: “Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence: A Global Study 2025” by KPMG

Large language models are not inherently “uncontrollable,” he argued, they can be trained using the same principles that have always governed journalism.

Some participants suggested that the only way to fully safeguard ethical standards for journalism in the deployment of AI is for news organizations to develop their own proprietary large language models in-house.

Along with the need for regional regulation and clear newsroom policies on



use of AI, they also emphasized the need for sovereignty over the technology models organizations choose to use.

Hayek, the strategic advisor, said the main challenge newsrooms in the region face is limited sovereignty over the technology, which restricts their ability to lead and shape content independently.

“We live in a region that has zero control over the platforms and the technology that we consume,” he said, refer-

ring to the dominance of big US tech firms such as Meta and Alphabet.

He called for the creation of a platform that empowers the region to create and distribute its own content, so that the media industry does not have to be “at the mercy of the black box of the big four tech (companies).”

In response to this tech sovereignty deficiency, several countries have already launched efforts designed to strengthen their AI capabilities. Saudi Arabia’s Public

A robot radio host sits behind the mic, symbolizing the growing role of AI in the media industry. Shutterstock

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THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

A conceptual image illustrating the growing sense of being overwhelmed and consumed by today's nonstop media ecosyste. Shutterstock



Investment Fund, for example, this year launched the company Humain to consolidate the Kingdom's ambitions for AI services, data centers, cloud capabilities and an Arabic large language model.²⁸

In 2024, Saudi authorities announced plans to invest up to \$100 billion in "Project Transcendence," an initiative that aims to establish a tech hub within the country focusing on investment in data centers, startups and other infrastructure crucial for the development of AI.²⁹

While there was consensus during the roundtable talks on the need for regulation and regional tech sovereignty, several participants also highlighted a growing need for improved education and awareness, inside and outside of the newsroom.

The main challenge, An-Nahar's Tueni said, "is to transform people, to let them adapt and create more and more in different ways," while preserving the trust of the audience and maintaining brand legacy.

The skills of existing journalists need to be developed to keep pace with technological change, which is no easy task in an increasingly multiplatform world, Tueni noted.

In one study this year, 50.6 percent of surveyed journalists said a lack of understanding of the available tools represented a key challenge to the integration of AI technology in their work.

The top-three reasons they cited for not using AI in their work were lack of awareness or knowledge about the tools (55.3 percent), insufficient training or support (52.6 percent), and lack of access to the necessary technology (47.4 percent). Almost 80 percent of journalists said there was no established policy for the use of AI in their newsrooms.³⁰

Another issue highlighted by the roundtable participants was the need to help the public identify AI content.

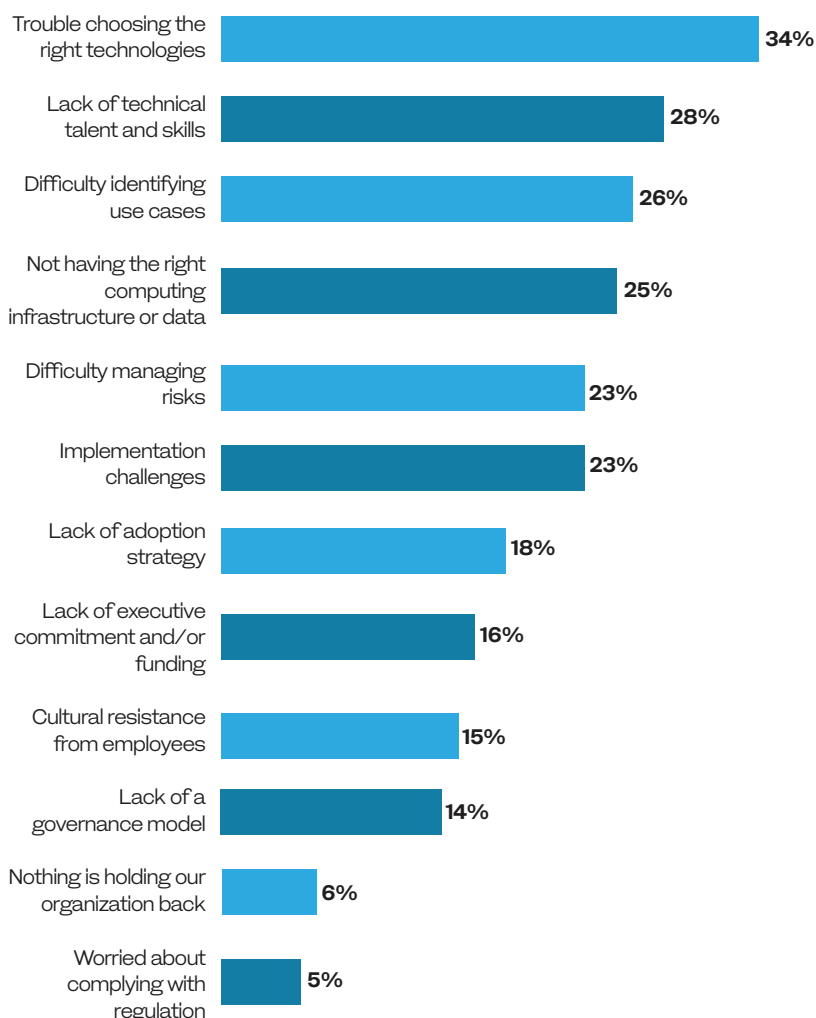
"We need to create awareness for the consumers, for our children, for everybody, that sometimes if you really want the truth, you've got to wait," said Elda Choucair, the CEO of Omnicom Media Group MENA.

CONCLUSION: AI STRATEGY MATTERS MORE THAN AI TECHNOLOGY

In the Middle East, a region that is rapidly adopting AI yet lacks comprehensive, GDPR-level protections, the responsibility currently falls on media organizations themselves to be unequivocal about their values, and uncompromising in their role as protectors of factual, verified information as audiences struggle to distinguish truth from fabrication.

Robust internal governance, strong ethical guidelines, clear labeling and attribution practices, and transparent newsroom policies have become essential tools for the preservation of journalistic standards at a time

TOP ADOPTION BARRIERS FOR ORGANIZATIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA, UAE, QATAR



Source: "The Perfect Storm: A Perspective on Unlocking AI's Value in the Middle East" by Deloitte AI Institute and Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence

when misinformation is expected to increase alongside technological advancement.

As the roundtable participants concluded, the future of journalism will be shaped by the ethics and discernment of the humans who guide AI.

"The technology, per se, is not wrong ... But if you do ask the wrong questions, you will definitely get wrong answer," said CAMB.AI's Prakash.

The need to strengthen human capabilities inside the newsroom is just as critical. The training and upskilling of journalists in AI literacy is essential to prevent errors, uphold the quality of news, and empower newsrooms to harness AI technology in creative and purposeful ways.

The future of journalism will hinge on the choices media organizations are making today to help control, shape and steer the use of AI for the benefit of newsrooms and, ultimately, the truth.

GLOSSARY

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The capability of computational systems to perform tasks requiring human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving.

GenAI (Generative AI): A subset of AI that produces new content based on training data, including text, images, audio and video.

LLM (Large Language Model): Advanced AI models trained on vast amounts of text to understand and generate human-like language.

GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation): An EU law regulating data protection and privacy for individuals within the bloc, influencing global policies.

Personal Data Protection Law: National laws in MENA countries aiming to protect personal data, aligning with global privacy standards.

AI Bias: Systematic errors and discrimination in AI outputs caused by prejudiced or unrepresentative training data or algorithms.

Disinformation: Deliberately false or misleading information spread to deceive or manipulate public opinion.

Misinformation: False or inaccurate information shared without intent to mislead.

Deepfakes: Synthetic media where AI is used to create realistic but fake images, videos, or audio of people.

Hallucination: Instances where AI-generated information is false, fabricated, or not supported by factual data.

AI-generated News: News content created fully or partially by AI systems, including automated writing and multimedia production.

Fact-checking: The process of verifying information for accuracy to combat misinformation and disinformation.

AI Governance: The frameworks and mechanisms for overseeing AI development and ensuring compliance with laws and ethics.

AI Ethics: Moral principles guiding responsible AI design and use, focusing on fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Tech Sovereignty: The ability of a country or region to independently control and manage its digital infrastructure and technologies without reliance on external powers.

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ARAB NEWS

Established in 1975, the Riyadh-based Arab News is the Middle East's leading English language daily. Part of regional publishing powerhouse, SRMG, Arab News has been Saudi Arabia's newspaper of the record for half a century, and has regional hubs in London, Dubai, Islamabad and Tokyo. Since 2016, the newspaper has undergone a digital transformation strategy which saw it enhance its web presence and launch three additional editions: Arab News Pakistan, Arab News Japan and Arab News en Francais. In 2025, Arab News partnered up with CAMB.AI to launch its website in 50 different languages

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