

AI and the future of journalism: Between China's media revolution and Malaysia's challenges

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INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving digital era, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not only transforming how we communicate but fundamentally reshaping the global news industry. Since Alan Turing first proposed the concept of AI in 1950, this technology has advanced at a breakneck pace, impacting various sectors including media and journalism. Globally, developed countries like the United States and Western Europe have long embraced AI to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of news reporting.

This follow-up article expands on the previous report, "The News Industry and Journalism in China and Malaysia," by exploring how AI is revolutionizing the media sector in China and the significant challenges Malaysia faces in adopting intelligent technology to strengthen digital journalism. This focus is critical because modern media is not just a news disseminator but also a social change agent that must balance technological progress with ethical values and public trust.

AI AND THE GLOBAL MEDIA REVOLUTION

Since Alan Turing asked, "Can machines think?" in 1950, the field of AI has undergone tremendous growth. Today, AI is no longer just a supportive tool it has become central to automation, big data analysis, and real-time news production (Russell & Norvig, 2021). In the United States, companies like the Associated Press and Reuters use AI algorithms to automatically generate financial and sports reports, accelerating broadcast times and improving data accuracy.

China, in particular, has integrated AI into every facet of media operations through national strategies such as the New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan (2017). This technology allows Chinese media to efficiently control information flow while enriching user experience through advanced interactivity and multimedia content.

Conversely, Malaysia still struggles with widespread AI adoption in media, hindered by the absence of focused policies and inconsistent investment (MCMC, 2023). While some Malaysian media organizations have started experimenting with AI, their implementation remains far from matching the progress seen in countries like China.

AI SOPHISTICATION IN CHINA'S MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

Since AI became a national agenda in 2017, China has witnessed a remarkable media transformation. AI-powered newsbots developed by companies such as Tencent and Baidu can produce reports within seconds after events occur. For example, the Jiuzhaigou earthquake was reported in under 25 seconds, demonstrating AI's capability for rapid and accurate news production (South China Morning Post, 2024). Beyond newsbots, smart drones and 360-degree visuals enhance coverage of events like National Day parades, providing viewers with immersive interactive experiences. The use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies is becoming commonplace for covering significant news, allowing audiences to virtually "experience" events.

Interactive tools like the 'Robot Xiaofeng' facilitate two-way communication between media and users, while WeChat's intelligent filtering system curbs the spread of fake news. Research by Thurman et al. (2017) emphasizes that AI in Chinese media not only accelerates reporting but also improves content accuracy and interactivity, proving that AI can holistically strengthen the news ecosystem.

MALAYSIA'S REALITY: VAST POTENTIAL, REAL CHALLENGES

Although Malaysia has long recognized digital media pioneered by Malaysiakini in 1999 AI use in local newsrooms remains limited. According to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC, 2023), less than 15% of Malaysian media organizations extensively use AI in content production. Major barriers include a shortage of AI-skilled personnel, uneven investment distribution, and a lack of national AI policies specific to journalism.

Furthermore, inadequate technology infrastructure, especially in rural areas, restricts effective adoption of advanced tools. Studies indicate only about 20% of local journalists have received AI and data science training, which hampers comprehensive integration of smart technologies (MCMC, 2023).

Nonetheless, AI's potential is enormous particularly in user behavior analysis, automated content generation, real-time fact-checking, and content personalization based on reader preferences. Early initiatives by institutions like the University of Malaya and startups such as NewsBot.my show promising development. For instance, NewsBot.my uses AI to generate news in Bahasa Malaysia and other local languages, while performing live fact-checking to combat fake news spread (New Straits Times, 2025).

AI AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN JOURNALISM

AI is reshaping journalists' roles from traditional tasks to a more dynamic smart ecosystem. Automated reporting and data translation enable journalists to focus on investigative reporting and in-depth analysis that require critical thinking and creativity.

AI-generated virtual news anchors allow 24/7 uninterrupted coverage, while VR and AR technologies enhance user engagement by providing more interactive and compelling visual experiences (Tez-López et al., 2018).

Thurman et al. (2017) found that sports journalists view AI as a complementary tool in their workflow, whereas Tez-López et al. (2018) noted that although AI supports data processing, many journalists remain cautious about fully trusting AI-generated editorial content highlighting the continued need for human editorial judgment to maintain journalistic integrity.

ETHICAL ISSUES, ALGORITHMS, AND THE FUTURE OF MEDIA

While AI offers great promise, it also raises serious ethical concerns. Transparency is a primary issue when AI-generated content contains inaccuracies or unnoticed biases. Algorithms can create filter bubbles that reinforce news polarization, while threatening traditional journalists' job security (Pariser, 2011).

The misuse of AI technologies such as automated bots in political propaganda campaigns or orchestrated fake news dissemination reminds us of risks that must be urgently addressed (Howard & Woolley, 2018).

However, AI should be regarded as an empowerment tool capable of enhancing journalism quality when combined with human ethics and professionalism. Policymakers, journalists, and the public must collaborate to establish clear control mechanisms and guidelines for AI use in media.

UNLOCKING THE PROMISE OF AI IN MALAYSIA'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE

I believe that to fully harness the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Malaysia's media industry, several strategic steps must be prioritized. First, it is essential to develop a comprehensive national policy that provides a clear and ethical framework for AI integration in journalism. This should include robust guidelines, regulatory oversight, and structured training components that support innovation while ensuring accountability. I also believe that targeted education and training programs are vital; journalists, editors, and media professionals must be equipped with the necessary skills in AI, data analytics, and automation tools to utilize the technology effectively while maintaining journalistic integrity.

Equally important is investment in digital infrastructure, particularly in expanding nationwide high-speed broadband access, which I believe is crucial for bridging the urban-rural technological divide. Strengthening public-private partnerships between the government, academic institutions, and media organizations can further accelerate AI innovation and commercialization. Lastly, I believe that enhancing media literacy among the public is key to ensuring responsible media consumption. By fostering greater awareness of AI's role in news production, audiences can be empowered to critically evaluate the credibility and intentions behind the content they consume.

CONCLUSION

The comparison between China and Malaysia reveals contrasting approaches to AI integration in media. China leads with strategic policy support and systematic investment, while Malaysia still requires a comprehensive framework to fully harness AI's potential. Moving forward, Malaysia must strengthen its AI ecosystem through journalist education and training, clear national policies, and collaborative efforts. The active role of journalists, policymakers, and society is crucial to ensure AI delivers maximum benefits with minimal risks. Only through a blend of technology, ethics,

and innovation can the future media revolution be realized fairly, inclusively, and meaningfully.

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