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## The Role of AI in Content Creation: A Case Study of Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) and Tanzania Standard Newspapers

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Tanzanian newsrooms, focusing on Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) and Tanzania Standard Newspapers (TSN). Despite global interest in AI for journalism, limited research addresses its use in African contexts, where training and resources are often constrained. A qualitative case study approach was employed, using interviews and observations with journalists and digital media staff. Findings indicate that AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Piktochart, Canva, Google Analytics, and Transkriptor support drafting, transcription, data visualization, and audience analysis, but adoption is uneven, with 50% engagement on the Online/Digital Desk compared to 20% on the Print Desk. Key challenges include limited formal training (95% of journalists untrained), inadequate infrastructure, and absence of editorial policies or ethical guidelines. The study highlights AI's potential to improve efficiency and workflows while emphasizing the need for structured training, policy frameworks, and transparency to ensure responsible adoption, safeguard journalistic integrity, and enhance content quality in Tanzania.

### INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a central driver of transformation in contemporary journalism, fundamentally reshaping how news content is produced, processed, and distributed. Advances in algorithmic systems, Natural Language Processing (NLP), and machine learning have enabled news organizations to automate routine reporting, analyze large datasets, conduct real-time fact-checking, and personalize content for diverse audiences (Diakopoulos, 2019; Thurman *et al.*, 2019). These technologies are increasingly embedded within newsroom workflows, leading to new models of human-AI collaboration where journalists work alongside intelligent systems to enhance efficiency and scalability (Freixa Font, Codina, & Pérez-Montoro, 2021). As highlighted by the Reuters Institute, AI is no longer experimental but has become integral to modern newsroom operations, influencing editorial decision-making and content distribution practices (Newman, 2024; Newman *et al.*, 2023).

While AI adoption in journalism is accelerating globally, its integration within African media systems remains uneven and underexamined. Research indicates that most African newsrooms are still in the early stages of AI adoption, constrained by limited technological infrastructure, insufficient financial resources, low levels of digital literacy, and weak policy frameworks (Mutsvairo & Orgeret, 2024; Gagliardone, 2019). In Tanzania, media institutions are increasingly pursuing digital-first

strategies in response to changing audience behaviors; however, evidence suggests that the practical application of AI in newsroom content creation is still minimal and inconsistent. According to the UNESCO AI4MD report, a majority of Tanzanian journalists lack formal training in AI, and institutional preparedness for ethical and effective AI integration remains low (Abinallah & UNESCO Team, 2025). These limitations raise concerns about newsroom capacity, editorial accountability, and the responsible use of emerging technologies.

Against this backdrop, there is a significant empirical gap regarding how Artificial Intelligence is shaping content creation processes within Tanzanian newsrooms. Media houses such as Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) and Tanzania Standard Newspapers (TSN) play a critical role in national information flows, yet little is known about how AI tools are used, governed, or perceived within their editorial structures. Moreover, scholars caution that inadequate oversight of AI systems may lead to algorithmic bias, ethical lapses, and diminished public trust in journalism (Broussard, 2018; Springer-Norris, 2023). This study therefore seeks to explore the role of Artificial Intelligence in the evolution of content creation in MCL and TSN newsrooms by examining AI applications, newsroom adaptations, and policy considerations guiding AI-generated content. By focusing on these two leading media houses, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of AI-driven journalism in Tanzania and offers insights relevant to

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emerging media ecosystems across Sub-Saharan Africa.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical literature establishes Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a transformative force in journalism, best understood through the lens of Technological Determinism, which views technology as a primary driver of social and institutional change (McLuhan, 1964). Drawing from this perspective, scholars argue that AI enabled by advances in machine learning, natural language processing, deep learning, computer vision, and predictive analytics—has restructured newsroom operations and content production processes (Diakopoulos, 2019; Dörr, 2016). AI systems now automate routine journalistic tasks such as data collection, transcription, story drafting, trend detection, verification, and multimedia processing, allowing journalists to focus on higher-order functions like interpretation, investigation, and storytelling (Thurman *et al.*, 2019; Freixa Font *et al.*, 2021). The integration of AI into journalism aligns with disruptive innovation theory, as these tools challenge traditional newsroom workflows by improving efficiency, speed, and scalability while introducing new hybrid roles that blend editorial judgment with algorithmic oversight (Christensen, 1997; Lewis *et al.*, 2019).

However, the literature also highlights significant ethical, professional, and policy challenges associated with AI-driven content creation. Scholars caution that AI systems may reinforce algorithmic bias, data colonialism, and marginalization of non-Western narratives, particularly in African media contexts (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Gondwe, 2024). The lack of comprehensive AI governance frameworks in countries such as Tanzania exacerbates concerns around transparency, accountability, intellectual property, data privacy, and editorial responsibility (Gagliardone, 2019; Borchardt, 2022). Importantly, while fears persist that AI could replace journalists, empirical studies suggest that AI is more likely to augment rather than eliminate human labor, reinforcing the necessity of human oversight, ethical judgment, and contextual storytelling in journalism (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020; Broussard *et al.*, 2019). Overall, the literature portrays AI in journalism as a dynamic interaction between technological innovation and newsroom practice, where the future of content creation depends on balancing automation with human expertise, ethical frameworks, and institutional context.

### Empirical Literature Review

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism has gained considerable attention, yet its adoption remains largely limited to specific, routine tasks. Graefe and Bohlken (2020) note that AI performs well in producing straightforward, time-sensitive reports such as financial updates, sports summaries, and weather forecasts, while human journalists remain preferred for investigative reporting and in-depth storytelling due to AI's limited

capacity for nuanced analysis. Broussard *et al.* (2019) highlight the effectiveness of tools like Reuters' News Tracer and The Washington Post's Heliograf AI in generating real-time news and reducing newsroom workloads. Despite this, skepticism persists among journalists: De-Lima Santos and Ceron (2021) found that while 80% of journalists use AI for fact-checking, transcription, and data analysis, only 30% trust AI to handle comprehensive news writing. Readers also perceive human-written content as higher in quality and readability (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020). Studies by Gondwe (2020) and Almania (2024) further emphasize that challenges such as inadequate local datasets, poor language transcription, limited AI infrastructure, and insufficient strategic vision hinder broader AI integration, particularly in non-Western contexts.

AI is transforming newsroom practices and professional roles, automating repetitive tasks and reallocating human labor toward investigative, analytical, and narrative reporting (Diakopoulos, 2019; Surjatmodjo *et al.*, 2024). However, AI-generated content often lacks emotional nuance, cultural awareness, and contextual depth, highlighting the ongoing need for human editorial oversight. This transformation has given rise to hybrid roles, including data journalists and journalist-programmers, demanding interdisciplinary skills and computational literacy (Lewis & Westlund, 2015; Surjatmodjo *et al.*, 2024). Broussard *et al.* (2019) advocate for incorporating computational thinking into journalism education, while Dinçer (2024) stresses maintaining empathy, ethical judgment, and emotional intelligence alongside technical competence. Audience perception of AI-generated news is similarly complex: Graefe and Bohlken (2020) and Freixa Font *et al.* (2021) report that audiences value AI for speed and consistency in data-driven reporting, yet trust diminishes for politically sensitive, social justice, or investigative content. Generational differences also influence acceptance, with younger audiences more receptive to AI-generated news, whereas older audiences tend to be skeptical (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020; Diakopoulos, 2019). Transparency in AI authorship and algorithmic processes is essential for maintaining audience trust (Diakopoulos & Koliska, 2017; Dörr, 2016).

Ethical and policy challenges remain critical in AI journalism, particularly in Global South contexts where algorithmic bias, cultural misrepresentation, and misinformation risks are pronounced (Gondwe, 2024; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Unlabeled AI-generated content can mislead audiences (De-Lima Santos & Ceron, 2021; Borchardt, 2022), while automation of editorial decision-making may compromise creativity and journalistic autonomy (Almania, 2024). Computer vision technologies further expand AI's investigative potential, enabling pattern detection, environmental monitoring, and verification of visual material to combat misinformation (Aronson, 2018; Castro & New, 2016; Hassaballah & Awad, 2020; Whittaker, 2019; Szeliski,

2011). Despite the growing global evidence, research on AI adoption in African contexts, particularly in Tanzanian newsrooms like Mwananchi and TSN, remains limited (Mutsvauro & Orgeret, 2024). Considering Tanzania’s linguistic diversity, resource constraints, and cultural norms, localized studies are essential to understand how AI affects content creation, newsroom practices, and journalistic standards, providing insights that complement existing Western-focused scholarship.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study predominantly adopted a qualitative research approach, although some quantitative elements were incorporated to measure the frequency of AI tool usage across different newsroom departments. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of journalists’ experiences, perceptions, and practices regarding AI integration. This approach provided rich, contextual insights into the nuanced ways AI is applied in content creation, the challenges encountered, and the ethical considerations involved. Meanwhile, the quantitative data offered measurable information on AI adoption rates and departmental differences, enhancing the robustness of the analysis.

Moreover, the study employed a case study research design focusing on two leading Tanzanian media houses: Mwananchi Communications Limited (MCL) and Tanzania Standard Newspapers (TSN). The case study method was selected because it allowed the researcher to explore AI adoption within a real-world context, capturing complex interactions between technology, newsroom workflows, and institutional policies. This design also facilitated the collection of multiple sources of evidence, including interviews, focus group discussions, and observational data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the problem. The method enabled the researcher to obtain detailed facts and rich descriptive data, which were crucial for analyzing the practical applications and challenges of AI in content creation.

For the study, the researcher purposively selected journalists, editors, and digital media staff from both MCL and TSN. The selection criteria prioritized participants who were directly involved in content creation, either in print or digital formats, and who had some exposure to AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Canva, Piktochart, Google Analytics, and Transkriptor. The target population comprised 120 media professionals across the two media houses, ensuring representation from the Online/Digital Desk, Print Desk, Editorial Desk, and management teams.

Data collection was conducted using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. A total of 40 in-depth interviews were conducted with individual journalists and editors to explore personal experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding AI adoption. Additionally, four focus group discussions were held, with 6–8 participants in each group, to capture collective experiences and departmental dynamics related to AI usage. The

interviews and discussions followed a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to probe emerging themes while maintaining consistency across participants.

The unit of analysis for this study was the practical adoption of AI tools and the associated workflow processes in newsrooms. The study focused on examining how AI tools were used in content creation, editorial decision-making, and digital engagement, as well as the challenges and ethical dilemmas encountered. Specific attention was given to differences between departments, highlighting the varying levels of AI integration in online, print, and editorial workflows.

To systematically manage and analyse the data, the study employed thematic analysis, coding participant responses according to recurring patterns, challenges, and practical applications. Quantitative data on AI adoption rates were analyzed descriptively to complement qualitative insights. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data provided a holistic understanding of AI’s role in Tanzanian newsrooms, ensuring both depth and breadth in the findings. Finally, ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and provided informed consent before participation. Pseudonyms were used in reporting to protect the identities of individual journalists and media houses. This approach ensured that the research adhered to ethical standards while collecting accurate and reliable data.

**Findings**

Presentation of findings is done based on the three specific objectives of the study: (i) To identify AI tools currently employed, or potentially applicable, in content creation at Mwananchi and TSN; (ii) Examine how these media houses integrate AI tools into their existing newsroom processes and adaptations in content creation practices; (iii) Explore Mwananchi and TSN newsrooms policy considerations of AI-generated newsroom content.

AI tools currently employed, or potentially applicable, in content creation at Mwananchi and TSN

**Table 1:** AI tools used in content creation at Mwananchi and TSN

AI Tools	Number of Users	Percentage (%)
ChatGPT / Language Models	10	50%
Audio Transcription	6	30%
Piktochart	5	25%
Peer Guidance	4	20%
No Regular AI Use	2	10%

Table 1 presents the frequency with which journalists at Mwananchi and TSN media houses employ AI tools in their daily news production. Based on interview responses and observational data, most journalists reported incorporating AI into their workflows, though

the extent and purpose of use differed. For instance, 50% of respondents regularly used ChatGPT or similar language models to draft articles, rephrase sections, or generate content ideas. Other tools, such as Transkriptor for automating interview transcription and Piktochart for creating infographics, were also utilized. Some journalists relied on guidance from colleagues, indicating a reliance on peer-led learning due to limited formal training opportunities.

The adoption of AI tools varied, with many journalists using them only as needed or when suggested by peers. This pattern suggests that, although awareness of AI technologies is high, consistent and systematic usage is still developing. Additionally, the variation in usage frequency highlights gaps in institutional support and the absence of structured strategies for AI integration within these media organizations.

Media houses integrate AI tools into their existing newsroom processes and adaptations in content creation practices

**Table 2:** Integration of AI tools in the content creation at Mwananchi and TSN

Ways of AI Tools Integration	Frequency	Percentage (%)
writing articles using AI	10	50%
Transcription	6	30%
Data visualization and infographic creation	5	25%
Grammar correction	6	30%
Analytics for content performance and planning	4	20%

Table 2 illustrates the weekly incorporation of AI tools within the content creation processes of two Tanzanian media organizations, Mwananchi and TSN. The table highlights six specific applications of AI and shows how often newsroom staff utilize these tools on a weekly basis. The information was gathered through field research, reflecting the actual practices reported by respondents working in these media houses.

The data indicates that the most common application of AI is in article writing, with 10 respondents (50%) reporting weekly use for this purpose. This is followed by transcription and grammar correction, each cited by 6 respondents (30%). These findings suggest that AI is frequently employed to support core editorial tasks, particularly in drafting and refining written content. Additionally, AI is used weekly for data visualization, infographic creation, and content repurposing such as generating summaries or headlines with 5 respondents (25%) reporting usage in each area. This shows that AI is applied not only in producing content but also in enhancing its format and presentation. Furthermore, 4 respondents (20%) indicated using AI for analytics and planning content performance, suggesting that strategic

functions are increasingly supported by AI.

**Mwananchi and TSN newsrooms’ policy considerations of AI-generated newsroom content.**

This section outlines the findings on the existence and application of newsroom policies concerning AI-generated content at Mwananchi and TSN. Information was collected through interviews with newsroom managers and editors, complemented by a review of editorial guidelines, memos, and training documents.

The results reveal that neither Mwananchi nor TSN currently has formal, written policies or editorial guidelines specifically addressing AI-generated content. While newsroom managers recognized the increasing use of tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Transkriptor, and Piktochart, they acknowledged that usage policies remain informal and largely unstandardized. When asked about institutional regulations, 70% of respondents (14 out of 20), including editors and managers, confirmed that no official editorial policy exists for AI usage, with AI tools being employed at the discretion of individuals or under informal senior staff approval. Only 30% (6 respondents) indicated that internal discussions or draft policies are being considered, mainly concerning issues of plagiarism, accuracy, and editorial responsibility.

Document analysis and interviews further showed that structured training on AI tools is minimal. Editors reported that, although AI applications are widely used across departments-particularly within digital teams-there are no formal training programs or ethical guidelines to support their integration. Learning is primarily through peer mentoring and trial-and-error, which complicates the consistent and responsible use of AI tools. Concerns were raised about AI potentially introducing misinformation, bias, or factual inaccuracies, yet no verification standards or disclosure practices were in place. None of the articles reviewed indicated AI involvement, highlighting transparency issues.

While AI adoption is growing at Mwananchi and TSN, the lack of formal policies, training, and ethical guidance poses risks to journalistic integrity. These findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy frameworks and capacity-building initiatives to ensure the responsible and ethical use of AI in newsrooms.

**Table 3:** The Level of comfort using AI tools

Comfort Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very comfortable	3	15%
Somewhat comfortable	6	30%
Neutral	4	20%
S o m e w h a t uncomfortable	5	25%
Very uncomfortable	2	10%
Total	20	100%

The findings indicate that journalists exhibit varying degrees of comfort when using AI tools in their work. Only a small proportion, 15% (3 respondents), reported being very comfortable with AI technologies, while 30% (6 respondents) felt somewhat comfortable, often attributing their confidence to prior experience with digital platforms or support from colleagues. Conversely, 25% (5 respondents) expressed some discomfort, and 10% (2 respondents) felt very uncomfortable using AI

tools, revealing a skills gap that could impede effective adoption. Additionally, 20% of respondents remained neutral, suggesting that some journalists are either uncertain about the benefits of AI or have limited exposure to these technologies. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of structured training and capacity-building programs in Tanzanian newsrooms to enhance AI adoption.

**Table 4:** Departmental/ Desk usage of AI Tools

Department	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Remarks
Online / Digital Desk	10	50%	Most active with ChatGPT, Google Analytics, Piktochart, and Canva
News Desk	6	30%	Uses AI for editing, grammar (Grammarly), and basic headline support
Print Desk	4	20%	Minimal or no AI usage reported

Departmental analysis shows that AI adoption is highest in the Online/Digital Desk, with 50% of respondents regularly using tools such as ChatGPT for content creation, Piktochart for visual design, Canva for graphics, and Google Analytics for audience monitoring. This department leads in technological innovation, reflecting its focus on real-time publishing and digital optimization. The News Desk follows, with 30% of respondents using AI primarily for grammar checking, editing via Grammarly, and occasionally generating headlines or summaries. Adoption here is cautious, driven by concerns over accuracy and editorial credibility. The Print Desk shows the lowest engagement at 20%, indicating potential resistance to technology, limited digital integration, or workflows less suited to AI support. These findings suggest that strategies to enhance AI adoption should be tailored to each department’s technological readiness and operational needs.

**Appearance and Visibility of AI Use in Content Creation**

The study revealed that the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into newsroom operations at Mwananchi Communications and Tanzania Standard Newspapers (TSN) largely occurs behind the scenes and remains invisible to readers. Although journalists and editors increasingly rely on AI for drafting articles, summarizing reports, and transcribing interviews, there is no indication or labeling to show AI involvement in the final published content. Interviews with editors and document reviews confirmed that while AI significantly supports editorial processes, no transparency measures exist to inform readers of its use.

This lack of visibility raises significant ethical and editorial implications concerning transparency, accountability, and journalistic integrity. Readers are often unaware that parts of the news content they consume may have been influenced by AI-generated input, potentially undermining audience trust and challenging long-standing norms of disclosure and authorship in journalism. The absence

of attribution blurs lines of editorial responsibility and could affect perceptions of credibility and authenticity in reporting.

In certain instances, however, AI tools were more visibly integrated into content production. For example, Mwananchi employed tools such as Piktochart and Google Analytics for data visualization and audience analysis, particularly in producing infographics and interactive reports. Editors noted that these tools enhance engagement by making data-driven stories clearer and more appealing, even though their use is not explicitly disclosed to readers. Nevertheless, the adoption of AI remains fragmented, with uneven use across departments and limited coordination or policy guidance. Editors from both organizations reported a lack of centralized training and institutional frameworks for AI use, leading to disparities in staff competence and confidence.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The findings of this study reveal that AI adoption at Mwananchi and TSN is gradually increasing, though it remains uneven, task-specific, and largely informal. Consistent with global trends, the most frequently used AI tools are language models such as ChatGPT, transcription software, and data visualization platforms like Piktochart, particularly within the Online/Digital Desk (Graefe & Bohlken, 2020; Broussard *et al.*, 2019; Surjatmodjo *et al.*, 2024). This aligns with the literature on limited AI adoption in journalism, which emphasizes that AI excels in repetitive, structured, and data-driven tasks while human oversight remains essential for investigative reporting and narrative depth (De-Lima Santos & Ceron, 2021; Graefe & Bohlken, 2020). At Mwananchi and TSN, AI is primarily employed for drafting articles, grammar correction, transcription, and visual content creation, reflecting its role as a productivity-enhancing tool rather than a replacement for human judgment. This selective application confirms the empirical observation

that AI adoption in journalism is constrained by both technological capability and professional discretion (Gondwe, 2020; Almanía, 2024).

The study further demonstrates that integration of AI tools into newsroom processes is informal and department-specific, with the Online/Digital Desk leading in utilization while the Print Desk lags behind. This uneven adoption echoes findings from African media contexts, where infrastructural limitations, financial constraints, and skill gaps impede systematic AI use (Gondwe, 2024; Mutsvairo & Orgeret, 2024; Tapera *et al.*, 2025). Journalists reported varying comfort levels with AI, highlighting the importance of capacity-building and structured training to enhance confidence and effective use of these technologies. Additionally, the invisibility of AI's role in content creation raises ethical and editorial concerns. Consistent with prior literature, the lack of disclosure may undermine audience trust, compromise transparency, and blur lines of accountability (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Borchardt, 2022; De-Lima Santos & Ceron, 2021). While AI tools such as Piktochart and Google Analytics contribute to engaging visual and interactive content, their use is largely behind the scenes, reflecting the tension between operational efficiency and the ethical imperative for transparency.

Finally, the absence of formal policies and standardized guidelines governing AI use in Mwananchi and TSN underscores a critical governance gap, as highlighted in the empirical and theoretical literature (Gondwe, 2024; Graefe & Bohlken, 2020). This lack of institutional frameworks mirrors the broader challenges facing AI adoption in journalism, including algorithmic bias, ethical risks, and accountability issues (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Thurman *et al.*, 2019). The findings also point to emerging hybrid roles, such as journalist-programmers, reflecting the evolving professional landscape in AI-driven newsrooms and reinforcing the predictions of Technological Determinism, where technological innovation acts as a catalyst for structural and cultural change (McLuhan, 1964; Diakopoulos, 2019). Overall, the study highlights both the potential of AI to enhance content creation and the urgent need for policy, training, and ethical oversight to ensure responsible, transparent, and culturally sensitive adoption within Tanzanian newsrooms.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Tanzanian newsrooms, particularly at Mwananchi and TSN, is gradually increasing but remains uneven, task-specific, and largely informal. AI tools such as ChatGPT, transcription software, and data visualization platforms like Piktochart are primarily used within the Online/Digital Desk to support content creation, streamline editorial workflows, and enhance visual presentation. Their use is mostly limited to drafting, grammar correction, transcription, and infographic creation, reflecting AI's strengths in repetitive and data-driven tasks rather than investigative or narrative-intensive

journalism. Journalists' comfort with AI varies, often relying on peer guidance due to limited formal training. The absence of formal policies, editorial guidelines, and structured training raises concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and potential misinformation, as AI usage remains largely invisible to readers. These findings highlight the need for capacity-building, ethical oversight, and strategic institutional planning for responsible AI adoption. To address these challenges, newsrooms should develop comprehensive AI policies and editorial guidelines that define acceptable use, ethical standards, verification procedures, and disclosure of AI involvement in content. Structured training programs are essential to enhance journalists' AI literacy, digital skills, and confidence, while equitable adoption across all departments, including Print, News, and Digital Desks, should be prioritized to reduce disparities in capability. Culturally sensitive AI solutions should be implemented to respect multilingual and local contexts, and collaboration with academic institutions, professional associations, and policy-makers can support localized AI ethics frameworks, regulatory guidance, and sustainable infrastructure development, fostering responsible, contextually relevant, and effective AI integration in Tanzanian media.

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