

AI Adoption in Indonesian and Malaysian Journalism: A Comparative Mixed-Methods Study

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Submitted: 17 March 2026 **Accepted:** 1 July 2026 **Published:** 27 August 2026

Issue: This article is part of the issue “AI Use in Marginalized Media Markets” edited by Bruce Mutsvairo (Utrecht University) and Mathias-Felipe de-Lima-Santos (University of New South Wales / Federal University of São Paulo), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.i503>

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping journalistic practice worldwide, automating tasks such as transcription, translation, content generation, data analysis, and personalisation. News organisations across the Global South are also experimenting with public-facing applications of AI, including AI-generated anchors and reporters. These developments challenge assumptions about technological lag in non-Western newsrooms, revealing how competitive pressures, resource constraints, and platform dependency can drive distinctive modes of technological adoption. This article compares Indonesian and Malaysian journalists' attitudes toward AI and their intentions to integrate these technologies into their professional practice. Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach grounded in the technology acceptance model, the study analyses how perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social norms influence decisions about the adoption of AI in news production. While both countries demonstrate strong links between usability and perceived value, cross-national differences in how these measures influence adoption intentions highlight how local contexts inflect journalists' attitudes. Interviews further reveal that acceptance is shaped not only by individual attitudes but by policy, market dynamics, infrastructure, generational dynamics, and anxieties about technological displacement. This article advances the study of individual journalists' attitudes toward AI within a critical, contextually grounded approach to technological adoption.

Keywords

artificial intelligence; Global South; Indonesia; journalism; Malaysia; technology acceptance

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming journalism worldwide, accelerating shifts in how news is produced, distributed, and consumed. AI has been embedded across newsroom workflows, including data analysis, newswriting, transcription and translation, audio-visual production, and content personalization (Biswal & Gouda, 2020; Sonni et al., 2024). As AI becomes more visible in journalistic practice, the central question is no longer simply whether newsrooms are using AI, but how journalists in different national and institutional settings evaluate and intend to adopt it.

While early scholarship on AI in journalism was skewed toward China, Europe, and North America, there is growing attention to the Global South (Kothari & Cruikshank, 2022; Molla & Ahsan, 2025). Research from Africa and Asia indicates that AI-related journalism practices are emerging beyond the Global North, complicating simple narratives of technological lag (Gondwe, 2023; Jamil, 2021; Ndlovu, 2024; Trang et al., 2024). However, there remains limited comparative research examining how journalists' AI adoption is shaped by media systems and regulatory conditions across neighboring contexts. Indonesia and Malaysia offer a useful point of comparison for examining AI adoption in the Global South. Despite their shared regional and linguistic ties, they diverge in media governance, market size, and economic structure. Indonesia's large, decentralized media ecosystem contrasts with Malaysia's smaller, more regulated industry, providing a clear comparison (Hidayat et al., 2023; Prawira & Mahamed, 2025; Tapsell, 2014). These similarities and differences make them useful for examining whether journalists' AI adoption follows similar patterns across adjacent Southeast Asian media environments.

This article draws on the technology acceptance model (TAM), a framework widely used to study how users evaluate new technologies. Using a mixed-methods approach combining survey and interview data, the study analyzes how perceived usefulness (PU), ease of use, and social norms (SN) influence adoption decisions. Overall, both countries demonstrated a strong relationship between perceived ease of use (PeoU) and usefulness. This was supported by interviews indicating that journalists value easy integration of AI into workflows. However, Malaysian journalists, supported by state-led digital strategies and more structured newsroom initiatives, place greater emphasis on professional usefulness when forming intentions to use AI. In contrast, Indonesian journalists working in a fast-paced, platform-driven media environment tended to focus more on efficiency and competitiveness in the interviews. Differences between Indonesian and Malaysian newsrooms highlight how individual attitudes, uneven infrastructures, and institutional pressures shape journalists' adoption of AI.

2. Literature Review

2.1. AI and Journalism

This study approaches debates over the risks and benefits of AI use in the news industry by bridging the epistemological divide between positivist technology acceptance traditions and critical political-economy perspectives. Journalists now employ AI across different stages of news production: investigative reporters use natural-language learning programs and statistical analysis tools to deal with large caches of documents (Bradshaw, 2026; de-Lima-Santos & Ceron, 2022); generative AI supports content creation, transcription, and translation (Nishal & Diakopoulos, 2024); and AI can also automate personalization for news circulation

and social media publishing (Petrucchio et al., 2025). Meanwhile, more experimental uses of AI include identifying and fact-checking disinformation (Santos, 2023) and creating AI avatars (Levy-Landesberg & Cao, 2025). Across these practices, journalists' engagements with AI are not only technical decisions but also situated responses shaped by professional norms and institutional constraints.

Journalists and news audiences remain sceptical about some uses of AI (Thomson et al., 2025), particularly when AI systems clash with journalism's democratic and ethical responsibilities (Simon, 2023). AI critics raise concerns about credibility, misinformation, editorial control, and the amplification of biases (Acemoglu et al., 2025). As audiences, journalists, publishers, and technology companies negotiate these tensions, AI continues to reconfigure how journalism is produced and how trust, authority, and accountability are understood. These concerns reflect struggles that are unlikely to be captured by quantitative methods alone.

National approaches to studying AI acceptance highlight the importance of examining technology within specific media systems shaped by newsroom cultures, infrastructures, and political-economic pressures (Gondwe, 2023; Pinto, 2024). Hallin and Mancini's (2004) distinction between media-system types provides a foundational framework for analyzing and comparing how political, economic, and professional structures influence journalism. Building on this work, recent cross-national studies point to uneven adoption of AI (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023; Kuai, 2024; Meier et al., 2024), with the United States, Europe, and China leading journalistic AI uptake and broader AI innovation (Nguyen & Hekman, 2022). The present study mobilises a comparative approach to examine how differences between Indonesian and Malaysian news industries are reflected in journalists' stated intentions to use AI.

Furthermore, researchers have called for the decolonization and de-Westernization of the field by foregrounding diverse epistemologies, institutional arrangements, and journalistic cultures (Kothari & Cruikshank, 2022; Moyo & Mutsaers, 2018). This is especially important when studying AI, which can reproduce epistemological hierarchies and reinforce Western cultural biases, embedding hegemonic assumptions that marginalize local ways of knowing (Adams, 2021; Couldry & Mejias, 2023; Mumford, 2022). Evidence shows that AI-generated news anchors and reporters have emerged across Global South and non-Western contexts, beginning with China's Xinhua agency in 2018 and followed by developments in India, Kuwait, Indonesia, and Russia (Ndlovu, 2024). These cases suggest that experimentation with audience-facing AI applications may be moving faster outside the West. Yet much remains unknown about how AI is adopted by journalists working in low- and middle-income countries (Jamil, 2021). Accordingly, examining Indonesia and Malaysia enables a comparative interrogation of how such hierarchies are negotiated, resisted, or reproduced in journalists' orientations toward AI.

Research on and from the Global South has drawn on established technology-acceptance frameworks such as TAM to examine how journalists and news audiences engage with AI. The appeal of these models lies in their standardisation and extensive prior validation, enabling systematic comparison across national and institutional contexts. Recent studies demonstrate the adaptability of these frameworks to non-Western settings by extending core constructs to reflect local conditions (Peng & Miller, 2021; Pham & Thi Nguyet, 2023; Trang et al., 2024; Venkatesh, 2022). This study contributes by placing TAM in dialogue with critical and qualitative approaches, using it as a lens to interpret journalists' intentions. It marries positivist measures of individual attitudes with critical analyses of media systems, enabling comparison of how Indonesian and Malaysian journalists' AI adoption is shaped by individual perceptions and structural conditions.

2.2. Journalism and Technology in Indonesia and Malaysia

Indonesia offers a window into how journalists adopt new technologies in a highly commercial, geographically dispersed, and culturally diverse market—a market where state pressures on the free press persist, and newswork has shifted toward fast-paced, multi-platform production. Technological convergence has driven commercial concentration, reproducing powerful media conglomerates in Indonesia (Tapsell, 2015). However, these conglomerates increasingly compete with global platforms, while relying on them for search visibility and platform advertising (Sianturi, 2025). These commercial pressures encourage efficiency-driven technological experimentation, prioritizing speed, multimedia production, and audience engagement (Laoera & Wibowo, 2023; Nugroho et al., 2012; Yunus et al., 2024). Despite high media concentration, Indonesia maintains a vibrant independent and start-up news culture where journalists balance professional norms and trust with the pressures of traffic and monetization (Purnama & Krisdinanto, 2025).

AI regulation and infrastructure have lagged behind practice, with Indonesia's ambitious national AI strategy hampered by friction between central policy design and decentralized execution (Wadipalapa et al., 2024). A review of AI implementation across government institutions found uneven policy implementation and capacity (Yusriadi et al., 2023). While journalists may look to policy for advice, the Indonesian Press Council's 2025 guidance offers limited direction on AI oversight, journalist protection, accountability, and copyright (Sianturi, 2025). Emerging research suggests AI adoption in Indonesian journalism is driven less by policy or infrastructural support than by commercial pressures and growing demands on newsworkers.

In contrast, national strategies such as the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint and the establishment of the National AI Office signal increasing state support for AI adoption in Malaysia. Hairi (2025) notes that major Malaysian media organisations, including Media Prima and Astro, have implemented AI-driven content workflows amid declining advertising revenue. Yet this technological enthusiasm also raises questions about power imbalances between local newsrooms and global tech platforms, journalistic autonomy, and democratic communication (Esa et al., 2022).

At the newsroom level, qualitative research highlights a strong positive association between PU of AI tools and workflow efficiency (Sarji & Abdul Aziz, 2025). Among Malaysian practitioners and journalism students, AI is widely embraced for routine tasks such as drafting, headline generation, and trend monitoring, enabling journalists to reallocate time to investigative and analytical work (Ng, 2024; Sualman, 2024). However, journalists articulate concerns about algorithmic bias, data privacy, editorial accountability, and the erosion of public trust (Sualman, 2024). Industry efforts such as Astro Awani's Jiwa guidelines exemplify emergent governance models that seek to institutionalize ethical AI practice (Hui, 2024). For Malaysia, sustainable journalism will depend on approaches to technological adoption that reflect the nation's policy environment and diverse audience. Building on previous comparative studies of Indonesia and Malaysia (Hidayat et al., 2023), this research uses TAM while drawing on critical political economy and Global South scholarship to explain how institutional contexts shape adoption.

3. Methodology

This study uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to examine factors shaping journalists' acceptance of AI in Indonesia and Malaysia. The design combines a quantitative TAM-based survey with qualitative semi-structured interviews, enabling triangulation and a richer interpretation of the results in their social and organizational context. TAM examines behavioral intentions (BI) to use new technologies through perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEoU), and (in this study) social norms (SN; Davis, 1989). Our procedure comprised four stages: (a) collection of quantitative and qualitative data in Indonesia and Malaysia; (b) country-level analysis; (c) cross-country comparison; and (d) synthesis of findings. For the quantitative study, the hypotheses are as follows:

H1: PEoU of AI tools positively influences BI to use AI tools;

H2: PEoU of AI tools among journalists in Indonesia and Malaysia positively influences PU to use AI tools;

H3: PU of AI tools among journalists in Indonesia and Malaysia positively influence BI;

H4: SN regarding AI tools among journalists in Indonesia and Malaysia positively influence BI.

The survey included 23 questions addressing PU, PEoU, SN, and BI, in addition to demographics. To distribute the survey, we used non-probability sampling combining purposive and snowball strategies. We closed the survey once we had recruited $N = 100$ from each country. While purposive sampling reduces the generalizability of the findings, it enabled us to survey a large number of journalists from different news organisations. The quantitative data are used to discover meaningful patterns rather than statistical generalizations. When working with smaller samples, the fundamental mixed-method approach also allowed us to triangulate data to improve validity and reliability (Ciccarino & da Silva, 2024).

Survey respondents in both countries predominantly worked for online outlets (48% in Indonesia, 46% in Malaysia), and most had 0–5 years of experience. The age categories are divided to approximate entry-level (age <25), early-career (26–30), mid-career (31–35), and senior (>35) newswriters, although these stages differ somewhat between the two countries. Respondents aged <25 years were most prevalent in Indonesia, while journalists aged >35 years accounted for the highest percentage in Malaysia (see Table 1). In Malaysia's smaller and more regulated news industry, entry-level jobs commonly require formal journalism or communication training, including a diploma or degree (Mahamed, 2022). This explains, in part, the older overall age of Malaysian journalists in our sample. Results were analysed using the structural equation modelling software SmartPLS, and involved reliability and validity tests.

TAM provides a robust basis for predicting technology acceptance, but its limitations include an individualistic focus that can under-represent relational and contextual determinants of adoption. To address this, we conducted eight semi-structured interviews with professional journalists from each country ($N = 16$). We recruited the interviewees via professional networks. Interviewees described regulation, culture, industry structure, and economic conditions that situated individual acceptance within broader organizational and institutional environments. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Table 1. Respondents' characteristics.

Characteristic		Indonesia	Malaysia	Total
Gender	Male	50 (50%)	49 (49%)	99 (49.5%)
	Female	50 (50%)	51 (51%)	101 (50.5%)
Age (years)	<25	49 (49%)	22 (22%)	71 (35.5%)
	26–30	14 (14%)	8 (8%)	22 (11%)
	31–35	12 (12%)	12 (12%)	24 (12%)
	>35	25 (25%)	58 (58%)	83 (41.5%)
Work experience (years)	<1	29 (29%)	19 (19%)	48 (24%)
	1–5	32 (32%)	15 (15%)	47 (23.5%)
	6–10	9 (9%)	10 (10%)	19 (9.5%)
	>10	30 (30%)	56 (56%)	86 (43%)
Primary media platform	Online	48 (48%)	46 (46%)	94 (47%)
	Television	29 (29%)	21 (21%)	50 (25%)
	Radio	17 (17%)	7 (7%)	24 (12%)
	Print	3 (3%)	21 (21%)	24 (12%)
	Multiple/other	3 (3%)	5 (5%)	8 (4%)

Qualitative coding and thematic analyses were conducted using NVivo. In the final stage, quantitative and qualitative findings from both countries were compared and synthesized.

4. Findings

4.1. Survey Results

This section presents the survey results based on separate analyses of responses from Indonesia and Malaysia. To enable meaningful comparison, findings are organized according to the three TAM constructs that we tested: PEoU, PU, SN—and their effect on BI. The statistical analysis is divided into two stages: the first is the reflective measurement model; the second is the structural model (Hair et al., 2021). The reliability of the measurement model was assessed using three complementary internal consistency reliability coefficients: Cronbach's alpha (α), Dijkstra–Henseler's rho_A (rho_A), and composite reliability (rho_C), as presented in Table 2. The three indices were evaluated concurrently because each estimates reliability under different assumptions regarding the relationships among the indicators, thereby providing a more comprehensive assessment of construct reliability.

Cronbach's alpha is the traditional measure of internal consistency and assumes tau-equivalence, meaning that all indicators contribute equally to the latent construct. As this assumption is often violated in partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), Cronbach's alpha tends to provide a conservative estimate of reliability. In contrast, rho_A incorporates the indicator loadings estimated by the PLS algorithm, making it a more accurate estimator of construct reliability for PLS-SEM. Composite reliability (rho_C) further accounts for the heterogeneous contribution of individual indicators by weighting them according to their respective outer loadings. Consequently, rho_C typically yields higher reliability estimates than Cronbach's alpha and

rho_A, as it better reflects the actual measurement model, although it may slightly overestimate reliability in some situations (Hair et al. 2021).

Evaluating all three reliability coefficients provides robust evidence of the internal consistency of the measurement model. Consistency among Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and rho_C indicates that the latent constructs are measured reliably despite the different estimation assumptions underlying each coefficient. As shown in Table 2, all four constructs—BI, PEoU, PU, and SN—demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency reliability, with all reliability coefficients exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. These findings indicate that the indicators consistently measure their intended latent constructs, providing strong evidence that the proposed measurement model is reliable and suitable for subsequent validity assessment and structural model evaluation

Table 2. Reliability and validity tests.

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted
BI	0.900	0.906	0.937	0.833
PEoU	0.831	0.837	0.888	0.665
PU	0.869	0.870	0.911	0.718
SN	0.901	0.907	0.938	0.834

The results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion analysis show that the diagonal value (average variance extracted square root) of both data sets is higher than the correlation between constructs, meaning that discriminant validity is met. Meanwhile, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is >0.6 , so predictive relevance can be calculated using Stone-Geisser, which yields Q^2 values of 0.887 and 0.879 for Indonesia and Malaysia, respectively. A Q^2 value >0.35 indicates that the predictive relevance of this model is very strong. Reliability, validity, R^2 , and Q^2 results indicate that the model has good adequacy.

4.2. Evaluation of the Structural Model

The evaluation of the structural model using path coefficient analysis for Indonesia and Malaysia is presented in Table 3. The study did not find statistically significant support for H1. In Indonesia, the relationship between PEoU and BI (PEoU $\rightarrow$ BI) as shown in Table 3 ($\beta = 0.238$, T -statistic = 1.937, $p = 0.053$) is not statistically significant, because $T < 1.96$ and $p > 0.05$. However, the result is close to significance, suggesting a weak but positive tendency. It means that journalists who find AI easier to use may be somewhat more inclined to use it, even though ease of use does not directly predict intention in this sample. For Malaysian journalists, the PEoU of AI tools did not influence their intention to use AI tools ($\beta = 0.050$, T -statistic = 0.415, $p = 0.678$). The findings indicate that while Malaysian journalists may perceive AI tools as easy to use, this perception is not sufficient to drive interest in adopting them. As we will expand on below, Malaysian journalists' BI may be influenced by other factors, reflect different stages of technological acceptance, or result from the demographics of the Malaysian journalists in this study.

The findings support H2, as both countries indicate a strong and positive influence of PEoU on PU (Indonesian journalists: $\beta = 0.812$, T -statistic = 18.535, $p = 0.000$; Malaysian journalists: $\beta = 0.792$, T -statistic = 19.459, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that for journalists in both contexts, the easier AI technology is to use, the more

Table 3. Evaluation of the structural model (test of hypotheses).

Path relationship	Indonesia				Malaysia			
	Original sample β (O)	T-statistics (O/STDEV)	p	Result	Original sample β (O)	T-statistics (O/STDEV)	p	Result
PEoU $\rightarrow$ BI	0.238	1.937	0.053	Not significant	0.050	0.415	0.678	Not significant
PEoU $\rightarrow$ PU	0.812	18.535	0.000	Significant	0.792	19.459	0.000	Significant
PU $\rightarrow$ BI	0.182	1.156	0.248	Not significant	0.485	4.170	0.000	Significant
SN $\rightarrow$ BI	0.173	1.405	0.160	Not significant	-0.107	1.248	0.212	Not significant

useful they perceive it to be. In other words, if journalists perceive AI as easy to learn and operate, they are more likely to see it as beneficial to their work. This finding suggests that PEoU shapes perceptions of AI as a useful and practical resource in news production and dissemination.

The relationship between PU and BI (PU $\rightarrow$ BI) is not significant for Indonesian journalists ($\beta = 0.182$, T -statistic = 1.156, $p = 0.248$). This means that although Indonesian journalists may see AI as beneficial, this perception does not directly translate into an intention to use it. This suggests that, for Indonesian journalists, PU alone is insufficient to motivate the use of AI tools. This may stem from concerns regarding the accuracy, objectivity, and credibility of AI in news production (Forja-Pena et al., 2024). Doubts about AI-generated news could hinder the influence of the PU of AI on BI.

Meanwhile, PU has a significant impact on the BI of Malaysian journalists ($\beta = 0.485$, T -statistic = 4.170, $p = 0.000$). It appears that PU is the main individual factor driving Malaysian journalists' intention to adopt AI technology. Malaysian journalists tend to perceive AI as relevant and helpful in their work. This perception directly influences their interest in adopting AI and its continued use in news production. Studies have shown that Malaysia is quicker to adopt digital technologies in educational, workplace, and personal contexts than neighboring Indonesia (Lestari et al., 2024; Supianto et al., 2024). As such, the difference in results may reflect a more advanced integration of AI into Malaysian newsrooms.

The relationship between SN and BI (SN $\rightarrow$ BI) was insignificant for Indonesian journalists ($\beta = 0.173$, T -statistic = 1.404, $p = 0.160$) and Malaysian journalists ($\beta = -0.107$, T -statistic = 1.248, $p = 0.212$). This suggests that SN do not meaningfully influence Indonesian and Malaysian journalists' intention to use AI. The acceptance of AI tools could be driven by individual attitudes, not by the influence of colleagues or managers. Alternatively, norms may operate through institutional and economic pressures more than interpersonal influence. The absence of clear AI policies in newsrooms may also contribute to this finding. This finding contrasts with several previous studies showing that SN directly influence BI to adopt technologies (Cao et al., 2020; Tatić et al., 2022).

Overall, the survey findings indicate some differences between the weighting of TAM measures and their influence on BI across the two countries. While there was no statistically significant relationship between PEoU and BI in either country, the relationship approached significance in Indonesia. As such, we cautiously

suggest that ease of use has some influence on Indonesian journalists' intentions to integrate AI into their work process. Results for both countries show that PEOU significantly shapes PU, indicating that AI tools that are simple to learn are more likely viewed as beneficial for newsroom work. The link between PU and BI diverges: In Indonesia, usefulness does not significantly motivate journalists to use AI, while Malaysian journalists show a strong positive association, suggesting greater emphasis on AI's relevance to professional outcomes. SNs do not significantly influence acceptance in either country. Below, we interpret this surprising finding in conjunction with interview data that highlights broader economic, policy, and social conditions (Park et al., 2022).

5. Interview Results

This section presents qualitative interview findings about journalists' intentions to adopt AI. It includes data from 16 interviews, evenly split between Indonesian and Malaysian participants, and is organized according to the TAM constructs of PEOU, PU, and SN, with the addition of organisational constraints. The interviews enrich the quantitative findings by showing how journalists interpret AI use in relation to workplace cultures, economic pressures, and policy.

5.1. PEOU

The interview data sheds light on the link between PEOU and BI in Indonesia. In terms of the ease of learning AI, a young developer at a major Indonesian broadcaster characterized his early experience with AI avatar production as demanding but quickly manageable: "At first, I didn't know anything about AI [but] within about a month, I already understood everything pretty well" (I04). Likewise, a senior staff member contrasted current tools with earlier workflows: "Back then...it was really difficult to remove atmo....Now, atmo can be removed easily" (I02). Moreover, a journalist described the ease of using prompts to generate articles, calling it a "basic skill" (I08). These accounts suggest that the willingness to adopt AI may increase when these technologies are easy to learn and use.

However, the qualitative data also complicate a straightforward narrative of ease. While individual tools were often described as simple, interviewees were concerned about the effort required to keep pace with rapid technological change. One participant noted, "The biggest challenge is the pace of technological development. What we're planning today might already be outdated by next week" (I02). Journalists described a continual need to "reskill," "adapt" (I03), and "keep learning about the latest AI developments" (I01). National differences further nuance our findings. Indonesian interviewees often framed AI adoption as urgent and competitive, with one stating, "We just can't afford to be left behind" (I04). Malaysian journalists, by contrast, were more likely to emphasize collaboration as a way of sharing expertise and effort associated with AI adoption (M02). Overall, the findings indicate that ease at the level of everyday use may not be sufficient to influence technology acceptance, and is mediated by economic pressures and newsroom culture.

5.2. PU

Interviewees across both countries articulated multiple ways AI was perceived to enhance individual and organisational performance, particularly through gains in efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness. These accounts reinforce the survey finding that PEOU contributes to PU, largely because it increases

efficiency. An AI developer at an Indonesian broadcast network called the labor savings achieved through AI “impressive and terrifying,” with the work of a 200-person newsroom replaced by a four-person AI team (I02). Interviewees similarly described how AI increased the capacity of small news teams to cover more beats and wider geographical areas (M08).

In terms of journalism quality, interviewees noted AI’s value in tracking emergent stories, supporting rapid disaster coverage, and aiding investigative work. A Malaysian newspaper journalist described AI as extending rather than replacing journalistic capability: “AI automates the grunt work, letting journalists focus on interviews, verification, and narrative” (M07). Still, journalists raised concerns about trust and the need for human judgement, creativity, and ethical oversight (M01). These accounts show how efficiency and enhanced capabilities intersect, supporting the survey’s strong relationship between PEOU and PU.

Indonesian journalists often defined usefulness in terms of productivity rather than editorial value. An Indonesian broadcast manager noted: “It allows us to write faster...now with ChatGPT, that volume has doubled” (I03). A reporter agreed they could produce an article in about ten minutes by pasting other outlets’ reports into ChatGPT and prompting it to “make this article more interesting and easier to understand” (I08). Such practices align with increased reporting churn rather than professional autonomy. Relatedly, AI adoption was viewed as necessary for survival amid shrinking resources and intensifying competition. As one Indonesian participant warned: “If we don’t start using AI, we risk being left behind while others move ahead” (I07). Intention to adopt AI may be shaped as much by fear of obsolescence and competition as by positive assessments of usefulness.

5.3. SN and Organisational Constraints

While the survey findings suggest that SN does not significantly shape journalists’ intentions to use AI, interviewees described the influence of institutional and demographic factors. Several interviewees reported phased organisational adoption. A Malaysian editor overseeing special projects outlined their rollout starting with speech-to-text, automated subtitles, AI-powered dashboards, and then AI-assisted graphics (M01). An Indonesian journalist recalled using AI trend analysis as early as 2013, before generative tools enabled text and audio-visual production (I01). They also reported that some Indonesian newsrooms are deploying AI presenters and reporters, while Malaysian organisations remained more cautious due to regulation and ethics.

Adoption patterns also varied by outlet type, reflecting strategic aims and constraints. An interviewee from a commercial network summarized a common view: “Private broadcasters innovate faster; public agencies move cautiously” (M01). A digital strategist at a national news agency noted that their approach was shaped by the need to “be fast like a commercial outlet, but impartial like a public service” (M02). At smaller independent outlets, journalists saw AI as pivotal to remaining competitive while maintaining audience trust (M06). Costs and infrastructure are also decisive, as “AI licenses, data storage, and cybersecurity strain budgets especially amid declining print revenue” (M07). Some interviewees struggled to convince managers to pay for subscriptions, particularly in cash-strapped organisations. Large commercial broadcasters were the main exception, using licensed AI technologies to produce public-facing outputs such as avatars and AI reporters.

Interviewees also discussed how personal attitudes and generational differences shaped AI adoption. While one Indonesian producer expressed reluctance due to AI being underdeveloped and inauthentic (I05), another said they “enjoy technology” and welcomed experimentation (I01). Several interviewees described a generational split: “Younger producers are excited....Veterans are cautious, as we are worried about quality, about machines replacing humans” (M04). Enthusiasm among junior reporters, however, carries risks of “over-reliance” (M03) and “over-trust” in AI outputs (M07). Older journalists, meanwhile, fear replacement (M03), deskilling (M02), and diluted judgement (M01), or the limitations of AI’s capabilities (I08). Reluctance to adopt AI was frequently framed as a personal shortcoming attributed to limited knowledge, while training was seen as a solution. The idea of a knowledge gap was common, with efforts to close it through mentorship (M01) and workshops (M03). While some Malaysian organisations have formal initiatives to encourage adoption, survey results suggest they do not directly influence intention to adopt AI.

The qualitative findings both reinforce and nuance the survey results by showing how intentions to adopt AI are shaped through the interaction of individual perceptions, organisational logics, and broader structural pressures. Ease of use clearly lowers barriers to experimentation, while PU is closely tied to efficiency gains and competitive survival, though not always to professional fulfilment. At the same time, social influence operates less through peer norms than through institutional strategies, resource constraints, and generational dynamics in newsrooms. These findings illustrate that journalists’ decisions about AI are embedded in commercial pressures, organisational priorities, and ongoing negotiations over professional values.

6. Discussion

The results reveal shared patterns and meaningful divergences in how Indonesian and Malaysian journalists adopt AI. While findings from both countries generally support core TAM propositions, there are differences. Across both samples, PEOU did not demonstrate a statistically significant effect on BI to adopt AI; however, the Indonesian data approached significance, indicating a weak but positive tendency. This suggests that Indonesian journalists who perceive AI tools as easier to use may be more inclined to integrate them into their work, even though ease of use does not independently predict intention. One interpretation within the TAM literature is that Indonesian journalists are at an earlier stage of the adoption timeline where ease of learning and use is more important (Saghafian et al., 2021). By contrast, Malaysian journalists place greater emphasis on professional benefits such as content scaling and increased investigative capacity, reflected in the strong PU–BI relationship (Supianto et al., 2024). However, “maturity” should not be understood as part of a linear trajectory toward technological adoption, as it reflects the role of state coordination, regulatory frameworks, and media governance.

The strong PeoU–PU relationship observed in both national contexts demonstrates that practitioners in Indonesia and Malaysia consistently convert ease of operation into perceived professional value (Marian et al., 2025). Qualitative accounts confirmed the value of AI that can be integrated into existing workflows, including audience metrics, audiovisual enhancement, and automated translation. However, despite shared perceptions of usability and worth, the mechanisms through which these attitudes translate into BI are not identical across the neighboring media systems. This indicates that TAM relationships are mediated by broader configurations of media regulation and economics, rather than operating as context-neutral cognitive processes.

The PU–BI relationship differs markedly between Indonesia and Malaysia. In Indonesia, the relationship is not significant (coef. 0.182), whereas it is significant among Malaysian respondents (coef. 0.485). Malaysian practitioners framed AI as a capacity-multiplying resource, suggesting that professional usefulness is intrinsically linked to quality journalism. This framing reflects a media environment in which regulatory stability and a more collaborative news industry align technological adoption with professional norms. In contrast, journalists in Indonesia's highly competitive and fragmented media system predominantly characterized AI's utility through the lens of efficiency. Their narratives also articulated persistent anxieties regarding credibility and editorial integrity, mirroring global evidence that skepticism toward automated content can blunt perceptions of professional value (Forja-Pena et al., 2024; Wu, 2026). Consequently, this comparison advances theoretical understanding by demonstrating that the construct of “usefulness” is not stable across settings.

A particularly important finding concerns the non-significant role of SN in both national contexts, which departs from a substantial body of TAM-based research (Nassar et al., 2019). Rather than indicating an absence of normative pressure, the findings may suggest a need to reconceptualize how SN operate within newsroom environments. Qualitative evidence points to multiple forms of normative influence, including organizational pressure, formal training, newsroom strategies, and generational differences. These factors indicate that SN remain influential, but are not primarily expressed through direct interpersonal expectations or peer pressure, as assumed in classical TAM formulations. Instead, they appear embedded in institutional arrangements that shape how journalists encounter and evaluate AI (Sianturi, 2025; Tapsell, 2015). These dynamics underscore the limits of classical acceptance models in environments where structural pressures and institutional ambiguity may override normative cues (Lin, 2003). TAM's social influence construct may underestimate how power operates through institutions, policy frameworks, and market structures, in addition to interpersonal persuasion.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that TAM variables can not only be weighted differently across national contexts, but they are fundamentally reshaped by the political economy of media systems in the Global South. The comparison between Indonesia and Malaysia shows that differences in media regulation, market structure, and access to resources act as conditioning forces that mediate the relationships between PEOU, PU, SN, and BI. Rather than treating institutional context as an external variable, the findings suggest it operates as a structuring condition that redefines what “ease,” “usefulness,” and “intention” mean in practice. This supports critical Global South scholarship, which argues that technology adoption cannot be abstracted from histories of uneven development, state power, and epistemic hierarchies, and calls for an embedded or politically informed extension of TAM that incorporates media systems as an integral explanatory component.

Differences between Indonesian and Malaysian newsrooms highlight the ways in which individual attitudes, uneven infrastructures, and institutional pressures shape journalists' adoption of AI, demonstrating that technology-acceptance relationships vary across neighboring Global South media systems (Gondwe, 2023; Ndlovu, 2024). By situating these differences within broader debates about AI, media regulation, and political economy, the study moves beyond descriptive comparison to show how epistemological assumptions embedded in TAM must be recalibrated to account for structurally differentiated media environments in the Global South.

7. Conclusion

The patterns observed across Indonesian and Malaysian newsrooms point to broader dynamics shaping AI uptake in the Global South, where adoption reflects uneven infrastructures, institutional pressures, and contested professional norms. Rather than following a universal trajectory, journalists' engagements with AI are embedded in local media ecologies that shape how usability, perceived value, and organizational support translate into adoption intentions. These findings suggest the need for a critical, contextually embedded TAM that situates technology adoption within the political economy and institutional ecology of media systems (Lin, 2003; Trang et al., 2024). In particular, this may require a reconceptualization of social influence as institutionalized normativity, expressed through newsroom policies, training regimes, and generational orientations.

The study's limitations also suggest directions for future inquiry. The individual focus of TAM research and reliance on self-reported data may narrow the interpretive range. Although the mixed-methods design mitigates some of these issues, the analysis remains a snapshot of attitudes in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Longitudinal research is needed to trace how adoption trajectories shift as tools mature and newsroom policies evolve, while future models may integrate additional constructs (such as trust, autonomy, or institutional constraints) to better capture the complexity of AI incorporation in diverse Global South contexts. Taken together, these dynamics indicate that AI acceptance in the Global South is not a uniform trajectory but a negotiated process shaped by individual attitudes, infrastructural disparities, policy ambiguity, and evolving debates over what constitutes responsible journalistic practice.

Acknowledgments

Author contributorship is as follows. Author 1: conceptualization, data collection, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, validation, visualization, writing original draft preparation, funding acquisition, writing-review and editing, correspondence. Author 2: conceptualization, data collection, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, validation, visualization, writing original draft preparation, funding acquisition, writing-review and editing. Author 3: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, validation, visualization, writing original draft preparation, funding acquisition, writing-review and editing, proofreading.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

We demonstrate our commitment to data openness and transparency. To facilitate further research, we have made the data available via the link <https://zenodo.org/records/18448526>

LLMs Disclosure

No LLM was used for this research.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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