

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Adoption by Journalists in Zambia

Survey Report

Project developed, led, and coordinated by Internews Network Zambia

USAID OPEN SPACES ZAMBIA (OSZ) PROJECT



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Background

03 Analysis and Results

05 Perception and AI Training

07 Research Recommendations

02 Overview

04 Generative AI in
Zambian Newsroom

06 Job Security and Regulation

08 Conclusion



Background

Between August and October 2023, Internews Network Zambia conducted a survey on the use of AI tools by journalists in Zambia. The survey report aimed to examine how much these technologies are utilized by media professionals and provide valuable insights to strengthen an enabling environment for independent and new media. Additionally, the survey sought to promote digitally literate and cyber-secure users as well as foster inclusive online spaces of engagement.

Research Background

The USAID Open Spaces Zambia (OSZ) is a USAID-funded consortium of FHI360, Internews, Panos Institute Southern Africa, MISA Zambia and Bloggers of Zambia that is currently implementing a project aimed at strengthening the democratic foundations of freedom of speech and assembly, build independent and new media by safeguarding spaces for activists, human rights defenders to promote democratic spaces in Zambia. The project leverages on partners' experience of working with independent media and existing civil society actors who advocate for rights both online and offline. The project is also supporting the production of quality, relevant content, strengthening the enabling environment for independent media and advancing social and online platforms that allow for free expression and access to information.

Research Background

Internews Network Zambia conducted a survey on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by journalists in Zambia. AI, especially generative AI, is gaining more prominence in newsrooms around the world, and this study seeks to investigate its potential and challenges in the Zambian media landscape. As the world becomes increasingly digitized, it is important that media professionals keep in touch with emerging technologies and understand how they impact their work. It is further essential to explore dangers or areas of good practice of AI on media and how AI will affect media business sustainability.

The study was carried out from August to October 2023 and surveyed 70 media professionals from various media outlets working in the Southern province, Muchinga province, Copperbelt, Eastern province, Lusaka province, and Central province. Among the respondents, 27% held reporter/journalist positions, 4% radio station managers, and 7% news editors. The age range was 49% above 35 and 50% below 35, with 63% being male and 36% female. Additionally, 3% of the respondents noted to have disabilities.

- Participants were questioned about a range of subjects, including: The current use of AI tools in their media house and which ones, if any, are utilized.
- The benefits AI tools bring to their operations and whether they've contributed to improved efficiency.
- The ease of implementing AI tools in the newsroom, availability of training to employees for working with AI tools, concerns about the impact of AI on their job security, and opinions on the regulation of AI
- The presence of a newsroom AI policy in their media house

Overview

The survey report of 70 Zambian media professionals found that 60% of journalists use AI tools, with chatbots, image and video analysis, and automated content generation being the most utilized tools. Although AI tools might have improve efficiency, some respondents found the integration process to be challenging.

The majority of journalists surveyed said they use generative AI in their work. The most commonly used AI tools include chatbots or conversational AI tools such as ChatGPT, Image analysis, and ChatSonic, with over 18% of the respondents saying they have used the tools. Almost 19% of the respondents use image and video analysis tools, and 16% use other automated content generation, such as JasperAI and Rytr. The survey further found that automated ad placement tools (Hubspot), speech-to-text, and social media management apps (Hootsuite and Google Analytics) are used to a lesser extent. The surveyed journalists said the use of generative AI has significantly improved the efficiency of operations in their newsrooms, although some respondents found the integration process challenging. The study suggests that media houses should provide adequate training to their staff members to ensure a smooth transition and develop AI policy to ensure its ethical use.

Research aims and methodology

- The study was conducted through a questionnaire with media practitioners in Zambia.
- The findings of this study will be used to develop a set of guidelines and recommendations for media houses in Zambian to effectively integrate emerging technologies into their newsrooms.
- The guidelines will advocate for responsible and ethical use of AI tools, promoting digital literacy and cyber security, and fostering a more inclusive and diverse media landscape.

- The project aims to contribute to the broader goal of promoting media freedom and independence in Zambia by providing media houses with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the rapidly evolving digital media landscape. Through this research, Internews Network Zambia hopes to create a more sustainable and innovative media industry in the country

Research questions

This survey report seeks to answer several research questions, such as:

1. What are the current levels of AI adoption by journalists in Zambia?
2. What is the level of knowledge on utilising AI tools in newsrooms?
3. What tools are most used by journalists?
4. Do newsrooms have AI policies?

The answers to these questions provides valuable insights and recommendations for media practitioners, the government and stakeholders to effectively leverage AI technologies for a more inclusive, diverse, and sustainable media industry.

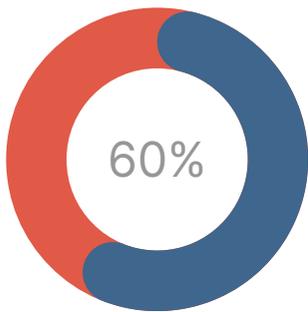
Analysis and Results

In a survey of 70 media professionals, it was discovered that 60% of them have incorporated AI tools into their newsrooms, while the remaining 40% have not. From the 60% of respondents who use AI tools, 47% found working with AI tools to be very easy, while only 7% found it to be very challenging. Meanwhile, 31% of respondents found using these tools somewhat easy, and 14% found it somewhat challenging.

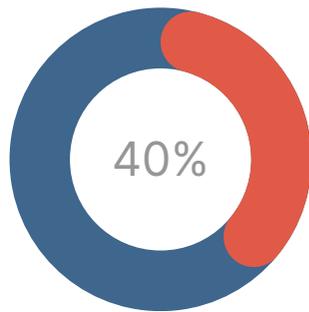
60%

Media houses reported using AI tools in their newsroom

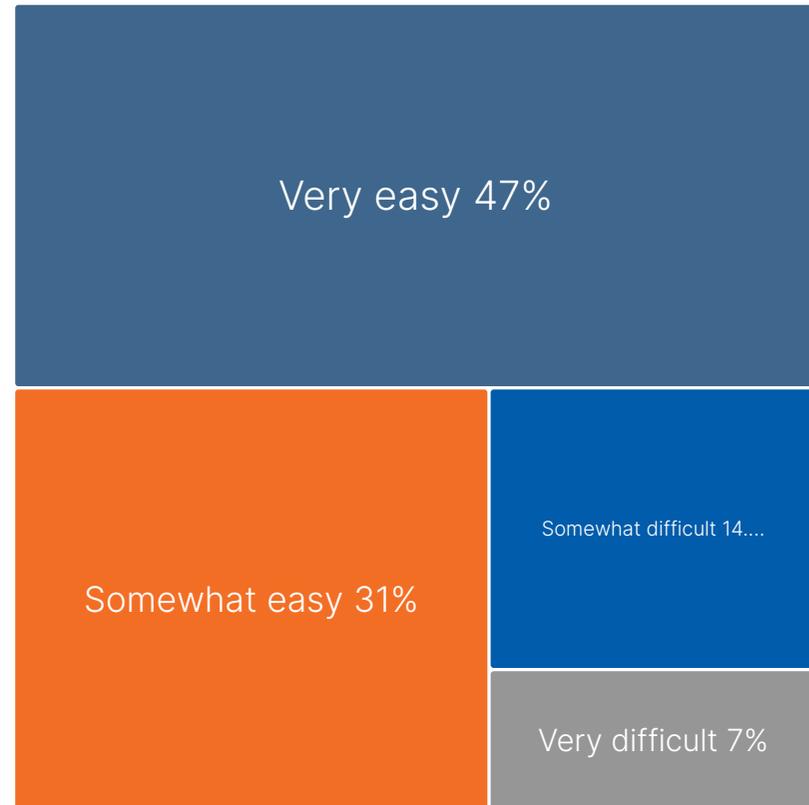
According to the research, 60% of media outlets surveyed have implemented AI tools in their newsrooms, while the remaining 40% have not.



Use AI tools

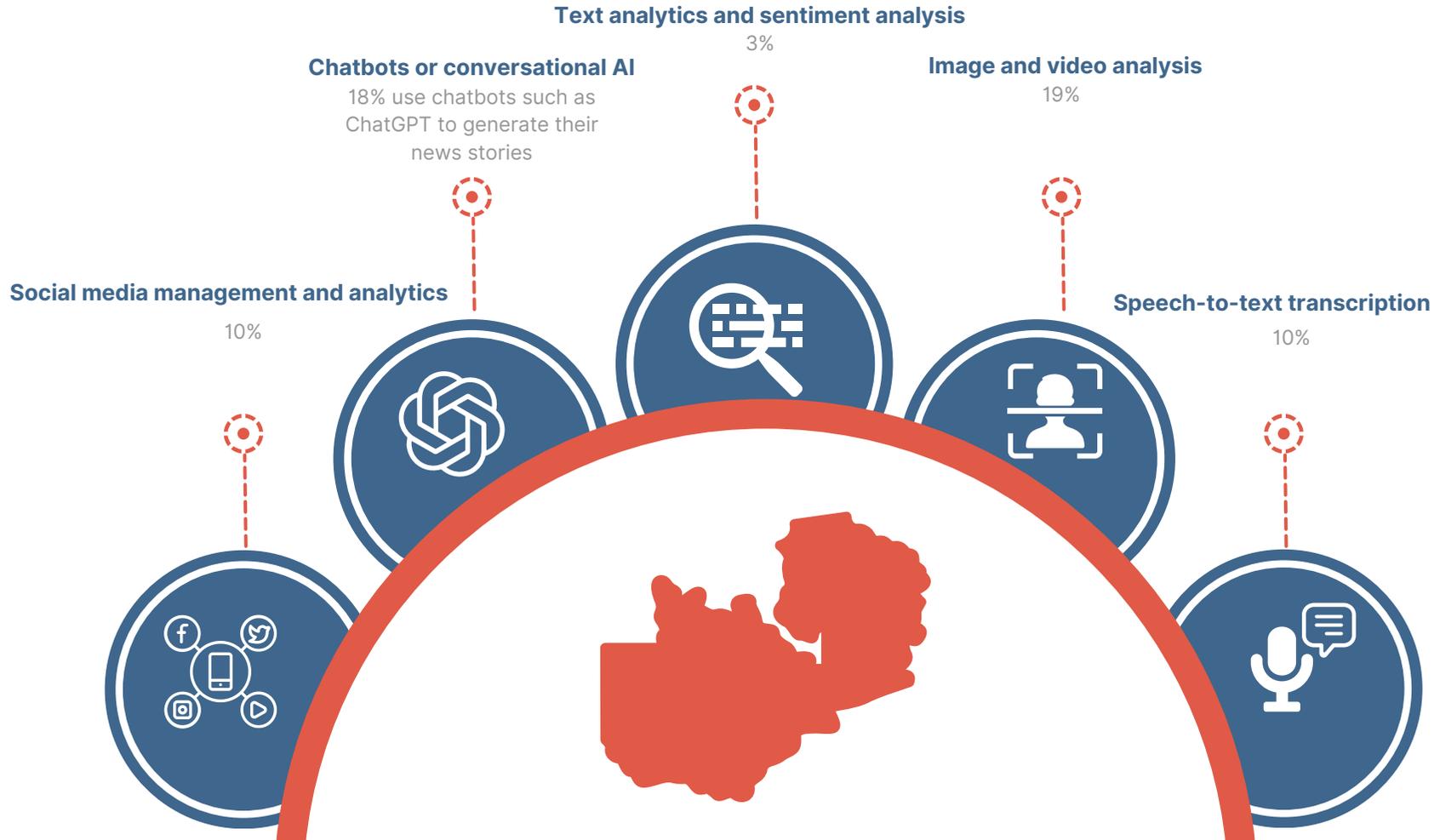


Do not use AI tools



Generative AI in Zambian Newsroom

Generative AI is one of the most popular AI tools with over 18% of respondents reporting to have used chatbots or conversational AI tools such as Image analysis, ChatGPT, and ChatSonic in media houses. Meanwhile, 19% commonly use image and video analysis, and 16% utilize automated content generation. Other tools like speech-to-text, social media management, and automated ad placement are used to a lesser extent. These results indicate that Generative AI tools are becoming increasingly popular in newsrooms, and the usage of these tools varies based on the task at hand. Generative AI is a subset of AI which employs algorithms to produce content. Newsrooms are increasingly adopting it for its potential benefits, such as faster content creation, fact-checking and research assistance.



Perception and AI Training

Almost 73% of the participants who currently use AI tools said they have not received any training while 23% stated to have received some form of training. Furthermore, 74% of the respondents did not consider AI to be a threat to their jobs. The question of whether AI should be regulated elicited varied responses, with 78% in favor of regulation and 22% against it.

AI AND REGULATION

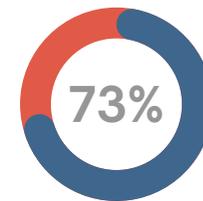
Opinions were varied when it came to the regulation of AI. While 78% believed it should be regulated, 22% were against it. This is a topic that is being discussed globally, and Zambia is no exception. The need for regulation arises from the potential risks associated with AI, such as bias and discrimination in decision-making, misuse of personal data, and job loss due to automation. Journalists have a significant role in influencing public opinion regarding AI's regulation. By providing a platform for experts to share their insights on AI's development and deployment across different industries, they raise awareness about the technology's benefits and risks.

AI TRAINING IN NEWSROOMS

The survey results showed that only 26% of respondents have received some form of training for integrating AI tools into their journalistic work, while the remaining 73% have not. This indicates a significant need for more training to enable journalists to effectively integrate AI tools into their work processes. Merely introducing new tools is not sufficient, and as such, proper training and resources must be provided to enable journalists to fully utilize AI tools.

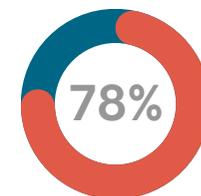
AI training in newsrooms

only 26% of respondents said yes, while the remaining 73% said no.



AI and regulation

The question of whether AI should be regulated elicited varied responses, with 78% in favor of regulation and 22% against it.



Job Security and Policy

Impact on Operations

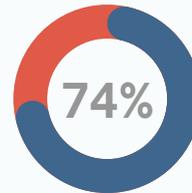
Most respondents indicated that AI tools have significantly improved the efficiency of their operations. However, the ease of integration varied, with some finding it very easy and others facing difficulties. Media houses need to provide adequate training to their staff to ensure a smooth transition to using AI tools.

Interest in AI Adoption

Based on the survey results, 96% of respondents expressed interest in integrating AI tools into their newsrooms. Additionally, journalists who have not yet implemented AI tools in their work expressed interest in incorporating them. The perception of AI tools among media professionals is varied. While some see AI as a potential threat to jobs, others view it as a valuable asset.

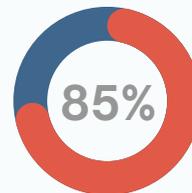
Job security

Out of the respondents, 74% do not perceive artificial intelligence as a threat to their job, 25% believe it poses artificial intelligence as a threat to their job



AI policy in newsrooms

Almost 85% of respondents reported that their newsroom does not have established AI policies, whereas only 14.8% indicated that such policies are in place.



AI Policy in newsrooms

The survey indicates that 85% of newsrooms still do not have AI policies in place, which means that journalists are currently using AI in their work without any clear guidelines. It is vital that journalists adhere to journalistic standards when reporting on news, and the absence of clear guidelines in Zambia is a cause for concern.

Perception of AI

Opinions on the use of AI by journalists were mixed. This indicates that while AI technology is gaining acceptance, there is still some skepticism about its impact on the media industry.

Research Recommendations

Provide Adequate Training

Most journalists implementing AI tools in their newsrooms have found the experience positive and relatively easy. However, the ease of integration varied, with some finding it very easy and others facing difficulties. Therefore, media houses and various stakeholders should aim to provide adequate training to journalists.

Become creators of AI

Information gaps in AI are a global challenge, highlighting the need for African newsrooms to create AI imaginaries. By developing prototypes and forging partnerships with tech companies, African newsrooms can begin to address some of these challenges. African journalists should be not only consumers of AI but also auditors and creators of such technologies.

Develop AI Policy

Media houses should develop an AI policy in their newsrooms to ensure the ethical use of AI tools. Ethics is very important, especially for journalists who are the fourth estate and gatekeepers. They should serve the communities they work in, and AI should be used to enhance their work and not to replace them.

Consider Cultural Context

Media houses should consider cultural context when implementing AI tools. AI models need information, or data, to generate a response and currently most data used to train AI models is often not representative of the African continent. For example, Chatbots requires extensive information on Zambia to write about Gender-Based Violence in Chibolya, as well as real-time, updated data to ensure accuracy, most lack such information.

Regulate AI

Journalists surveyed in this report believe that AI should be regulated. Therefore, journalists, policymakers, and the public must come together to ensure that the integration of AI in journalism serves to strengthen the right to freedom of expression rather than weaken it. By implementing regulations and guidelines for the use of AI, policymakers can also help ensure that technology is used in a responsible and beneficial way.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that the technology serves as a force for good, it is crucial to address the potential biases and inequalities that might be perpetuated by its algorithms. By embracing a human-centred approach to AI development and fostering greater inclusivity and awareness, we can create a more equitable, informed, and just future for all. By fostering greater representation and inclusivity in AI systems, journalists should work towards dismantling unfair systems and create a more equitable media landscape that respects the rights of all humans.

AI in Zambian NEWSROOM

Conclusion

The use of AI in media outlets has changed the way news and content is produced and distributed worldwide. With the help of chatbots, image and video analysis, and automated content generation, journalists might work more efficiently and effectively. However, the integration of these AI tools is not without its challenges, as highlighted by the study of 70 journalists.

This survey report sought to shed light on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools by Zambian journalists across six provinces, highlighting challenges and opportunities. The findings show that 60% of journalists surveyed have implemented generative AI tools in their newsrooms, with the most commonly used AI tools being generative AI, such as chatbots or conversational AI tools. The study also reveals that AI tools have improved the efficiency of newsroom operations, although some respondents found the integration process challenging.

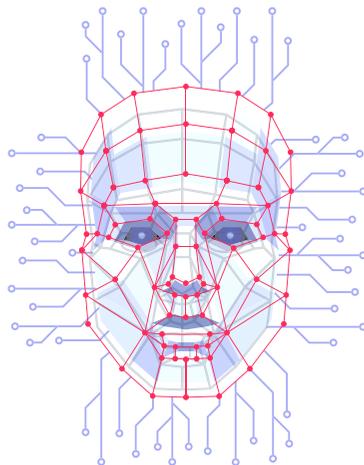
The study recommends that media houses provide adequate training to their staff to ensure a smooth transition to using AI tools and develop AI policy to ensure its ethical use. Media houses should use AI tools thoughtfully and supplement them with human judgment and expertise to ensure that the stories they tell accurately represent the communities they serve.

Newsrooms are increasingly adopting generative AI for its potential benefits, such as faster content creation, fact-checking and research assistance, and its apparent multilingual capabilities. At onset, these are good and commendable benefits and they can greatly aid newsrooms. However, African journalists need to audit and examine these supposed benefits.

Generative AI for example raise concerns about biases and ethical dilemmas, particularly in African newsrooms. While AI can be trained to imitate human behaviour and preferences, it may also adopt human biases. AI systems trained on data that is not representative can inadvertently perpetuate discrimination and injustice. This is especially troubling in the context of journalism, where bias AI-driven content could further marginalise underrepresented communities and distort public discourse. Journalists must remain vigilant as gatekeepers, ensuring the accuracy and fairness of news stories before publication or broadcast.

Furthermore, the survey report emphasizes the importance of ethics, policy, and seeks to challenge journalists and newsrooms to collaborate with various stakeholders and start generating stories dealing with AI's impact on journalism and how by impact communities.

Future research can build on the survey by providing a deeper analysis of the use of AI in media houses in Zambia or Africa.



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