

Journalistic Ethics in the Utilization of ChatGPT in Journalistic Activities at Pikiran Rakyat Media Network

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ABSTRACT

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has brought significant changes in modern journalistic practices, including in the news production process in the mass media. One of the technologies that is starting to be used is ChatGPT, which is used to support information search, news drafting, and content processing. However, the use of this technology poses various challenges related to information accuracy, news independence, transparency, and compliance with the Journalistic Code of Ethics. This study aims to analyze the use of ChatGPT in journalistic activities in the Pikiran Rakyat Media Network (PRMN) and examine its implementation from the perspective of journalistic ethics. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on the Innovation Diffusion Theory from Rogers. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, documentation studies, and literature studies of informants involved in the journalistic process within PRMN. Data analysis is carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that the use of ChatGPT in PRMN is seen as able to improve the efficiency of journalistic work, especially in the process of searching for data, summarizing information, and preparing initial draft news. The technology adoption process takes place through the stages of knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation as described in the Innovation Diffusion Theory. However, the use of ChatGPT has not been able to fully replace the role of journalists because it has limitations in understanding local contexts, fact verification, social sensitivity, and ethical considerations. Therefore, editorial supervision is still necessary to maintain the accuracy, independence, and integrity of news in accordance with the Journalistic Code of Ethics.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT, Journalistic Ethics, Innovation Diffusion, Digital Journalism, Pikiran Rakyat Media Network

1. INTRODUCTION

The editorial policies of mass media outlets and press organizations regarding news production have undergone significant changes with the advent of the artificial intelligence (AI) era. The adoption of AI serves as an innovation that enhances the efficiency of journalistic work while maintaining media relevance in the digital age.

Pikiran Rakyat Media Network (PRMN) is a prominent mainstream media organization in Indonesia and West Java that has incorporated various artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, into its editorial operations. Originally established as a conventional newspaper with its first edition published on March 24, 1967, Pikiran Rakyat has adapted its editorial practices over time. In 1996, the outlet launched its digital platform, *pikiran-rakyat.com*, making it one of the oldest online media outlets in Indonesia. Furthermore, in 2020, the organization

established the Pikiran Rakyat Media Network (PRMN), a national online media ecosystem built on principles of collaboration and shared media management.

The transformation of Pikiran Rakyat from print to digital via the PRMN media ecosystem reflects a response to shifting audience needs and preferences. With an ecosystem comprising over 200 media outlets spread across 34 provinces, PRMN has built an extensive network while providing local journalists with the opportunity to manage independent media operations.

As it enters the era of digital technology, PRMN integrates AI into its operations to enhance efficiency and effectiveness—utilizing technology for data analysis, content personalization, and audience interaction. As a press organization governed by Law No. 40 of 1999 concerning the Press and the Journalistic Code of Ethics, PRMN's use of artificial intelligence must remain strictly aligned with mandated ethical standards.

Journalistic ethics in the AI era have recently come under intense scrutiny. According to the Ministry of Communication and Digital (Komdigi, 2025), the rise of AI has coincided with a surge in deepfake content and media manipulation, with reported incidents increasing by as much as 550 percent. In the early part of the year alone, the ministry processed hundreds of thousands of pieces of negative content, including thousands of cases involving hoaxes and disinformation (Komdigi, 2025).

Despite the challenges posed by deepfakes and media manipulation, artificial intelligence holds significant potential to enhance the efficiency of knowledge management and news production. By accelerating access to information and supporting automated editing processes, journalists can allocate more time to creative and analytical reporting (Ningsih, 2024).

PRMN has utilized ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence technology, to assist the editorial team in managing vast volumes of daily information. This tool enables journalists to quickly retrieve data, organize key information, and efficiently draft initial news stories. Furthermore, its natural language processing capabilities facilitate preliminary automated editing, error detection, and tone adaptation for PRMN's target audience.

According to a survey conducted by Populix in April 2023, ChatGPT is the generative AI application most widely used by the Indonesian public (Annur, 2023). Among 1,014 respondents, 530 professionals and entrepreneurs reported using AI-based applications, with 52% identifying ChatGPT as their most frequently used platform (Annur, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study examines journalistic ethics at Pikiran Rakyat Media Network regarding the use of ChatGPT as a tool to enhance time efficiency and accuracy. The study focuses on the integration of AI into editorial workflows, its impact on content quality, adherence to journalistic codes of ethics, and the technical and professional challenges associated with its implementation.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a single-case study approach, focusing on the organizational and editorial dynamics within PRMN. The primary goal is to examine and explain the ethical dimensions of using ChatGPT in journalistic activities at PRMN.

To gather comprehensive primary data, the researcher conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key internal and external informants selected through purposive sampling:

1. Muhammad Bayu Pratama (Managing Editor, PRMN) – Primary Informant
2. Rahmi (Journalist, *Pikiran Rakyat Bandung*) – Primary Informant
3. Aep Hendi (Journalist for *Kabar Priangan* and Head of the Indonesian Journalists Association [PWI], Garut Regency Chapter) – Key Informant
4. Sigit Zulmunir (Journalist, *Tempo*) – Key Informant

These informants were selected due to their direct involvement in daily news production and their expertise regarding press standards and AI integration in West Java.

Primary data obtained through interviews and direct field observations were complemented by secondary data, including internal PRMN editorial guidelines, Press Council regulation documents, literature reviews, and industry reports.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, comprising three concurrent flows: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data validity and trustworthiness were systematically evaluated through credibility (internal validity via source triangulation), transferability (external validity via dense description), dependability (reliability via audit trails), and confirmability (objectivity).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The research findings indicate that the PRMN editorial team navigates the adoption and ethical governance of ChatGPT through stages aligned with Everett M. Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory: Knowledge, Persuasion (Deliberation), Decision, Implementation, and Confirmation (Evaluation).

3.1. PRMN Editorial Knowledge Regarding the Use of AI in Ethical Journalism

Knowledge regarding artificial intelligence tools is crucial for the editorial team at PRMN. Personnel across structural levels are encouraged to understand how to utilize AI in news production while adhering to ethical standards.

The PRMN editorial team is fully aware of the existence and operational role of AI in journalism. Informants noted that the official usage guidelines issued by the Press Council on January 25, 2025, marked a turning point in formalizing AI within the media ecosystem (Rizaldi, 2025). PRMN views AI not as a disruptive threat, but as an innovation capable of enhancing production speed and workflow efficiency (Pikiran Rakyat, 2025).

Viewed through Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations framework, this corresponds to the knowledge stage, where an organization becomes aware of an innovation and seeks to understand its functions. PRMN is actively assessing the benefits, risks, and limitations of AI usage.

To operationalize this understanding, PRMN established internal guidelines stipulating that non-news journalistic articles must not be generated entirely by AI. As a preventive measure against hallucinated data, the editorial team enforces field verification to cross-check AI-generated information. Furthermore, editors retain a human touch by incorporating contextual insights and personal investigative reporting, ensuring content adheres to the Press Council's Journalistic Code of Ethics (Rizaldi, 2025).

3.2. PRMN Editorial Considerations (Persuasion) Regarding AI Usage

In the persuasion stage, an organization forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward an innovation by evaluating its relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability.

Research findings indicate that PRMN's primary consideration revolves around framing AI as a supportive digital assistant rather than a substitute for human journalists. Journalists remain responsible for data accuracy, depth, balanced coverage, and adherence to Law No. 40 of 1999 concerning the Press.

AI offers a clear relative advantage by accelerating routine tasks (e.g., manuscript drafting, preliminary proofreading, SEO tag optimization). However, to remain compatible with core journalistic values, AI output must be filtered through human critical judgment. Strategic considerations are also driven by intense market competition in online search engine optimization (SEO), where faster publication speeds directly influence traffic visibility (Pikiran Rakyat, 2025). Thus, PRMN demonstrates high conceptual readiness, accepting AI selectively to support operational productivity without sacrificing narrative integrity or credibility.

3.3. PRMN Editorial Decision Regarding the Ethical Use of AI

The decision stage involves actions that lead to a choice to adopt or reject an innovation. PRMN formally decided to adopt ChatGPT within its editorial production process, driven primarily by operational constraints and the demand for digital speed.

Faced with resource optimization and shrinking newsroom sizes, AI acts as an efficiency buffer. This adoption strategy aligns with findings by Marconi and Siegman (2017), who demonstrated that newsroom automation can reduce production lead times by 30 to 40 percent through automated drafting and data processing.

Beyond operational efficiency, PRMN utilizes AI-driven data analytics to understand audience consumption patterns, supporting audience-driven content strategies (Carlson, 2021). However, PRMN's decision represents adaptive adoption rather than total automation. As Diakopoulos (2019) highlights, successful AI integration in media depends on maintaining a

rigorous balance between algorithmic capability and human editorial control to preserve public trust.

3.4. PRMN Editorial Evaluation and Confirmation on AI Usage

The confirmation (evaluation) stage occurs when an organization evaluates its adoption decision, seeking reinforcement or making adjustments if conflicts arise.

PRMN conducts routine editorial reviews, internal training, and coaching sessions to evaluate AI integration. When AI-generated drafts fall short of editorial standards, corrective feedback is provided during daily briefing sessions.

Regular evaluations serve as an essential safeguard against algorithmic bias, factual errors, and ethical breaches (Flew, 2023). This approach reflects what Hafied (2025) describes as an "ethical governance framework"—a structured system ensuring that automated media production abides by core principles of accuracy, independence, and social accountability. Through continuous monitoring, PRMN applies what Rogers termed adaptive confirmation, refining its operational rules to ensure technology serves ethical standards.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the utilization of ChatGPT in journalistic activities at Pikiran Rakyat Media Network (PRMN) follows the structured stages of Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory: Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, and Confirmation. PRMN's editorial team views ChatGPT as an auxiliary tool that improves efficiency in data collection, text summarization, and initial drafting. However, the organization maintains that AI cannot replace human journalists due to its fundamental limitations in local contextual understanding, fact verification, and ethical reasoning.

Compliance with the Press Council's regulatory guidelines (Rizaldi, 2025) and Law No. 40 of 1999 ensures that PRMN balances technological adaptation with journalistic integrity. Human editorial oversight, field verification, and continuous ethical evaluation remain mandatory components of the newsroom workflow.

Recommendations: Future research should expand this inquiry by conducting comparative cross-case studies across different media networks, exploring public perception toward AI-assisted news, and evaluating the long-term impact of algorithmic news generation on journalistic labor dynamics.

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