

AI public relations: the early rise of Kizuna AI

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Abstract AI has assumed a dominant role in society, leveraging various tools to extend its influence beyond digital marketing and content creation. In the year 2023, AI's industry role has witnessed significant expansion. An illustrative example of this is the emergence of Kizuna AI, which serves as a testament to the fact that AI is not confined solely to scientific rigour but also encompasses creative endeavours akin to those undertaken by humans. In light of these developments, the New Media Theory prompts us to reconsider the discourse surrounding AI, recognising that it manifests differently in certain respects and has the potential to behave unpredictably as it becomes increasingly integrated into society. For this study, the Media Analysis model proposed by Neuman was employed to gain valuable insights. This research underscores the importance of fostering greater collaboration between humanity and scientific disciplines to gain a comprehensive understanding of how AI operates. By bridging these domains, researchers can unlock more profound insights into the workings of AI and its implications for society.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; new media theory; public relations

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, a noteworthy phenomenon known as influencer relations has emerged, garnering significant attention (Angelia & Susilo, 2023). This trend has been fuelled by the rapid expansion of social media platforms, where individuals boasting substantial followings, particularly on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, wield considerable influence over public opinion, brand narratives, and revenue generation (Enke & Borchers, 2019; Zhou et al., 2021). At its essence, influencer relations revolve around establishing connections between brands and influential personalities who can effectively promote their products or services to their dedicated followers. Such collaborations may encompass sponsored content, product reviews, joint ventures, and brand partnerships. Influencers typically possess a large and devoted audience and are regarded as authorities or experts within specific niches or industries.

The rise of influencer relations can be attributed to the evolving advertising and marketing landscape. Traditional advertising channels like television and print advertisements are experiencing diminished efficacy as consumers increasingly turn to social media for information and entertainment. In contrast, influencers present a more genuine and relatable approach to engaging with audiences, as they are perceived as authentic individuals who have cultivated their followings through their hard work and creativity. Another significant catalyst for the surge in influencer relations is the democratisation of influence. In the past, only a select group of celebrities and public figures possessed the capacity to wield extensive influence over public opinion. However, the digital era enables anyone with a smartphone and internet access to build a following and become an influencer. This democratisation has created fresh ways for brands to connect with consumers through diverse voices and perspectives (Arief & Gustomo, 2020; Panda et al., 2019).

The impact of influencer relations reverberates across a broad spectrum of industries, from fashion and beauty to food and travel. In many instances, influencers have eclipsed the influence of traditional celebrities due to their perceived authenticity and relatability. As a result, brands are increasingly turning to influencers as an effective means to reach their target audiences, given that they offer a more targeted and cost-efficient approach. Nevertheless, navigating the intricate dynamics between influencers and their followers presents a central challenge in influencer relations. Influencers are trusted sources of information and entertainment, and their followers exhibit high engagement and loyalty. Consequently, influencers are responsible for maintaining transparency and authenticity in their interactions with brands and their dedicated followers.

To succeed in influencer relations, brands must establish authentic and mutually respectful relationships with influencers, recognising and accommodating their unique needs and aspirations (Abdullah, 2020). Transparent communication regarding the affiliations between brands

and influencers is imperative, avoiding practices that could mislead or deceive and potentially harm the brand's reputation. Despite the challenges involved, influencer relations are expected to maintain their significance. As social media platforms evolve and new ones emerge, brands must stay abreast of the latest trends and adapt their strategies accordingly to remain relevant (Susilo & Hui Chen, 2023; Susilo & K. Santos, 2023). With a well-considered approach, influencer relations can be a potent tool for fostering brand awareness, driving sales, and establishing meaningful connections with consumers.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the impact of technology extends beyond human work, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) having a growing influence on the digital content landscape. This unique facet of Influencer Marketing is exemplified through the emergence of AI trends, where Kizuna AI serves as a prominent role model preceding the onset of AI trends. This research aims to analyse the essence of the evolving AI trend, recognising that its development necessitates a comprehensive perspective that can determine the future landscape of publication, marketing, and organisational practices.

Taking a retrospective view of the AI trend, it has become a pivotal force in contemporary times, riding the wave of digital content. The field of AI is rapidly evolving and expanding, fostering significant growth and impact. Machine learning (ML) algorithms represent a pivotal trend within AI, empowering machines to learn from data without explicit programming (Huynh-The et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2022). This facet is particularly relevant for tasks reliant on pattern recognition, such as image and speech recognition. Moreover, machine learning facilitates the development of predictive models that enhance decision-making processes and mitigate business risks.

In parallel, natural language processing (NLP) has become another prominent AI trend, centring on interactions between computers and human language. With the surge in digital data, NLP assumes increasing significance in applications like chatbots, virtual assistants, and sentiment analysis (Korzynski et al., 2023; Reswara et al., 2017). Advanced search engines utilising NLP enable better comprehension of user queries, simplifying user information retrieval.

Furthermore, AI has made substantial inroads in the healthcare domain, bolstering patient outcomes, reducing costs, and elevating the quality of care. Predictive models driven by AI contribute to the identification of patients at risk of chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease. Personalised treatment plans are also being developed based on a patient's medical history, genetic information, and lifestyle (Biswal, 2020; Kumar Gouda et al., 2020).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is making notable strides in revolutionising various aspects of our lives, including how we shop and conduct business. E-commerce enterprises leverage AI to create more personalised shopping experiences by analysing customer data, offering

product recommendations and tailored marketing messages (Huynh-The et al., 2023; Phelan et al., 2010).

Additionally, AI is pivotal in enhancing supply chain efficiency through optimised inventory management and demand prediction. In the financial sector, AI is powering the development of predictive models for credit scoring, fraud detection, and risk management while also facilitating the creation of trading algorithms capable of responding swiftly to market fluctuations.

Furthermore, AI is proving its mettle in manufacturing, streamlining production lines, minimising waste, and elevating product quality. Manufacturers can reduce downtime and prolong equipment lifespan by incorporating predictive maintenance models. In autonomous vehicles, AI has become instrumental in developing self-driving cars and trucks (Farhi et al., 2022), ushering in transformative changes within the transportation industry, including reduced accidents, enhanced traffic flow, and diminished reliance on human drivers.

While AI's impact is undeniably beneficial, concerns about job displacement arise, particularly in the manufacturing and transportation sectors. However, proponents argue AI will create fresh employment opportunities, particularly in data science and AI development. Additionally, there are apprehensions regarding the potential malicious use of AI for cyberattacks and surveillance. As AI advances, it becomes paramount to establish robust regulations and ethical guidelines to ensure responsible and conscientious utilisation.

The present paper delves into the Artificial Intelligence (AI) trend and its various roles in the industry. Notably, the early emergence of AI lies beyond the scope of mainstream trends. Before the advent of Metaverse and Open AI, the industry had its pioneering influencer, Kizuna AI, a virtual YouTuber (VTuber) who gained prominence in 2017, swiftly becoming one of the most popular virtual content creators in Japan and worldwide. Kizuna AI transcends being a mere animated character, as she embodies an AI avatar with a distinct personality and captivating backstory. Her creation can be credited to Activ8, Inc., and she debuted on YouTube in November 2016. Swiftly, her popularity soared, with her inaugural video garnering over one million views in months. The factors contributing to Kizuna AI's success are multifaceted. Her remarkable persona, often depicted as cheerful, vibrant, and enthusiastic, coupled with her affection for video games, anime, and otaku culture, endears her to audiences. Additionally, her unique, high-pitched voice adds to her charm, making her readily recognisable and beloved by fans. Her infectious energy and enthusiasm have effectively endeared her to viewers, firmly establishing her as a cherished figure in the virtual realm.

Another critical element that drives Kizuna AI's popularity is her ability to foster a genuine connection with her fans. Through live streams, tweets, and active engagement on various social media platforms, she consistently interacts with her viewers, responding to

comments and sharing personal anecdotes. This level of interaction fosters a sense of community among her fans, making them feel personally connected to her. Kizuna AI's widespread acclaim also owes to her pioneering use of cutting-edge technology in her content creation. Employing motion capture and 3D animation, her videos boast fluid and natural movements, heightening the immersive experience for her audience. Moreover, her live streams, often conducted through virtual reality headsets, enable viewers to engage with her more profoundly (Hoang & Su, 2019; Saputra & Setyawan, 2021).

As her popularity surged, Kizuna AI's influence extended to mainstream media outlets, resulting in features on various television shows, magazines, and other media, further bolstering her visibility and following. In a remarkable testament to her cultural impact, Kizuna AI was invited to perform at the opening ceremony of the esteemed World Cosplay Summit in Japan in 2018, solidifying her status as a cultural icon. Beyond being a source of entertainment, Kizuna AI has proven to be a valuable promotional asset (Puspitaningrum & Prasetio, 2019). Collaborating with several companies, she effectively promoted their products, including energy drinks and a mobile game. These endorsements played a pivotal role in elevating her profile and cementing her status as a powerful marketing tool.

Overall, Kizuna AI's rise to stardom exemplifies virtual content creators' growing appeal and technology's immense potential to revolutionise entertainment. Her unique personality, innovative use of technology, and genuine rapport with her fanbase have solidified her as a cultural icon and a trailblazer in virtual content. As technology in virtual content creation advances, the future holds exciting possibilities for creators like Kizuna AI.

METHODOLOGY

This research will use the New Media Theory, a contemporary and pertinent subject within communication studies, encompassing digitalisation and Influencer Relations. W. Russell Neuman, a prominent media scholar and theorist, has made substantial contributions to this field, significantly influencing our understanding of the impact of new media on society and how media is consumed and utilised. The core tenet of New Media Theory is the recognition that media technologies are not neutral tools but carry significant social and cultural implications. According to Neuman, these new media technologies fundamentally alter our interactions with one another and the world at large (Admin, 2022).

A fundamental aspect of Neuman's contribution to new media theory is the concept of "the end of the audience." This notion posits that new media technologies, such as social media and user-generated content, have disrupted the traditional relationship between media producers and audiences. Audiences are no longer passive consumers but actively participate in creating and disseminating media content.

This shift has led to a new form of media culture, where every individual assumes the dual role of producer and consumer of media (Achmad, 2020). Another pivotal concept in Neuman's work is "media rituals," wherein he underscores that media consumption is intricately woven into cultural practices and rituals. For instance, events like watching the Super Bowl or following the evening news are deeply embedded in our cultural customs. Neuman argues that understanding these rituals is vital to comprehending the impact of new media technologies on society, as they play a crucial role in shaping our attitudes and beliefs.

Context holds immense significance in Neuman's understanding of the impact of new media technologies. He highlights that the implications of a particular technology can vary drastically depending on the social, cultural, and political context in which it is used. A social media platform, for instance, may have different consequences on political discourse in a democratic society as opposed to an authoritarian regime. Thus, comprehending the specific context in which new media technologies are employed is critical to grasping their effects (Moreno Esparza, 2015; Roa, 1998). Additionally, Neuman emphasises the role of power in shaping the impact of new media technologies. While these technologies have the potential to challenge existing power structures, they can also be co-opted and utilised to reinforce existing power dynamics. Social media, for instance, can be a powerful tool for mobilising social movements and challenging authoritarian regimes. However, those in power can also manipulate it to spread propaganda and sway public opinion (Moreno Esparza, 2015; Roa, 1998).

Lastly, Neuman's work underscores the critical importance of media literacy in the digital age. Individuals must cultivate essential media literacy skills as media consumption becomes increasingly complex and multifaceted. This involves the ability to analyse media content, discern its cultural and social implications, and evaluate the credibility of sources. With these skills, individuals can navigate the dynamic media landscape more effectively and make informed judgments. Neuman's contributions to the field of new media theory are significant and far-reaching. His work sheds light on the social and cultural impact of new media technologies, stresses the importance of understanding media rituals and context, highlights the role of power in shaping media technologies' effects, and underscores the significance of media literacy. These concepts are indispensable in comprehending how new media technologies transform our society and shape our interactions with one another and the world.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In 2023, The academic scholars find ourselves in an era where OpenAI has become an influential force across various industries, prompting others also to harness the power of AI to develop their products. Examples include ChatGPT, a tool for copy marketing, and AI's ability to create art from scratch. As a result, the trend of AI has firmly

established itself as a fundamental aspect of our current landscape. AI's extensive influence and significant role in various systems have transformed it from a mere tasking tool to a vital Public Relations (PR) component. Traditionally, PR was associated with human corporation management and public speaking, but with AI's integration, PR now incorporates data-driven insights into its communication and marketing strategies.

The fundamental difference between AI PR and traditional PR lies in using advanced technologies such as machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics to achieve PR objectives (Kim & Yoo, 2021). AI PR harnesses algorithms and software applications to analyse vast data swiftly and extract valuable insights to inform PR strategies and tactics.

A notable advantage of AI PR is its ability to process extensive data rapidly and accurately. In contrast, traditional PR methods rely on manual data collection and analysis, which is time-consuming and susceptible to human error. With AI PR, PR practitioners can discern patterns and trends that may have been overlooked using manual approaches, leading to more precise insights and a deeper understanding of target audiences (Babiak, 2023; Forbes, 2020). Moreover, AI PR facilitates personalised communication, enabling organisations to engage their target audience more effectively. Through predictive analytics and machine learning, AI PR can provide insights into individual preferences and behaviour, empowering PR practitioners to tailor their messages and tactics for each specific audience segment.

Another significant difference between AI PR and traditional PR lies in automation. AI PR can automate tasks such as media monitoring, sentiment analysis, and content creation, freeing PR practitioners to focus on higher-level responsibilities, including strategic planning and relationship-building. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential drawbacks of AI PR. The reliance on algorithms and automated processes may result in a lack of human connection and empathy, which are essential in building trust and nurturing relationships with target audiences. Additionally, an excessive focus on data-driven metrics and measurement may overlook vital qualitative aspects of PR.

AI PR and traditional PR diverge in their use of advanced technologies, emphasising automation and personalisation (August et al., 2020; Drydak, 2022). While AI PR offers significant benefits such as speed and accuracy, PR practitioners must balance automation and human connection to foster and sustain meaningful relationships with their target audiences. This transformation in PR, revolving around AI, indicates the changes New Media brought forth in our contemporary landscape.

Kizuna AI and Early Rise of AI: Vtuber and AI Avatar

The presence of Kizuna Ai serves as compelling evidence that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not limited to being a mere tasking tool but is making

significant advancements in public relations. Kizuna Ai represents a pivotal evolution in traditional PR, marking an early foray into AI's potential before the widespread trends of Metaverse and ChatGPT took over (Puspita Yuri, 2022). While a human streamer portrays her, her modelling, avatar, and expressions are all manifestations of AI. The emergence of Kizuna Ai sparked considerable investment in her branding, with companies utilising her as a platform to promote gaming products through her live streams. This shift in the media landscape can be aptly described as the natural progression from traditional human PR to AI-powered PR.

Beyond serving as a brand ambassador for specific companies, Kizuna Ai has become a trendsetter within the larger cultural context. Her success, evidenced by her impressive three million subscribers, prompted the establishment of the Hololive Company, further expanding the Virtual YouTuber (Vtuber) industry (Wingström et al., 2022).

Kizuna Ai's influence has redefined the perception of AI, challenging the stereotypical image of AI as intimidating, rigid, and solely associated with scientific strictness (Zaelani, 2022). Instead, she has reconstructed the public's perspective of AI to be more approachable, creative, and sociable. Kizuna Ai's interactions with people, characterised by the cuteness of her avatar, have fostered a more culture-friendly and creative image of AI.

Kizuna Ai effectively introduced various games and products to her audience through her gaming promotions and endorsements, showcasing AI's versatility beyond its traditional roles (Bredikhina, 2020). This demonstration of AI's capacity as an influencer signifies a significant culture shift, transforming AI from a perceived symbol of scientific rigidity into a creative and socially engaging figure. Kizuna Ai's influence goes beyond merely riding the bandwagon; she has spearheaded a genuine cultural change in the perception and acceptance of AI in society.

The Struggle of AI and Our Future

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to advance and become more deeply integrated into our society, concerns arise regarding its impact on various aspects of our lives, such as the job market, privacy, and ethical considerations. As we navigate this evolving landscape, AI will undoubtedly remain a subject of debate and contention as we grapple with its potential benefits and drawbacks.

One significant challenge we will face with AI is its effect on the job market. As AI can automate numerous jobs currently performed by humans, there is a concern that this could lead to widespread unemployment and economic instability. However, it is also plausible that AI will create entirely new job opportunities that are presently beyond our imagination. The critical struggle lies in ensuring a smooth transition to an AI-based economy and ensuring that the benefits of AI are accessible to all individuals.

Privacy is another area of concern as AI advances. As AI becomes more sophisticated, it gains access to a vast amount of data about individuals, raising the possibility of privacy breaches and the potential development of a surveillance state. Striking a balance between reaping the benefits of AI and safeguarding our privacy and civil liberties will be a critical challenge.

Furthermore, as AI becomes more intelligent, ethical implications must be considered. AI systems may find themselves in situations where they must make morally significant decisions. For instance, autonomous vehicles may be required to decide between saving the lives of their passengers or protecting pedestrians. Addressing these ethical dilemmas will require the development of clear ethical guidelines and ensuring that AI is programmed to prioritise decisions that benefit society as a whole.

The trend of AI has already become an integral part of our daily lives, closely intertwined with digitalisation. Digitalisation involves the integration of digital technologies into various aspects of business operations. The relationship between AI and digitalisation is mutually beneficial, as one propels the growth of the other (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; Mikalef et al., 2022). AI has proven to be one of the most transformative technological innovations of the 21st century, profoundly impacting all sectors of the economy.

One notable way AI is flourishing alongside digitalisation is through the abundance of available data. As digitalisation progresses, businesses generate vast volumes of data through online platforms and tools. AI systems are designed to analyse and learn from this data, empowering businesses to comprehend customer behaviour, market trends, and crucial metrics. With the increasing availability of data, AI systems have become more potent, enabling businesses to make informed decisions and enhance overall performance (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; Mikalef et al., 2022).

Additionally, AI is thriving through the development of sophisticated algorithms. These algorithms serve as the core of AI systems, enabling machines to learn from data and make informed decisions. Digitalisation has spurred the creation of advanced algorithms capable of processing vast data and making accurate predictions. These algorithms find applications in various domains, from speech recognition and image processing to fraud detection and risk management.

Moreover, AI's growth is intertwined with the broader adoption of cloud computing. Cloud computing allows businesses to access significant amounts of data and computing power remotely, eliminating the need for costly on-premises infrastructure. This accessibility simplifies the implementation of AI systems, enabling businesses to harness the required computing power without incurring the expenses associated with building and maintaining their infrastructure (Jeljeli et al., 2023).

The increasing accessibility of cost-effective hardware significantly influences Artificial Intelligence's (AI) growth. Advancements in processors and specialised hardware, such as Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), have made it easier for businesses to implement AI systems more efficiently and affordably. These hardware improvements have enhanced the processing capabilities of AI, resulting in faster and more accurate data analysis, thereby increasing its effectiveness in various applications. Another contributing factor to AI's growth in tandem with digitalisation is the development of specialised AI applications tailored to different industries. As businesses integrate digital technologies, they are exploring novel ways to utilise AI in their operations, creating industry-specific AI applications catering to fields like healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and transportation. These specialised applications are designed to address the unique requirements of each industry, ultimately enhancing productivity, cost-efficiency, and overall performance.

Additionally, AI's growth with digitalisation is linked to the increasing emphasis on automation. As businesses become more digitally integrated, they are increasingly inclined to automate various aspects of their operations. AI systems are at the forefront of this automation trend, enabling businesses to streamline processes ranging from customer service and marketing to manufacturing and logistics (Matkevičienė & Jakučionienė, 2021). The incorporation of automation not only improves efficiency and productivity but also allows businesses to allocate resources towards more strategic endeavours.

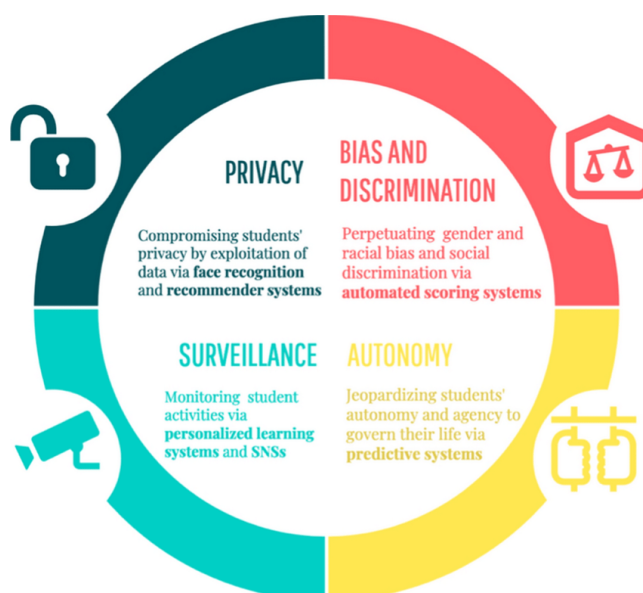


Figure 1. Potential of Ethical Misuse of AI
Source: Akgun & Greenhow (2021)

However, the ongoing struggle lies in ensuring AI's responsible and ethical use. The potential misuse of AI for malevolent purposes, such as creating powerful weaponry or manipulating people's thoughts

and opinions, poses ethical concerns. Addressing this struggle involves establishing robust regulations and guidelines that govern the development and application of AI, ensuring its ethical use and positive impact on society (See Figure 1).

The future challenges surrounding AI are multifaceted and complex. As AI progresses, we must address job displacement, privacy, ethics, and regulation issues. Collaboration between governments, industry leaders, and the public will be pivotal in navigating these challenges and shaping a future for AI that benefits society at large, ensuring a better future for future generations. As we embrace digitalisation and its intertwining with AI, we can expect AI to play an increasingly vital role in transforming our lives and work for the better.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that AI is dynamic, deviating from previous scientific discussions. This is supported by the evolving and dynamic nature of New Media, as demonstrated by New Media Theory and Kizuna AI's PR style. While much of the discussion surrounding AI pertains to its potential takeover of various tasks, the origins of the AI trend lie in creative works, challenging the notion that AI is incapable of emotional engineering. Consequently, society experiences both advantages and disadvantages due to this development, with AI now integrated into Influencer Relations.

The research findings indicate that AI's purpose is not solely to replace human labour but to complement it, potentially lessening human workload. This, in turn, could lead to innovations that are not solely reliant on monetary factors, as AI takes on specific tasks traditionally performed by humans. The author proposes a recommendation for more collaborative and multidisciplinary research involving both humanities and scientific fields, aiming to uncover the multifaceted potentials of AI beyond its portrayal as a mere tool for replacing human jobs. By exploring the full scope of AI's capabilities, researchers can emphasise its role as a transformative force with broader applications beyond mere labour substitution.

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