BledCom

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Public Relations: **Boon or Curse?**

Proceedings of the 32nd International Public Relations Research Symposium BledCom

EDITORS: Dejan Verčič, Ana Tkalac Verčič and Krishnamurthy Sriramesh

BledCom 2025

32nd International Public Relations Research Symposium
June 27 - June 28, 2025

Organized by:

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA | FDV Faculty of Social Sciences

Photo by Lucas Miguel on Unsplash

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Public Relations: Boon or Curse?

Proceedings of the 32nd International
Public Relations Research Symposium BledCom
June 27 - June 28, 2025

EDITORS:
Dejan Verčič
Ana Tkalac Verčič
Krishnamurthy Sriramesh

PUBLISHED BY:
University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Social Sciences
Kardeljeva ploščad 5
1000 Ljubljana
Slovenia

AVAILABLE AT:
https://www.bledcom.com/

Ljubljana, 2025

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani
COBISS.SI-ID 259607299
ISBN 978-961-295-139-9 (PDF)

Contents

Paper Abstracts

Papers

Investigating the impact of AI on SMEs: communicative challenges and insights from an Italian study

Lovari, Alessandro, *University of Cagliari (Italy)*
Marinelli, Alberto, *Sapienza University (Italy)*
Brescia, Paolo, *University of Cagliari (Italy)*
Tedeschi, Laura, *Sapienza University (Italy)*
Comunello, Francesca, *Sapienza University (Italy)*

Abstract

This study examines the adoption and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions across various business functions, such as customer care, communication, public relations, and marketing, focusing on a sample of 200 Italian micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The analysis is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Adoption and Diffusion Theory and the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) model. It explores both the opportunities and barriers perceived by C-level managers in implementing AI systems within their organizations. The study, based on 200 CATI interviews with SMEs managers (administrated in collaboration with IPSOS as part of a broader national research project), highlights that communication is increasingly recognised as a key area for AI adoption, although current use remains confined to routine tasks.

In general, existing data show that engagement with AI is growing, but remains underdeveloped, due to inadequate digital skills and limited government support. Furthermore, media narratives significantly impact managers' perceptions of AI, with many expressing concerns about its potential impact on job loss. The study calls for further qualitative investigation and cross-country comparisons, emphasizing the need for AI literacy and clearer AI competencies.

Introduction and Aim of the study

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has long attracted the attention of both scholars and the general public. According to McCarthy (2007), AI is a technological domain focused on creating systems capable of performing tasks that were once considered the exclusive domain of human intelligence. These tasks range from perception and reasoning to learning and problem-solving (McCarthy, 2007).

However, it is increasingly recognized in the literature that AI systems are not merely simulators of human behaviour; rather, they represent the construction of autonomous entities capable of making decisions, learning from data, and operating in complex environments (Olteanu et al., 2025). The development of AI systems significantly accelerated after the release of Large Language Models (LLMs, such as ChatGPT) in 2022, which marked a significant turning point in the diffusion and adoption of generative AI, to the point that this technology is reshaping business

processes and communication across organizations, both in the private and in the public sector. While large companies are rapidly integrating AI into their operations, adoption among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises remains comparatively limited and underexplored in the scholarly literature, particularly within the Italian context. Moreover, research focusing on Italian SMEs becomes particularly relevant, as they not only represent the backbone of the national economy, accounting for nearly 90% of all businesses and employing approximately 78% of the total workforce but also have the capacity to serve as key drivers of innovation and competitiveness. Providing insights into how AI, still in its early stages of adoption, is shaping their strategic (and communication) functions is therefore essential for understanding both organizational transformation and broader socio-economic impacts.

In this context, this study, aligning with the existing research frameworks of the Adoption and Diffusion of Innovation theory (Rogers, 2003; Kee, 2017) and the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) model (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990), aims to investigate the level of AI adoption and integration by Italian SMEs. It focuses on the impact of AI solutions on communication and customer relationship practices, exploring the perceived barriers and opportunities associated with AI integration, from the perspective of C-level executives. The study underscores the communicative dimension as a strategic entry point for fostering AI adoption within smaller organizations such as SMEs. The research also addresses how media narratives about AI and job displacement influence managerial perceptions, offering insights into both practical and cultural dimensions of AI adoption in SMEs.

Literature Review

Despite an extensive public attention that has been dedicated to the topic of AI, relatively few studies have investigated its practical applications within micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This observation aligns with a similar gap that has been identified in studies of the public sector (Panda et al., 2025). However, the use of AI in both the private and public sectors is gaining momentum (Hjaltalin & Sigurdarson, 2024; Madan & Ashok, 2023), fuelling a public debate that is shedding light on its technological, economic, and societal implications (Lorentz et al., 2023; Galloway & Swiatek, 2018).

Recent studies (Huseyn et al., 2024; Schwaeke et al., 2024) have emphasized AI's potential to generate new business and entrepreneurial opportunities (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2023), as well as its ability to reshape strategic (Gregory & Smith, 2025) and corporate communication (Kelm & Johann, 2025). AI can also enhance public relations (Galloway & Swiatek, 2018) and crisis management (Cheng et al., 2024). At the same time, AI raises unprecedented ethical challenges and risks, including concerns related to privacy and security, bias and fairness, trust and reliability, transparency, and the human–AI interaction. (Bowen, 2024; Kamila & Jasrotia, 2025; Illia, Colleoni & Zyglidopoulos, 2023).
Given this *double-edged* nature (Zerfass et al., 2024), AI adoption and integration in SMEs largely remain confined to low-risk and repetitive functions, hampered by a variety of internal and external challenges (Mohd Rasdi & Umar Baki, 2025; Zerfass et al., 2024). Indeed, Wirtz et al. (2018) note that AI continues to operate within defined limits, while creative problem-solving and innovative thinking remain predominantly human-driven. However, the release of ChatGPT in November 2022 has accelerated AI adoption, intensifying both the pace and the relevance of the debate (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Generative AI, in particular, is reshaping the global labour market as LLMs constitute a different form of automation that increasingly overlaps with tasks traditionally performed by

the creative, highly educated, and highly paid workers (Eloundou et al., 2023). At the same time, AI holds considerable potential to boost labour productivity (Brynjolfsson et al., 2021), a factor that may explain why nearly 80% of large companies have already implemented AI into their core operations (Ghosh et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2024).

In response, the World Economic Forum (2025) underscores the urgency of widespread reskilling and lifelong learning initiatives to prepare societies for these transformations. However, the levels of AI adoption among SMEs vary widely due to structural and organisational barriers. Some scholars have noted that SMEs tend to emulate the strategies of larger companies (Atkinson, 2025), but their efforts are frequently hindered by limited digital skills and insufficient financial resources. On the other hand, studies have indicated that SMEs may benefit from greater flexibility compared to larger companies, enabling them to adapt more rapidly to innovative approaches (Ahmed, 2024; Rajaram & Tinguely, 2024).

In the broader European context SMEs tend to be hesitant and slower than larger companies in adopting AI (Ameen et al., 2022), with Italy, for instance, reporting even lower levels of AI adoption compared to the European average (Eurostat, 2025). This gap is largely caused by a combination of structural and cultural barriers, including limited access to advanced digital competencies, insufficient training opportunities, and persistent financial constraints that hinder both progress and innovation (Proietti & Magnani, 2025). However, existing literature suggests that participation in collaborative networks, such as innovation hubs, and public–private partnerships has proven effective in enhancing AI adoption and facilitating knowledge-sharing among smaller companies, thereby helping to overcome some of these limitations (Muto et al., 2024).

Rogers's Diffusion of Innovation Theory (2003) pointed out that an innovation spreads rapidly once it reaches at least 10% of the members of a social group. However, research by the Institute for Competitiveness in collaboration with TeamSystem (2025) indicates that, to date, only 8.2% of Italian SMEs have adopted AI, compared with the European average of 13.5%. This may suggest that we are not yet witnessing the domino effect described by Rogers, which would enable more rapid diffusion. Consequently, Italian SMEs may be situated within so-called homophilous social systems—contexts that are more conservative and resistant to innovation, and that tend to adopt new practices with greater hesitation than others (Rogers, 2003).

Furthermore, the Teha Global Innosystem Index 2025, a global ranking developed by Ambrosetti-The European House to evaluate the innovation capacity of the world's 47 most advanced countries, ranks Italy only 30th, two positions lower than in 2022. This places the country below the EU average, reflecting a persistent hesitation among Italian enterprises to adopt technological innovations at an early stage, including AI solutions. The index evaluates performance across five key dimensions: human capital, financial resources, ecosystem attractiveness, innovation ecosystem, ecosystem effectiveness. According to the index data, one of Italy's most pressing challenges lies in the weakness of its human capital, largely attributable to insufficient investment in education and research (Ambrosetti - The European House, 2025).

In this context, the communicative dimension plays a particularly significant role (Ertem Eray & Cheng, 2025). In SMEs, communication activities frequently overlap with marketing and advertising functions due to their limited organizational size. Indeed, this area represents a strategic entry point for the introduction of AI. By applying AI solutions to communication,

SMEs can experiment in a relatively low-risk environment, testing automation, personalization, and data-driven insights. Such initiatives not only enhance the effectiveness of communication but also elevate its strategic importance within the broader organizational ecosystem (Kelm & Johann, 2025).
Furthermore, one perspective that has recently attracted scholarly attention in the international context concerns the role of media narratives: public discourses about AI, particularly those emphasizing its potential impact on employment, may shape managerial perceptions and influence the pace of AI adoption in SMEs (Ittefaq et al., 2025; Schwarz & Faj, 2024).

Methods & Research Questions

This study is part of a broader research project (IATI), funded by the Italian Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT, *Direzione Generale per il Digitale e le Telecomunicazioni*, ItalianGovernment) and aims to investigate the challenges posed by AI for Italian micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, with a specific focus on perceptions related to communication and public relations functions.
The empirical data were collected in July 2024 through 200 CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) surveys conducted by research institute IPSOS. The sample is representative of the national population of Italian micro/SMEs and includes C-level executives (CEOs, General Managers, and Entrepreneurs). Interviewees were selected based on geographical distribution, company size, and industrial sector, with particular attention to industry/manufacturing, commerce, construction, and business or personal services. Geographically, respondents were distributed across Italy to capture regional variations: 25% in the North East, 33% in the North West, 21% in the Center, and 21% in the South and Islands. The questionnaire, consisted of 21 closed-ended questions, was designed to assess managers' awareness and perceptions of AI adoption.

The study addresses three main research questions:

- **RQ1** *What challenges do C-level managers in Italian SMEs perceive in adopting AI solutions, and how do these differ between adopters and non-adopters?*
- **RQ2** *Which business functions are considered most impacted by AI, and how do these perceptions vary depending on whether AI has already been adopted, particularly in the area of communication?*
- **RQ3** *How do Italian C-level managers interpret media narratives concerning AI's impact on employment?*

Results and Discussion

The study highlights that Italian SMEs appear to operate within homophilous systems and show greater resistance to innovation. In particular, companies that have not adopted AI highlight two main obstacles: the high cost of developing internal human capital (152 responses) and employees' limited adaptability to digital or technological innovation (142). Interestingly, these barriers are not exclusive to non-adopters. Among companies that have already introduced AI solutions, similar difficulties persist—albeit to a lesser extent—especially concerning employees' adaptability (14 responses) and the ongoing need for investment in human capital development (12). These findings suggest that such challenges are not confined to the pre-adoption stage but continue to shape SMEs' experience throughout the implementation process.

These results resonate with recent studies emphasizing the lack of AI-related competencies within SMEs as a key limiting factor (Chatterjee et al., 2022). The perception of AI as a complex and resource-intensive technology appears to amplify concerns about workforce preparedness

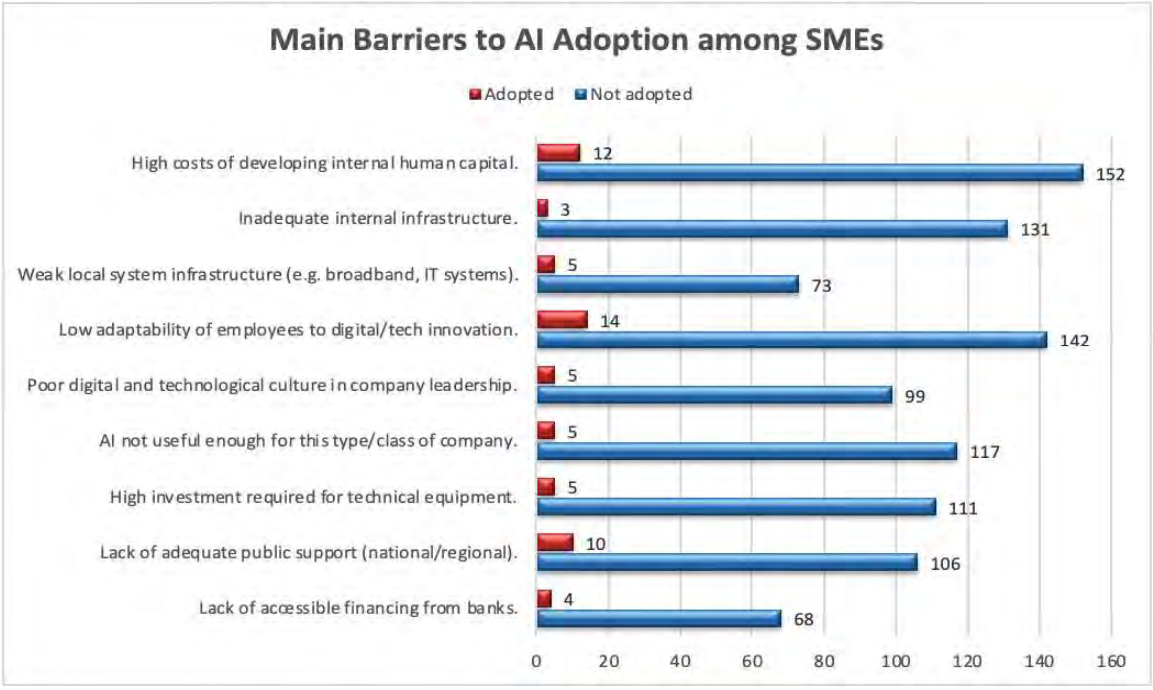

Figure 1 Main Barriers to AI adoption among SMEs; Base= 200, absolute numbers.

and long-term sustainability. This also points to a broader need for external support systems (i.e. training programs, incentives, and shared infrastructure) capable of alleviating the burden on smaller companies.

The structural gap identified is also consistent with the Teha Global Innosystem Index 2025, which highlights similar obstacles in different contexts, thereby reinforcing the robustness of these findings. According to the European Innovation Scoreboard 2024, Italy falls within the "Moderate Innovators" category, reflecting its low talent mobility and limited digital skills compared to other European countries. The relatively weak private and public investment in innovation and the commercialization of new ideas is another important constraint. Consistently, the third major weakness identified by the C-level executives surveyed concerns inadequate internal infrastructure and insufficient funding (131 responses).

These concerns reflect both organizational and environmental constraints—two dimensions commonly associated with the TOE framework (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990)—confirming that both internal readiness and structural limitations are crucial in AI adoption decisions. In light of these findings, the social system of Italian SMEs cannot currently be considered heterophilous—that is, a system that readily embraces change or adopts innovations with relative ease. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognize that social systems are dynamic rather than fixed; shifts in organizational culture, investment in human capital, or external pressures could facilitate a gradual move toward greater openness to innovation in the future.

Turning to the perceived opportunities, particularly in relation to business functions most impacted by AI, communication emerges as a strategic entry point. Across the sample, the area most frequently cited as potentially benefiting from AI is "communication and marketing" with 42 mentions among non-adopters and 11 among adopters. Those who have already implemented AI tools confirm the relevance of this

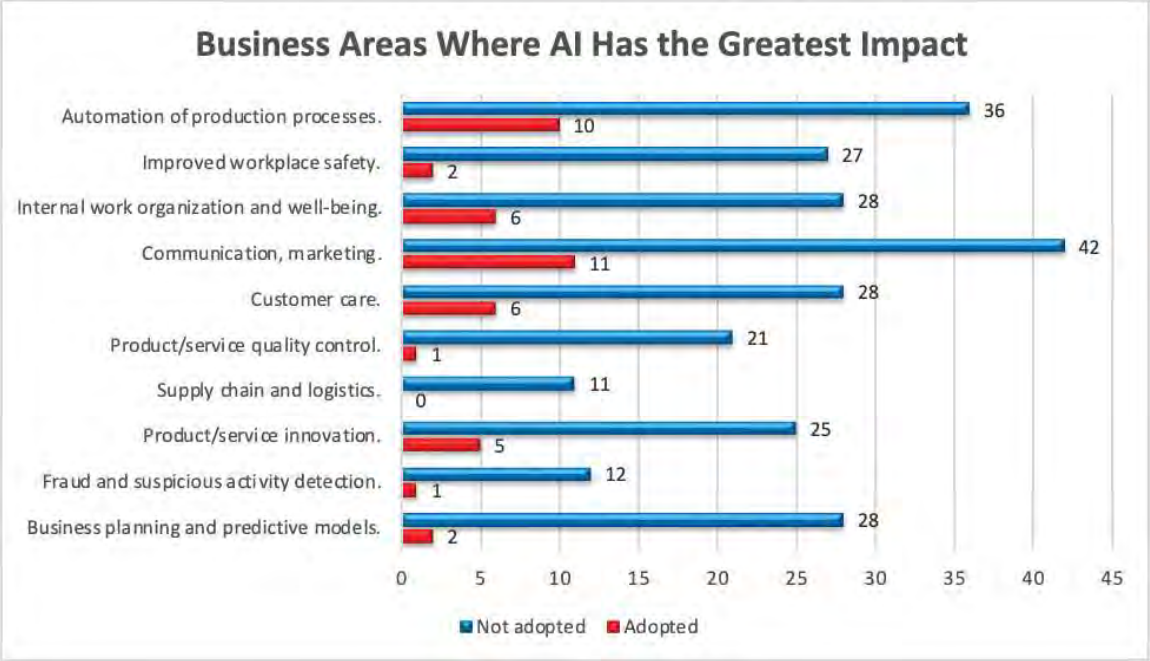

Figure 2: Business Areas Where AI Has the Greatest Impact. Base= total, absolute numbers.

area—suggesting that communication functions may serve as a low-risk and high-visibility area for innovations. In fact, among the 29 companies that have adopted AI solutions, 11 have implemented them in the field of communication. Indeed, the adoption of AI in communication activities is gradually reshaping organizational flows and processes, as well as strategic approaches, with potential implications for competitiveness (Iaia et al., 2024; Zerfass et al., 2024). Moreover, studies also suggest that AI applications may enhance stakeholder and employee engagement, while contributing to a more effective management of customer experience through the collection and interpretation of direct feedback (Buhmann, 2023; Zerfass et al., 2020).

C-level executives who have implemented AI in the communications sector are predominantly located in Northern Italy, particularly within the 'Personal and Business Services' sector. This finding aligns with the analysis of secondary data, which reveals that opinion leaders and early adopters are predominantly concentrated in Northern districts (Eurostat, 2025). Italy itself represents a complex case, with the business system more heavily concentrated in the Northern regions, where technological, business, and other forms of innovation are predominantly located (Regional Innovation Scoreboard, 2025).

Notably, no micro-enterprises appear in this group, confirming what existing literature suggests: that organizational size remains a key enabler of AI adoption (Gregory et al., 2023; Kelm & Johann, 2025). The data show a tendency for larger companies to implement AI in marketing and communication more often, supporting the idea that more structured organizations are better equipped—both financially and operationally—to integrate new technologies. It is widely acknowledged that SMEs tend to encounter greater challenges in pursuing technological innovation compared to larger companies (Ameen et al., 2022).

However, expectations for future growth in this

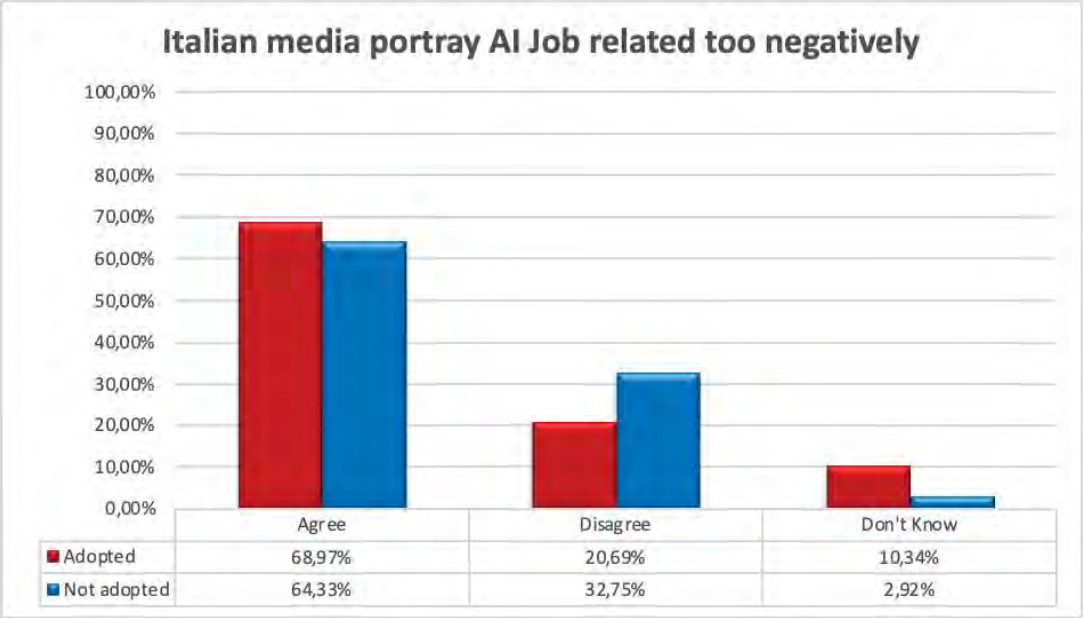

Figure 3 C-Levels' Perception of Mass Media Discourse on AI; Base=total; percentages values.

area remain cautious. Despite the perceived strategic relevance of communication, 74% of respondents indicated that they do not find AI solutions in marketing particularly useful at this stage. This scepticism likely stems from the still limited implementation of such technologies among SMEs, and reflects broader concerns around their practical utility, return on investment, and the complexity of integration—challenges widely recognized in the literature as key obstacles for SMEs approaching AI adoption (Wirtz et al., 2018).

After considering both the perceived barriers to AI adoption and the strategic relevance of communication functions, the focus shifts to a more cultural and discursive dimension of the phenomenon. Specifically, the third research question (RQ3) focuses on how high-level Italian executives perceive media narratives regarding AI's impact on employment.

Survey results indicate that many C-level managers—particularly those whose companies have already adopted AI solutions—perceive the tone of media narratives as predominantly negative, especially regarding employment risks. A substantial portion of respondents agreed that the media tend to overemphasize the potential for job loss, reinforcing a negative framing of AI's social impact. Among adopters, only 20% (6 out of 29) disagreed with this assessment, suggesting that exposure to AI tools within their companies does not necessarily lead to a reassessment of public narratives.

This discrepancy contrasts with most academic studies, which show that media coverage of AI tends to be largely positive or industry-oriented, often promoting innovation, growth, and competitiveness (Chuan et al., 2019; Fast & Horvitz, 2017; Schwarz & Faj, 2024). It may be partially explained by the limited self-reported expertise of many respondents in AI, as shown earlier in the findings.

Conclusion

This study has provided an overview of how Italian micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are approaching to AI adoption and

integration, particularly in the communication sector.

Despite still limited overall implementation, there is growing recognition of AI strategic potential. Communication activities, often overlapping with marketing and customer service in smaller companies (Kelm & Johann, 2025), has emerged as a pioneering field for experimentation, particularly in Italian medium-sized companies and service-oriented sectors.

Nonetheless, significant structural barriers continue to affect AI adoption in Italian SMEs. These barriers can be understood at both the organizational and individual level, according to the TOE model (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). At the organizational level, the external environment—including governance, regulations, and strategic orientations—shapes the conditions in which companies operate and influences their capacity to adopt new digital technologies. Findings from this study has indeed stated that C-level executives consider insufficient infrastructure and persistent technological gaps as the primary obstacles to progress and innovation in their organizations.

At the individual level, adoption depends on personal competence, self-confidence, and emotional attitudes (Sartori & Bocca, 2023). These factors relate to the technological dimension of the TOE framework and are especially relevant in the context of discontinuous technological change: while AI offers opportunities for improvement, it can also rapidly render existing technological and human skills obsolete (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). This dual challenge is reflected in the cultural resistance and uncertainty reported in our research by many executives, highlighting the difficulty of adapting to fast-evolving technologies.

Empirical insights suggest that successful AI adoption requires not only addressing structural and technological limitations within the organizational environment but also managing the human dimension of change. Companies that can navigate both fronts effectively are more likely to transform AI into a driver of innovation rather than a source of hesitation. These concerns appear to be reinforced by media narratives, which are widely perceived as negative or alarmist, despite the literature suggesting a more optimistic or business-oriented tone in AI coverage. This misalignment highlights the importance of digital literacy: in line with the science communication deficit model (Scheufele & Lewenstein, 2005) and the media hostile effect (Choi et al., 2009), limited knowledge can lead to selective interpretations of complex topics like AI, further inhibiting its adoption.

In this sense, AI becomes not only a technological object, but also a symbolic one, through which broader uncertainties about the future of work are negotiated. As noted in the emerging technologies literature (Beck & Vowe, 1995; Scheufele & Lewenstein, 2005), media narratives not only reflect innovation but actively participate in its social construction.

For SMEs navigating digital transformation with limited resources, such narratives can amplify concerns rather than alleviate them, especially when the practical benefits of AI remain inaccessible or abstract.

The barriers identified, alongside the negative media framing of AI's impact on employment, suggest that Italian SMEs currently exhibit homophilous social structures—networks characterized by similarity and internal reinforcement. However, this trajectory could shift if more attention is given to investing in specialized human capital, which may nurture heterophilous opinion leaders and thereby catalyse innovation.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, several directions emerge for future research.

First, a methodological expansion is needed: integrating in-depth interviews, for instance with communication professionals and middle managers, could offer richer insight into how AI is concretely reshaping internal workflows, redefining professional roles, and influencing strategic communication practices within SMEs. While the survey has helped map key perceptions and trends, a qualitative approach would allow for a more nuanced exploration of personal and organizational realities. At the same time, cross-sectoral and cross-national comparisons could help assess the extent to which the patterns observed among Italian SMEs reflect broader structural or cultural dynamics. Exploring similar phenomena in other national contexts or industrial sectors not covered by this study would better clarify whether the barriers and opportunities identified here are specific to the Italian economic and regulatory landscape, or part of a wider trend in the integration of AI within small and medium enterprises.

Another critical area deserving further investigation is the development of AI-related competences within SMEs. Beyond questions of technological infrastructure, there is a growing awareness that human skills remain central to the effective and ethical use of AI tools. Future studies should therefore focus on identifying the core competencies required to navigate and manage AI systems across different organizational levels. Rather than replacing human roles, AI adoption demands new forms of oversight, interpretive ability, and critical awareness—especially in smaller enterprises where digital literacy may be unevenly distributed (Gregory et al., 2023; Annapureddy et al., 2025).

Finally, the strategic role of communication itself should be explored in greater depth. As this study has shown, communication is often among the first sectors where AI tools are introduced, together with marketing and customer care. Future research should examine the ways in which automation and augmentation are reshaping the responsibilities and expectations of communication functions within resource-limited organizational contexts, such as SMEs.

Indeed, although the findings are exploratory, they suggest that communication serves not only as a space for early AI adoption but also as a potential driver of broader cultural and operational change. Therefore, supporting SMEs in cultivating an AI-oriented culture and fostering trust in emerging technologies may be crucial to unlocking AI's transformative potential.

References

Ahmed, S. (2024). Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology Adoption in SME. *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*, 17(01).

Ambrosetti - The European House. (2025, May 9). *Technology Forum 2025*. https://www.ambrosetti.eu/en/innotech-hub/technology-forum-2025/

Ameen, N., Choudrie, J., Jones, P., & Anand, A. (2022). Innovative technologies and small- and medium-sized enterprises in times of crisis. *Information Systems Frontiers,* 24(4), 1055–1060.

Annapureddy, R., Fornaroli, A., & Gatica-Perez, D. (2025). Generative AI literacy: Twelve defining competencies. *Digital Government: Research and Practice,* 6(1), 1–21.

Atkinson, W. (2025). Artificial intelligence as a strategy in the British economic field. *British Journal of Sociology*, 76:814–827.

Beck, K., & Vowe, G. (1995). Multimedia aus der Sicht der Medien: Argumentationsmuster und Sichtweisen in der medialen Konstruktion. *Rundfunk und Fernsehen,* 43(4), 549–563.

Borges, A. F. S., Laurindo, F. J. B., Spínola, M. M., Gonçalves, R. F., & Mattos, C. A. (2020). The strategic use of artificial intelligence in the digital era: Systematic literature review and fu-

ture research directions. *International Journal of Information Management,* 57, 102225.

Bowen, S.A. (2024). "If it can be done, it will be done": AI ethical standards and a dual role of public relations. *Public Relations Review,* 50(1), 1-13.

Brennen, J. S., Simon, F. M., & Nielsen, R. K. (2021). Beyond (mis)representation: Visuals in COVID-19 misinformation. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 26(1), 277–299.

Brynjolfsson, E., Rock, D., & Syverson, C. (2021). The productivity J-curve: How intangibles complement general purpose technologies. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics,* 13(1), 333-372.

Buhmann, A. (2023). The implications of artificial intelligence for strategic and organisational communication. *Communication & Organisation,* 64(2), 218.

Cacciatore, M. A., Anderson, A. A., Choi, D. H., Brossard, D., Scheufele, D. A., Liang, X., Dudo, A. (2012). Coverage of emerging technologies: A comparison between print and online media. *New Media & Society,* 14(6), 1039–1059.

Chatterjee, S., Chaudhuri, R., Vrontis, D., & Basile, G. (2022). Digital transformation and entrepreneurship process in SMEs of India: A moderating role of adoption of AI-CRM capability and strategic planning. *Journal of Strategy and Management,* 15(3), 416–433.

Cheng, Y., Lee, J., & Qiao, J. (2024). Crisis communication in the age of AI: Navigating opportunities, challenges, and future horizons. *Media and crisis communication,* 172-194.

Choi, J., Yang, M., & Chang, J. J. (2009). Elaboration of the hostile media phenomenon: The roles of involvement, media skepticism, congruency of perceived media influence, and perceived opinion climate. *Communication Research,* 36(1), 54–75.

Chuan, C.-H., Tsai, W.-S. S., & Cho, S. Y. (2019). Framing artificial intelligence in American newspapers. In *Proceedings of the 2019 AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society* (pp. 339–344). Association for Computing Machinery.

Dwivedi, Y. K., Kshetri, N., Hughes, L., Slade, E. L., Jeyaraj, A., Kar, A. K., Baabdullah, A. M., Koohang, A., Raghavan, V., Ahuja, M., Albanna, H., Albashrawi, M. A., Al-Busaidi, A. S., Balakrishnan, J., Barlette, Y., Basu, S., Bose, I., Brooks, L., Buhalis, D., Carter, L.,…& Wright, R. (2023). "So what if ChatGPT wrote it?" Multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice and policy. *International Journal of Information Management,* 71, Article 102642.

Eloundou, T., Manning, S., Mishkin, P., & Rock,D. (2023). Gpts are gpts: An early look at the labor market impact potential of large language models. *arXiv pre-print, Available at:* https://arxiv.org/pdf/2303.10130.

Ertem-Eray, T., & Cheng, Y. (2025). A Review of Artificial Intelligence Research in Peer-Reviewed Communication Journals. *Applied Sciences,* 15(3), 1058.

European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. (2025, July 15). *European Innovation Scoreboard 2025. Research and Innovation Performance Indicators.* https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/statistics/performance-indicators/european-innovation-scoreboard_en

Eurostat (2025). *Use of artificial intelligence in enterprises. Statistics Explained.*

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Use_of_artificial_intelligence_in_enterprises

Fast, E., & Horvitz, E. (2017, February). Long-term trends in the public perception of artificial intelligence. In *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence* (Vol. 31, No. 1). AAAI Press.

Galloway, C., & Swiatek, L. (2018). Public relations and artificial intelligence: It's not (just) about robots. *Public relations review*, 44(5), 734-740.

Ghosh, B., Daugherty, P. R., Wilson, H. J., & Burden, A. (2019). Taking a systems approach to adopting AI. *Harvard Business Review,* 9.

Giuggioli, G., & Pellegrini, M. M. (2023). Artificial Intelligence as an Enabler for Entrepreneurs: A Systematic Literature Review and an Agenda for Future Research. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research,* 29, 816-837.

Gregory, A., & Smith, B. G. (2025). AI State of Play: The Technology, Strategic Communication Practice and Academia. *International Journal of Strategic Communication,* 19(2), 119–129.

Gregory, A., Valin, J., & Virmani, S. (2023). *Humans needed more than ever*. Chartered Institute of Public Relations.

Hennen, L. (1999). Participatory technology assessment: A response to technical modernity? *Science and Public Policy,* 26(5), 303–312.

Hjaltalin, I. T., & Sigurdarson, H. T. (2024). The strategic use of AI in the public sector: A public values analysis of national AI strategies. *Government Information Quarterly,* 41(1), 101914.

Huseyn, M., Ruiz-Gándara, Á., González-Abril, L., & Romero, I. (2024). Adoption of artificial intelligence in small and medium-sized enterprises in Spain: The role of competences and skills. *Amfiteatru Economic,* 26(67), 848-866.

Iaia, L., Nespoli, C., Vicentini, F., Pironti, M., & Genovino, C. (2024). Supporting the implementation of AI in business communication: The role of knowledge management. *Journal of Knowledge Management,* 28(1), 85–95.

Illia, L., Colleoni, E., & Zyglidopoulos, S. (2023). Ethical implications of text generation in the age of artificial intelligence. *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility,* 32(1), 201-210.

Ittefaq, M., Zain, A., Arif, R., Ala-Uddin, M., Ahmad, T., & Iqbal, A. (2025). Global news media coverage of artificial intelligence (AI): A comparative analysis of frames, sentiments, and trends across 12 countries. *Telematics and Informatics,* 96, 102223.

Kamila, M. K., & Jasrotia, S. S. (2025). Ethical issues in the development of artificial intelligence: Recognizing the risks. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems,* 41(1), 45–63.

Kee, K. F. (2017) Adoption and diffusion, In C. Scott, & L Lewis (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of organizational communication Hoboken*, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kelm, K., & Johann, M. (2025). Artificial intelligence in corporate communications: determinants of acceptance and transformative processes. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal,* 30(1), 124-138.

Lorenz, P., Perset, K., & Berryhill, J. (2023). *Initial policy considerations for generative artificial intelligence*. OECD Artificial Intelligence Papers, N.1. OECD Publishing.

Madan, R. & Ashok, M. (2023) AI adoption and diffusion in public administration: a systematic literature review and future research agen-

da. *Government Information Quarterly,* 40 (1). 101774.

McCarthy, J. (2007). From here to human-level AI. *Artificial Intelligence,* 171(18), 1174-1182.

Mohd Rasdi R, Umar Baki N (2025) Navigating the AI landscape in SMEs: Overcoming internal challenges and external obstacles for effective integration. *PLOS ONE 20(5): e0323249.*

Muto, V., Luongo, S., Percuoco, M., & Tani, M. (2024). Artificial intelligence and the great reset: Impacts and perspectives for Italian SMEs business model innovation. *Systems,* 12(9), 330.

Olteanu, A., Barocas, S., Blodgett, S. L., Egede, L., DeVrio, A., & Cheng, M. (2025). Ai automatons: Ai systems intended to imitate humans. *arXiv pre-print, Available at https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.02250.*

Panda, M., Hossain, M. M., Puri, R., & Ahmad, A. (2025). Artificial intelligence in action: shaping the future of public sector. *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance.*

Porlezza, C. (2023). Promoting responsible AI: A European perspective on the governance of artificial intelligence in media and journalism. *Communications,* 48(3), 370–394.

Proietti, S., & Magnani, R. (2025). Assessing AI Adoption and Digitalization in SMEs: A Framework for Implementation. *arXiv pre-print, Available at https://arxiv.org/pdf/2501.08184.*

Rajaram, K., & Tinguely, P. N. (2024). Generative artificial intelligence in small and medium enterprises: Navigating its promises and challenges. *Business Horizons,* 67(5), 629-648.

Rogers, E.M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations.* New York: Free Press.

Sartori, L., & Boccia, G. (2023). Minding the gap(s): Public perceptions of AI and sociotechnical imaginaries. *AI & Society,* 38, 443–458.

Scheufele, D. A., & Krause, N. M. (2019). Science audiences, misinformation, and fake news. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* 116(16), 7662–7669.

Scheufele, D. A., & Lewenstein, B. V. (2005). The public and nanotechnology: How citizens make sense of emerging technologies. *Journal of Nanoparticle Research,* 7(6), 659–667.

Schwaeke, J., Peters, A., Kanbach, D. K., Kraus, S., & Jones, P. (2025). The new normal: The status quo of AI adoption in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business Management,* 63(3), 1297–1331.

Schwarz, A., & Faj, T. (2024). Communicating and perceiving risks of artificial intelligence as an emerging technology. In T. L. Sellnow, Deanna D. Sellnow (eds), *Communicating risk and safety* (pp. 503–526). De Gruyter Mouton.

Sousa, M. J., & Wilks, D. (2018). Sustainable skills for the world of work in the digital age. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 35(4), 399–405.

Tornatzky, L. G., & Fleischer, M. (1990). *The process of technological innovation*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Tushman, M. L., & Anderson, P. (2018). Technological discontinuities and organizational environments. In G. Hage (Ed), *Organizational innovation* (pp. 345–372). Routledge.

Wirtz, B. W., Weyerer, J. C., & Geyer, C. (2018). Artificial Intelligence and the Public Sector—Applications and Challenges. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 42(7), 596–615.

World Economic Forum. (2025). *The future of jobs report 2025.* World Economic Forum.

https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025

Yin, M., Jiang, S., & Niu, X. (2024). Can AI really help? The double-edged sword effect of AI assistant on employees' innovation behavior. *Computers in Human Behavior,* 150, 107987.

Zerfass, A., Buhmann, A., Laborde, A., Moreno, A., Romenti, S., & Tench, R. (2024). *European Communication Monitor 2024. Managing tensions in corporate communications in the context of geopolitical crises, artificial intelligence, and managerial learning.*

Zerfass, A., Hagelstein, J. and Tench, R. (2020). Artificial intelligence in communication management: A cross-national study on adoption and knowledge, impact, challenges and risks. *Journal of Communication Management,* Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 377-389.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, AI adoption, AI diffusion, public relations, communication, SMEs.