

3 - 5 July 2026

Zurich , Switzerland

Benchmarking AI Maturity in Platform-Dependent Media Systems: Adoption Asymmetry, Governance Lag, and Linguistic Sovereignty in the UAE – A Theoretical Validation and Empirical Application of the Index of Media Innovation (IMI)

Prof Dr. Elsayed Darwish , Dr. Ahmed Al-Mansoori

Zayed University, UAE

Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the material, symbolic, and institutional conditions of news production. However, existing maturity frameworks remain largely calibrated to Anglophone, platform-native environments, limiting their applicability to platform-dependent media systems in the Global South. This study addresses this gap by introducing and empirically validating the Index of Media Innovation (IMI), a five-pillar composite instrument designed to assess AI adoption maturity under conditions of state-led digital policy, Arabic linguistic complexity, and reliance on global computational infrastructures.

Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the study triangulates data from a practitioner survey (N = 249), leadership assessments across 12 major UAE media organizations, and a two-round Delphi panel (N = 20). The composite IMI score (59.7/100) positions the UAE media sector at the threshold between “Emerging” and “Operational” maturity. The findings reveal a statistically significant Adoption Asymmetry, where practitioner maturity exceeds institutional readiness, alongside a 16.3-point Governance Lag between policy articulation and operational infrastructure. Furthermore, limitations in Arabic natural language processing create a structural constraint affecting the majority of practitioners. The study introduces three conceptual contributions—Adoption Asymmetry, Governance Lag, and Linguistic Sovereignty—and positions the UAE as a diagnostic case for Global South media transformation. It extends the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework, Institutional Theory, and Structuration Theory to platform-dependent contexts, emphasizing the need for a strategic

International Conference on Modern Approach in HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES



shift toward sovereign system co-development and governance-by-design in AI-enabled news ecosystems.

Keywords: Adoption Asymmetry; Artificial Intelligence in Journalism; Governance Lag; Index of Media Innovation (IMI); Linguistic Sovereignty