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# Motivations of Public Relations Professionals to Use Artificial Intelligence: A Study on Türkiye

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**Abstract:** As all the other sectors, Public Relations (PR) sector, which is evolving from traditional to digital, must also integrate AI into its process of change and development. This study is inspired by the latest digital developments and it examines the role of AI in the Turkish PR world. The study aims to identify PR professionals' experiences, perceptions and attitudes regarding AI, as well as their approaches to AI tools and their motivations for using these tools, within the framework of a phenomenological research design. This study seeks to answer questions such as how the digitalized communication and PR sector is evolving with AI, how professionals in the industry are approaching this change, what opportunities and risks AI will bring

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to the field, and what positive and negative developments might be encountered in the future. The sample of the study consists of PR/Communication agency professionals selected among members of two of the largest PR professional organizations in Türkiye: TÜHİD (Public Relations Society of Türkiye) and İDA (Communication Consultancies Association of Türkiye), the Turkish representative of ICCO. Within the framework of the qualitative research method, in-depth interviews were conducted with 24 volunteers from both associations. AI, which is considered as an important assistant in organizing routine tasks, provides significant convenience in data analysis, target audience, and media analysis. Within the field of PR, AI applications are frequently used to support tasks such as text design, content creation, media relations, reporting, and targeting. However, despite this, it has been observed that senior PR professionals in Turkey are still cautious about AI and display a rather conservative attitude toward it, and that some do not use, or even trust it.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), Public Relations (PR), digitalization, communication profession, digital communication

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*Motivations des professionnels des relations publiques à utiliser l'intelligence artificielle : Une étude sur la Turquie*

**Résumé :** Comme tous les autres secteurs, le secteur des relations publiques, qui évolue du traditionnel vers le numérique, doit également intégrer l'IA dans son processus de changement et de développement. Cette étude s'inspire des derniers développements numériques et examine le rôle de l'IA dans le monde des relations publiques en Turquie. L'étude vise à identifier les expériences, perceptions et attitudes des professionnels des relations publiques concernant l'IA, ainsi que leurs approches des outils d'IA et leurs motivations à les utiliser, dans le cadre d'un design de recherche phénoménologique. Cette étude cherche à répondre à des questions telles que la manière dont le secteur numérisé de la communication et des relations publiques évolue avec l'IA, comment les professionnels du secteur abordent ce changement, quelles opportunités et quels risques l'IA apportera au domaine, et quels développements positifs ou négatifs pourraient être rencontrés à l'avenir. L'échantillon de l'étude est composé de professionnels des agences de relations publiques et de communication, sélectionnés parmi les membres de deux des plus grandes organisations professionnelles de RP en Turquie : TÜHİD (Société turque des relations publiques) et İDA (Association des cabinets de communication de Turquie), représentant turc de l'ICCO. Dans le cadre de la méthode de recherche qualitative, des entretiens approfondis ont été menés avec 24 volontaires issus des deux associations. Considérée comme un assistant important dans l'organisation des tâches routinières, l'IA offre une commodité significative dans l'analyse des données, l'identification des publics cibles et l'analyse des médias. Dans le domaine des relations publiques, les applications de l'IA sont fréquemment utilisées pour soutenir des tâches telles que la conception de textes, la création de contenus, les relations médias, le reporting et le ciblage. Cependant, malgré cela, il a été observé que les

professionnels seniors des relations publiques en Turquie restent prudents face à l'IA et affichent une attitude plutôt conservatrice à son égard, certains n'utilisant pas, voire ne faisant pas confiance à cette technologie.

**Mots-clés :** Intelligence artificielle (IA), Relations publiques (RP), numérisation, métiers de la communication, communication numérique

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## Introduction

Technology, which has brought all economic, sociocultural, political, and environmental systems to the present day, and has appeared in each era with a different catalyst since the Industrial Revolution, has now begun to change all life and business models with AI. The computer scientist and co-founder of Coursera, Andrew Ng (2017), who says, "AI is the new electricity," states that, "Just as electricity transformed everything 100 years ago, AI will transform everything in the coming years." According to Poole and Mackworth (2017, p.3), AI has emerged as a transformative science and engineering discipline, including machine learning.

The McKinsey Global Survey on AI (2024) defines 2023 as the year the world discovered generative AI, while 2024 is described as the year organizations started to truly use this new technology and derive business value from it. The McKinsey Global Survey on AI (2024) reveals that 65% of the participants' organizations regularly use generative AI, nearly double the rate from last year's survey. The most common functions for AI usage are marketing, sales, product and service development, and customer service. Organizations that have adopted AI report significant cost reductions and revenue increases.

Since the concept of AI was introduced, many academic studies and research have been conducted internationally and nationally regarding its impact across various sectors. Although both sectoral and academic studies are still limited in the context of the relationship between AI and PR, it is anticipated that this will change as the significance of the topic is recognized within the PR sector, leading to an increase in the number of studies. At the 2018 Barcelona Critical PR Conference, various issues regarding the use of AI technologies in PR were examined, and subsequently, academic studies and research on PR and AI began to accelerate. Among these studies, the AIinPR panel organized by the UK Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in 2018 presented the perspective on AI, its potential application areas, opportunities, and risks from a PR perspective. CIPR also highlights in its "The AI and Big Data Readiness (2021)" report, which presents the findings of a global survey conducted with PR professionals and academics, that there is hesitation in the use of AI in PR. The CIPR report states that while some PR practitioners are advanced in understanding, designing, implementing, and using AI at a strategic level, the majority are, at best, competent at a tactical level, and at worst, have not even started AI-related processes (https://cipr.co.uk/). Although discussions on digitalization and AI continue

in the global and Turkish PR sectors today, the PR profession does not have a long history in Türkiye.

The history of professional PR in Türkiye dates back to the 1960s. In Türkiye, PR has been considered as a component of public administration practices and, unlike other countries, it has not evolved from fields like journalism or advertising. Instead, it emerged as an independent communication practice within the state (Watson, 2015, p.5). The period between 1960 and 1980 can be considered as the years of institutionalization of PR in Türkiye. During this period, PR emerged not as a tool for private institutions to promote themselves or persuade their target audiences, but rather as a means for public administration to reveal itself. PR, which was seen as a tool for planned development in line with the needs of the country at that time, began to be implemented by establishing PR units in public institutions. Then, for the first time in 1965, PR education was offered as a four-year program at universities. In the 1970s, multinational companies and conglomerates began to establish PR departments within their organizations. Following the increase in PR departments and professionals, the first professional organization for PR, the Public Relations Society of Türkiye (TÜHİD), was established in 1972. On the other hand, Türkiye's first PR agency, A&B Communication, was established in 1974. In the mid-1980s, as a result of the development of the private sector, the efforts of businesses to engage their target audiences became evident, and PR gained significant prominence. It began to become professionalized, and the number of both PR departments and agencies increased rapidly (Hızal et al., 2014, p.636).

In the 1990s, PR agency managers began participating in international events organized by IPRA and ICCO. Looking at the practices implemented from the past to the present, it can be said that the most commonly used PR practices in Türkiye are marketing-oriented PR, crisis management, media relations management, digital/social media management, and event management (Görpe and Öksüz, 2024, p.7), while the least used PR practices are lobbying and financial PR. Today, the most prominent PR organizations in Türkiye are TÜHİD, İDA, and KİD. In today's Türkiye, the PR profession, like in the rest of the world, is dynamic, continuously improving itself, striving to create a more positive perception of the profession, adapting to developing technology, and undergoing transformation. Although there is an increasing amount of research on the effects of AI in various sectors, when considering its role in the transformation of the PR sector, it is evident that studies in Türkiye are still very limited. The aim of this study is to explore how PR agencies in Türkiye define and perceive AI, for what purposes they use it, and what they consider as risks and opportunities in the use of AI. It is believed that this study is important in raising awareness about AI technologies within the PR sector and will contribute to the field. It is thought that this study is important in terms of evaluating, analyzing, and examining the concept of AI in terms of PR and understanding how AI can transform the PR sector and provide benefits. The findings will define the main framework of the relationship between the PR sector and AI and provide insights into future predictions.

## 1. Artificial Intelligence

The first concrete step towards the concept of AI, which is a technology that learns and constantly improves itself by imitating human intelligence through iterative processes, machine learning, and algorithmic training, was taken by Alan Turing in 1950. Turing asked the question “Can machines think?” in his article titled “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” which was published in the journal Mind (1950). In the article, the possibility of machines being intelligent was discussed and a test known as the Turing Test was proposed to understand this. Turing's question and the test are considered to be one of the most fundamental conceptual starting points in the field of AI. The concept of AI was defined by John McCarthy at a conference held at Dartmouth College in 1956, as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines and intelligent computer programs" and began to be used officially. Nilsson (1998), one of the important researchers for AI, highlighted that the AI discipline is concerned with "intelligent behaviors that include perceiving, reasoning, learning, communicating and acting in complex environments.

According to Păvăloaia & Necula (2023), AI is “one of the most disruptive technological revolutions in recent human history”. With the launch of OpenAI’s ChatGPT in November 2022, Microsoft’s Bing in February 2023, and Google’s Bard in March 2023, AI has begun to reach all segments of society. According to a study published by the Global Research and Evidence Lab at Swiss Investment Bank UBS, within just two months after its launch, more than 100 million monthly active users have tried ChatGPT, making this young AI model the fastest-growing consumer application in history (Bove, 2023).

AI, which can think and perform tasks like humans through software and algorithms, is capable of carrying out cognitive functions that humans have, such as learning, analyzing, and problem-solving (Galloway and Swiatek, 2018). AI, which is based on technologies such as natural language processing, data acquisition, knowledge representation, semantic reasoning, and machine learning and which is seen as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, mimics human behaviors such as deep learning, perception, reasoning, and decision making, simultaneously adapting to changing and unpredictable situations, learning from its experiences and improving itself (Zerfass et al, 2020).

AI, which started with Turing (1950) and followed by the works of many researchers such as McCarthy (1956) and Nilsson (1998), has reached the present day and begun to change all life and business models. It seems that it will be difficult to survive without utilizing AI applications and tools and adapting them to business processes, as they have initiated an inevitable process of change.

## 2. Artificial Intelligence in the Field of Public Relations and Communication

Public relations is the construction and management of strategic communication activities aimed at gaining and maintaining reputation, positive perception, respect,

and prestige for organizations. PR and corporate communications must establish a communication network between the organization it serves and its target audience and stakeholders. Within this communication network and process, PR has to carry out many important functions such as crisis management, media planning, copywriting, content management in traditional/digital media, strategic communication plans and campaign designs, creating awareness about the brand/institution/idea, analyzing and influencing the public opinion. Managing strategic communication in parallel with changing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental factors is possible today through adaptation to the digital world. After the rapid development of the internet, social media, etc. in the 2000s, AI has now knocked on the door of every sector, including PR.

Galloway and Swiatek (2018), who define AI as "technologies that have human-like cognitive abilities and perform human-like functions while carrying out PR activities," emphasize that AI can provide benefits in PR, both alongside the practitioner or independently. According to Bara et al. (2022), AI has become the main component of business development and communication improvement processes.

However, the process of using or adapting AI is different in each sector. Surveys and interviews with communications professionals show that AI is still in its early stages in PR, and PR practitioners have limited understanding and capability in AI (Zerfass et al., 2020; Buhmann and White, 2022). Many studies have concluded that PR professionals have difficulties in adapting to digital technologies and possess a moderate level of competency in using digital platforms (Wigley and Zhang, 2011; Macnamara et al., 2018). According to Buhmann and White (2022, p.626), who state that analyzing the use of AI in PR is complex, the need for and accessability to AI vary depending on the sector and organization structure. While there are large organizations capable of developing their own AI infrastructure, there are many small local organizations that will never use AI at all. Likewise, there are significant differences among individual practitioners regarding understanding and utilizing AI. One of the most commonly used models for understanding such differences is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989). The TAM provides a theoretical framework for explaining individuals' attitudes toward adopting a new technology through perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use variables. According to the model, when a user believes that a technology makes their work more efficient and faster, and that it is easy to use, their tendency to use that technology increases (Davis, 1989: 334-335). Similary, the attitudes of PR professionals toward AI technologies are shaped by their perceptions of AI's usefulness in enhancing their job performance and its ease of use.

In addition to the TAM, which explains the adoption of new technologies at the individual level, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory developed by Rogers (2003), which explains how innovations are adopted and spread within societies, can be considered as a useful framework for explaining the adoption process of AI in PR. The theory is based on the assumption that there are five key factors which determine

the process of adoption of an innovation: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability. In addition, according to Rogers, individuals can be classified into five categories based on their speed of innovation adoption: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards. These categories differ according to individuals' risk-taking tendencies, socio-demographic characteristics, and degree of openness to innovation (Rogers, 2003: 282–285). This classification is considered as a useful framework for understanding generational and cultural differences in PR professionals' adoption of AI technologies.

AI has the potential to automate and perform a variety of tasks in the context of PR. These tasks include writing data-driven stories, organizing and updating media lists, assisting in crisis management, converting and transmitting audio to text, monitoring and forecasting media trends, and monitoring and managing social media (Panda et al., 2019; Buhmann and White, 2022). AI can free up time for PR practitioners so that they can focus on important strategic works (Abbass et al., 2018).

As AI tools become part of our daily lives, studies regarding the impacts of AI on various sectors have also begun to gain importance. The history of the relationship between PR and AI is also recent. Vercic, et.al. (2015), in their research examining 155 articles on PR and information communication technologies that were published between 1980 and 2015, showed that none of the articles included AI in their titles. In studies on PR and AI that gained momentum since 2018, Valin (2018), for example, categorized the skills that AI can perform in the PR profession in his study conducted with the support of CIPR and also tried to understand how AI will affect the future of the PR profession. As a result of his study, Valin stated that AI will be significantly useful if the individuals using it have conscious awareness. He also emphasized that regardless of how advanced and varied AI's capabilities become, there will always be a need for human intervention in terms of sensitivity, emotional intelligence, good judgment, and ethics. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of developing these human characteristics, which are highly valued in the PR profession. In his study which he examined the preparedness of PR in dealing with the impact of AI on communication discipline, Biswal (2023) investigated what kind of PR practices AI may replace and in which PR practices AI can be used effectively. As a result of the study, it is pointed out that, PR professionals should not be afraid of AI, but should develop an understanding of this technology to offer better guidance to their clients. The study also highlighted that AI may better understand PR functions, produce better results in the near future, and become a driving force in the PR sector so that a PR professional should not make the mistake of ignoring AI. In their study, Arief and Gustomo (2022), aimed to determine a comprehensive understanding of AI technologies in PR and to find out which tasks AI can replace in the future of PR. As a result of the study, it is stated that although AI may replace some of the PR practices, there is still a need for human aspect and in this context, PR professionals need to be encouraged to use this technology.

In the study carried out by Swiatek et al. (2022), the important role of PR practitioners regarding ethical issues related to AI technologies is emphasized. The

study states that; PR practitioners need to have an encouraging role in developing an ethical approach to AI and to take on an informative, supportive, and educational role for their clients in changing ethical environments. Other studies indicate that PR professionals are expected not only to take responsibility for using AI effectively, but also to assume the ethical responsibilities arising from their use. In this context, Bowen's (2004) Normative Ethical Decision-Making Model provides an important theoretical framework for understanding ethical decision making in PR. This model, which is based on Kant's deontological ethics, suggests that PR professionals should act in accordance with the principles of autonomy, duty, goodwill, and respect in their decision-making processes. According to Bowen, PR professionals should act not only in a results-oriented manner, but also with a sense of moral obligation (Bowen, 2004: 80-83). In this regard, this model is believed to provide a normative framework that can guide the ethical and responsible use of AI in PR.

In the report "AI Tools and the Impact of PR Practice," conducted by CIPR, AI tools applicable to PR were examined, predictions for the future were made, and a total of 18 categories were outlined. The Davis+Gilbert 2023 Public Relations Industry Trends Report shared the PR sector's purposes for using AI and the positive outcomes of integrating AI technologies into PR practices. According to the report, the PR sector primarily uses AI for creating text content, generating new ideas, social listening, market research, taking and summarizing meeting notes, and producing visual content. In addition to these studies, Alawaad (2021), Canela (2019), Afzal (2018), Ardila (2020), Rahikainen (2020), and Rogers (2019) also examined the relationship between PR and AI.

PR, although gradually and due to various concerns and worries, has also started to use the advantages and benefits of AI. Today, thanks to AI, PR agencies are able to implement more effective and personalized communication strategies with their clients, and due to the data analysis provided by AI, they can make and implement more efficient and effective strategic decisions. AI provides benefits by providing services independently from PR practitioners through its algorithms and by offering services that ease the workload of PR practitioners. These benefits enhance the competitiveness of PR agencies.

As in other parts of the world, PR in Türkiye continues to add new technologies every day. These technologies, which enable PR practitioners to work more efficiently, also transform the future of the profession. PR practitioners are aware that those who best adapt to technological developments will have a competitive advantage and to keep up with technological transformation, they closely follow and implement digitalization trends, new digital applications, and tools both in Türkiye and around the world. AI is one of the technologies driven by this transformation and holds particular importance as it is certain that its use will become increasingly widespread in the future.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. *Purpose and Significance of the Research*

AI has increasingly integrated into both our daily lives and all business processes in recent years. This study aims to explore PR professionals' ability to use AI, their approaches, attitudes, and perceptions towards AI. The limited number of published studies regarding the impact of AI applications in the PR sector highlights the significance of this research, as it is expected to make a valuable contribution to the field. This research focuses on the motivations and concerns of PR professionals regarding the use of AI. This paper also aims to answer questions regarding how the PR sector is changing with AI, how professionals in the sector are responding to this change, the opportunities and risks AI may bring, and the potential positive and negative developments that could emerge in the future.

### 3.2. *Research Method*

This study uses a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is an approach that addresses the meanings individuals or groups attribute to a social or human issue, uses interpretive/theoretical frameworks, and includes in-depth thoughts of the participants and the researcher, offering a complex explanation and interpretation of the problem (Creswell, 2013, p.44). Since the study focuses on understanding the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of PR professionals, a phenomenological research design was preferred within the framework of qualitative research methods. A phenomenological study defines the common meaning of lived experiences related to a phenomenon or concept by one or more individuals and reduces individual experiences of the phenomenon to a universal explanation (Van Manen, 2016, p.4-7). In this study, using a phenomenological design, the experiences, motivations, and concerns of PR professionals regarding AI have been explored in detail.

The data was collected through in-depth interviews, which is one of the main data collection methods used in qualitative research. In-depth interviewing is a mutual and interactive communication process based on asking questions and receiving answers, conducted for a predetermined and serious purpose (Stewart and Cash, 1985, p.7). In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted after the literature review. Semi-structured interviews follow a pre-prepared set of questions but allow the researcher flexibility in the way they ask questions or ask additional questions to obtain more detailed information (Baum, 2021, p.105). Sixteen questions were prepared for the interviews, excluding demographic ones. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questions, a pilot study was conducted with 5 participants. Based on the responses from the pilot study, the open-ended questions were finalized.

The interviews were conducted between July 1 and September 30, 2024. 10 of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, while 14 via video conferencing platform Zoom. First, demographic questions such as the participants' age, gender, and years of experience were asked. Following this, the remaining 16 questions based on the

research of Zerfass et al. (2020) and the CIPR (2023) report, were posed. The interviews lasted 30-45 minutes on average.

To ensure the reliability of the research, audio recording technique was used in all interviews after obtaining the written consent of the participants. During the data processing phase, it was aimed to prevent possible data losses, and the internal reliability of the research was strengthened. For the reliability of the study, both researchers participated in all interviews simultaneously. Face-to-face interviews were recorded by both researchers using two different recording devices. The interviews conducted via Zoom were also recorded by both researchers using Zoom's recording tool and also another recording device. All coding and theme formation stages were carried out by both researchers, and the analysis was completed based on the shared decisions reached. This approach has strengthened the validity and reliability of the study. The researchers have both academic and professional experience in PR. This situation facilitated communication with the participants. However, this situation may have led the researcher to make certain assumptions based on their professional experience in the field. Therefore, to reduce potential bias, during the data collection and analysis process systematic coding was carried out, direct quotations were included, and the findings were continuously reviewed through comparative analysis. In Addition, the findings were supported by direct quotes from the raw data, and the evidence reached was presented as much as possible.

In order to achieve the aim of this study, the following 6 key research questions have been formulated.

RQ 1: How do PR professionals define AI?

RQ 2: To what extent do PR professionals use AI technologies in their business processes, and in which aspects?

RQ 3: What is the general perception and attitude of PR professionals towards AI applications?

RQ 4: What responsibilities does artificial intelligence impose on PR professionals and PR agencies?

RQ 5: What problems and risks do PR professionals perceive regarding AI at the individual and organizational level?

RQ 6: How will AI shape the future direction of the PR profession, and what kind of changes can be expected?

The data obtained from the interviews were transcribed into text using the AI program TurboScribe, and then reviewed and edited by both researchers to confirm the accuracy of the data. The data obtained were analyzed and evaluated using MAXQDA24, a qualitative data analysis program. MAXQDA, is a software tool that enables the systematic organization, analysis, and evaluation of both qualitative and quantitative data (Dereli, 2023). As an advanced data analysis software that enables the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, MAXQDA facilitates processes such

as coding, content and thematic analysis, text mining, visualization, and reporting (https://www.maxqda.com/, 2025).

In the study, the data were analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis refers to a systematic, impartial, and quantitative analysis conducted to measure variables within a text (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 135-136). To carry out content analysis on texts (such as interviews, articles, etc.), it is necessary to code the texts and categorize them into different levels of categories/themes. The data were coded In MAXQDA24, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is an examination conducted to identify repetitive patterns of meaning within a data set, consisting of a series of individual or focus group interviews or various texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.86). An inductive strategy was followed, and the interviews were read several times to become familiar with the data as required by thematic analysis. After the first step of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, which is becoming familiar with the data, the first initial codes were created. Based on these codes, sub-themes and main themes were created. The data sets were visualized through mapping and tabulation tools within the MAXQDA24 program. Although there is little tendency to quantify themes in thematic analysis, Boyatzis (1998) suggests that qualitative data can be converted into a quantitative format and subjected to statistical analyses using thematic analysis. Additionally, quotes are important for demonstrating the confirmability of the research. Therefore, to support the findings, direct quotes are also presented by using descriptive analysis.

### 3.3. *Universe and Sample*

The universe of the study consists of members of two PR professional organizations in Türkiye; TÜHİD (Public Relations Society of Türkiye), and İDA (Communication Consultancies Association of Türkiye), the Turkish representative of ICCO. Members of the KİD (Association of Corporate Communicators) were not included in this study, since all members are communication professionals employed by corporate companies.

The participants of these interviews were selected using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is used in cases where participants meet specific criteria (Neuman & Robson, 2014). In line with the purposive sampling method, the participants were subject to two limitations- being members of TÜHİD or İDA, and working in Istanbul. Among approaches regarding sample size, according to Creswell (2017: 189), narrative research involves studying 1-2 participants, phenomenological research 3-10 participants, and grounded theory research 20-30 participants. Polkinghorne (1989) also indicates that interviews in phenomenological research can be conducted with 5- 25 participants. Another approach regarding determining sample size is the data saturation approach. In qualitative research, sample size is often defined by the criterian of "saturation", referring to the point at which no new information is obtained and the data start to repeat (Guest, vd, 2006; Francis vd., 2010; Hennink and Kaiser, 2022).

In this study, the researchers considered "saturation" as a key principle while determining the sample size during data collection. Since further collected data did not provide additional insights on the subject, data collection was discontinued after 24 participants. In qualitative research, sample sizes are often explained with the concept of "saturation," which refers to the point at which no new information is observed in the data and the data begins to repeat itself (Guest et al., 2006; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Francis et al., 2010).

TÜHİD was established in 1972 to bring together PR professionals in Türkiye under one roof, to provide solidarity within the profession, and to work towards the recognition, establishment, and development of the profession. The members of the association consist of PR professionals working in agencies, retired and freelance PR professionals, academicians and PR professionals working in NGOs and private/ public institutions and TÜHİD has 330 members as of 2024 (TÜHİD, 2024, https://www.tuhid.org). İDA, established in 2004, aims to develop and expand the PR sector in Türkiye, raise service standards, ensure access to accurate information about the sector, create solidarity regarding professional challenges, and enhance the service quality of practitioners by adhering to international service standards and ethical codes. Today, İDA, the representative of ICCO in Türkiye, has 27 members, all of which are PR/communication agencies (ida.org.tr).

When determining the number of interviews for both associations, since İDA consists of only 27 members, all of which are PR/communication agencies, in order to meet a similar criterion within TÜHİD, interviews were planned to be conducted only with professionals working in PR Agencies. In this context, permission letters were first obtained by emailing the Presidents of TÜHİD and İDA. Additionally, ethical approval for the research was obtained from the ethics committee of İstanbul Aydın University. The head of associations provided an official letter of approval allowing us to carry out interviews with their members and also they informed their members regarding our study. E-mails were sent individually to TÜHİD and İDA members working in PR agencies, and an official permission letter was attached to emails. Interviews were then conducted with those who volunteered to participate. All interview participants were carefully selected to ensure they were all working within a public relations agency. A total of 24 PR /Communication agency representatives (13 TÜHİD members, 11 İDA members) who volunteered to participate in the interviews were interviewed in-depth, both face-to-face and via Zoom, between July 1st and September 30th 2024.

### 3.4. *Findings*

Five demographic questions were asked to the participants before the AI-related questions. The data obtained and their analysis are as below. As seen in Table 1, the participants consist of PR professionals aged between 28-61 and 10 of them are female, while 14 are male. Since TÜHİD and İDA members are generally in managerial positions, it is observed that the interview participants also hold managerial roles and work at a managerial level. Participants' experience in the

communications sector varies from 3 to 35 years, while their years of employment at their current agency varies between 2 months and 30 years. Considering the years of work, it can be said that the participant group is highly experienced in this field.

**Table 1.** Participants' Demographic Characteristics

| Participants | Sex | Age | Position | Department | Years of Professional Experience | Years of work in this agency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | Woman | 28 | Content Specialist | Media Planning | 3 | 2 |
| P2 | Man | 37 | Creative Director | Digital Creative | 13 | 6 |
| P3 | Woman | 45 | Founding Chairman | Founding Manager | 20 | 11 |
| P4 | Man | 30 | Project Director | Project Department | 6 | 5 |
| P5 | Man | 60 | Founding Chairman | Founding Manager | 33 | 30 |
| P6 | Woman | 40 | Agency President | Agency President | 20 | 10 |
| P7 | Man | 53 | General Manager | General Manager | 14 | 14 |
| P8 | Man | 52 | Founding Chairman | Founding President | 20 | 2 |
| P9 | Woman | 43 | Founding Chairman | Founding President | 25 | 9 |
| P10 | Woman | 60 | Founding Chairman | Founding President | 35 | 30 |
| P11 | Woman | 50 | Manager | Strategy and Business Dev. | 14 | 9 |
| P12 | Man | 41 | Brand and Content Manager | Brand and Content Director | 16 | 1 |
| P13 | Man | 33 | Strategy Director | Strategy Management | 10 | 4 |
| P14 | Woman | 61 | Founding Chairman | Founding Partner | 25 | 13 |
| P15 | Woman | 52 | Agency President | Management-Consultancy | 24 | 17 |
| P16 | Man | 45 | Brand and Content Management | Brand and Content Director | 10 | 2 months |
| P17 | Man | 50 | Agency President | Agency President | 25 | 20 |
| P18 | Man | 34 | Founding Chairman | Founding Manager | 10 | 5 |
| P19 | Man | 41 | Creative Strategy | Creative Strategies | 21 | 12 |
| P20 | Man | 33 | Agency President | Agency President | 12 | 10 |
| P21 | Man | 51 | Strategy and Business Development Dir. | Strategy and Business Dev. | 25 | 11 |
| P22 | Man | 42 | Strategic Communication Manager | Strategy and Planning | 15 | 1 |
| P23 | Woman | 48 | Agency President | Agency President | 30 | 18 |
| P24 | Woman | 47 | Strategic Communication Co. | Strategic Management | 22 | 7 months |

The PR professionals who participated in the interview stated that they primarily use text-based AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot and often prefer tools for presentations, translation, and meetings. Three participants additionally mentioned using Midjourney, Dall-e, Runway, Monika, Claude AI, and Kling AI, while one participant stated that they do not use any AI tools. The participants stated that they generally learned how to use AI tools by trying them or watching YouTube and Instagram videos. Only four participants mentioned that they received individual and institutional training.

As suggested by many qualitative studies, at the end of the data collection process, the recorded interviews were read, coded, and categorized as subthemes, themes, and main themes. As a result of 1551 codings, 3 main themes, 11 themes, and 32 sub-themes emerged.

Main Theme 1: PR Professionals and AI Perception (4 themes, 12 sub-themes)

Main Theme 2: AI Integration in PR (3 themes, 8 sub-themes)

Main Theme 3: Overall Impact and Future of AI (4 themes, 12 sub-themes)

*Main Theme 1: PR Professionals and AI Perception*

Within the first theme, four themes and twelwe sub-themes (Figure 1) have emerged. These sub-themes are: AI Means and Perception, Motivation and Reasons for Using AI, PR Professionals' AI Approach and Attitudes, and Türkiye vs Europe.

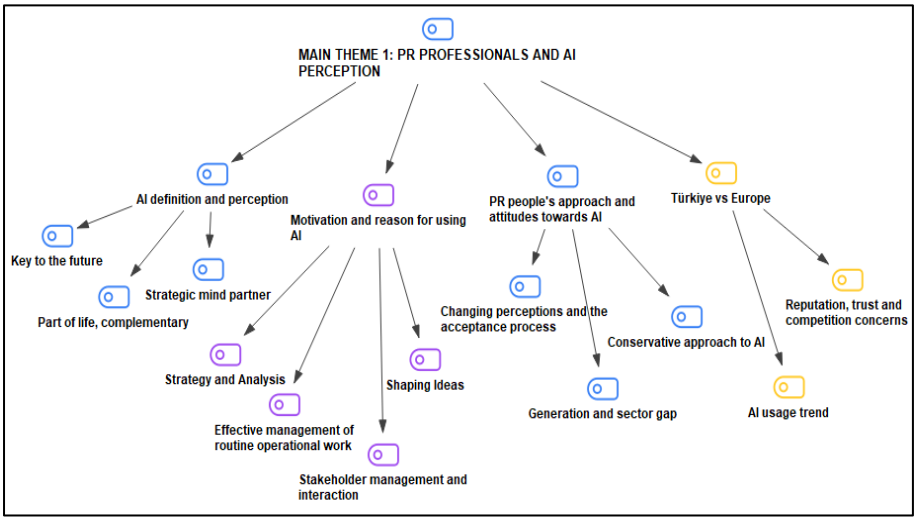



**Figure 1.** *Hierarchical code-subcode model (Main Theme 1)*

*AI Means and Perception:* Participants generally view AI as a supportive tool that eases and accelerates tasks, facilitates access to information, broadens perspectives, idea bank and serves as a close assistant (Figure 2). PR professionals define AI as a technological asset, that has become a part of life and a problem-solving hub. The participants' definition of AI as "a supportive, facilitating, and accelerating tool" strongly aligns with two key variables of the TAM: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to this model, the adoption of a technology depends on the user's perception of it as a tool that enables work processes to be carried out more effectively, quickly, and effortlessly.

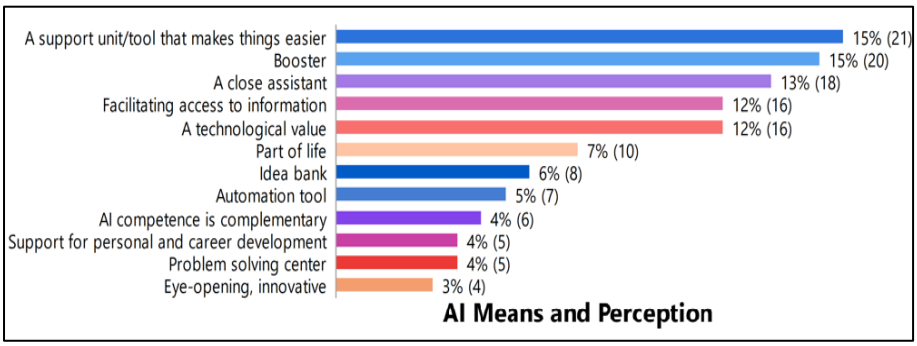



**Figure 2.** *AI Means and Perception*

*Motivation and Reasons for Using AI:* As seen in the participants' responses (Figure 3), AI is extensively used, particularly in content creating, text preparing, editing and controlling, as it eases and accelerates. AI plays an important role not only in texts in Turkish but also in translating and editing texts in foreign languages. Most PR professionals stated that they get support from AI for generating and expanding new ideas and providing assistance. Within the study, PR professionals stated that they often benefit from AI in facilitating tasks such as competitor/target audience/situation analysis, stakeholder management, customer satisfaction, personalization, crisis, and reputation management, as well as routine tasks like social media management, translation, media planning, measurement-reporting, data analysis, campaign planning, presentation preparation, meeting management, and other time-consuming tasks. PR professionals stated that they often use AI to develop strategies for competitor/target audience/situation analysis, stakeholder management, customer satisfaction, personalization, crisis management, and reputation management as well as to facilitate routine tasks such as social media management, translation, media plan/report/measurement, data analysis, campaign planning, presentation preparing, meeting management, and other time-consuming activities. The responses participants gave about their motivations for using AI align directly with perceived usefulness, one of the core constructs of the TAM. According to the model, individuals adopt a technology to the extent that they believe it enhances their performance. It is observed that this assumption of the model finds support in the participants' responses.

*P15: Stated as "AI makes significant contributions to PR in areas such as developing data-driven strategies, automating customer interactions, and creating personalized content. AI also made business models more flexible by facilitating rapid action in critical processes such as crisis management and reputation management."*

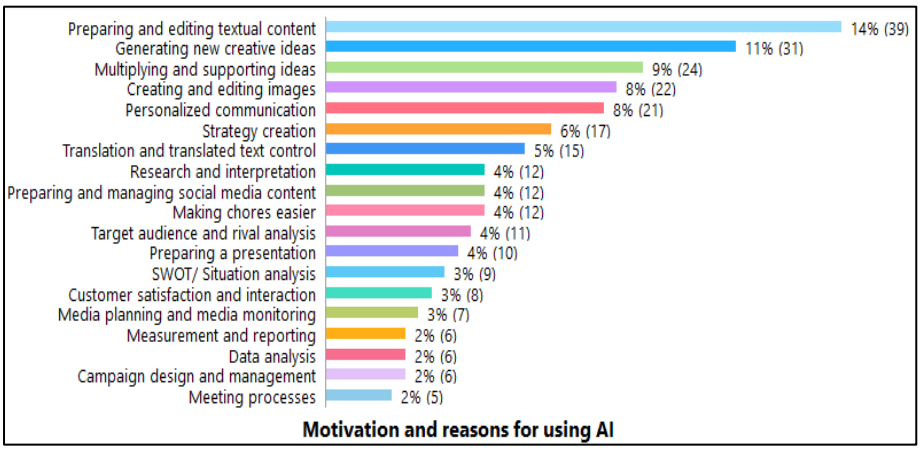



**Figure 3.** *Motivation and Reasons for Using AI*

*PR Professionals' Approaches and Attitudes to AI:* As seen in Figure 4, most of the participants have been observed to be cautious or even conservative regarding the development and use of AI, or to perceive the sector in this manner. Especially the high average age of agency managers supports this view. Naturally, young professionals are more eager and keen on using AI. In fact, a CEO stated that AI would not make a difference in the profession, that they were against its use, and that they did not encourage anyone in the office to use it. The participants' statement supports the assumption of the diffusion of innovations theory that socio-demographic variables, such as age and experience, have a direct impact on the speed of innovation adoption. Conservative agency managers represent the late majority and laggards categories described in the theory, while curious and innovation-oriented young professionals represent the early adopters and early majority categories.

Generally, the common consensus of all participants is that the PR sector has a more conservative approach to AI. Turkish PR professionals generally stated that, in terms of digital and AI developments, the PR sector is behind advertising and marketing, which tends to be more traditional and less courageous. They explained that this is because their work is primarily focused on strategic communication, reputation management, risk management, and crisis management.

*P21: "When it comes to AI, PR agencies are still cautious. The average age of agency owners is high, and considering that these managers' personal and professional experiences are more prominent, the complete incorporation of AI as a business model across the entire agency or organization is not possible."* The participant's statement reveals the generational and cultural factors that slow down the diffusion of AI in the PR sector.

*P24: "Agency owners are cautious about AI and also have not yet fully understood its operational system."*

Moreover, the core responsibilities of PR include strategic communication, reputation management, and due to the conditions in Türkiye crisis communication. Due to their concerns about data security and confidentiality of corporate information, they consider it problematic to input information into AI, and this makes them cautious about using AI.

Based on these participant evaluations, it is observed that the factors slowing the adoption of AI in the PR industry align with the complexity variable (referring to the difficulty of understanding AI) and compatibility variable (referring to the misalignment with ethical principles such as information privacy and data security) identified in the diffusion of innovations theory.

*P22: "Since corporate communication/PR is closely related to reputation management, you need to be very careful when saying something about the organization. Therefore, I see a more cautious, careful process moving forward step by step. I believe it will continue more conservatively until cybersecurity measures are clarified. I think it will continue to be a little more conservative until the steps related to cybersecurity are clarified."*

Based on the rapid developments in recent years, it is observed that Turkish PR professionals have a more positive outlook towards AI. Most of the participants stated that the intense integration of AI into their lives has changed their perspectives over the years. It has even been expressed that they are considering how to use it more. These statements reflect the sequential stages of "knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation" that individuals pass through over time in the innovation adoption process described by Rogers (2003). The fact that PR professionals who approach cautiously due to security and ethical concerns become more open as they observe the benefits of technology supports Roger's variables of compatibility and observability.

*P23: "With the increase in functions and the development of applications, I see that we are one of the professions most inclined to use AI."*

*P8: "In the past, we were more distant towards digitalization and the digitalization of the media, but now everyone is aware that if they remain outside of this, they will be left behind."*

A positive attitude is observed especially due to AI's ability to speed up and simplify many time-consuming tasks.

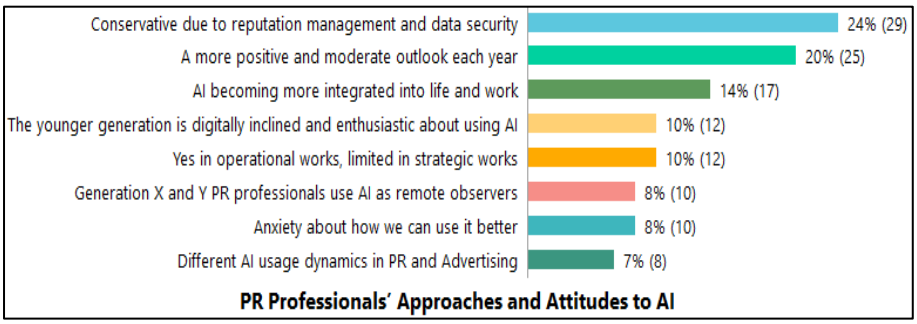



**Figure 4.** *PR Professionals' Approaches and Attitudes to AI*

*Türkiye vs Avrupa*: The participants highlighted differences in the use of AI between the PR sectors in Türkiye and Europe. The political and economic conditions in Türkiye also influence investments in digitalization and technical infrastructure. It is stated that the late arrival of some applications in Türkiye, the limited usage areas offered by many applications, and the dollar-based pricing pose a problem. It is also stated that AI tools are not yet fully integrated with cultural dynamics, codes, and language features, which makes them less efficient than they are for professionals in Türkiye compared to those in other countries. As with many digital technologies, the fact that AI technology is developed and sourced outside of Türkiye also delays its adaptation.

It has been noted that agencies in Türkiye with foreign partners and international clients are in a stronger position compared to others. However, all participants noted that communication professionals in Türkiye have recently made significant efforts to acquire new technologies, adapt to them, and close the gap with their colleagues abroad. Except for one participant, all others who closely follow developments believe that more serious efforts should be made in AI as an agency and industry.

The number of studies examining attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions toward AI in PR industry is steadily increasing worldwide. According to the ICCO World PR Report (2024), AI is expected to play an increasingly significant role in the evolution of the PR sector. The study highlighted that PR agencies in North America are leading globally in the integration of AI into PR sector (ICCO World PR Report, 2024–2025: 6). Other studies emphasized the importance of AI integration into PR sector and indicated that PR professionals mainly use AI is for daily tasks such as data analysis, content creation, idea generation, text refinement (Nikolova, 2024; Yue et al., 2024; Galloway and Swiatek; Panda et al., 2019). The Global CommTech Report (2024) revealed that PR professionals identified the main benefits of AI as time and efficiency, while the major challenges were legal and copyright issues, along with privacy and security concerns. The report also underlined the need for PR professionals to be competent in using AI (Global CommTech, 2024: 5; 23–25; 39).

*Main Theme 2: AI Integration in PR*

Under the second main theme, three themes and eight sub-themes have emerged (Figure 5). These themes are as follows: AI in Agency-Brand Relationships, Individual Contribution of AI, and Contribution of AI to PR.

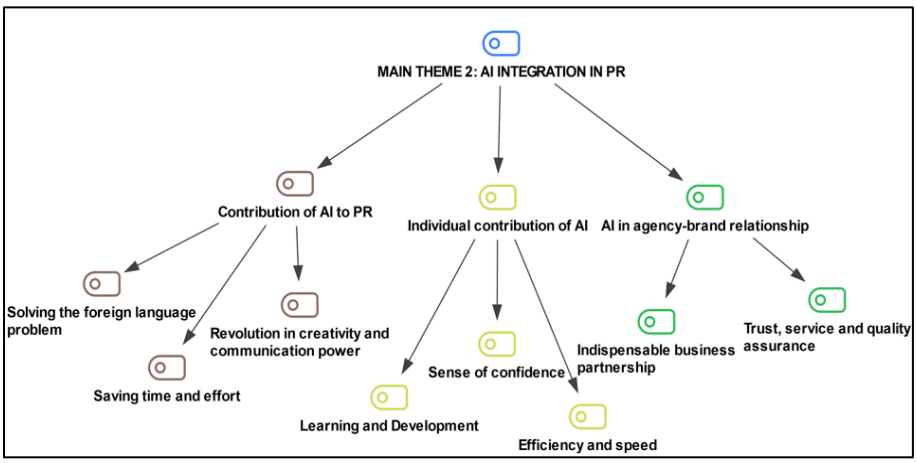



**Figure 5.** *Hierarchical code-subcode model (Main Theme 2)*

*AI in Agency-Brand Relationship:* All participants stated that the use of AI in PR processes has not caused any issues between agencies and the brands they serve. On the contrary, they noted that the brands have a positive attitude and it increased efficiency on both sides. Ten participants mentioned that there was a change in the demands of brands from the agency after AI. Brands are also trying to improve themselves in AI. This situation supports mutually productive collaboration. As the email and request traffic between the agency and the brand decreases, the expectation for higher-quality services increases. The views of P13 and P15 illustrate this clearly.

*P13: "Everyone has started developing their own internal tools. Brands started writing and sending briefs to agencies through their own AI tools. Agencies also prepare and edit texts and contexts via AI and send them back to their clients. This has made our work more efficient and faster*." The initiatives of agencies and brands to develop their own AI tools in order to accelerate their processes support the assumption of the TAM that technology delivers tangible benefits. The observation that the process becomes faster and easier supports the model's perceived ease of use variable.

*P15: "AI made the relationship between agencies and brands more dynamic and data-driven. Brands now expect faster and more measurable results from agencies, which allows agencies to continuously optimize their strategies. This process also requires agencies to provide more creative solutions."*

The texts, visuals, campaigns, and crisis communication tools prepared by agencies for brands determine the level of the brand's reputation and standing. Therefore, participants believe that since they have important responsibilities towards brands, both out of respect and ethics, it is essential to inform the brand about the work made with AI. The participants' remark is directly consistent with the principles of respect and goodwill outlined in Bowen's (2004) model. The brand's right to be informed is respected; however, since the purpose of this communication is honesty and transparency, it reflects goodwill and a morally justified intention.

*P21: "We have a responsibility towards the client regarding pricing, billing, and invoicing. "I believe there should also be a responsibility to inform the brand about the part created by AI.*" This statement directly reflects the duty principle in Bowen's (2004) model. According to Bowen's duty principle, PR professionals should act not in a results-oriented manner, but in accordance with universal ethical principles and professional responsibility. It emphasizes that ethical responsibility in PR should be fulfilled with a professional sense of moral duty. The participant's emphasis on "providing information is a responsibility" indicates that this duty arises not from an external requirement but from an internal sense of ethical obligation.

*Individual Contribution of AI:* In the individual study format, 21 participants generally expressed the positive aspects of AI. PR professionals who find AI's assistance reassuring have stated that it makes their work easier and faster. Specifically, five of the participants mentioned that it helps correct writing style. More than half of the participants find AI inspiring and motivating, encouraging them to learn the technology better and to conduct further research for self-improvement.

*Contribution of AI to PR:* The contribution of AI to PR is significant, as it is in many other sectors. Its ability to instantly translate and edit both textual and verbal content from different languages has reduced language barriers. Most of the participants emphasized that AI provides time and budget savings by offering speed and ease in operational tasks (such as media monitoring, translation, summarizing news, etc.).

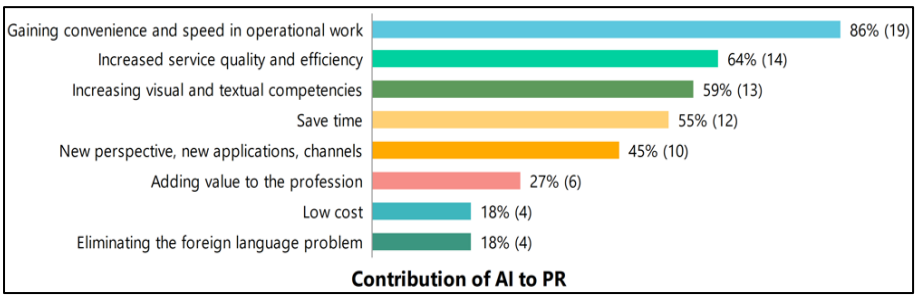



**Figure 6.** *Contribution of AI to PR*

According to the interviews, AI adds value to the profession by offering innovative approaches to preparing all kinds of texts and content, planning campaigns, providing

new ideas, and suggesting and guiding new communication sources. The participants remarks such as "AI provides speed and cost advantages in operational tasks like media monitoring, translation, and news summarization; enhances writing quality; and encourages a willingness to learn", indicate that the participants perceive technology as a tool that enhances their job performance. The participants' reference to AI as "facilitating" and "time-saving", indicate that the technology is perceived as effortless to use, thus supporting perceived ease of use.

*P13: "Previously, a hotel press release would be sent to tourism and travel sections, but with the AI tool we have, we observed that topics related to hotels are frequently used on food and dining websites. For this reason, we directed our tourism customers to collaborate with food publications and place their press releases and advertisements there."*

*Main Theme 3: Opportunities and future of AI in PR*

Under the third main theme, four themes and twelve sub-themes were formed (Figure 7). These themes are as follows: Opportunities and future of AI in PR, Negatives and Risks of AI in PR, The responsibility and challenge of using AI, Human vs AI.

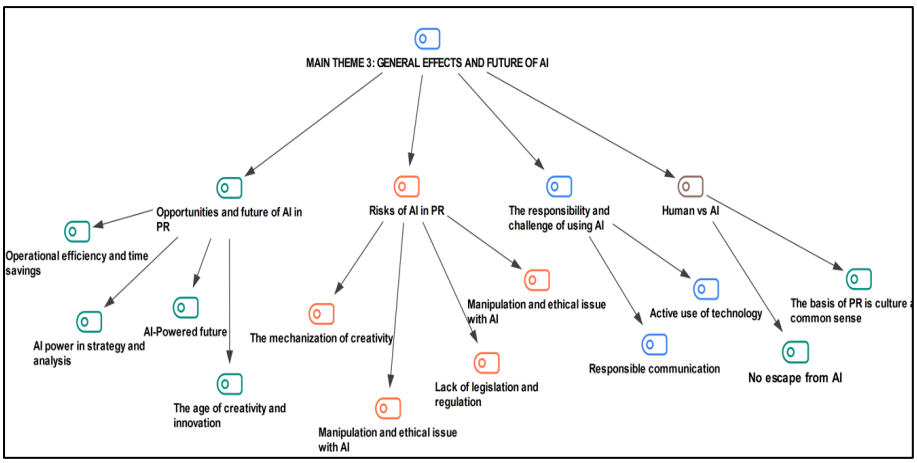



**Figure 7.** *Hierarchical code-subcode model (Main Theme 3)*

*Opportunities and future of AI in PR:* If the PR sector adapts to new technologies, particularly AI, and uses them correctly and efficiently, many tasks, especially operational ones, will become faster, and more cost-effective, and this will lead to more efficient business results (Figure 8). PR professionals who see the advantages of AI today have expressed that, strategic thinking and creativity will be even more important in the future.

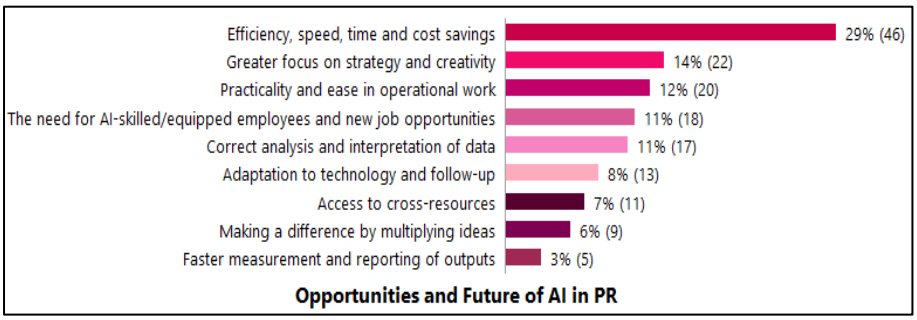



**Figure 8.** Opportunities and Future of AI in PR

*P3: "We will have more time to focus on creative tasks (such as what kind of campaign we can create, what else we can do, what kind of strategies we can think of in different areas). In other words, it will allow us to shift from operational tasks to more creative areas."*

According to the interviews; cross-sourcing will provide access to a broader and more diverse range of information, allowing for better preliminary research on the sectors served. This will give agencies a better understanding of consumer behavior, target audiences, competitors, and both national and international market trends, allowing them to stand out in PR planning and execution with their insights. Half of the participants mentioned that access to more diverse results in data analysis, measurement, and reporting through AI will also support personalized communication strategies.

P9: "*I believe that strategy and planning are fundamental for our profession. We develop great ideas and create innovative projects. Therefore, I believe that AI tools will enhance our work, elevate it to a higher level, and make it more sustainable and trackable."*

PR has been slower in adapting to digitalization compared to advertising and marketing. It must be bold and embrace technology without fear of AI. Therefore, it has been stated that the sector requires more talented individuals with AI and digital communication technologies and that newcomers should educate themselves in this field. This has been linked to the challenges and responsibilities of using AI.

*The responsibility and challenge of using AI:* One of the general findings under this theme is that many PR agencies and agency employees are still not sufficiently skilled in technology. It has been stated that many people in PR agencies face challenges due to the complexity of technology or learning difficulties, especially in directing and managing AI prompts correctly. Some participants who find using AI enjoyable and even easy emphasize the importance of being proficient regarding prompts to achieve effective and accurate results. You need to know; correct and customized prompt input, request information with precise instructions, language

skills, train AI, and avoid monotony. This is closely related to generating original ideas, especially within the boundaries of information security.

However, using AI effectively is not limited to just using it frequently; most of the participants also emphasize the importance of responsible and conscious use. They highlight the importance of awareness in AI usage, emphasizing the need for high levels of privacy, verification of information, and the understanding that every piece of information entered into AI remains stored. The participants' concern regarding information secuirty and privacy supports the moral awareness of doing what is right, as emphasized in Bowen's principle of duty. The emphasis on raising awareness regarding the use of AI aligns with the principle of goodwill, as it demonstrates an ethical intent to act in line with the public interest.

*Negatives and Risks of AI in PR:* Almost all of the participants stated that one of the biggest negative aspects of AI is its lack of originality, often offering similar, superficial, and commonplace ideas (Figure 9). They especially see sending AI-generated content to the client or social media without editing as a major disrespect and against professional ethics. The fact that the information is incomplete, misleading, incorrect, mechanical, or contains plagiarism shows that AI is not always a reliable source and requires verification.

*P9: "Writing prompts for AI and interpreting and evaluating the information obtained from them requires expertise. Unless we verify the content we created using the data we received from AI, it can pose significant risks for our brand."*

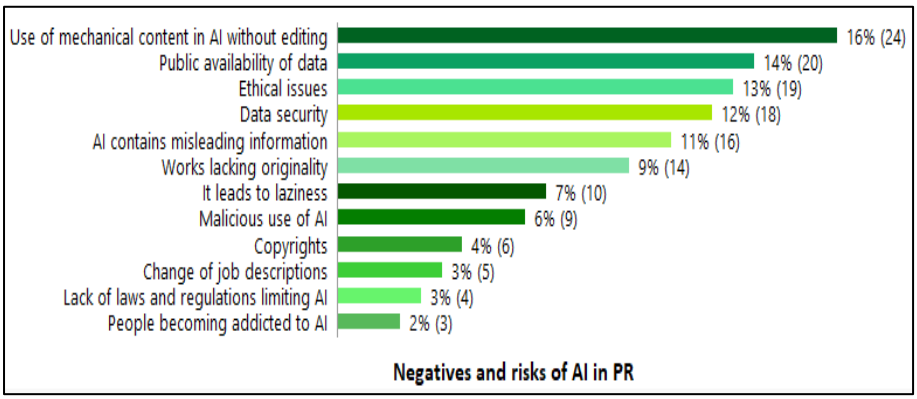



**Figure 9.** *Negatives and Risks of AI in PR*

Additionally, being open-source and having data accessible to everyone carries serious risks regarding ethical issues, data security, and privacy. Moreover, the use of AI for malicious purposes is seen as a significant threat both for individuals and institutions.

*P21: "By inputting any information for analysis or summary, you are making it accessible to other institutions, and confidential information loses its privacy and*

*becomes anonymous. For example, it could lead to problems in a company's stock value. Therefore, data security is one of our biggest responsibilities in our sector. We refrain from sharing data specific to our brands. Everyone in the office must also show the same level of care."*

The lack of laws and practices limiting AI, copyrights, dependency on AI, and pushing especially young employees towards laziness and complacency are also listed as other negative aspects.

*Human vs AI:* Almost all participants emphasized that, in the digital and AI era, rather than resisting or fearing these technologies, it is essential to stay updated, renew, learn, and adapt to maximize benefits. As P18 mentioned, "*Agencies and institutions that do not adapt will be wiped out from sectors, while brands and agencies that use it professionally will survive and succeed."*

Among the participants, thirteen agency managers stated that they actively use AI both individually and corporately, and they aim to integrate AI tools into their workflows to ensure the success of their companies in the next five years. However, one important point that almost all of them are certain about is that humans are special; the human spirit, ideas, emotions, and creativity are unique, and humans will always be part of PR.

*P21: "Since our work is based on cultural, sociological, and psychological foundations, it is not possible to perceive it, analyze it, and give a culture-focused answer."*

According to most of the participants, AI cannot understand emotional, social, and cultural codes. While PR work is related to emotions, AI is a source of information. "Therefore, it is stated that PR, which is based on psychology, sociology, and culture, is one of the professions that AI cannot eliminate."

Additionally, P9 mentioned an AI-based communication model called Learning Brand Communication, which they are trying to adapt to their agency, while P13 stated that they are working on a new business model focused on textual content called PRAI.

## Conclusion

PR, as a management and strategic communication function, acts as an intermediary between the brands it serves and their stakeholders. It facilitates communication in various forms between the brand and all stakeholders. Grunig (2001) emphasizes that PR is a "communication management," while Vercic et al. (2001) list the functions of PR as, strategic relationship management, persuasion, defense, information sharing, image building, reputation enhancement, and relationship building. Although all these fundamental PR functions are ongoing, their application and workflows are undergoing dramatic changes every year. Among the fundamental transformations,

digitalization stands out, while AI applications have emerged as a prominent force in today's landscape.

Digitalization caused radical changes in every sector today. Like many other industries, PR must continuously adopt innovative and technological approaches and integrate these technologies into its business processes. The framework of this study is focused on the adoption of AI in the Turkish PR industry, its integration into business processes, the AI knowledge levels of professionals working in this field, their attitudes, motivations, abilities to use it, and the problems/risks they face. Unfortunately, fearing digitalization or escaping from it is not possible. Therefore, this article aims to emphasize that PR should not ignore these developments and must make extra efforts to adapt to them. The study aims to explore how Turkish PR professionals define AI, their perceptions, how they use it in various business processes, the responsibilities they carry, and to answer questions regarding the opportunities, risks, and future of AI in the industry.

This article provides a comprehensive evaluation of how PR agencies in Türkiye, approach and perceive AI technologies, their intended uses of AI, as well as their opportunities and risks. The findings revealed in the study sufficiently answer the research questions of the study and provide significant contributions to the field.

Initially, by examining how participants define AI (RQ1), it is understood that AI is generally perceived as a tool that facilitates, accelerates, and supports work. According to the data obtained from in-depth interviews, conducted within the framework of qualitative analysis, with members of the two leading associations in the Turkish PR sector (TÜHİD and İDA), the sector is closely monitoring the development of digitalization and AI. They define AI as a tool that accelerates and simplifies tasks, guides new ideas and projects, and serves as an insightful office mate and a close assistant.

AI can be considered as a key to ideas and thoughts for PR professionals, as it encourages individual learning, saves time, provides new resources, eliminates the boredom of staring at a blank screen wondering "What should I write now?" and offers solutions to ease the challenges of foreign language issues. PR professionals, especially pleased with the practicality and ease AI brings to time-consuming routine tasks, find themselves more time to dedicate to strategy and creativity, and they are highly satisfied with this situation. These results can be considered as the greatest motivation AI offers to PR professionals.

The participants' description of AI as a supportive, facilitative, and accelerating tool directly aligns with the key variables of the TAM: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to the TAM, individuals are more likely to adopt a technology when it enables them to perform their work processes more efficiently, rapidly, and with less effort. In this context, the participants' views that AI enhances speed, efficiency and quality, while simplifying processes, indicate that the two key variables of the model play an essential role in fostering a positive attitude toward technology. Moreover, the emphasis on AI's role in increasing the flexibility of

business models supports the assumption of the TAM that the intention to adopt a technology is shaped by its perceived usefulness.

One of the aims of this study was to identify the primary tasks where PR professionals predominantly use AI technologies (RQ2). The obtained data indicate that AI is mainly used in essential tasks within the PR sector, such as writing and editing texts, creating social media content, translation, media planning, target audience/competitor/industry analysis, reporting, personalization, stakeholder management, customer relations, measurement and evaluation, presentations, meeting processes, and crisis and reputation management strategies. These findings align with the results of Davis + Gilbert Public Relations Industry Trends Report (2023), Matusova & Naciniakova (2023), and Galloway & Swiatek (2018).

The findings regarding participants' perceptions and attitudes toward AI (RQ3) are remarkable. Although they agree that AI simplifies these tasks, most of them remain cautious about using it. It is observed that a generally conservative approach towards AI prevail. The reason for this is attributed to the high average age of managers in the sector and their tendency to rely more on their own experience rather than on digital developments. As stated in the studies of Zerfass et al. (2020) and Petrucci (2018), the lack of familiarity with technology and the deficiency in technological knowledge also present a barrier. However, the study observed that this perception is gradually changing over time, due to young Turkish professionals being more open to development and displaying a curious attitude. It has been stated that the sector is less bold in adopting AI compared to advertising and marketing, with a more conservative and cautious approach, making it slower to adapt to developments.

The participants' views are also consistent with Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory. The cautious attitudes of senior and more conservative managers toward AI correspond to the late majority and laggards categories, whereas the attitudes of younger, curious, and innovation-oriented correspon d to the early adopters and early majority categories. This finding supports the theoretical framework highlighting the importance of socio-demographic variables, such as age and experience, in shaping the process of innovation adoption. In addition, the participants' emphasis on complexity (the difficulty of understanding AI) and compatibility (ethical alignment, especially in terms of privacy and data security) is consistent with the factors identified in the theory as slowing down the adoption of innovations. The speed, cost efficiency, and innovative practices provided by AI align with Rogers' (2003) variables of relative advantage and observability.

Also, within the study, the individual and organizational ethical responsibilities arising from the use of AI (RQ4) were also thoroughly examined. Participants show great sensitivity, especially in the context of brand communication, regarding transparency, data security and privacy; it is emphasized that AI-generated content must be carefully reviewed and that the clients should be informed accordingly. Another reason for the cautious stance towards AI is concerns about data privacy and security. They have mentioned the responsibilities related to reputation management,

crisis management, and strategic communication of the brands they serve, highlighting the importance of conscious and responsible use in these areas. In the ethical dimension, the participants' perspectives align with Bowen's (2004) Normative Model of Ethical Decision-Making. The participants' approach regarding "providing information is a responsibility" indicates that ethical behavior, in line with Bowen's duty principle, arises not from external obligations but from an internal sense of moral duty. The concern for data security and the protection of confidential information aligns with the duty principle, which emphasizes the moral obligation to do what is right. Furthermore, the participants' remarks that AI-generated content should not be shared without verification demonstrate an ethical stance aligned with the principle of respect toward both the public and brands. The participants' call for the responsible and conscious use of AI reflects Bowen's principle of goodwill and emphasizes the importance of ethical intent.

The findings also reveal the main risks encountered by PR professionals in using AI (RQ5). In particular, issues and risks regarding AI such as lack of original ideas, repetition, the openness of data, plagiarism, ethical concerns, copyright issues, misuse of data, the provision of misleading information, and the lack of laws have been listed as concerns.

In their prospective insights (RQ6), participants indicated that AI is expected to encourage a stronger focus on strategic thinking, creativity, and planning within the PR profession. Aligned with the findings of Biswal (2020), this study establishes a direct correlation between the effective adaptation to and utilization of AI, without fear, and improvements in time efficiency, labor savings, and productivity. The research, analysis, interpretation, and design tasks will be facilitated and accelerated, and this will allow PR professionals to focus on strategy and creativity, allowing them to make a significant impact. Similar to Valin's (2018) and Arief & Gustomo's (2022) research, the results of this study show that the cultural, emotional, and social aspects of humans are essential and creativity is unique to humans. The prevailing belief is that "AI cannot eliminate the PR profession".

While Turkish PR professionals hold an optimistic approach, they also exhibit a stance of anxiety and insecurity. As a result, although the current attitude in PR seems conservative, there is a need to get closer to AI and adapt it to business processes. However, although every change can be intimidating, it is also inevitable. Setting ethical/security boundaries in AI and increasing technological investments for effective use could help break the ice between AI and its users.

Overall, the research findings reveal that AI is having an increasingly significant impact on PR sector; yet, this impact is significantly determined by professionals' attitudes at both individual and organizational levels. It is believed that this study will be important in evaluating, analyzing, and examining the concept of AI from a PR perspective, as well as understanding how AI can transform the PR industry and provide benefits. Additionally, an attempt has been made to provide insights on what PR practitioners should pay attention to. It is believed that the study provides valuable

insights into the increasingly important role of AI in PR. It is believed that this research is important for PR practitioners to understand the potential benefits of AI and recognize its contributions to the sector.

The study was conducted between July and September 2024 among members of TÜHİD and İDA working in communication and PR agencies across Turkey. In today's world, where technology is advancing at a breathtaking pace, all sectors are trying to adapt to this transformation. In this context, considering the circumstances of the period during the research was conducted, it can be stated that the participants' cautious attitudes toward the use of AI can be seen as a reflection of the sectoral dynamics of that time. On the other hand, considering that AI tools are becoming increasingly integrated into professional practices, it can be anticipated that if the same questions were asked again at a later date—such as in December 2025—PR professionals might display more positive attitudes toward AI. Therefore, it is assumed that future studies conducted with a larger and more diverse sample may yield different and more comprehensive findings.

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