The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Public Relations Strategies: A Quantitative Analysis of the Middle East's 10 Most Valuable Brands

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper's research question is: How does artificial intelligence impact the main elements of public relations strategies: communication objectives, target audiences, brand positioning, and creative concepts (art and message)?

Methodology: To answer this question, we conducted a literature review about how this technology impacts the marketing industry, branding campaigns, and public relations strategies. Then, we resorted to *Brand Finance*'s "Middle East 150" report and defined 20 indicators to quantitively analyze how the Middle East's 10 most valuable brands used artificial intelligence to enhance their public relations strategies.

Findings: Our results revealed that the three most respected indicators were the use of several target audiences simultaneously (78), impactful images (74), and storytelling (73). The brands respecting the most criteria were *Sabic* and *Stc*.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Companies must use this technology to revisit the public relations profession and implement more credible branding models based on sharing meaningful content that improves stakeholders' lives. We recommend brands to integrate artificial intelligence professionally into their public relations departments, recruit experts in this area, update their communication plans, and implement new internal practices and indicators guiding public relations campaigns.

Keywords: *Marketing, Technological change, Social Innovation, Middle East*

JEL Codes of Classification: *M31, O33, 035, O53*

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence, big data, deep learning, and the Internet of Things drastically change companies' business models and internal processes. Companies are now revamping their products and services, launching new business units, and requiring employees to upgrade their digital skills. Public relations experts must adapt to this technological environment and enhance their research activities, communication strategies, and creative concepts. However, they face several challenges: strict legal frameworks, new codes of ethics, and stakeholders' new behaviors. On the other hand, more and more consumers do not trust brands and refuse to interact with them. Some consumers accuse companies of bad practices – internal corruption, employees' unacceptable working conditions, and lies about products and services-. Other consumers respect companies but do not want to interact with their brands since the content shared is not helpful for their lives. This new technological and corporate environment has forced public relations experts to revisit their profession and develop new stakeholder relationship models that allow companies to build more credible brands. To do that, public relations experts resort to artificial intelligence-based techniques. Despite the positive impact of artificial intelligence, many public relations experts do not have skills in this area or refuse to learn how to use it, so they cannot implement efficient campaigns based on this technology. Besides, CEOs and managers in some companies are not willing to invest in this area and implement platforms allowing PR experts to use artificial intelligence professionally. This paper aims to fill the gap between theoretical assumptions and practical implementations by analyzing the positive impact of this technology on public relations campaigns. The practical knowledge shared in this paper will help PR experts and CEOs understand how to use artificial intelligence to improve the efficiency of public relations campaigns and accelerate digital transformation in their companies.

This paper analyses how public relations experts in the Middle East use artificial intelligence to enhance public relations strategies. In other words, we tried to answer the following research question: How does artificial intelligence impact the main elements of public relations strategies: communication objectives, target audiences, brand positionings, and creative concepts (art and message)? To answer this question, we conducted a literature review about the impact of artificial intelligence on the marketing industry, branding campaigns, and public relations strategies. Then, we resorted to the "Middle East 150", a report published in 2024 by *Brand Finance,* to identify the ten most valuable brands in the Middle East. We chose ten campaigns from each brand launched between 2020 and 2024; in total, we considered 100 public relations campaigns. We focused on this part of the world since many Middle Eastern countries, such as the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia, are worldwide references in artificial intelligence. Subsequently, based on our literature review and an initial screening of some public relations campaigns recently launched by companies in the Middle East, we defined 20 indicators. Thanks to these indicators, we analyzed the 100 public relations campaigns and evaluated how artificial intelligence impacted their main strategy elements: communication objectives, target audiences, brand positionings, and creative concepts (art and message). Finally, we presented our quantitative results and proposed managerial recommendations and conclusions to help companies in the Middle East integrate artificial intelligence into their public relations strategies more professionally and reinforce their brand reputation.

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Public Relations Strategies

Artificial Intelligence and Marketing

Public and private companies have increased their investments in online marketing to enhance their stakeholder relationships and implement collective branding processes based on the information available on social media and mobile applications (Moukdad & Juidette, 2024). Companies use artificial intelligence to strengthen their online marketing initiatives. Most of them focus their artificial intelligence efforts on six main areas: artificial intelligence-based psychosocial dynamic models, artificial intelligence-enhanced market dynamic strategies, artificial intelligence for consumer services, artificial intelligence for decision-making, artificial intelligence for value transformation, and artificial intelligence for ethical marketing (Labib, 2024). In other words, artificial intelligence is radically changing companies' online marketing strategies: companies can now decrease marketing costs, use different communication channels, implement more creative campaigns, and monitor stakeholders' perceptions more accurately (Mustak et al., 2021). On the other hand, some companies also resort to the metaverse to enhance their online marketing campaigns and establish new relationships with stakeholders, especially consumers and employees (Kim, 2021).

Using artificial intelligence for marketing campaigns involves risks such as data privacy, user security, and algorithmic bias (Rita et al., 2025). However, this technology also represents numerous advantages. Thanks to artificial intelligence, companies accelerate their marketing processes: use of sophisticated search algorithms to better research stakeholders, content delivery mechanisms to reinforce brands' impact, and predictive customer service models to avoid organizational crises (Surana Sanchez & Aramendia Muneta, 2024). On the other hand, artificial intelligence allows companies to know better consumers' attitudes and behaviors, which is essential to defining personalized marketing strategies (Hamamah et al., 2024) that strengthen relationships with stakeholders (Schiessl, Dias, Korelo, 2022). In other words, the adoption of artificial intelligence has enabled the practice of digital marketing with incomparable efficiency (Basu et al., 2024), which helps companies retain clients and improve their economic benefits (Haleem et al., 2022).

Artificial Intelligence and Branding

Companies resort to marketing, advertising, and public relations to promote their brands and establish more dynamic relationships with stakeholders: clients, employees, media companies, policymakers, and public authorities (Alkathiri & Alharbi, 2024). However, artificial intelligence has drastically changed companies' branding strategies, which forces these organizations to continuously innovate and invest in this area (Iyelolu et al., 2024). In other words, companies must find synergies among different online platforms (social media, artificial intelligence, virtual reality) and make these synergies consistent with their corporate communication plans; otherwise, they will not be able to promote their brands efficiently (Chu et al., 2024). To achieve this goal and build reputed brands, companies consider the 8-T Strategic Framework, which includes eight elements: technology, training, teaming, targeting, technique, timing, tailoring, and trust (Deryl et al., 2024). These eight elements help companies set branding criteria that consider employees' skills, consumers' needs, internal practices in the communication department, and protocols in the organization, which contributes to balancing artificial intelligence and branding efforts.

Artificial intelligence has radically changed companies' branding strategies: the use of learning systems, neural networks, and databases allows companies to understand their stakeholders better and build more credible brands (Lim et al., 2024). In other words, artificial intelligence helps companies develop personalized branding campaigns, adjust messages to each stakeholder's perceptions, and integrate cultural elements, enhancing brand credibility (Musaiqer & Hamdan, 2023). On the other hand, this technology allows companies to predict stakeholders' behaviors, which is essential to continuously adapt the company's branding campaigns (Liu & Chen, 2021). Companies can now implement more professional branding initiatives thanks to artificial intelligence and reinforce their strategic positioning in the industry (Calderón-Fajardo et al., 2023). Finally, in some companies, marketing experts use artificial intelligence to transform their organizations internally and launch meaningful business initiatives (Deryl et al., 2023), positively influencing the company's brand reputation (Kozinets, 2023).

Artificial Intelligence, Branding, and Public Relations Strategies

Public relations practitioners need excellent communication, interpersonal, writing, analytical thinking, and related soft skills; however, they also need artificial intelligence skills related to research, edition, and design (Permatasari et al., 2021). Artificial intelligence helps these experts use natural language processing models, image recognition systems, and natural language generation software that make public relations campaigns more dynamic, automated, and personalized (Ford et al., 2023). Unfortunately, some public relations experts lack skills in artificial intelligence, so public relations agencies, universities, and professional associations should urgently implement training sessions to help them upgrade their digital skills (Ki et al., 2024). Once public relations experts excel in this area, they can transform this profession at many levels: communication strategies, media monitoring, crisis management, reputation management, customer relationship management, and content production (Cerci, 2024). Besides, they can use this technology to implement more professional campaigns on social media platforms: better target audience segmentation, meaningful content, and interactive channels (Wang et al., 2021; Ziakis & Vlachopoulou, 2023).

The use of artificial intelligence represents five main advantages for public relations experts. First, they can use conversational artificial intelligence software to identify stakeholders' needs, enhance their experience, and generate market insight (Mariani et al., 2023). Second, the data provided by artificial intelligence-based software lets these experts know stakeholders' sentiments better and implement more emotional campaigns (Zhang & Adegbola, 2022). Third, this technology helps them define more personalized strategies that influence stakeholders more efficiently: perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Chandra et al., 2022). Fourth, public relations experts implement more creative initiatives thanks to artificial intelligence, which helps the company reinforce its innovation and entrepreneurship processes (Kaleel & Alomari, 2024). Fifth, artificial intelligence-driven tools allow public relations experts to improve efficiency and enhance the company's economic performance: for instance, they can use these tools for content creation, sentiment analysis, or stakeholder monitoring (Jeong & Park, 2023). Even if artificial intelligence radically changes public relations, these experts must always respect ethical principles, legal frameworks, and internal protocols (Hermann, 2022).

Artificial intelligence leads public relations experts to work differently: communication initiatives, branding models, and stakeholder relationships (Yue et al., 2024). This technology significantly affects public relations strategies: communication objectives, target audiences, brand positionings, and creative concepts (Liew, 2021). Concerning communication objectives, public relations experts use artificial intelligence-based software to understand better stakeholders' behaviors, competitors' communication strategies, business challenges, and ethical frameworks; then, they use this knowledge to establish more accurate communication objectives (Makwambeni & Makwambeni, 2025; Tkalac Vercic et al., 2024). Concerning target audiences, public relations experts use vast amounts of stakeholder data to precisely define primary and secondary publics: behaviors, needs, expectations, and brand interactions (Gao et al., 2023). As to brand positioning, artificial intelligence-based tools provide public relations experts with valuable content that helps them identify brand territories and define unique brand positionings (Gupta & Khan, 2024). Finally, this technology contributes positively to defining better creative concepts: on the one hand, it allows public relations experts to understand stakeholders' imaginaries, which is essential to developing efficient art creations (Ameen et al., 2022); on the other hand, it allows them to identify the words that are more meaningful for each target audience, which enhances the efficiency of public relations campaign (Kretschmer & Winkler, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Companies in the Middle East use artificial intelligence to make their public relations strategies more dynamic and adapted to each stakeholder's needs. However, implementing this technology constitutes a challenge from a communication perspective. To understand better how the best brands in that part of the world use artificial intelligence to enhance their public relations strategies, we resorted to the "Middle East 150", a report published in 2024 by *Brand Finance* that analyzed the most valuable brands.

Based on a previous definition of the key concepts of enterprise value, branded business value, brand contribution, and brand value[1], *Brand Finance* researchers analyzed 3.000 brands from 30 countries and conducted surveys of 100.000 people from 37 countries to evaluate their perceptions about 4.000 brands. Thanks to this data, they developed brand rankings for different parts of the world, such as Europe, America, and the Middle East. They used two complementary methodologies to analyze each brand and define its position in those rankings. First, *brand valuation methodology*. They considered four criteria to calculate each brand's valuation: a) brand impact (what brands paid in royalty agreements); b) brand strength (activities supporting the future strength of the brand); c) relationship between brand impact and brand strength; and d) brand value calculation credibility. Second, *brand strength methodology*. They analyzed each brand's marketing investments, stakeholder equity, and business performance. Thanks to all the attributes considered in both methodologies, they calculated each brand's Strength Index Score, a quantitative score out of 100 used to define each brand's position in the different rankings (Brand Finance, 2024).

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[1] Main definitions:
- *Enterprise Value*: the value of the entire enterprise, made up of multiple branded businesses.
- *Branded Business Value*: the value of a single branded business operating under the subject brand.
- *Brand Contribution*: the overall uplift in shareholder value that the business derives from owning the brand rather than operating a generic brand.
- *Brand Value*: the value of the trademark and associated marketing IP within the branded business.

Thanks to *Brand Finance*'s "Middle East 150" report, we identified the ten most valuable brands in that part of the world. Then, for each brand, we retrieved ten public relations campaigns launched between 2020 and 2024: we focused on that period since, at that moment, artificial intelligence became a general practice in the public relations industry (see Appendix 1). We consulted every company's corporate profile on *Youtube* to retrieve the ten campaigns, and we ensured all of them were public relations campaigns aiming to promote the company's brand.We analyzed each public relations campaign's strategy: a) communication objectives, b) target audiences, c) brand positionings, and d) creative concepts (message and art). These five elements are the most important ones in every public relations campaign. Public relations experts analyze stakeholders' behaviors, measure key performance indicators, and interpret data to define communication objectives that help brands achieve their business goals efficiently (Capizzo, 2022). Then, they use quantitative and qualitative techniques, as well as multidisciplinary analysis, to define primary and secondary target audiences (Morehouse, 2021). Subsequently, they define brand positionings, which refer to meaningful ideas and unique experiences that will guide companies' public relations initiatives in the long term (Mogaji, 2021). Finally, based on these three elements -objectives, audiences, and brand positionings-, public relations experts propose creative concepts, which include artistic ideas that convey the company's identity and contribute to building its brand territory (Estanyol, 2022), as well as credible messages that influence stakeholders' perceptions about the brand (Compton et al., 2021).

From 15th January to 9th February 2025, we quantitatively analyzed how the ten most valuable brands in the Middle East used artificial intelligence to improve their public relations strategies. We selected 100 campaigns, ten from each brand. Subsequently, we defined 20 indicators that evaluated the impact of artificial intelligence in public relations strategies. We grouped these indicators into five categories, each referring to one of the elements integrating the public relations strategy: a) communication objectives, b) target audiences, c) brand positioning, d) creative concept (art), and d) creative concept (message) -see Table 1 below-. We resorted to a binary system to evaluate whether each public relations campaign complied with the 20 indicators.

Table 1: Indicators

Communication Objectives	Target Audiences	Brand Positioning	Creative Concepts: Art	Creative Concepts: Message
1. Build the brand collectively	1. Hyper personalization	1. Brand positioning related to technology	1. Emotional approach	1. References to technology
2. Reinforce the brand's cultural engagement	2. Several target audiences in the same campaign	2. Quantitative data to justify the brand positioning	2. Use of storytelling	2. Use of scientific language
3. Promote a corporate dialogue	3. References to young consumers	3. Impactful images and effects to describe the brand positioning	3. References to current trends	3. Multilingual campaign
4. Strengthen the company's digital value	4. References to tech investors	4. Integration of the brand positioning on interactive platforms	4. Postproduction techniques	4. References to sustainability

RESULTS

Introduction

Companies in the Middle East use artificial intelligence to make their public relations strategies more dynamic and interact with stakeholders more efficiently. However, each company uses this technology differently. To understand this area better, we analyzed the most recent public relations campaigns launched by the ten most valuable brands in the Middle East: *Aramco*, *Adnoc*, *Stc*, *Etisalat*, *Qnb*, *Emirates*, *Al Rajhi Bank*, *Sabic*, *Snb*, and *Kpc*. These brands are headquartered in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait. For each brand, we analyzed ten public relations campaigns launched between 2020 and 2024 (see Appendix 1).

Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Public Relations Strategies

According to our results, most companies considered the data provided by artificial intelligence to define their communication objectives: reinforcing the brand's cultural engagement (62 campaigns), strengthening the company's digital value (59), and building the brand collectively (58). However, only five campaigns integrated artificial intelligence-based applications to promote a corporate dialogue between the brand and its stakeholders. The best companies in reinforcing the brand's cultural engagement were *Adnoc* (10 out of 10 applicable criteria), *Qnb* (9), and *Aramco* (8). Concerning the use of artificial intelligence to reinforce the company's digital value, the best brands in this category were *Sabic* (10), *Stc* (9), and *Etisalat* (7). As to building the brand collectively, the companies that respected the most criteria were *Adnoc* (8), *Kpc* (7), and *Aramco* (7). Finally, the best brands in using artificial intelligence to promote a corporate dialogue with stakeholders were *Etisalat* (2) and *Aramco* (1).

Our analysis revealed that 78 campaigns simultaneously focused on several target audiences: the best brands in this category were *Kpc*, *Snb*, and *Sabic* (9 criteria). Thanks to data generated by artificial intelligence, brands personalized their public relations campaigns to influence their audiences more efficiently: 63 campaigns implemented hyper-personalization techniques. The best brands in this area were *Sabic* (9), *Al Rajhi Bank* (9), and *Emirates* (8). Concerning specific target audiences, 53 campaigns referenced young consumers and 34 to tech investors. The best brands with the first target audience were *Stc* (8) and *Etisalat* (8), and the best ones with the second public were *Sabic* (8), *Etisalat* (4), and *Aramco* (4).

Besides communication objectives and target audiences, most companies used artificial intelligence to promote their brand positioning. Our data revealed that, on the one hand, 74 campaigns integrated impactful images and effects to describe the company's brand positioning. On the other hand, 54 campaigns used technology to reinforce the uniqueness of the company's brand positioning. The best brands using impactful images were *Aramco* (10), *Qnb* (9), and *Sabic* (9), and the best ones using technology to reinforce their brand positioning were *Stc* (9) and *Sabic* (9). Finally, 29 campaigns displayed data to justify the company's brand positioning, and only seven campaigns used interactive platforms to promote this value. *Sabic* (6), *Emirates* (5), and *Stc* (4) were the best companies in using data to reinforce their brand positioning; and *Etisalat* (3) and *Adnoc* (2) were the best ones in integrating this value with interactive platforms.

Most companies used artificial intelligence to make their creative concepts more credible and impact stakeholders more efficiently. Concerning art, most campaigns respected the criteria considered: use of storytelling (73), references to current trends (70), emotional approach (59), and postproduction techniques (46). For each of these four criteria, the best brands were, respectively, *Qnb* (10), *Sabic* (10), *Qnb* (9), and *Aramco* (8). As to the message, most campaigns integrated references to technology (63); however, only a few campaigns used scientific language (36), made references to sustainability (30), and produced multilingual videos (29). *Sabic* was the best brand in using scientific language (10) and making references to sustainability (8); concerning references to technology, *Stc* (10) led this category; finally, the best brand in using multilingual campaigns was *Adnoc* (7).

Global Results

Our quantitative analysis revealed that the most valuable brands in the Middle East used artificial intelligence to define their public relations strategies: communication objectives, target audiences, brand positionings, and creative concepts. As shown in Table 2, the most respected indicators were the references to several publics (*target audience*), the use of impactful images (*brand positioning*), and the implementation of storytelling (*creative concept*). This fact proved that most brands used artificial intelligence in the different stages of the strategic process:

Table 2: Ten Most Respected Indicators

	Criteria	Number of campaigns
1	Several publics in the same campaign	78
2	Impactful images and effects to describe the brand positioning	74
3	Use of storytelling	73
4	References to current trends	70
5	References to technology	63
6	Hyper-personalization	63
7	Reinforce the brand's cultural engagement	62
8	Strengthen the company's digital value	59
9	Emotional approach	59
10	Building the brand collectively	58

Source: Authors' Elaboration

Etisalat (United Arab Emirates)*, Sabic* (Saudi Arabia)*, Stc* (Saudi Arabia), and *Qnb* (Qatar) launched the best public relations campaigns, which means that the use of artificial intelligence is a common practice in most countries in the Middle East. As shown in Table 3, the campaign "5G...a network tested to the limits", launched by *Etisalat* in 2021, was the only public relations campaign respecting 17 indicators out of 20 applicable. On the other hand, three of the ten campaigns launched by *Sabic* were among the best. In 2024, this company launched two campaigns that achieved 16 criteria each: "Creating chemistry for better healthcare" and "Chemistry can make a real difference." One year before, its campaign "A Sabic frontline hero" met 15 criteria.

Table 3: Best Campaigns

	Brand	Country	Year	Campaign	Number of indicators
1	Etisalat	United Arab Emirates	2021	5G...a network tested to the limits	17
2	Sabic	Saudi Arabia	2024	Creating chemistry for better healthcare	16
3	Sabic	Saudi Arabia	2024	Chemistry can make a real difference	16
4	Etisalat	United Arab Emirates	2023	National program for establishing businesses	15
5	Stc	Saudi Arabia	2024	Going further, going global	15
6	Stc	Saudi Arabia	2021	Sustainability	15
7	Qnb	Qatar	2024	QNB, your trusted partner in the world of finance	15
8	Sabic	Saudi Arabia	2023	A Sabic frontline hero	15

Source: Authors' Elaboration

From 2020 to 2024, the Middle East's public relations industry radically changed because of artificial intelligence. Some companies have quickly integrated both technologies to dynamize their public relations strategies and achieve their branding goals. This is the case of *Sabic*. As shown in Table 4, the company based in Saudi Arabia was the best brand since it achieved 137

marks out of the 200 applicable. *Stc* (Saudi Arabia) and *Etisalat* (United Arab Emirates) were the second and third-best companies, respectively, since they achieved 114 and 109 marks.

Table 4: Best Brands

	Aramco	Adnoc	Stc	Etisalat	Qnb	Emirates	Al Rajhi Bank	Sabic	Snb	Kpc
Objectives										
Collective branding	7	8	5	5	6	4	6	5	4	8
Cultural engagement	8	10	7	6	9	3	4	3	7	5
Corporate dialogue	0	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Digital value	6	4	9	7	5	5	6	10	5	2
Audiences										
Hyper-personalization	3	5	7	7	4	8	9	9	7	4
Several publics	6	7	8	7	8	7	8	9	9	9
Young consumers	2	6	8	8	6	6	4	6	6	1
Tech investors	4	3	3	4	2	2	3	8	2	3
Brand positioning										
Technology	6	5	9	6	6	2	4	9	3	4
Quantitative data	3	2	4	3	0	5	1	6	2	3
Impactful images	10	8	7	7	9	8	5	9	4	7
Interactive platforms	1	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Creative concept (art)										
Emotional approach	5	7	4	8	9	4	3	8	7	4
Storytelling	7	7	9	8	10	9	4	8	6	5
Current trends	8	8	8	7	5	7	5	10	4	8
Postproduction techniques	8	3	4	5	5	6	4	6	3	2
Creative concept (message)										
Technology	6	5	10	8	5	4	7	10	4	4
Scientific language	4	5	4	4	1	3	1	10	1	3
Multilingual campaign	1	7	3	3	5	1	2	3	2	2
Sustainability	4	2	4	1	2	3	0	8	1	5
Total	**99**	**105**	**114**	**109**	**98**	**88**	**76**	**137**	**77**	**79**

Source: Authors' Elaboration

Discussion

Artificial intelligence is drastically changing the public relations industry. Most public relations agencies and corporate communication departments in companies are recruiting experts in artificial intelligence, big data, deep learning, and the Internet of Things. Thanks to this technology, brands interact with stakeholders more frequently, monitor their stakeholders' perceptions more accurately, and automate some professional tasks such as research or film production. Despite this technological impact, public relations remains a human profession, which means that the most critical element is not the final product -videos, brochures- but the

strategy. Critical thinking, social consciousness, and multiculturalism are essential to define accurate communication objectives, valuable target audiences, credible brand positionings, and meaningful creative concepts. Our quantitative data proved that the most valuable brands in the Middle East invest in artificial intelligence to make their public relations strategies more dynamic; however, these brands must carefully consider balancing technology and strategic thinking. Indeed, companies must consider legal frameworks, ethical standards, and technical mistakes associated with artificial intelligence. Besides, the profession of public relations is a human activity that cannot rely exclusively on technology: social issues, human values, and personal behaviors must also be present in this profession.

Public relations have become a multifaceted profession that directly influences companies' strategic management processes from an economic, business, legal, and organizational perspective (Tam et al., 2020). For this reason, public relations experts define communication objectives that align with the company's business goals: this approach contributes to making this profession more efficient and credible (Elgueta-Ruiz & Martínez, 2022). This business approach was present in most public relations campaigns analyzed in this research. According to our results, 62 out of 100 campaigns aimed to reinforce the brand's cultural engagement, which is essential to enhance the company's presence in the industry and its business results. Thanks to artificial intelligence, companies access real-life data about cultural elements and social trends, which helps them integrate both aspects into their public relations strategies. On the other hand, only five campaigns displayed interactive platforms, such as chatbots, to allow consumers to interact with brands. This fact proved that most companies in the Middle East used artificial intelligence to make their public relations campaigns more credible, but they did that subtly through data analysis and not through more visible tools. More and more consumers in the Middle East do not trust companies and refuse direct interaction with brands; that is why brands respect consumers' demands and do not implement aggressive public relations techniques.

Public relations experts find new ways to interact with stakeholders and promote their companies' brand reputation: to do that, they analyze stakeholders' environments, social ties, and relational engagement models (Morehouse & Saffer, 2023). Besides, they use digital transformation to implement platforms and interconnectivity models that allow stakeholders to be part of the company's branding processes (Mato-Santiso et al., 2021). The high importance given to target audiences was also present in most public relations campaigns analyzed in this research. Our results revealed that 78 campaigns focused on several publics simultaneously, and 63 used hyper-personalization techniques. These facts proved that brands used this technology to optimize their investments in public relations, accelerate branding processes, and integrate stakeholders into the company's branding processes more efficiently. However, this direct approach could also constitute a reputation risk since companies need to focus on the long-term and their social legacy.

Public relations experts' primary responsibility is defining brand positionings that companies use in the long term to bring reputational, economic, and organizational benefits (Robson, 2021). To do that, they analyze their companies' business structure, as well as external cultural elements: this way, they engage with stakeholders authentically and define brand positionings that resonate with specific cultural contexts (Jahns, 2023). Based on our quantitative results, we can state that most brands considered in this research used artificial intelligence to make their brand positionings more unique and profitable from a business perspective: 54 campaigns

resorted to this technology to strengthen the brand's uniqueness and reinforce the company's relationships with its stakeholders. This was especially the case of *Aramco* (Saudi Arabia), which complied with the ten criteria in this category. On the other hand, in 74 campaigns, companies used artificial intelligence to produce impactful images that described their brand positionings more creatively.

Defining a creative concept has become a challenge for public relations experts since, on the one hand, they must respect the company's brand architecture -identity, values, mission, vision, and culture; and, on the other hand, they must integrate different elements, such as social trends and stakeholders' perceptions (Bardhan, 2013). Besides, they must adapt these creative concepts to stakeholders' new visual culture, which forces public relations experts to use strong narrative pictures that create a compelling visual hook, choose humanized images that cut through fatigue, and script texts that reinforce the brand's visual impact (Dhanesh & Rahman, 2021). According to our results, most brands in the Middle East followed this logic and resorted to narrative pictures and humanized concepts. Most brands used storytelling, mentioned current trends, and implemented emotional approaches to develop unique creative concepts: out of 100 campaigns, 73, 70, and 59 campaigns, respectively, complied with the mentioned criteria. *Qnb* (Qatar) was the reference in this area since it respected all the indicators related to storytelling, as well as nine indicators concerning emotional approach. On the other hand, *Sabic* (Saudi Arabia) met all the indicators associated with current trends. These facts proved that companies headquartered in countries with strict legal frameworks for public relations – Saudi Arabia and Qatar- have found a way to use artificial intelligence to dynamize their creative concepts and enhance the efficiency of their public relations strategies.

Besides developing an artistic idea, public relations experts must define a clear message that complements the creative concept and influences stakeholders' perceptions of the brand (Shin, 2023). To do that, these experts find a balance between technology and human values: they integrate some elements into the messages that help brands become a form of corporate conscience that protects human potential in the face of technological determinism (Santa Soriano et al., 2021). Our quantitative research revealed that most brands in the Middle East followed this logic: only 36 public relations campaigns used scientific language, which means that brands also prioritize other aspects, such as social engagement, human values, and people's perceptions. However, only 29 campaigns were multilingual, which constitutes a reputational risk since most citizens in the Middle East are bilingual (Arabic, English).

Artificial intelligence, big data, and deep learning can help public relations experts revisit this profession, implement new branding models, establish more credible relationships with stakeholders, promote trust more efficiently, and reinforce the business, economic, and management impact of this profession. To do that, companies need to diversify the professional profile of employees working in the public relations department, recruit artificial intelligence experts, upgrade their current employees' digital skills, define new communication plans, set new criteria to evaluate the impact of public relations campaigns and establish mechanisms to allow public relations experts lead digital transformation processes in companies. In other words, this technology can reinforce the added value of public relations. However, these experts cannot rely only on this technology; they must find bridges between artificial intelligence and the humanities. This means that public relations departments must also recruit experts in sociology, anthropology, and philosophy who smartly use artificial intelligence to reinforce brands' social legacy.

This paper analyzed how the most valuable brands in the Middle East used artificial intelligence to enhance their public relations strategies. Our quantitative research proved that many brands use this technology to define their communication objectives, target audiences, brand positionings, and creative concepts. Despite this interesting fact, we must also highlight some limitations that affected this paper. First, we did not contact each brand's public relations department, which prevented us from better understanding how they integrated artificial intelligence into public relations plans. Second, we did not analyze consumers' perceptions of artificial intelligence-based public relations campaigns, so we could not evaluate how this technology influences brands' reputations. Third, we found no other paper analyzing this area and using similar methodologies, so we could not compare our results with those of brands in other parts of the world. Despite these limitations, this paper helps researchers understand a critical area: artificial intelligence's impact on public relations strategies. We recommend that researchers interested in this topic analyze the effects of artificial intelligence on consumers' perceptions of brands, the impact of this technology on brands' social legacy, and the role of multiculturalism in this technological environment.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence, deep learning, big data, and the Internet of Things have radically changed the public relations industry. Companies use these technologies to improve their public relations strategies, establish better stakeholder relationships, and build more reputed brands. However, they must overcome two main barriers: on the one hand, the legal frameworks, ethical standards, technical requirements, and budget limitations that highly determine how brands implement artificial intelligence-based public relations campaigns; and, on the other hand, the integration in companies' public relations departments of experts in business and technology who do not have a background on branding, strategy, and creativity. Besides these two barriers, companies must consider other elements such as privacy risks, consumer skepticism about this technology, the technical biases and mistakes associated with artificial intelligence-based software, and the business risks of relying excessively on technology rather than qualified employees' professional criteria. This paper's main research question was: How does artificial intelligence impact the main elements of public relations strategies: communication objectives, target audiences, brand positioning, and creative concepts (art and message)? To answer this question, we proposed three last ideas that will help companies in the Middle East use artificial intelligence as a public relations tool more efficiently.

First, most companies in that part of the world have professionalized the use of artificial intelligence in their public relations department. This was especially the case of *Sabic*, *Stc*, and *Etisalat*. These companies achieved the higher marks for the 20 indicators considered: 137, 114, and 109, respectively. Besides, other companies analyzed also achieved good results in most categories: *Adnoc* (105), *Aramco* (99), and *Qnb* (98). This fact proves that artificial intelligence has become a new public relations territory that most companies are developing to build their brands and reinforce their relationships with stakeholders. Second, most companies in the Middle East used artificial intelligence to define all the elements of their public relations strategies. The three most respected indicators referred to three different strategic areas: focusing on several publics simultaneously (*target audience*), using impactful images (*brand positioning*), and implementing storytelling (*creative concept*). In other words, companies have integrated artificial intelligence into their internal protocols, and employees working in public relations departments and agencies have enhanced their skills in this area. Third, our results

revealed that most brands in the Middle East tried to find a balance between technology and strategic thinking: even if most of them used artificial intelligence, big data, and other technological tools to make their public relations strategies more efficient, they also considered cultural elements and consumer's perceptions to develop more meaningful public relations strategies (objectives, target audiences, brand positionings, and creative concepts- art and message-). For example, one of the best campaigns launched by *Sabic* in 2024, "Creating chemistry for better healthcare", complied with 16 out of 20 branding indicators, but it also showed cultural elements not based on technology, such as comparisons to explain scientific concepts, the presence of patients in the campaigns, and references to their social needs (understanding of technology).

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Appendix 1. 100 Public Relations Campaigns

Table 5: 100 Public Relations Campaigns

Code	Company (*Brand*)	Country	Year	PR Campaign
1	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Saudi Arabia welcomes the 2034 FIFA World Cup
2	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	World Environment Day
3	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Safety on the frontline - Aramco firefighters
4	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Global diversity and inclusion in the workspace
5	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	Technology meets forestation
6	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	Women driving innovation in the oil industry
7	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	Iktva - A story of success
8	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2021	Our drive to deliver
9	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2021	Protecting marine life
10	Arabian American Oil Company (*Aramco*)	Saudi Arabia	2020	Our people, our heroes
11	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	Beat the heat
12	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	ARIF Ai chatbot launch
13	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	World Environmental Day
14	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	The Forefathers. H.E. Mohammed Abdul Jalil Al Fahim
15	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	The Forefathers. H.E. Dr. Maitha Al Shamsi
16	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	Energy for life's journey
17	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	Liwa Festival
18	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	ADNOC Report 2023
19	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2022	Eid
20	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (*Adnoc*)	United Arab Emirates	2020	Adnoc energy for life
21	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Going further, going global
22	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	The role model of aggregation
23	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	The root of connectivity
24	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Your voice services trusted partner
25	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	5G Internet
26	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Connect & fly beyond

27	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	Welcome to the world capital of going further
28	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	We strive, we race, and we surpass
29	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	Eid
30	The Saudi Telecom Company (*Stc*)	Saudi Arabia	2021	Sustainability
31	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	UAE football
32	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	UAE National Day
33	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	UAE Team Emirates community ride
34	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	e& wider web mobile extension
35	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	e& is Etisalat and so much more
36	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	National program for establishing businesses
37	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2022	Together, there's more
38	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2022	Ramadan Mubarak
39	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2021	Friendship awareness month
40	Emirates Telecommunications Group Company (*Etisalat*)	United Arab Emirates	2021	5G...a network tested to the limits
41	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2024	With QNB, together, we move beyond!
42	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2024	QNB, your trusted partner in the world of finance
43	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2024	Teachers Day
44	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2024	QNB VIP lounge
45	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2024	Back-to-school CSR
46	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2024	Stay protected
47	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2022	Dream bigger with QNB - FIFA
48	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2021	From every Arab nation
49	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2021	Great businesses are founded on solid partnerships
50	Qatar National Bank (*Qnb*)	Qatar	2020	With the right time, you can always make the right decisions
51	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	Our new no-nonsense safety video
52	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	This 2024, Fly better with Real Madrid
53	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2024	Welcome to the next era of Emirates
54	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	You deserve to fly better
55	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	Dubai Airshow 2023
56	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	Investing in a sustainable future
57	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2023	The world works better

58	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2022	Come fly with us
59	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2022	See you at Dubai Expo
60	The Emirates Group (*Emirates*)	United Arab Emirates	2022	Introducing Emirates
61	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Even from afar, your transfer changes lives
62	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Saudi Arabia National Day
63	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	The eighth winner of one million riyals
64	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Al Rajhi Gamers Championship
65	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Al Rajhi business
66	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	From your place, you earn bonus points
67	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	Italian star Del Piero's concert
68	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	Graduate development program
69	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	Al Rajhi Bank pavilion
70	Al Rajhi Banking and Investment Corporation (*Al Rajhi Bank*)	Saudi Arabia	2020	Eid from Afar
71	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Take a deeper look into the life of a security guard
72	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Help feed the world
73	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Chemistry can make a real difference
74	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Leading the charge into season 11
75	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Creating chemistry for better healthcare
76	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	Imagine your home without SABIC
77	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	Powering thousands of homes with clean energy
78	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	A SABIC frontline hero
79	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	Formula E has a new innovation partner
80	Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (*Sabic*)	Saudi Arabia	2020	How will we solve the biggest challenges of the future?
81	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	Wherever you are, it will always be around you
82	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	We celebrate more than three centuries since the founding of our country
83	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	ISAF 2024
84	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2024	From the glory of its past, we build the glory of its future

85	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	Pilgrimage
86	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2023	Ramadan boxes distribution
87	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2022	SNB achieved SAR 13.8 billion net income
88	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2021	The official bank of Saudi football
89	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2021	Together, we move forward and make tomorrow meaningful
90	Saudi National Bank (*Snb*)	Saudi Arabia	2021	Saudi National Day
91	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2024	International Youth Day
92	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2024	Ashjar cultivation process
93	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2024	From Kuwait to Oman - Duqm refinery
94	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2024	KPC's role in carbon capture, utilization, and storage
95	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2024	Traffic law amendments
96	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2024	Human resources' role in our strategic directions
97	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2023	Faisal Al Zayed - Success stories of our employees in the industry
98	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2023	Strategy 2040 and Energy Conference 2050
99	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2022	Environment fuel project
100	Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (*Kpc*)	Kuwait	2021	Vaccination campaign

Source: Authors' Elaboration