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Developing an Ai News Anchors Engagement Framework: Assessing Content Quality and Continuance Behavior among News Consumers in Oman

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is the consumers' understanding, dealing, and recognition of the AI-generated news in Oman. The impact of the perception of AI-centric qualities, including intelligence, innovation, trust, and information value in the utilization and engagement of the AI news services in developing the AI Anchor Engagement Framework was also analyzed. For gaining an in-depth insight from the purposively sampled 10 media as well as AI experts, the researcher utilised a qualitative research design. For data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the data underwent thematic analysis where dominant patterns and associations were established to aid in the structuring of the framework. The outcome of the research indicates that the critical elements of consumer engagement and continuance intentions are triggered by trust, intelligence perceptions, and information quality. The respondents indicated that audience trust can be strengthened by credibility, transparency, and connection once the audience witnesses the credentials of knowledge of the AI anchors in terms of novelty and timely response. As expected, the evidence proves that the critical factor leading to the successful implementation of AI newsreaders is their unique capability of meshing technology intelligence and human authenticity and trustworthiness. The successful consumer adaptation is greatly contingent on the trust and engagement rhetoric. In this regard, with qualitative research quality, this paper has emerged as an inspiration for innumerable novel insightful ideas concerning Omani media organizations to develop trust-worthy and user-friendly AI news platforms with the concept of the AI Anchor Engagement Framework.

Keywords: AI news Anchors, Content Quality, Audience Engagement, Media Innovation, Oman.

INTRODUCTION

The integration of artificial intelligence in media has transformed the way news is produced and consumed (Helberger *et al.,* 2022). AI news anchors, also known as digital anchors, are increasingly being deployed to deliver real-time news content across multiple platforms (Xue *et al.*, 2022). These AI systems can present information consistently, efficiently, and interactively, appealing to diverse audiences (Sun *et al.,* 2024). They combine natural language processing, speech synthesis, and visual rendering to mimic human anchoring. With the rise of digital media consumption, audiences are exposed to a continuous flow of news content, making engagement and content quality critical for retention (Cloudy *et al.,* 2023). As technology advances, AI anchors have the potential to reshape traditional journalism by supplementing or even replacing human anchors. This innovation brings both

opportunities for enhancing user experience and challenges in terms of trust, credibility, and acceptance (Abdelraouf, 2024).

Despite the growing deployment of AI anchors, news organizations face challenges in ensuring sustained audience engagement (Jinhui & Tarofderb, 2024). Many users remain sceptical about the authenticity, credibility, and emotional connection provided by AI-generated news (Gilardi *et al.,* 2024). Content quality, including accuracy, clarity, and presentation style, plays a significant role in influencing user perception and satisfaction (Xuan & Yang, 2023). In addition, cultural and regional differences affect how audiences perceive AI anchors, creating a gap in understanding specific markets such as Oman. Limited research has addressed the factors that drive continuance behavior toward AI anchors in non-Western contexts (Lv *et al.,* 2022). Without proper engagement strategies, media outlets risk lower retention rates and reduced trust in AI-mediated news (Owsley & Greenwood, 2024).

Developing an AI Anchor Engagement Framework can provide a structured approach to improving audience interaction and retention (Li, 2025). Such a framework would evaluate key factors like content quality, visual presentation, responsiveness, and perceived credibility of AI anchors (Li & Wang, 2025). It can incorporate mechanisms to measure satisfaction, trust, and user expectation confirmation to understand continuance behavior. By integrating insights from human-computer interaction, cognitive engagement, and media studies, the framework can guide news organizations in designing AI anchors that meet audience preferences (Jinhui & Tarofderb, 2024). It can also inform strategies for personalizing news delivery, enhancing interactivity, and reducing psychological distance between the AI anchor and viewers (Wang, 2023). The framework would serve as a practical tool to balance technological innovation with user-centred design (Radiansyah *et al.,* 2023).

The motivation behind this study lies in the potential of AI anchors to revolutionize news consumption in Oman and similar markets. Understanding how content quality influences engagement can help media organizations deliver news that resonates with local audiences. Assessing continuance behavior provides insights into factors that promote long-term adoption and user satisfaction. With increasing digital media penetration, there is a pressing need to optimize AI systems for both efficiency and user experience. This research can contribute to bridging the gap between AI-enabled news dissemination through the creation of an AI Anchor Engagement Framework, which embeds Expectation Confirmation Theory and Cognitive-Affective Trust theories to interpret how perceived intelligence, information quality, and authenticity affect common audience trust in, satisfaction with, and ongoing engagement with news content created artificially with the use of AI anchors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Chen *et al.,* 2025) qualitatively address audience perceptions of digital versus human anchors by emphasizing credibility endorsement and psychological distance in persuasive communication. Their study aims to compare how digital and human news anchors influence audiences' policy adoption intention. The study employs a quantitative experimental method, using scenario-based designs and statistical analysis to measure credibility, psychological distance, and intention outcomes. The findings show that credibility endorsement significantly enhances policy adoption intention, while psychological distance moderates audience responses to digital anchors. The results suggest that although human anchors generally elicit higher trust, digital anchors can be equally effective when credibility cues are strong and psychological distance is reduced.

(Ovaska, 2025) investigated news users' perceptions of how audience data are collected and utilized in contemporary journalism, emphasizing users' "folk theories" about data-driven news practices. The study aims to understand how audiences interpret the economic motivations behind audience data usage and its implications for journalistic values. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, employing in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to capture users' interpretative frameworks. The findings reveal that users largely believe audience data utilization is driven by commercial interests rather than public service or editorial quality. The results indicate that such perceptions can weaken trust in news organizations and shape users' engagement and continuance behavior with digital news platforms.

(Wen & Li 2025) qualitatively conceptualized user perceptions of AI digital humans by focusing on responsiveness as a key interaction attribute influencing consumer behavior. The aim of the study is to examine how AI digital human responsiveness affects consumer purchase intention, with trust as a mediating factor. The study employs a quantitative research design, using survey data and structural equation modelling to test the proposed relationships. The findings indicate that higher perceived responsiveness of AI digital humans significantly enhances consumer trust. The results demonstrate that trust plays a crucial mediating role, ultimately increasing consumers' purchase intention in AI-mediated commerce environments.

(Qian *et al.,* 2025) qualitatively explore how the congruency between the AI anchor image and news content influences the news-viewing experience among Gen Z users in China. The study aims to examine the role of visual content alignment in shaping audience engagement and perception of AI news anchors. The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to analyze user responses. The

findings indicate that higher image–content congruency enhances viewer satisfaction, perceived credibility, and overall engagement. The results suggest that congruency is a critical factor in fostering positive news experiences, which can influence continuance behavior toward AI news anchors.

(AlMarzouq *et al.,* 2025) explored digital transformation opportunities in the IS field across Saudi Arabia and GCC countries, adopting a qualitative, exploratory orientation to identify emerging research domains. The study aims to highlight how regional institutional, cultural, and technological contexts shape digital innovation trajectories. Using document analysis and expert reflections, the authors synthesize insights from academic literature, policy reports, and practitioner narratives. Their findings reveal significant gaps in governance, capability building, and context-specific strategy development. The results underscore the need for grounded research frameworks that align digital transformation initiatives with regional priorities and socio-economic realities.

(Ladeira *et al.,* 2025) examined consumer behaviour in the metaverse, adopting a qualitative-interpretive synthesis alongside quantitative meta-analytic evidence to deepen theoretical understanding. The study aims to identify consistent drivers of engagement, purchase intention, and immersive experience across diverse metaverse contexts. Using a meta-analysis of prior empirical studies combined with thematic interpretation, the authors integrate behavioral, technological, and psychological factors. Their findings show that perceived usefulness, enjoyment, social presence, and trust strongly shape consumer responses. The results reveal significant moderating effects across cultures and platforms, highlighting opportunities for more context-sensitive research and strategy design.

(Jung & Jo, 2025) investigated how AI anchor image news content congruency affects the news-viewing experience among Gen Z users in China. The aim of the study is to understand how visual–content alignment influences audience engagement and satisfaction with AI news anchors. The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to assess user perceptions and experiences. The findings reveal that higher image–content congruency improves perceived credibility, satisfaction, and overall engagement. The results suggest that aligning AI anchor visuals with news content is crucial for enhancing viewer experience and promoting continuance behavior toward AI news anchors.

(Sabaa *et al.,* 2025) explored how gamification and AI stimuli influence customer engagement, adopting a qualitative and empirical approach to assess user readiness and behavioral response. The study aims to understand the interplay between AI-driven interactions and engagement in the context of Saudi telecom users. Using surveys and structured interviews, the authors analyze participants' perceptions of AI features and gamified experiences. The findings indicate that both AI stimtuli and gamification significantly enhance engagement, with user ability readiness acting as a key moderating factor. The results suggest that integrating interactive AI elements with gamified designs can effectively boost customer involvement and sustained participation in digital services.

(Akbar *et al.,* 2025) explored users' continuance intentions toward AI-enabled teaching in higher education, focusing on factors influencing sustained engagement. The aim of the study is to model how expectation confirmation, perceived usefulness, and satisfaction affect continued use of AI teaching tools. The research employs a quantitative survey method based on the Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM), analyzing responses using structural equation modeling. The findings indicate that expectation confirmation positively influences perceived usefulness and satisfaction, which in turn drive continuance intention. The results demonstrate that satisfaction and perceived usefulness are key predictors of ongoing engagement with AI-enabled teaching systems.

(Šola, Qureshi & Khawaja, 2025) qualitatively investigate how AI-driven design elements influence reader engagement in e-magazines. The aim of the study is to examine the impact of visual and interactive design features on attention, satisfaction, and engagement. The research employs a mixed-method approach, combining AI-assisted eye-tracking data with surveys to assess user responses. The findings reveal that well-designed visual elements significantly enhance reader attention, engagement, and perceived content quality. The results suggest that optimizing design and presentation through AI can improve user experience and sustained engagement, offering insights applicable to AI news anchor content presentation.

Research Gap

Although AI news anchors are increasingly used to deliver news, existing studies focus on isolated factors such as trust, visual-content congruency, responsiveness, or gamification, without integrating psychological, social, and technological determinants. Most research is conducted outside Oman, limiting understanding of local cultural and media consumption influences on engagement and continuance behavior. Prior work also tends to rely on single-method approaches, restricting nuanced insights into audience perceptions. Consequently, strategies for enhancing content quality, credibility, and sustained adoption remain underdeveloped. A context-specific AI Anchor Engagement Framework is therefore needed to guide Omani news organizations in designing AI anchors that foster meaningful engagement and long-term audience retention (Abdelraouf, 2024).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research uses different theories that relate to how consumers perceive and interact with AI-presenting news anchors. The theoretical basis of this research is rooted in Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT). According to this theory, a user's continuance intentions for a system are a function of how much their pre-use expectations have been confirmed or surpassed (Akbar et al., 2025; Huang & Yu, 2023). In this case regarding AI-presentation news anchors, if consumers are satisfied with how much AI systems confirm their expectations regarding their functionality, credibility, and interactivity, their levels of satisfaction and re-use will increase.

Adding to the mix, the Cognitive and Affective Trust Theory helps to shed light on the process that users take in trusting AI-mediated communication (Radiansyah et al., 2023). Cognitive trust is seen as the assessment of the competence of the AI anchor, coupled with its accuracy, whereas affective trust is based on its emotional foundations, which encompass authenticity. Both aspects are crucial in maintaining engagement as well as gaining long-run acceptance for AI-led delivery of the news.

In addition, the proposed framework also distills other important aspects from existing theories, such as those from the Technology Acceptance Model and the theory of Human–Computer Interaction, which stress the importance of usefulness, ease of use, and responsiveness (Lv et al., 2022; Qian et al., 2025).

By integrating these theoretical models, the overall structure of the AI Anchor Engagement Framework is constructed. The framework assumes that trust (both cognitive trust and affective trust), content, perceived intelligence, and novelty significantly interact in terms of engaging and retaining consumers. The proposed framework gives a holistic view of how consumers interact orengage with the intelligence of the AI anchor within an Omani media environment.

Research Objectives

- RO1: To determine the impact of AI anchor characteristics (perceived intelligence, perceived novelty, and trust) on the quality of content/information.
- RO2: To evaluate the role of AI anchor characteristics (perceived intelligence, perceived novelty, and trust) in influencing continuance intention.
- RO3: To explore the AI anchor model/framework that can be applied to enhance consumer engagement with news reports in the media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Design

This qualitative study design was used to gain insights into, as well as comprehension of, how Omani news viewers comprehended and responded to AI-generated NEWS content. It was indeed a study design that offered in-depth understanding into cognitive-emotional-verbal responses related to AI anchors. The purposive sampling method was used to ensure that the study participants had ample expertise in their field of study, thereby providing positive contributions to the study. Semi-structured interview methods were used as prime tools for data generation, where the researchers were able to roam into themes in-depth, ensuring consistency throughout interview sessions. The thematic analysis method was used to provide meaning to the data analysis, where themes were used to provide patterns, relationships, and conceptual connections to data points such as trust, perceived intelligence, novelty, and quality of Information. The use of this qualitative method for the study enabled the creation of the AI Anchor Engagement Framework in relation to inter expert interpretations.

Population and Sampling Technique

The study population was composed solely of media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) specialists residing in Oman. This group was selected as a study population since it is a category of professionals with vast expertise and experience related to online media and news content as well as Artificial Intelligence integration and application related to such media content. These professionals include news-related specialists such as journalists and media professionals, communication specialists, as well as others related to Artificial Intelligence development that are required for designing AI-formulated content related to news. Purposive sampling was employed in this research, and this is the best method employed when the research is aimed at performing an in-depth review on the topic, as is the case in this research paper. The selection of the respondents was conducted based on relevance and accessibility as well as the ability of the respondents to offer educated opinions relevant to this research paper, and

a total of 10 AI experts' respondents were selected. The respondents would be selected from different organizations related to the media, academia, and technology. This focused sampling approach has proven to be very effective in ascertaining different opinions concerning key elements such as trust, perception of intelligence, quality of content, and user engagement by different experts. The level of depth and richness in different opinions and insights has played an essential role in understanding the phenomenon of AI-generated news in Oman.

Data Collection

The research adopted a qualitative method of collecting data to get an in-depth understanding of Omani audience perception and engagement with AI-generated news. The data collection method included conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 purposively selected experts in media, journalism, communications, and Artificial Intelligence. The selection of these respondents focused on those who had direct involvement and expertise in media practices using AI technology. These interviews allowed for flexibility in enabling an in-depth exploration of respondents' perceptions and attitudes toward trust, perceived intelligence, novelty, and quality of information presented by AI news anchors. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, either face-to-face or online, based on convenience. The interviews were recorded and then manually transcribed to ensure accuracy. Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration with respondents while also being consistent, ensuring that a varied yet informed level of insights into the development of an Omani media framework relating to AI news anchor engagement could be achieved.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis, which helped in gaining insights into recurring patterns and concepts in consumer engagement with AI-generated news. After completing the transcription of all semi-structured interviews, it became essential to have familiarity with the collected information. The systematically coded transcripts covered statements concerning trust, perceived intelligence, novelty, and quality of information by individuals. These initial codes were then developed into six primary themes identified from the analysis:

Theme 1: Cognitive Competence of AI Anchors
Theme 2: Novelty and Its Effects
Theme 3: Trust and Credibility
Theme 4: Viewer Retention and Loyalty
Theme 5: Enhancement Strategies for AI Anchors
Theme 6: Ideal Trait Combination for Engagement

These identified themes were further validated for their integrity and consistency. The analysis combined both personal expert opinions as well as collective views, which unveiled the technological, ethical, and emotional factors underlying engagement with AI news. The results combined to create the AI Anchor Engagement Framework, shaped for the Oman media landscape.

RESULT

Thematic Analysis

The qualitative study analyzed the participant responses to understand better how people perceive and interact with AI anchors in Oman. We conducted 10 semi-structured interviews, which covered different age groups and professional backgrounds. Through thematic analysis, the responses were coded and six themes were identified: Cognitive Competence, Novelty and Effects, Trust and Credibility, Viewer Retention and Enhancement Strategies. Most of the people interviewed agreed that AI news anchors can use data effectively and present accurate and well-structured content. Still, they are worried about the lack of emotional depth and contextual sensitivity of the machines. Many of the participants considered AI news anchors as a revolutionary concept and at the beginning they were very interested and pleased. However, they also stated that this newness disappears if there is no personalization or the presence of human-like warmth. Trust and ethical transparency were at the core of credibility according to the respondents. They also mentioned that being consistently accurate and giving fair reporting are what really make people trust more in a source. Some of the people present at the focus group claimed that loyalty, as well as repeated viewership, could be heavily supported if the emotional bond and interactivity were there. The comments show that people have a good view of AI news anchors in terms of their professionalism and precision, but they still ask for more human features. Such traits as empathy, adaptability, and transparency were mentioned

by the participants. The findings suggest that audiences welcome the efficiency and innovation of AI, but for continued engagement, there must be a balance between technological accuracy and emotional and ethical authenticity.

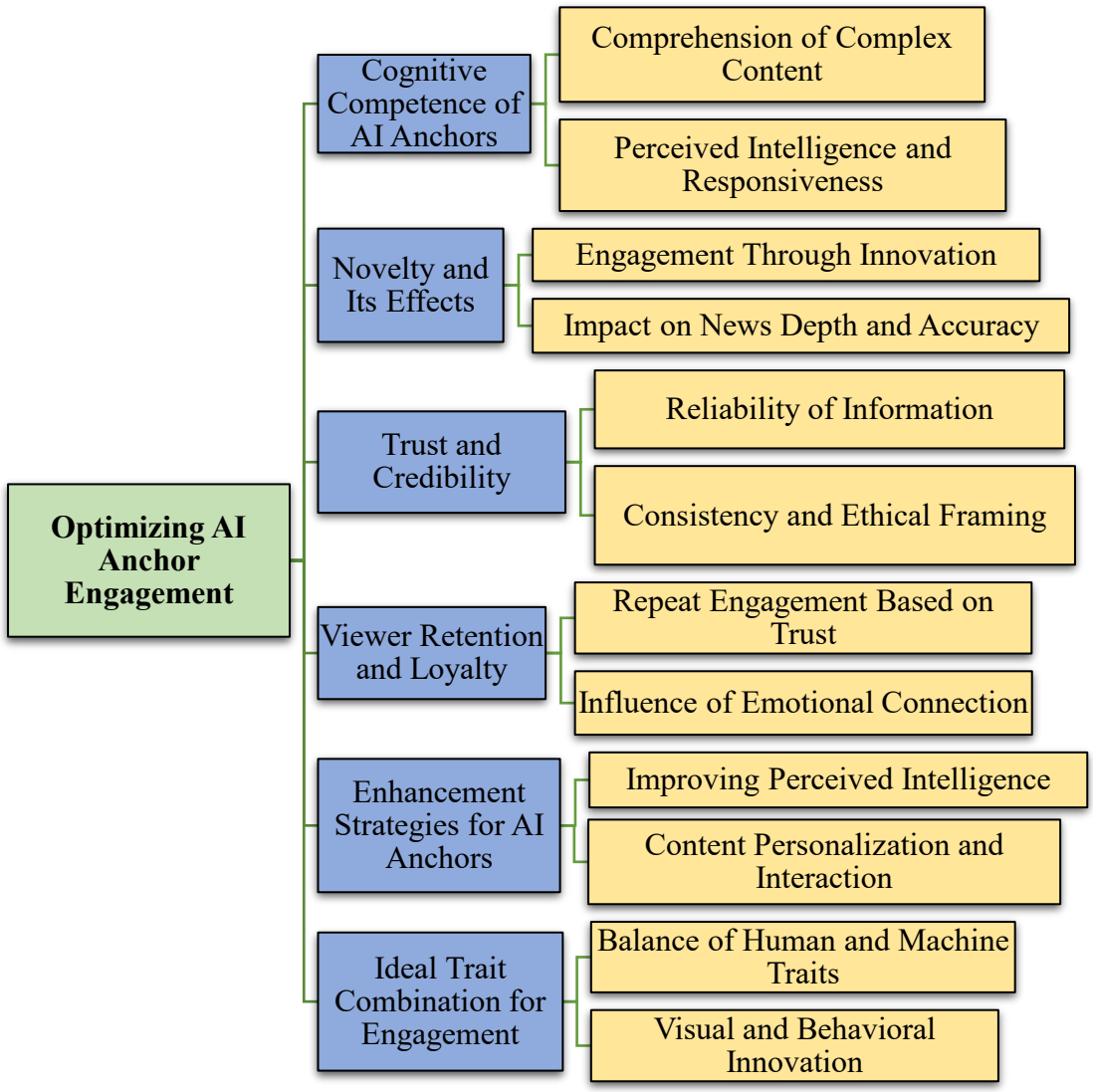

Figure 1: Schematic diagram of Thematic Analysis (Source: Author)

Theme 1: Cognitive Competence of AI Anchors

This theme reflects on the notions of the AI intellectual and logical reasoning abilities of the participants. The focus was on the ability of the AI to not only understand but also to interpret and deliver complex content in a precise manner. Most of the respondents believed AI anchors are technically very competent, fast, and consistent when it comes to handling vast data sets and presenting information. Nevertheless, they also recognized that AI still has shortcomings in terms of emotional sensitivity, understanding the context, and getting ready for sudden reporting situations. On one hand, users valued AI's well-organized communication and correctness. On the other hand, many of them pointed out that it is still necessary to have a human-like understanding to enhance the connection with the audience as well as for better contextual awareness. Therefore, cognitive competence was considered as a necessary condition but not enough to be able to completely trust the audience.

❖ **Sub Theme 1.1: Comprehension of Complex Content**

This subtheme delves into how users believe AI presenters understand and explain complicated or technical topics. A large number part of users commended AI presenters for making data-heavy content easy to understand and for giving clear presentations. At the same time, they recognized that AI misses emotional and contextual understanding aspects in situations like politics, crises, or social issues that are sensitive and have a certain nuance. Although respondents acknowledged the accuracy and speed of AI, they pointed out that understanding goes beyond just giving the information—it includes empathy and awareness of the situation. That

is why the users considered AI as a good tool for delivering factual or analytical news but thought it less capable of emotionally connecting with or providing the context of the stories.

"One respondent appreciated that AI anchors deliver complex economic and scientific data quickly and clearly, enhancing understanding".

"Another participant noted that while AI is efficient, it cannot grasp emotional or moral contexts in sensitive stories".

"A third respondent felt AI's strength lies in factual clarity but lacks interpretive reasoning and empathy".

A majority of respondents have the opinion that AI anchors show a high level of analytical understanding but lack emotional insight. They are instrumental in simplifying and making technical topics more understandable, however, they are not able to portray the subtleties of the human nature. This suggests that there is a requirement for the embedding of empathy and contextual awareness in AI-powered news.

❖ ***Sub Theme 1.2: Perceived Intelligence and Responsiveness***

This subtheme delves into how the intelligence of AI anchors and their ability to adapt and respond effectively influence the audience's perceptions. Some of the respondents revealed that AI can do information processing at a much faster speed and with more accuracy than a human but also pointed out that the responsiveness of the AI is still limited to its programmed parameters. Participants found the intelligence that was logically sequenced, data-handled, and updated in real-time very appealing, however, they criticized AI for not being able to generate spontaneously and for not being able to change their tone or content dynamically. They thought that improving AI's adaptive learning, conversational ability, and contextual sensitivity would help engagement to a greater extent. Therefore, perceived intelligence and responsiveness are the major factors that determine the level of trust, credibility, and continuous interaction of the audience with AI-driven media.

One participant admired AI anchors' quick, consistent updates and clear explanations, calling them more efficient than humans.

Another remarked that AI responses feel robotic and fail to adapt naturally to live discussions or unexpected questions.

A third respondent stated that while AI appears intelligent, its lack of emotional awareness limits relatability and long-term engagement.

The answers show that viewers consider AI anchors to be smart but not very much adjusted to the context. Although the accuracy of the operation makes the AI more trustworthy, the lack of flexibility to the emotions of the viewer results in a weakened emotional bond. To maintain the trust and interest of the audience, the AI must be more responsive and able9 to learn from the context.

Theme 2: Novelty and Its Effects

This topic delves into the impact of AI news presenters as a new and innovative technological solution on the audience's curiosity, engagement, and trust. As a result of their sci-fi-like nature, live and direct data provision, and cool way of showing the information, participants were first attracted by AI news anchors. The newness of the technology was considered as something energizing and attracting, particularly among young people who are skilled in digital media. Nevertheless, a great number of respondents argued that this kind of delight would diminish if there is no emotional connection or if the content is not of intellectual nature. Although novelty can attract the attention of people for a short period of time, the audience pointed out that engagement can be maintained only if it is accurate, personalized, and the communication is human-like rather than just showing off the technology.

❖ **Sub Theme 2.1: Engagement Through Innovation**

This sub-theme explores how changes in the design and delivery of an AI-powered newsreader can engage more people. The technological advancements of AI anchors to the level of the on-the-fly interactivity, the use of the state-of-the-art graphics, and the automated delivery, as per the respondents, were the factors which largely aroused their curiosity and attention. They referred to the innovation as a new and up-to-date way of broadcasting compared to the usual methods of the news. Nevertheless, a substantial number of participants emphasized that engagement because of novelty only is of a temporary nature if not supported by substance, trustworthy information, and personalization. In due course, audiences move from being attracted by technology to the quality of the reportage and the emotional bond. Consequently, innovation was considered as a means through which one gets to the depth of journalism but not as a replacement for it.

One respondent found AI anchors visually engaging and "fun to watch" due to their advanced digital presentation.

Another participant said that while the technology is impressive, "it feels repetitive once the novelty fades."

A third respondent noted that AI's modern features "draw initial curiosity but cannot maintain long-term attention without relevance."

Most of the people agreed that new things attract the attention very fast, but the interest stays for a short period of time unless new things are combined with believable and relatable content. Technology-loving audiences are not unwilling to accept progress, but they need saturation, emotional context, and correct details if they want to keep their trust and get continuous viewership.

❖ ***Sub Theme 2.2: Impact on News Depth and Accuracy***

This subtheme delves into the impact of AI anchor novelty on the quality and trustworthiness of news content. Those surveyed valued AI's capacity to deliver correct information in a rapid and efficient manner but were also worried about the simplification of the content and the lack of a deep critical approach. Some made the argument that the technology got the analytical side of journalism thus, it wasted the complex stories by turning them into brief summaries at the surface level. Moreover, the participants were concerned that reliance on pre-programmed data might lead to losing the grasp of the context and human judgment. While AI news presenters can expedite the process, viewers stated that the newness should be a way of helping rather than taking over accuracy, interpretive analysis, and the involvement of a responsible and trustworthy editorial staff in giving out reliable news.

One respondent praised AI anchors for being "fast and data-driven" but said reports lacked contextual depth".
Another commented that "AI focuses more on visual delivery than analytical meaning."
A third participant felt "AI anchors sound factual but miss the human interpretation needed for complex issues."

Respondents appreciated the fact that AI anchors were accurate but at the same time pointed out that the analysis was less rich, and there was less context. The newness factor makes the process faster but at the same time, there is a danger of the interpretive depth being lowered. Viewers concluded that in the long run, trust in the news can only be maintained if the exactness of the technology is combined with the editorial judgment of a human and the interpretive awareness of a human.

Theme 3: Trust and Credibility

These people are also thinking about how fair and what kind of moral behaviour the AI newscasters might have in delivering the news, Trust was considered by the participants as the main factor which led to audience engagement and eventually to the acceptance of journalism through AI for a long period. Some of the respondents to the survey were on the whole positive about the fact that AI newscasters were consistent and that there were no errors in the news, at the same time they were pointing out the absence of emotional intelligence, transparency in data sourcing, and accountability. Ethical credibility was considered the most important factor for trust-building in AI media. Respondents believed that the partnership of AI with its incredible performance and some human intervention as well as revealing the ways of programming could be a perfect solution for the reliability of AI-generated news content and the creation of trust in the audience.

❖ ***Sub Theme 3.1: Reliability of Information***

This subtheme describes the ways in which audiences judge the factual accuracy and reliability of the news content of AI anchors. Interviewees communicated that trust is established when AI characters provide the news that is accurate, verified, and impartial. Several of them tied the trustworthiness of the technology to the support of the trusted media institutions, thus, they consider the credibility of the institution as a source of increased trust in the AI-generated reports. However, a few people raised doubts about whether they could trust AI completely because they were not sure how the data is collected, filtered, and verified. Participants admitted that AI makes news more accurate and consistent, but they pointed out that trustworthiness is a question of openness, presence of human editorial staff and accountability in the news-gathering process.

One respondent said, "I trust AI anchors more when they are associated with a known media organization."
Another commented, "I worry about how AI verifies its sources—without that, it's hard to rely completely."
A third participant shared, "AI's accuracy is impressive, but its lack of human judgment limits full trust."

Respondents considered AI anchors to be a source of information that is mostly dependable though confirmation from a human is necessary. The level of trust was raised when the information given was believed to be accurate and clear, but it was lowered when the sources of the data were not obvious. The viewers associated trustworthiness with the proper supervision and disclosure of the making of the content.

❖ ***Sub Theme 3.2: Consistency and Ethical Framing***

This subtheme is about the impact of ethical transparency, objectivity, and consistency on the trust towards AI anchors. Consistently being accurate and fair was, according to participants, the main factor that made AI credible, while a biased and poorly explained programmed AI gave the opposite effect. A great number of respondents were very vocal about the necessity of the media disclosing the way AI is used in their work, the algorithm, and the degree of human editorial involvement. Ethical accountability and audience privacy were two of the most important things that people talked about. Viewers were most comfortable with AI news presenters who were able to show impartiality, honesty, and adherence to journalistic standards. Therefore, consistent ethical framing in terms of fairness, accountability, and transparency was pointed to as the basis of audience trust in AI-generated journalism.

One respondent stated, "Transparency about how AI works helps me trust what it reports."
Another mentioned, "AI anchors need regular ethical checks to ensure fairness and avoid bias."
A third participant expressed, "If media companies show accountability, I'll feel safer trusting AI news."
Most of them concurred that ethical transparency and reporting going on in the same way are the main factors that bring the trustworthiness. It is said that a kind of trust that supports AI processes together with a human control is what people call openness. Respondents came to the decision that providing ethics as a set of features based on justice, accountability, and disclosure, creates trust and more people become followers of the continuous communication with the audience.

Theme 4: Viewer Retention and Loyalty

This theme revolves around the importance of trust, emotional bond and content regularity in keeping the audience engaged with AI anchors over the period. Surveyed people stated that it is a curiosity which mostly leads to the first interaction, but the follow-up loyalty is influenced by the trust, emotional connection and quality of the content delivery. Those who took part in the survey stressed that the audience will be on the side of the AI ones they will find trustworthy, human-like and stable in their approach. A great deal of trust and authenticity were pinpointed as the leading causes of a viewer's choice to watch the program again, while the lack of emotional connection and the use of the machine-like style in delivering the content led to the decrease in loyalty. Hence, in order to keep the audience, it is necessary not only to be accurate from a technical point of view but also to turn to the development of the empathetic, context-aware and human-like manner of communication.

- ***Sub Theme 4.1: Repeat Engagement Based on Trust***

The subtheme focuses on the changes in viewers behaviour towards AI-anchors due to the latter's perceived credibility and trustworthiness. The respondents conveyed that accuracy, reliability, and impartiality of the information were the factors that attracted them to repeat their interaction with the AI anchor. They said that if they trusted the integrity and consistency of the news content, they would be more willing to watch AI anchors regularly. Nevertheless, the confidence in communication could be so shaken by a single mistake or misleading information that the viewer may decide to stop watching. Many argued that the presence of human editorial control is a source of accountability, thus, it supports the genuineness of AI-generated news. In essence, trust, openness, and flawless performance were some of the main factors that were pointed out as being instrumental in retaining the audience at large and ensuring their frequent engagement.
One participant said, "If the AI anchor remains accurate, I'll keep watching—trust keeps me loyal."
Another shared, "One factual error can make me lose confidence and stop following the broadcast."
A third respondent mentioned, "When AI news is supervised by humans, it feels more trustworthy and reliable."
Consistent trust is the main factor for ongoing engagement according to the responses. Repeated viewership is facilitated by accuracy, transparency, and human oversight, whereas misinformation rapidly discredits trust. Among all the factors, trust was identified as the key reason that most strongly motivated sustained audience retention as well as continuous engagement with AI anchors.

- ***Sub Theme 4.2: Repeat Engagement Based on Trust***

This subtheme dives deep into the emotional side of engagement, showing how empathy and relatability can influence viewer loyalty. Those surveyed said that even though AI anchors deliver concise and well-organized reports, they lack emotional depth and the ability to connect with the audience. They also voiced their preference for AI anchors that employ an expressive voice, warmth, and visual engagement. Emotional resonance allowed the audience to feel a stronger connection and become more interested in the content. The participants thought that AI anchors that can integrate emotional cues with factual reporting create a higher level of satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, human-like empathy and the use of communicative warmth are indispensable for establishing a deeper emotional and cognitive connection with the audience, which can be sustained over time.
One respondent said, "I enjoy AI anchors more when they sound expressive and engaging."
Another participant shared, "The lack of emotional warmth makes the news feel robotic and distant."
A third respondent noted, "If AI could show empathy or adapt tone to stories, I'd connect better."
The responses pointed out that using emotional appeal is the main factor that changes the customer loyalty. Emotional tone, in fact, is the one that keeps the long-term engagement although clarity and accuracy attract the initial attention. People want the mix of reason and feeling and, therefore, emotional bond is the one that makes the audience stay and have a higher level of satisfaction.

Theme 5: Enhancement Strategies for AI Anchors

This theme revolves around the different approaches by the participants to the enhancement of AI newsreader efficacy, their human-likeness, and trustworthiness. As per the input, the panellists acknowledged that AI anchors are very efficient in terms of precision and speed, however, they still need to be upgraded with features such as emotional expressiveness, interactivity, and personalization. The respondents recommended the use of cutting-edge natural language processing, adaptive learning, and human-like behavioural cues as means of deepening the involvement of the audience. They considered the introduction of empathy, cultural awareness, and contextual sensitivity as the main elements that lead to viewer trust. In general, the results point to the fact that mere technological improvement is not enough AI newsreaders have to be a mixture of intellect, character, and alacrity to be able to establish a rapport with contemporary audiences.

❖ ***Sub Theme 5.1 Improving Perceived Intelligence***

This subtheme covers the idea that by making artificial intelligence (AI) anchors seem smarter to the people, it can lead to higher credibility and more people getting involved. Most of the interviewees thought that AI news anchors should not be merely handing over the facts but should rather demonstrate their understanding by providing deep analysis and giving the background of the issue. Changes suggested for AI included emotional intelligence, being able to understand complex topics and being able to react to new situations immediately. Conversation-wise, participants also thought that AI should talk like humans and be more aware of their tone while reporting on sensitive topics. They pointed to the analytical depth, contextual adaptation, and empathetic response as the main factors that contributed to a rise in perceived intelligence. Finally, higher intellectual ability was linked by audiences to getting their trust and them being willing to continue engagement.

One respondent stated, "AI anchors should sound more natural and analytical, not just robotic readers."
Another said, "They need to adapt their tone depending on how serious or emotional the news is."
A third participant suggested, "If AI could explain complex issues clearly and contextually, I'd trust it more."

Audience responses emphasized that the most valued features of a communication are intelligence and awareness of the context rather than the fact that it is delivered by a machine. Raised adaptability, analytical reasoning, and emotional tone go a long way in a speaker's believability. So, intelligence as a perception is, to a large extent, a matter of both technical correctness and subtle, human-like communication.

❖ ***Sub Theme 5.2 Content Personalization and Interaction***

This subtheme reflected the participants' focus on the importance of content personalization of AI anchors to the preferences of an individual viewer and the enabling of interactive engagement. The respondents proposed that data-driven personalization should be used to deliver relevant topics, interactive Q&A sessions, and the feature of real-time feedback. They thought that such enhancements would make AI anchors more relatable and responsive to audience needs. They also suggested that the emotional tone, the conversational flow, and the use of dynamic visuals could make the news delivery more humanized. Personalized and interactive content were considered as the main factors for increasing the satisfaction level, building trust, and ensuring the continuous engagement of AI anchors with the viewers in a competitive digital environment.

One participant shared, "I'd prefer if the AI anchor customized news topics to my interests."
Another said, "Interactive options like asking questions would make me feel more connected."
A third respondent remarked, "Natural voice and emotional tone help the AI feel more human and engaging."

Participants identified that personalization and interactivity infuse the audience with a higher degree of involvement and loyalty. Tailoring news content to the needs of the users and making the communication interactive help the users to feel that they are included and that the experience is real. As a result, the users are transformed from being mere viewers to becoming co- creators of the content, which simultaneously deepens their engagement and trust to the brand or organization.

Theme 6: Ideal Trait Combination for Engagement

This theme reveals that the best AI news anchors are those able to achieve a balance between being human-like and warm, while also tapping into the precision and flawless repeatability of machines. Participants underlined that audiences like AI anchors who offer both the consistency and accuracy of artificial intelligence and the understanding, adaptability, and expressiveness of human hosts. It is this synergy that can foster better emotional resonance and trust, in turn enhancing user experience. Participants also emphasized that developing innovative visual and behavioral elements, such as realistic gestures, natural voice modulation, and culturally appropriate expressions, further strengthens audience connection. These attributes reduce the psychological distance between the viewer and the AI system. Collectively, this theme reflects how an ideal AI anchor should transcend purely

technical competencies by incorporating human-centered features that evince authenticity, relatability, and social presence-driving factors for long-term engagement and acceptance in Oman's evolving digital media landscape.

❖ **Sub Theme 6.1: Balance of Human and Machine Traits**

This theme reveals that the best AI news anchors are those able to achieve a balance between being human-like and warm, while also tapping into the precision and flawless repeatability of machines. Participants underlined that audiences like AI anchors who offer both the consistency and accuracy of artificial intelligence and the understanding, adaptability, and expressiveness of human hosts. It is this constructive collaboration that can foster better emotional resonance and trust, in turn enhancing user experience. Participants also emphasized that developing innovative visual and behavioral elements, such as realistic gestures, natural voice modulation, and culturally appropriate expressions, further strengthens audience connection. These attributes reduce the psychological distance between the viewer and the AI system. Collectively, this theme reflects how an ideal AI anchor should transcend purely technical competencies by incorporating human-centered features that evince authenticity, relatability, and social presence-driving factors for long-term engagement and acceptance in Oman's evolving digital media landscape.

One respondent stated, "AI should maintain accuracy but still sound human—calm, expressive, and responsive."
Another said, "People want facts with feelings; both matter for real engagement."
A third participant added, "If an AI anchor understands tone and emotion, it will feel more alive."

These answers indicate a preference for either an accurate anchor with human-like emotional expression capabilities, making audiences feel a sense of authenticity in communication. They emphasized how accuracy alone can easily be achieved, so aspects like tone, empathy, and responsiveness would make communication feel authentic. They were impressed by anchors who can effectively understand emotions and contexts because it makes them feel authentic in communication. Once an anchor uses technology with human-like warmth and adaptability, audiences feel a deeper connection with enhanced authenticity in interaction with an AI-generated anchor in a news article.

Subtheme 6.2: Visual and Behavioral Innovation

This sub-theme concentrates on how visual realism and behavioral design can further develop the audience's engagement with AI anchors. Participants stressed that visual and behavioral realism, such as maintaining eye contacts, exhibiting adequate nonverbal behavior, natural facial expressions, and speech synchronization, help bridge the psychological distance between the audience and AI anchors. Participants believed that viewers in Oman could engage better with AI anchors who embody cultural familiarity in terms of clothing, nonverbal behavior, and proper communication approaches. Other visual innovations in this sub-theme involve fluid movement in the human figure, micro-expressions, and behavioral adaptability to create believable interactions that increase the authenticity of AI presenters in terms of emotions. According to experts, incorporating all these visual elements can create AI anchors who are viewed as intelligent machines but also as believable communicators.

One respondent shared, "Realistic eye contact and expressions make AI seem trustworthy."
Another explained, "When visuals match local culture, audiences feel connected."
A third participant noted, "Behavioral accuracy—like gestures and tone—creates natural engagement."

The answers show that visual and behavioral realism is crucial for making audiences trust and connect with AI news anchors. The answer highlights that natural eye contact, gestures, and cultural visuals can help audiences feel that news presented using AI is more authentic and trustworthy. If news anchor behavior is closer to their culture, audiences feel more comfort and familiarity with it. Thus, making news with AI sound natural and authentic with realistic movement and expression is very crucial for audiences to stay engaged with news presented using AI.

DISCUSSION

This paper provides an overview of how audiences in Oman engage with AI-generated news and thus contributes to recent developments in AI-mediated communication research. The findings confirm that information quality and factual accuracy are cornerstones that form the foundation for fostering trust in AI-based journalism, which is consistent with recent studies emphasizing precision and transparency as key determinants of credibility (Wang et al., 2025; Radiansyah et al., 2023). Indeed, Kim et al. (2024) emphasize that clarity and contextual accuracy in automated content diminish ambiguity and foster users' confidence in AI communication. Participants in this study particularly commended the cognitive competence of AI anchors-such as their speed, accuracy, and ability to deliver structured and data-driven insights-which reinforces user trust and engagement. However, integrating perspectives from the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Huang & Yu, 2024; Akbar et al., 2025), the findings indicate that satisfaction and continuance behavior become manifested when AI anchors meet or surpass user expectations in credibility, usefulness, and interaction quality.

Beyond confirming prior evidence, this study extends current knowledge (Li & Wang, 2025; Gilardi et al., 2024) by demonstrating that informational quality alone is not sufficient to maintain viewer engagement. The findings reveal that emotional authenticity, ethical transparency, and relational sensitivity, along with informational accuracy, are critical for the adoption and long-term trust of AI news anchors. This finding aligns with Cognitive–Affective Trust Theory, which distinguished between cognitive trust based on reliability and affective trust based on empathy, warmth, and emotional connection (Zhang et al., 2025).

The rationale for adopting a qualitative research design lies in its ability to capture the emotional, cultural, and ethical dimensions of audience engagement, which may not be adequately assessed through quantitative surveys. Expert interviews, for example, brought nuanced insights from professionals into how perceptions of authenticity, empathy, and contextual awareness shape the dimension of trust in AI-generated news within Oman's media landscape. Thematic analysis showed how cognitive and affective trusts coexisted, proving that engagement evolves from novelty into relational continuity. These insights subsequently informed the development of the AI Anchor Engagement Framework, which integrated perceived intelligence, novelty, trust, and information quality as key predictors of user engagement and continuance behavior. The framework showcases how technological precision combined with human-like authenticity epitomizes the future of audience trust in AI-mediated journalism. It contributes both on theoretical grounds by extending trust models in AI communication and on practical ones by guiding media organizations in the design of credible, empathetic, and ethically responsible AI anchors within the Omani context.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that audience trust, engagement, and continuous acceptance of AI news anchors in Oman depend on a delicate balance between technological intelligence and human-like authenticity. While participants have continuously valued the precision, speed, and structured presentation of AI anchors, they equally assert that these technical qualities alone cannot maintain loyalty in the long run. Thus, emotional depth, ethical transparency, and contextual sensitivity have emerged as definitive factors of continuous audience engagement.

On the other hand, the research indicates that audiences engage with AI news anchors because of a novelty appreciation for their efficiency and curiosity. But such novelty-driven interest dissipates fast unless supported by interpersonal warmth, empathy, and continuous ethical communication. For this reason, trust becomes a multi-dimensional construct entailing both cognitive trust based on accuracy and reliability, and affective trust emanating from emotional affinity and ethical behavior.

The current study makes its main contribution in terms of developing the AI Anchor Engagement Framework, explaining how perceived intelligence, novelty, trust, and information quality influence audience engagement and continuance behavior. This provides Omani media organizations with a blueprint on how to create an AI news anchor that combines technological precision with human-like relatability.

In other words, this research concludes that effective AI journalism needs to move beyond mere automation and adopt emotional intelligence and moral awareness similar to human news anchors. Only then can AI news anchors incorporate empathy, ethical integrity, and adaptive communication to ultimately achieve the desired sustainable engagement and credibility of modern media. This study "fills a regional gap by contextualizing AI journalism within the Omani socio-cultural environment".

Implication

Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to advance existing theories of AI-facilitated communication regarding an argument that engagement and trust cannot be solely attributed to cognitive accuracy. The paper combines the concepts of Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), Cognitive-Affective Theory of Trust, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in order to provide a complete understanding of how audiences judge trustworthiness of AI anchors. The results point out that accuracy and trust, and also empathy and authenticity, play essential roles in influencing satisfaction and continuance intentions. The consideration of cultural and ethical perspectives enriches discourse concerning AI-facilitated communication and provides a new conceptual framework that bridges technological trust and acceptance through emotions and values, adding values to debates on AI and non-Western cultures.

Practical Implications

Practitioners are encouraged to transform the findings of this study into AI anchors that present a balance of accuracy and personality. The media in Oman should develop AI anchors that employ appropriate cultural expressions through news delivery and AI-generated content to endear them to their audiences. AI developers are challenged to incorporate emotion modeling and AI-generated content that is sensitive to and responds to the audience in their endeavors to humanize AI-generated anchors. More importantly, policymakers are encouraged to set guidelines for AI-generated content to promote fairness and transparency in AI-generated news content.

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