



## The coverage of AI in the news media: a scoping review

### *La cobertura sobre IA en los medios de comunicación: una scoping review*

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#### Abstract:

Media coverage of artificial intelligence (AI) plays a key role in shaping public understanding of the technology and consequently influences its use, regulation, and development. The importance of this topic has led to a surge in academic studies in recent years. This article aims to contribute to a better understanding of this emerging field by presenting a scoping review of the literature. It analyzes 55 peer-reviewed articles on media coverage of AI published between 2020 and 2025. The findings show that scholarly output on the subject has increased steadily, particularly following the launch of ChatGPT. Research is largely focused on and dominated by the English-speaking world, though there is a trend toward greater geographic and cultural diversity.

Media portrayals of AI are predominantly positive and speculative, often framed with an economic focus, though critical and ethical perspectives are becoming more prominent as adoption increases. The review also identifies key gaps in the existing literature. This study contributes to mapping an emerging research field and points to promising directions for future inquiry.

**Keywords:** journalism, artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, media coverage, science communication, media studies, emerging technologies, scoping review.

**Resumen:**

La cobertura sobre inteligencia artificial (IA) en los medios de comunicación ayuda a conformar la realidad de esta tecnología al determinar su comprensión por parte de los ciudadanos y, en consecuencia, su uso, regulación y desarrollo. La relevancia de la temática, derivada de su alto impacto social, ha motivado un número creciente de estudios durante los últimos años. Este artículo busca ofrecer un panorama de este campo emergente mediante una revisión sistemática de la literatura del tipo *scoping review*. Se analizan 55 artículos sobre cobertura mediática de la IA publicados en revistas científicas de Web of Science y Scopus entre 2020 y 2025. Los resultados muestran que la producción académica sobre el tema viene aumentando, en particular a partir del lanzamiento del chatbot ChatGPT. Aunque las aportaciones procedentes del mundo angloparlante dominan el campo de investigación, se observa una creciente diversidad geográfica y cultural. La representación mediática de la IA aparece como positiva, especulativa y centrada en temas económicos, pero el avance de la tecnología ha introducido visiones más críticas. Se mencionan también las principales brechas en la literatura. Esta revisión contribuye así no solo a entender mejor el campo de estudio, sino que también señala futuras vías de investigación.

**Palabras clave:** periodismo, inteligencia artificial, ChatGPT, cobertura mediática, comunicación científica, tecnologías emergentes, revisión de literatura.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As of today, artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the technologies with the greatest disruptive power. Advances in recent years in the area of generative systems and large language models have placed AI at the center of public debate, industrial development in various sectors and the strategy of governments and policy makers. According to data from 2024, private investment in generative AI soared worldwide by almost 19% to \$33.9 billion in one year; the number of companies reporting use of AI rose from 55% to 78%; the cost of access to the technology fell steadily; and governments in countries such as China, Canada, France and Saudi Arabia committed multibillion-dollar investments in its development (Maslek et al., 2025).

Like other industries, journalism has been heavily impacted by this technology. The explosion of generative AI has turned the industry “upside down” (Beckett & Yaseen, 2023, p. 1). AI opens up a new range of practices, possibilities, challenges and ways of conceiving journalism due to advancements in automatic transcription systems, content generation, data analysis, news personalisation and topic and trend detection (Beckett et al., 2023; de-Lima-Santos et al., 2024).

Unlike other industries, journalism faces an additional challenge: helping audiences better understand AI by representing it clearly and accurately. The literature shows that media coverage of a technology helps shape its reality by guiding public and individual understanding, use, research, public policy and regulation (Cave et al., 2019; Moriniello et al., 2024; The Royal Society, 2018). This is especially true for emerging and still developing technologies such as AI (Natale & Ballatore, 2017; Scheufele & Lewenstein, 2005). Coeckelbergh (2023) therefore proposes to incorporate the concept of “narrative responsibility” among the various ethical challenges surrounding AI systems, such as bias, transparency or privacy.

Until recently, the impact of media coverage on public perception of AI occupied a marginal place in academic literature (Romele, 2022). Recently, however, an increasing number of researchers have focused on this topic to form an emerging field of study (Brause et al., 2023). The topic has become particularly relevant since AI experienced

one of the biggest milestones in its history: the launch of ChatGPT. The popular chatbot, introduced in late November 2022 by the company OpenAI, set a record as the fastest growing application in history by gaining one million users in five days (Hu, 2023). Beyond the commercial aspect, ChatGPT became a cultural phenomenon and a symbol of the generative AI revolution across all fields (Chui et al., 2023), as well as shaking up the media landscape on several fronts (Sidorenko Bautista et al., 2024).

This article aims to outline the main trends in AI media coverage and in the research on the topic with a systematic approach covering a period of more than five years (2020-2025), which includes the post-launch output of ChatGPT. To that end, the following research question is posed:

- How does academic literature analyze the representation of artificial intelligence in the media?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study presents a variety of systematic literature review known as scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), which aims to “determine, as rigorously as possible, the status of an area, a sector of science or a field of knowledge” (Codina et al., 2021, p. 69). As required for this type of review, it follows the checkpoints of the PRISMA ScR framework (Tricco et al., 2018).

The article search was conducted on March 5, 2025 in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The search string was based on three concepts with their respective variations separated by the Boolean operator “OR”: 1) Artificial intelligence: “artificial intelligence” OR AI OR chatgpt); 2) Representation: representation OR portray\* OR coverage OR narrative OR frame OR discourse OR imaginaries; 3) News media: news OR media OR press OR newspaper OR headlines. The artificial intelligence string (1) was only searched for in the title of the articles, while the representation and news media strings (2 and 3) were also searched for in the abstracts. The results were narrowed by

adding filters by year (2020-2025), type of material (academic articles in peer-review journals) and discipline (Social Science, Arts and Humanities)<sup>1</sup>.

The search returned 257 results in Scopus and 128 in Web of Science, while 10 articles that met the eligibility criteria and had been previously detected by Google Scholar were manually added to the corpus. Thereafter, 90 duplicate articles were eliminated, leaving 305 for individualized screening. In this phase, 244 articles were discarded due to the exclusion criteria detailed in Table 1. Of the 61 resulting articles, another six were eliminated during the full-text review because they were either false positives, not academic articles, or written in Russian which is not a language spoken by the author of this study.

The final corpus for the literature review consisted of 55 articles. Figure 1 summarizes the process of corpus formation following the scheme recommended in the PRISMA framework.

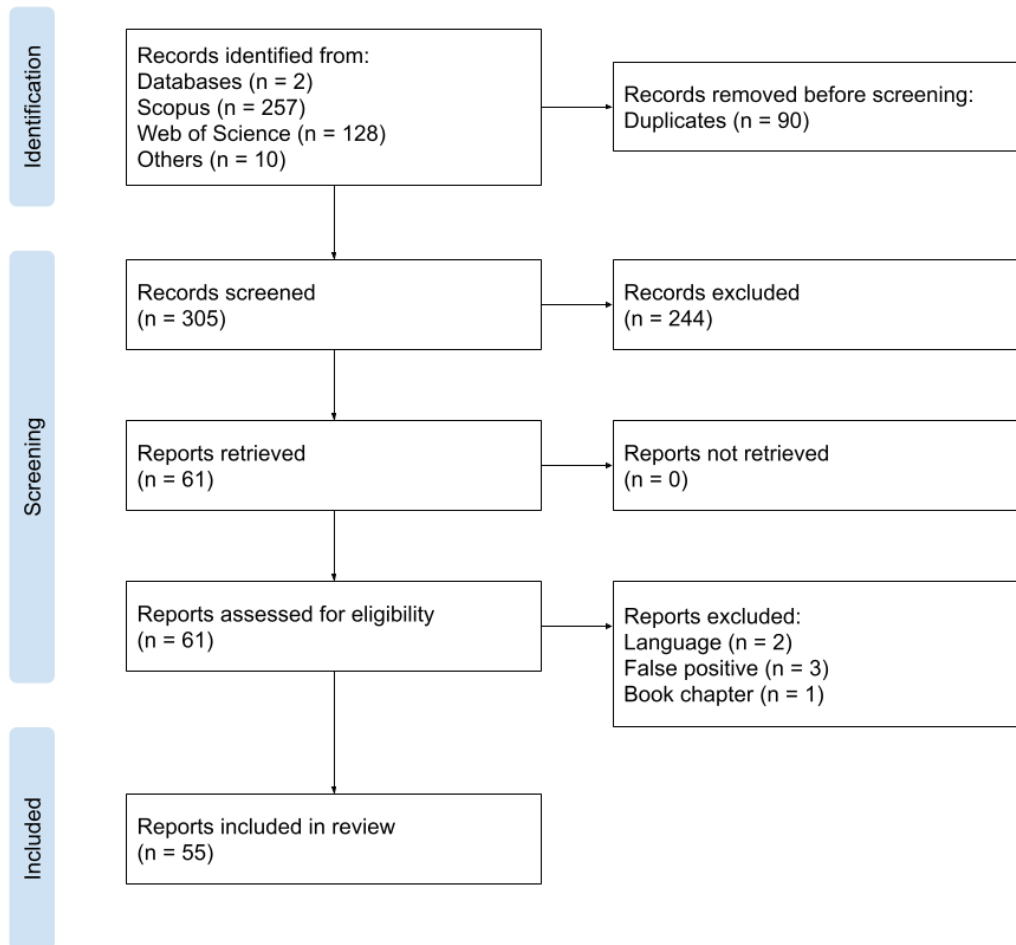
**Tabla 1.** Main characteristics of the articles' search and selection

<b>Databases</b>	Scopus, Web of Science
<b>Type of document</b>	Academic articles in peer reviewed journals
<b>Date range</b>	January 1, 2020 – March 23, 2025
<b>Concepts of the advanced search string</b>	- Artificial intelligence - Representation - News Media
<b>Main reasons for exclusion during the screening phase</b>	- Conceptual studies without empirical analysis. - Articles that do not analyze news outlets, but only social media, public documents, video platforms or blogs. - False positives including the search terms but in contexts unrelated to this study, such as journalists' perception of AI, use cases of AI in the media, or AI as a methodology for research on communication topics.

Source: Own elaboration

<sup>1</sup> An example of the search string used in Scopus: ((TITLE("artificial intelligence" OR AI OR ChatGPT) AND ABS(news OR media OR press OR newspaper OR headlines) AND ABS(representation OR portray\* OR coverage OR narrative OR frame OR discourse OR imaginaries) AND NOT TITLE("social media")) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE,"ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA,"SOCI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA,"ARTS" ) )

**Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram**



Source: Own elaboration

In the analysis phase, three matrices were used to systematically extract information from the 55 articles and to facilitate the detection of trends (Codina, 2025). The fields of each matrix are detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Matrices and fields of analysis used for the analysis

Matrix	Fields
1	Id., Authors, Year, Author M., Author F., Affiliation, Country, Journal, Article Title, Volume, Issue, Start Page, End Page, DOI.
2	Id, Media region/country, Comparative approach, Media type, Nr of media, Specific media outlets, Time covered, Corpus, Database, Methods.
3	Id, Main focus, Theoretical Framework, AI events or technologies analyzed, Main findings, Main topics / themes / frames, Tone, Evolution, Actors/stakeholders, Gaps, limitations, future directions, Recommendations.

**Source:** Own elaboration

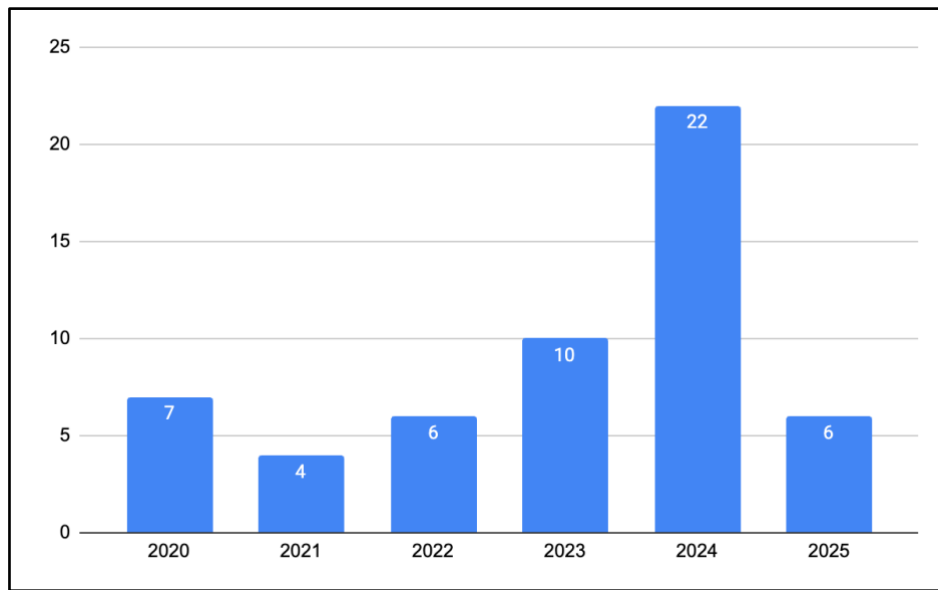
### 3. RESULTS

The literature search and selection processes detailed in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) resulted in the inclusion of 55 articles that meet the eligibility criteria for this scoping review. The analysis of the information extracted and organized in the three matrices described in Table 2 made two tasks possible: describing quantitatively (section 3.1) and summarising the main results of these studies qualitatively (sections 3.2 to 3.6).

#### 3.1. THE CORPUS

The number of articles reviewed shows that interest in investigating media coverage of AI has been increasing each year since 2021, and in particular, following the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022 (Figure 2). The chatbot is mentioned in 25 of the 55 articles selected, with some focusing specifically on its impact on AI representation (González-Arias & López-García, 2023; Roe & Perkins, 2023; Ryazanov et al., 2024; Sidorenko Bautista et al., 2024).

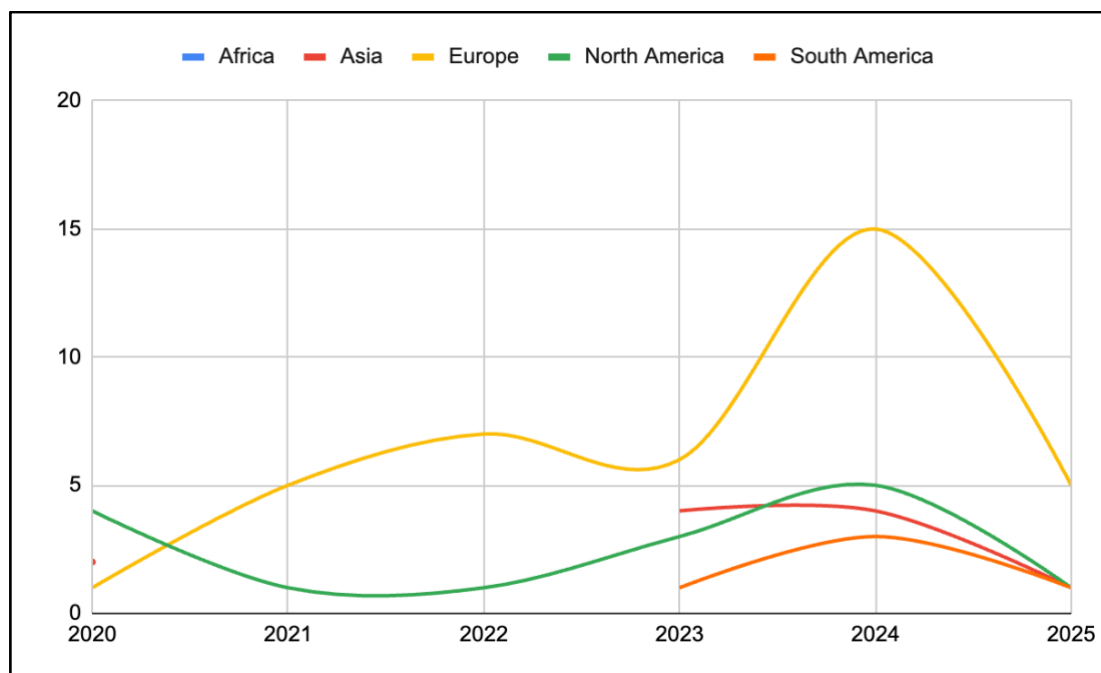
**Figure 2.** Articles by year



Source: Own elaboration

This increase is driven mainly by publications by authors affiliated with academic institutions in Europe (39) and Asia (11), while North America (15) remained relatively stable (Figure 3). Since 2023, publications from universities in South America (5) and Africa (1) can also be found.

**Figure 3.** Evolution of articles by year and region of the academic institution



Source: Own elaboration

The 55 articles analysed were published in 42 different journals by authors affiliated with universities in 28 countries. Spanish universities are in second place with 8 articles, behind those from the United States (11) and ahead of universities from the Netherlands (7), United Kingdom (6) and China (5).

The total number of authors is 148, which includes a gender imbalance: less than a third are women (47), compared to more than twice as many men (101). As some researchers penned more than one article, the number of unique authors is 138. Table 3 lists the authors, countries and journals with more than one article.

**Table 3.** Authors, countries and journals with more than one article

Author and articles	Country and articles	Journal and articles
Zhai, Yujia 4	USA 11	AI & Society 8
Nguyen, Dennis 3	Spain 8	Information, Communication & Society 3
Sun, Shaojing 3	Netherlands 7	Global Media and China 2
Chen, Yibei 2	United Kingdom 6	Journalism Practice 3
Gonzalez-Arias, Cristian 2	China 5	Social Sciences 2
Hekman, Erik 2	Canada 4	Telematics and Informatics 2
Lopez-Garcia, Xose 2	Germany 3	
Zhang, Hezhao 2	Switzerland 3	
	Chile 2	
	Singapur 2	
	Sweden 2	
	Vietnam 2	

Source: Own elaboration

### 3.2. THE 'WHEN': GROWING MEDIA INTEREST IN AI

The presence of AI as a topic of media coverage was small for decades (Sun et al., 2020; Zhai et al., 2020). Since the 2000s it showed a steady growth that reached a turning point around 2015, when most studies with a diachronic perspective detected a dramatic increase (Bunz & Braghieri, 2022; Garvey & Maskal, 2020; Nguyen, 2023). This leap of AI into the forefront of news cycles coincided with the consolidation of the deep

learning paradigm, a wider adoption of the technology and the integration of AI systems in healthcare or autonomous cars (Nguyen & Hekman, 2022).

The next major turning point in media interest in AI came with the launch of ChatGPT in late November 2022. Two studies comparing journalistic output in the six months before the chatbot's rollout with that in the six months after agree that the number of articles on AI increased about sixfold in the media analysed (Ryazanov et al., 2024; Sanguinetti & Palomo, 2024). Both analyses also point out that the six months prior to ChatGPT's launch had already experienced a strong increase in AI articles due to the "boom" of generative image models such as Dall-e 2, Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, so that the increase motivated by ChatGPT would be even greater if a longer period were taken as a basis for comparison.

### 3.3. THE 'HOW': A POLARIZED AND SHALLOW REPRESENTATION

In general, various studies note that the media represents AI with a positive or even promotional tone (Dwyer et al., 2023; Korneeva et al., 2023; Sarisakaloğlu, 2021; Yucra-Mamani et al., 2024; Zeng et al., 2022), closely linked to its potential economic and commercial benefits. However, the popularization of the technology mentioned in the previous point from 2015 and 2022 onwards has been generating more awareness of its social impact (e.g. on employment) and its potential risks (e.g. on privacy, bias and surveillance issues), incorporating more critical and reflective views on its ethical implications into media coverage (Ittefaq et al., 2025; Ouchchy et al., 2020). The tone is also more critical when the media focuses on specific problems such as deepfakes (Gosse & Burkell, 2020), the impact of AI on journalism (Moran & Shaikh, 2022) or risks linked to the use of data (Nguyen, 2023).

Once again, the revolution unleashed by ChatGPT also impacted the tone of stories on the subject, albeit with mixed results. While ethical and social considerations came to the forefront of coverage, they did so in alarmist, dystopian and speculative terms (Yadlin & Marciano, 2024). Roe & Perkins (2023) characterize the first months of chatbot coverage in the UK as leaning towards sensationalism and more focused on potential dangers than actual possible benefits, while González-Arias & López-García (2023) find

a negative and distrustful tone in their analysis of the representation of ChatGPT in Spanish media.

In summary, what characterizes media coverage, according to various studies, is a polarized and unrealistic view (Garvey & Maskal, 2020) that alternates between utopian and dystopian narratives (Wang et al., 2023) and focuses more on speculating about the future than on providing an in-depth analysis on the current reality (Wahl-Jorgensen & Carlson, 2021). Ouchchy (2020) defines media coverage on AI as practical but still shallow.

Therefore, some authors go beyond the analysis of positive or negative sentiment in the coverage and focus on what Sartori and Bocca (2023) call “AI anxiety”: the feeling of anxiety or distress in the face of AI conveyed by some media outlets due to a misleading or inaccurate presentation of this technology (Wang et al., 2023). ChatGPT had the effect of increasing levels of “anxiety” (Sanguinetti & Palomo, 2024), in part due to a feature that has accompanied narratives about AI since the very origins of the technology: its anthropomorphic representation (Bunz & Braghieri, 2022; Curran et al., 2020; Ryazanov et al., 2024).

A vast majority of the articles focus on text. Only four studies analyse the visual representation of AI (Chen et al., 2023; Díaz Monsalvo & López Vidales, 2024; Vrabič Dežman, 2024; Zhai et al., 2020), one of the most frequently mentioned research gaps in the corpus.

#### 3.4. THE ‘WHY’: THE NEED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND JOURNALISTS

Several articles call for a deeper study of the actual conditions of journalistic production to understand the causes that determine how AI is represented (Duberry & Hamidi, 2021; Moran & Shaikh, 2022; Nguyen & Hekman, 2024; Vergeer, 2020). An interesting exception in this regard is Dandurand et al. (2023), who supplement their study of coverage in Canada with surveys of journalists writing about the topic to connect the final product to their motivations.

Another gap that stands out in the literature is the lack of articles that manage to establish a relationship between the representation of AI and its public perception,

although many of them consider it necessary to establish that connection empirically (Chen et al., 2023; Curran et al., 2020; Roe & Perkins, 2023; Sarisakaloğlu, 2021; Vergeer, 2020).

In the absence of studies that better explore the causes and consequences of AI coverage, several articles consider that some of the main characteristics found in how this technology is represented can be attributed to two determining factors explored in the next two sections: the voices that dominate the narrative on AI (3.5.) and the different national realities and context of the news media (3.6.).

### 3.5. THE 'WHO': THE INDUSTRY DETERMINES THE TONE OF COVERAGE

A common finding in the literature is that the economic perspective dominates news about AI and that many journalists base their reporting on industry and technology sources, amplifying dominant and uncritical views (Brantner & Saurwein, 2021; Sun et al., 2020; Vergeer, 2020). The media discourse on AI appears focused on its economic potential and aligned with the government's industrial strategy in realities as heterogenous as Germany (Köstler & Ossewaarde, 2022) and China (Zeng et al., 2022) for example. Analysing the case of Canada, Dandurand et al. (2023) argue that journalists “freeze” the debate on the most controversial aspects of AI by forming an ecosystem with a small group of industry experts and institutions. They further argue that “AI coverage is primarily business news” (p. 3).

The impact of ChatGPT in this area is mixed. On the one hand, following its launch, there is a trend toward explanatory journalism and greater use of experts in AI reporting to satisfy the audience's need to understand a novelty that seems to affect them directly (Roe & Perkins, 2023). At the same time, ChatGPT being a commercial product, its coverage exacerbates the problem of the dominance of industry and government perspectives in the media at the expense of less attention to critical voices, the general public and academia (Ryazanov et al., 2024).

### **3.6. THE 'WHERE': DIFFERENT NATIONAL NARRATIVES ON AI**

Detecting differences between imaginaries of different countries and regions poses a challenge given the lack of more comparative studies, another limitation in this subject's literature. Of the 55 articles covered for this review, 23 focus exclusively on English-speaking media, particularly major media outlets in the United States and the United Kingdom, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian*. In addition, 31 articles include at least one of the two countries in their analysis.

However, in recent years there has been an attempt to fill this gap. The corpus of this review includes 14 articles focused exclusively on other countries, mostly in Europe, but also in Asia, South America and Africa (Table 3). More interestingly, ten articles adopt comparative perspectives between different countries or regions, which makes it possible to detect not only similarities such as those discussed so far in this study, but also differences and particularities, as described below.

**Table 3.** Studies focused on specific countries other than USA and UK

Region	Country	Studies
Africa	Gambia, Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	(Mohammed et al., 2024)
North America	Canada	(Dandurand et al., 2023)
South America	Argentina	(Azzara, 2023)
	Brazil	(Canavilhas et al., 2024)
	Chile	(Valderrama Barragán et al., 2025)
Asia	China	(van Noort, 2024; Zeng et al., 2022)
	South Korea	(Chang, 2024)
Europe	Germany	(Carstensen & Ganz, 2023; Köstler & Ossewaarde, 2022; Winkel, 2024)
	Austria	(Brantner & Saurwein, 2021)
	Denmark	(Hansen, 2022)
	Spain	(Díaz Monsalvo & López Vidales, 2024; González-Arias & López-García, 2023, 2025; Parratt-Fernández et al., 2024)
	Netherlands	(Vergeer, 2020)
	Portugal	(Canavilhas et al., 2024)
	Turkey	(Sarisakaloğlu, 2021)

Source: Own elaboration

In their extensive study comparing media from the “global south” with media from the “global north,” Ittefaq et al. (2025) find that both the framing of AI and the tone of coverage vary by region. While newspapers in the northern hemisphere are dominated by negative sentiments associated with regulatory issues, ethics and impact on employment, those in the southern exhibit a more positive tone, mostly derived from emphasizing AI as an innovation and solution in areas such as health. The authors link this to diverse journalistic cultures in the two regions, with an individualistic and data privacy focus in Western media and a more collectivist and development-focused focus in Southeast Asian media.

A similar conclusion is drawn by Wang et al. (2023) when comparing the sociotechnical imaginaries of India and China, which are more focused on AI as an economic opportunity and more confident about the future, with those of the United Kingdom, where the impact of technology at both the public and individual level generates concern. Another comparative approach (Nguyen & Hekman, 2022) reveals a more critical and pro-regulation attitude in the American newspaper *The Washington Post*, versus a focus on economic growth in China's *South China Morning Post*. Rather than media culture, as in the previous case, these studies link the differences to the diverse political and cultural realities of each country.

These and other comparative analyses covered in this review (Alcaraz-Martínez et al., 2024; Curran et al., 2020; Duberry & Hamidi, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2024; Sanguinetti & Palomo, 2024) provide an overview of the transnational frames that characterize journalistic coverage of AI, but also demonstrate that each country's coverage is filtered by their local realities. As Wang et al. (2023) argue, the debates about AI “tended to very much reflect national priorities, preoccupations, hopes and fears” (p. 14). If we consider that journalistic representation of emerging technologies contributes to shaping the reality of said technologies, it is worth going further and noting that “news media not only mirror these discourses but actively participate in them.” (Nguyen & Hekman, 2022, p. 74).

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

This article provides an overview of studies on journalistic coverage of AI through a type of systematic literature review known as scoping review. The analysis of 55 scientific articles published over a period of more than five years (2020-2025) and with an empirical approach shows that media interest in AI has skyrocketed in recent years, with key turning points found in 2015, with the development and establishment of the technology, and in late 2022, with the launch and strong social impact of ChatGPT. Coverage tends to be positive in general terms, partly due to the predominance of economic frames and industry sources utilised in news on the subject, although it has been incorporating more critical and negative aspects as the technology has been more concretely installed in society. Beyond the positive/negative polarity, what characterizes

much of the information on AI is its sensationalist, superficial and speculative tone. This distance between the representation and the reality of the systems can generate a form of “anxiety” that the launch of ChatGPT fueled. The imaginaries in which AI narratives are embedded are transnational and shared only in part, as they are shaped by local realities, hopes, fears and interests. Finally, this review detects the gaps frequently mentioned in the literature as recommendations for future research on the topic: to extend the study to more types of media and non-textual formats, to better connect the type of AI representation with the causes in the newsroom and with its impact on public opinion and to extend the analysis to a wider cultural and geographic diversity.

This scoping review entails some limitations. The analysis was restricted to publications in peer-reviewed journals, excluding, for example, books, book chapters and conference papers. The search was conducted in English and was limited to articles in Scopus and Web of Science; searches in alternative databases and in other languages could expand the sample analysed. Future reviews could provide a more complete picture of the field of study by also incorporating articles that study the representation of AI in more types of media, such as specialized journals, video platforms or social media.

Despite these limitations, the review provides important findings on how the media represents AI, thus contributing to a better understanding of a key aspect in the social reception of today's most disruptive and impactful technology.

## **5. FUNDING**

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## 6. CONTRIBUTION

	<b>Author 1</b>
Conceptualization	X
Data curation	X
Formal analysis	X
Investigation	X
Methodology	X
Supervision	X
Validation	X
Visualization	X
Writing (original draft)	X
Writing (review & editing)	X

## 7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The undersigned person(s) declares that there is no conflict of interest.

## 8. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The authors declare that they have not made use of artificial intelligence in the preparation of the article.

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