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UNDERSTANDING BLOGGERS' ADOPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR FAKE NEWS DETECTION IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence tools are increasingly promoted as solutions to misinformation, yet adoption among independent digital journalists in the Global South remains poorly understood. This paper examined how news bloggers in Kwara State, Nigeria, became aware of AI-based fake news detection applications, and why that awareness so rarely converted into sustained use. Drawing on 21 in-depth interviews, the study applied a thematic analysis informed by diffusion of innovations theory and the technology acceptance model. It identified a sharp divide between passive awareness, meaning bloggers knew such tools existed, and informed awareness, meaning bloggers understood what the tools did and how to use them. Peer demonstration emerged as the trigger that consistently converted passive into informed awareness. Structured training emerged as a weaker trigger whose success depended on follow-up support. Crisis-driven necessity did not emerge in the analysed interviews. Conversion failed when digital competence was low or when perceived usefulness remained abstract. Awareness campaigns without embedded skills practice may therefore produce frustration rather than adoption. Interventions must also address the incentive structures that shape whether bloggers want to verify content at all. The findings carry implications for AI literacy programmes targeting independent content producers in resource-constrained media environments.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, fake news detection, awareness, news bloggers, technology adoption, Nigeria, Global South

Introduction

The credibility of digital journalism has become entangled with the speed at which content circulates online. Traditional gatekeeping mechanisms, once relied upon to verify claims before publication, are routinely bypassed as bloggers compete to publish first (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). In Nigeria, this shift carries particular weight, given documented links between misinformation, weakened institutional trust and heightened political tension (Ojebuyi & Ekenyan, 2019; Esan et al., 2023). The consequences are not abstract. False claims about election results, public health measures and communal violence have circulated widely enough to shape behaviour, and in some cases they have precipitated physical harm. Where verification capacity is thin, the cost of a false story is borne disproportionately by audiences who have few alternative sources of local information.

News bloggers in Kwara State occupy an increasingly influential position within this ecosystem. Operating across blogs, Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube, they supply fast, locally relevant information, much of it without the formal training or institutional oversight that constrains mainstream outlets. Their reach is substantial, particularly in state-level political coverage where national outlets devote limited attention. Yet their working conditions differ sharply from those of employed journalists. No editor reviews their copy, no legal desk vets their claims, and no newsroom budget supplies them with verification software. Artificial intelligence offers a partial remedy. Machine learning, natural language processing and automated fact-checking systems are increasingly deployed in newsrooms worldwide to flag manipulated or misleading content (Graves, 2018). Whether independent bloggers in a state such as Kwara are even aware such tools exist, let alone using them, remains poorly documented.

Awareness sits at the first stage of Rogers'

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(2003) diffusion process. Without it, the subsequent stages of persuasion, decision and adoption cannot proceed, yet awareness alone rarely guarantees use. The gap between knowing a technology exists and folding it into daily practice is where many adoption efforts stall. Existing scholarship has concentrated on detection accuracy and algorithmic design (Albahar, 2021), or on the societal consequences of misinformation in Nigeria (Ojebuyi & Ekenyan, 2019; Agbese & Adeosun, 2020). Far less attention has been paid to the demand side. Little is known about how much independent digital journalists in Nigeria's sub-national media markets actually know about AI detection tools, and whether that knowledge translates into use. This imbalance matters because detection systems, however accurate, produce no public benefit unless they are actually used by the people who publish.

This paper addresses that gap directly. It draws on the first objective of a wider qualitative study, isolating and reworking the findings that speak specifically to bloggers' awareness of AI-based fake news detection applications and how that awareness relates to their reported use of such tools. The wider study also examined digital competence, perceived effectiveness and adoption barriers, and those dimensions are referenced here only where they clarify the awareness-use relationship. The aim is narrower, and sharper, than the parent study. It is to examine qualitatively how bloggers' awareness of AI-based fake news detection applications relates to their reported use, and to draw out implications for training and policy interventions in comparable media environments.

Accordingly, the paper is guided by one central research question and two supporting questions.

RQ1. How do news bloggers in Kwara State describe their awareness of AI-based fake news detection applications?

RQ2. How does that awareness relate to their reported use of such tools?

RQ3. What conditions appear to convert passive awareness into informed awareness and use?

The paper makes three contributions. First, it supplies empirical evidence on the demand side of AI adoption among independent digital journalists, a population largely absent from the literature. Second, it refines the awareness construct by distinguishing informed from passive awareness, showing that recognition and procedural understanding are analytically distinct and carry different behavioural consequences. Third, it demonstrates that awareness and digital competence operate jointly rather than sequentially, with implications for how AI literacy interventions are designed in the Global South.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature and sets out the theoretical framework. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 presents the findings. Section 5 discusses them in relation to theory and prior research. Section 6 offers conclusions, recommendations and directions for future research.

Literature Review

Fake news and AI-based detection

Fake news is commonly defined as content produced to mislead audiences whilst posing as legitimate reporting (Santos, 2023). It differs from honest error in its deliberate intent to distort belief or behaviour. Scholars typically subdivide it into misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (Tandoc et al., 2018), and the term itself has been contested for its political elasticity. Tandoc et al. note that scholarly definitions vary in the degree to which they emphasise intent, format and falsity. For present purposes, the concern is with content whose circulation degrades public trust and informed debate, regardless of whether intent can be established.

AI's entry into journalism has been framed largely around efficiency, enabling automated data collection, real-time verification and personalised content delivery. Natural language processing underpins many detection tools, allowing systems to flag suspicious linguistic patterns, while machine learning models help identify content likely to have been manipulated (Zhou & Zafarani, 2020). Detection approaches have grown more sophisticated, combining content features with user-comment signals and network-level metadata (Albahar, 2021). Recent work has also explored transformer-based models and multimodal detection, where text, image and video signals are analysed together. Alghamdi et al. (2024), for instance, propose a hybrid summarisation approach for multilingual fake news detection

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in low-resource languages, addressing the limitations of pre-trained language models when applied to languages such as Swahili and Indonesian. Rananga et al. (2024) similarly review misinformation detection across high- and low-resource languages, noting persistent performance gaps for African languages.

Yet accuracy remains uneven across languages and contexts, and performance on Nigerian English, pidgin and indigenous-language content is not well established. This gap is not merely technical. A detection model trained predominantly on English-language American political news may perform poorly on the register, idiom and reference points of Kwara State political blogging. The implication is that even bloggers who adopt AI detection tools may find them less useful in practice than promotional accounts suggest.

Critically, these capabilities matter little if the intended users remain unaware they exist. Graves (2018) notes that fact-checking technologies diffuse unevenly even within well-resourced newsrooms, where training budgets and technical support are available, and the picture in under-resourced, informal blogging contexts is likely more uneven still. This observation shifts attention from the supply of detection technology to the conditions under which journalists and para-journalists come to recognise, evaluate and adopt it. It also raises a question that the detection literature rarely poses, namely what it would take for a self-taught blogger with no institutional backing to incorporate such a tool into daily practice.

Awareness in technology adoption

Awareness has long been treated as the entry point to technology adoption, but its conceptualisation is often loose. In diffusion research, awareness-knowledge refers narrowly to knowing that an innovation exists, distinct from how-to-knowledge and principles -knowledge (Rogers, 2003). Studies that collapse these dimensions risk conflating recognition with capability, and they then interpret any association between awareness and use as evidence of a causal pathway that has not been demonstrated. This is a recurring weakness in adoption research, where single-item awareness measures are used to predict complex behavioural outcomes.

Prior work in journalism and information systems suggests that awareness rarely translates into use on its own. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, prior digital competence, organisational support and peer influence all mediate the relationship (Sholola et al., 2025; Trang et al., 2024). In low-resource contexts, where formal training is scarce and technical support is minimal, peer networks and informal communities of practice appear to carry a disproportionate share of the learning burden (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2025). This has implications for intervention design, since campaigns that raise awareness without providing practice opportunities may simply produce a larger pool of people who know a tool exists but cannot use it.

A further distinction matters for the present study. Awareness can be acquired through direct experience or through second-hand exposure. Direct experience tends to produce richer, more accurate mental models of what a tool can and cannot do, whereas second-hand exposure often yields inflated or vague expectations. Where expectations are inflated, early trial may disappoint and produce abandonment rather than adoption. The literature on technology domestication has long noted that adoption is not a single decision but an ongoing process of appropriation, during which users reshape both the tool and their own routines (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996). This perspective reinforces the argument that awareness should be studied alongside competence, not in isolation from it.

Theoretical framework

Two frameworks anchor the analysis. Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory positions knowledge as the first of five adoption stages, preceding persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. Its analytical value here lies in the distinction between awareness-knowledge, how-to-knowledge and principles-knowledge. This paper treats awareness as recognition plus, in its stronger form, procedural and evaluative understanding, and does not treat awareness as equivalent to adoption.

The technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003) complements diffusion theory by identifying perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key drivers of intention to use. Where bloggers recognise concrete benefits, such as improved accuracy or credibility, awareness is more likely to convert into use. Where recognition remains abstract, adoption tends to stall. Together, the frameworks suggest that awareness is necessary but insufficient, and

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that conversion depends on perceived usefulness, digital competence and specific triggering conditions.

Two limitations of these frameworks should be acknowledged. Both were developed largely in organisational and Western contexts, and their assumptions about infrastructure, training and managerial support may not travel well to informal, self-taught, individual-level production. Rogers (2003) himself cautioned that diffusion research has historically been biased towards the perspective of change agencies rather than adopters. Sholola et al. (2025) likewise note that AI adoption research in Nigeria has concentrated on institutional newsrooms, leaving independent producers comparatively under-examined. The present study responds by attending closely to bloggers' own accounts of how awareness formed and what it did or did not enable, treating the frameworks as interpretive resources rather than as templates to be confirmed.

Independent blogging and misinformation in Nigeria

Nigeria's fragmented, high-reach blogging sector, where fact-checking capacity is uneven, makes the country a useful site for examining how independent producers navigate the misinformation problem (Abu Arqoub et al., 2022). Ojebuyi and Ekenyan (2019) document the corrosive effect of fake news on public trust in Nigerian media, and Agbese and Adeosun (2020) show how health misinformation spread during the COVID-19 pandemic. Esan et al. (2023) demonstrate the technical feasibility of detection models trained on Nigerian data, though such work remains at the level of model performance rather than user adoption. The gap between technical capability and everyday practice is precisely where the present study is located.

More recently, investigative reporting has documented the extent to which Nigerian bloggers have been implicated in the production and circulation of political disinformation. Okong'o (2024), writing for AFP Fact Check, found that influential bloggers in Kenya and Nigeria were regularly recruited by political actors to operate fake accounts, sway public opinion and fan tensions during elections. The report described a new industry of online personalities who parrot politicians' views, create false narratives and promote viral conspiracies. Such findings complicate any assumption that bloggers are merely passive victims of misinformation, since some are active participants in its production. This does not diminish the case for equipping bloggers with detection tools, but it does suggest that awareness and adoption may be shaped by incentives that have little to do with accuracy.

What is missing from the literature is scholarship on the producers who sit between professional journalism and unregulated citizen publishing. Bloggers in this space often operate without editorial oversight, yet reach substantial audiences and shape local political discourse (Asabor, 2024). Their adoption pathways are unlikely to resemble those of institutional newsrooms, because they lack the training, budgets and technical support on which newsroom-level adoption depends. Where a newsroom might mandate use of a verification tool through editorial policy, a blogger must decide alone whether the effort is worthwhile. Whether awareness of AI detection tools is present in this population, and what it produces when present, is an empirical question that existing work has not addressed.

Research gap

Three gaps emerge from the foregoing. First, existing empirical work concentrates on detection accuracy and algorithmic design (Albahar, 2021; Alghamdi et al., 2024), or on the societal consequences of misinformation (Ojebuyi & Ekenyan, 2019; Agbese & Adeosun, 2020), leaving the demand side underexamined. Second, awareness is frequently operationalised in ways that conflate recognition with use, producing findings that are partly circular. Third, the Global South, and Nigeria in particular, is under-represented in studies of AI adoption in journalism, which are dominated by North American and European newsroom samples (Graves, 2018; Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2025). This paper addresses these gaps by treating awareness as a differentiated construct and examining that construct's relationship to reported use among independent bloggers in a Nigerian sub-national media market.

Methodology

Research design

The study adopted a qualitative design intended to capture bloggers' subjective experiences of AI adoption rather than

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measure its prevalence numerically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In-depth interviews served as the sole data collection instrument, chosen for their capacity to surface detailed, first-hand narratives that structured surveys often miss. The design is appropriate to the research questions, which concern meaning, interpretation and process rather than distribution. A survey could have established how many bloggers had heard of a given tool, but it could not have explained what that hearing amounted to, nor why it did or did not develop into use.

Sampling and participants

The population comprised 47 registered news bloggers identified through the Association of Kwara State Online Media Practitioners. Twenty-one participants, roughly 45 per cent of the population, were purposively selected to ensure both topical relevance and geographic spread. Seven bloggers were drawn from each of Kwara State's three senatorial districts, namely Kwara Central, Kwara North and Kwara South, balancing regional representation against the depth demanded by qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015). Inclusion required demonstrable engagement in public-affairs blogging, understood broadly as blogging on politics, social issues, entertainment or business, and at least some familiarity with fact-checking or content-moderation technologies. This criterion was appropriate because the parent study examined AI adoption, but it means the sample over-represents bloggers already disposed towards verification. The sample is therefore not a baseline picture of awareness among all Kwara State bloggers.

All twenty-one respondents identified as male. This reflects the composition of the association's register rather than a deliberate exclusion, but it nonetheless limits what the findings can say about women bloggers. Research on Nigerian female journalists documents disproportionately high rates of online harassment, cyberstalking and deepfake abuse, and a UNESCO-ICFJ study found that 73 per cent of female reporters had experienced online harassment (Etinosa, 2025). Women's verification practices and their willingness to engage with new digital tools may therefore differ substantially from those of their male counterparts. Thematic saturation was judged to have been reached by the eighteenth interview, with the final three confirming existing patterns rather than generating new themes. This judgement was reviewed against the coding record, where no new codes had been generated after the seventeenth transcript.

Data collection

An interview guide, reviewed by the project supervisor and piloted with five bloggers outside the final sample, structured conversations around AI tool types, perceived effectiveness, adoption barriers and ethical considerations. The pilot led to minor refinements in wording, particularly around technical terminology, and several questions that assumed a level of familiarity the pilot participants did not possess were rewritten to begin from concrete scenarios rather than abstract categories. Interviews lasted between 35 and 70 minutes, were conducted by WhatsApp voice call, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. WhatsApp was chosen for accessibility and cost, though it precludes the observation of non-verbal cues available in face-to-face interviewing. Connection instability occasionally required repetition of questions, and one interview was completed across two sessions.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, combining inductive coding with deductive categories drawn from the study's objectives. Transcripts were read repeatedly, initial codes generated, and codes grouped into candidate themes. This paper isolates the theme tied most directly to the first objective, namely bloggers' awareness of fake news detection applications, and its bearing on subsequent AI use.

Coding was conducted by the first author, with a subset of six transcripts, roughly 29 per cent of the sample, independently coded by the project supervisor. Disagreements were resolved through discussion, and a simple percentage agreement of 88 per cent was recorded across the double-coded subset. Per cent agreement was selected over kappa because the coding scheme involved a small number of broad categories and the purpose was to confirm shared understanding rather than to establish fine-grained reliability across many codes (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Two worked examples illustrate the kind of disagreement that occurred and how it was resolved. In the first, a respondent said, "I have

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heard of the tools but I don't use them because I don't really understand them." The first author coded this as passive awareness. The second coder initially coded it as informed awareness, on the grounds that the phrase "I don't really understand them" implied some awareness of what the tools do. Discussion clarified that the respondent had not, in the surrounding transcript, named any tool or described any function, and the code was resolved to passive awareness. In the second, a respondent said, "I check headlines with AI before I post, but only when I remember." The first author coded this as informed awareness with tentative trial, while the second coder coded it as informed awareness without routine use. The disagreement concerned the boundary between trial and routine use rather than the awareness category itself, and it was resolved by treating trial as a behavioural outcome reported separately from awareness, consistent with the analytical distinction between the two. These examples indicate that disagreements clustered around the boundary conditions of the awareness categories rather than the categories themselves.

Results

This section presents findings on bloggers' awareness of AI-based fake news detection applications and how that awareness related to reported use. The demographic profile of respondents is presented first to contextualise the sample, followed by the thematic structure of awareness itself, and finally the relationship between awareness, digital competence and adoption behaviour.

Demographic profile of respondents

Twenty-one bloggers were interviewed. They ranged from 18 to over 45 years, with the largest group aged 25–34 (7 of 21), followed by 35–44 (6), 18–24 (5), and 45 and above (3). Educational attainment concentrated at tertiary level, with 9 holding a bachelor's degree or HND, 5 a postgraduate qualification, 4 an ND/NCE, and 3 having secondary schooling only. Blogging experience varied, with 7 respondents reporting 1–3 years, 6 reporting 4–6 years, 6 reporting more than 6 years, and 2 reporting less than 1 year. Content focus was distributed across social issues (6), entertainment (6), business (5) and politics (4). All 21 respondents were male, a composition that limits transferability to women bloggers and is addressed in the limitations. Table 1 summarises the sample. The spread of experience and content focus allowed the interviews to draw on both novice and established bloggers and to capture verification pressures beyond political blogging, including entertainment bloggers handling celebrity death rumours and manipulated images.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 21)

Characteristic	Category	n (of 21)
Age	18–24	5
	25–34	7
	35–44	6
	45 and above	3
Education	Secondary schooling	3
	ND/NCE	4
	Bachelor's degree or HND	9
	Postgraduate qualification	5
Blogging experience	Less than 1 year	2
	1–3 years	7
	4–6 years	6

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	More than 6 years	6
Content focus	Politics	4
	Social issues	6
	Entertainment	6
	Business	5
Sex	Male	21
	Female	0

Patterns of awareness among bloggers

Awareness of AI tools clustered into two dominant patterns, informed and passive, each illustrated with representative excerpts below. A third, cross-cutting pattern concerned the source of that awareness rather than its intensity. Informed awareness refers to recognition plus the ability to name at least one AI tool or function and explain its verification purpose. Some bloggers with informed awareness reported tentative trial, but trial is treated here as a behavioural outcome and analysed separately in the discussion of adoption behaviour, and it is not the defining criterion of awareness. Passive awareness refers to registering that such tools exist without developing a working understanding of how to use them.

Informed awareness was less common than passive awareness. Bloggers with informed awareness treated AI as a practical resource rather than an abstract concept, and their descriptions named concrete verification tasks such as checking headlines or flagging inconsistencies before publication. As R3 put it, "I use AI occasionally to verify facts and identify misleading headlines before posting papers." R1 similarly stated, "I have heard of AI tools that check news stories before sharing them, and I sometimes try to use them." Another participant described a workflow in which suspicious claims were cross-checked before publication.

> "When I see a story that looks too sensational, I put the headline into the tool to see if it has been flagged before. It doesn't always work, but it helps." (R11)

Passive awareness, by contrast, described bloggers who had registered that such tools existed without moving beyond that recognition. This pattern recurred more often across the interviews than informed awareness did, suggesting that knowledge of AI's existence is more widespread among Kwara State bloggers than its practical uptake. Importantly, the distinction between informed and passive awareness separates knowing from doing, and awareness did not automatically translate into adoption.

The third pattern concerned exposure route rather than depth of knowledge. Bloggers embedded in technology forums or active peer networks reported a fuller understanding of AI functionality, whereas isolated bloggers described only second-hand knowledge filtered through informal conversation. R7's account was typical of the latter, "I have heard about AI tools from friends, but I don't know exactly how to use them." R5 similarly noted, "I know about some apps, but I haven't really explored them fully." By contrast, a participant active in an online media practitioners' group offered a different account.

> "Someone in our group posted about a fact-checking tool and showed how he used it. That was how I started trying it myself." (R16)

This pattern is consistent with the Thomson Reuters Foundation's (2025) finding that over 80 per cent of journalists surveyed across the Global South were self-taught in AI use, relying on peer networks and informal learning rather than structured training. The interviews were not designed to produce a systematic count linking a specific demographic profile to either awareness pattern, since the interview guide targeted experience with AI rather than personal history. However, the pattern is at least consistent with a sample in which blogging tenure varied widely. Bloggers with

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several years of continuous engagement in online communities were the ones most often describing forum- or peer-based exposure to AI tools, though this observation is suggestive rather than conclusive.

Awareness in relation to digital competence and adoption

Awareness rarely operated in isolation from digital competence. When awareness pattern and digital competence were read together, four configurations emerged, summarised in Table 2. In the first configuration, bloggers with informed awareness and high digital competence reported regular, purposeful use of AI for fact-checking and headline verification. In the second, bloggers with informed awareness but low digital competence reported occasional trial or selective use, and their engagement stalled without support. In the third, bloggers with passive awareness but moderate digital competence sometimes moved towards trial when peer demonstration supplied a visible model of use. In the fourth, bloggers with passive awareness and low digital competence reported avoidance or restricted use confined to simple, low-risk tasks, and for them peer demonstration alone was insufficient without hands-on practice.

Table 2. Awareness–Competence–Adoption Configurations

Configuration	Awareness pattern	Digital competence	Reported adoption behaviour
1	Informed	High	Regular, purposeful use
2	Informed	Low	Occasional or selective trial; stalls without support
3	Passive	Moderate	Moves towards trial when peer demonstration supplies a visible model
4	Passive	Low	Avoidance or restricted use confined to simple, low-risk tasks

These configurations suggest that awareness functioned as a threshold rather than an outcome in its own right. Bloggers who crossed from passive to informed awareness typically described a specific trigger, most often a peer recommendation. Two bloggers mentioned a training session, and no participant described a crisis-driven trigger, such as a verification failure or reputational crisis. Where no trigger was present, awareness tended to remain passive regardless of how long the blogger had known that AI tools existed. Competence appeared to mediate conversion. Bloggers who possessed both informed awareness and high digital competence were more likely to report regular use, while those with only one, or neither, tended to restrict or avoid engagement altogether. Awareness and competence reinforced one another, but neither alone guaranteed adoption.

Discussion

This section returns to the three research questions in turn, interpreting the findings against diffusion of innovations theory, the technology acceptance model and prior empirical work. It then draws out implications for AI literacy interventions in resource-constrained media environments.

The first research question asked how Kwara State news bloggers describe their awareness of AI-based fake news detection applications. The findings show that awareness is not a single state but a differentiated construct. Two patterns recurred across the interviews. The first is informed awareness, in which bloggers could name a tool or function and explain its verification purpose. The second is passive awareness, in which bloggers had registered that such tools exist without developing a working understanding of how to use them. Passive awareness was more common than informed awareness.

This finding directly addresses the conceptual looseness identified in the literature review. Prior adoption research has often treated awareness as a binary, that is, heard of or not heard of, producing findings that conflate recognition with capability (Rogers, 2003). The present study shows that this conflation

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obscures a substantively important distinction. Bloggers who used similar words to describe their knowledge differed markedly in what they could actually describe doing. R5's "I know about some apps" and R3's "I use AI occasionally to verify facts and identify misleading headlines" are not points on a single continuum of awareness, but different states with different behavioural consequences.

The findings refine Rogers' (2003) three knowledge types. Rogers distinguishes awareness-knowledge, which is knowing the innovation exists; how-to knowledge, which is knowing how to use it; and principles knowledge, which is knowing why it works. The empirical patterns in this study map onto these types as follows. Passive awareness corresponds to awareness-knowledge alone, with bloggers in this pattern knowing the innovation existed but possessing neither how -to knowledge nor principles knowledge. Informed awareness corresponds to the combination of all three, with bloggers in this pattern able to name a tool, describe a verification task, and explain why the tool was useful for that task. The empirical finding does not discard Rogers' three-type distinction, but shows that in this population, how-to knowledge and principles knowledge cluster together and separate jointly from mere recognition. This clustering is itself a finding, suggesting that once a blogger acquires procedural knowledge, evaluative understanding tends to follow, because both are acquired through the same exposure routes.

The exposure route finding reinforces this interpretation. Bloggers embedded in technology forums and active peer networks reported fuller understanding of AI functionality, whereas isolated bloggers described only second-hand knowledge filtered through informal conversation. R16's account is instructive, "Someone in our group posted about a fact-checking tool and showed how he used it. That was how I started trying it myself." This is consistent with the Thomson Reuters Foundation's (2025) finding that over 80 per cent of journalists surveyed across the Global South were self-taught in AI use, relying on peer networks and informal learning rather than structured training. It also aligns with Bello et al. (2023), who found high awareness of AI among Nigerian journalists but restricted adoption.

The second research question asked how awareness relates to bloggers' reported use of AI detection tools. The findings show that awareness is necessary but not sufficient. Informed awareness was associated with trial and routine use when paired with adequate digital competence, whereas passive awareness was associated with non-use regardless of general digital fluency. This stalling between recognition and use is consistent with the technology acceptance model's emphasis on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Bloggers who could articulate a concrete benefit, such as faster fact-checking, more credible headlines or reduced risk of reputational damage, moved towards use, while those whose awareness remained vague described no such benefit and their AI knowledge stayed inert. Awareness without a felt need does not convert into use. The technology acceptance model constructs specify why, since passive awareness does not generate a perceived usefulness signal strong enough to motivate trial, and low competence depresses perceived ease of use even when usefulness is recognised.

The explanatory power of the technology acceptance model here is partial. It was developed to predict intention to use in organisational settings where the technology is provided and support is available. In the blogger context, neither condition holds. Bloggers must discover the tool, decide whether to try it, teach themselves to use it, and absorb the cost of any failure, all without editorial mandate or technical support. The configurations identified in Table 2 show that the two constructs of the model operate in this context, but they are mediated by conditions the model does not capture, namely the availability of peer demonstration, the presence of a felt verification need, and the blogger's baseline digital competence. This study therefore treats the technology acceptance model as a partial explanatory resource. Its value is in directing attention to perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as proximal barriers. Its limitation is that it does not explain how those perceptions form in the absence of organisational support.

This resonates with Graves' (2018) observation that fact-checking technologies diffuse unevenly even in resourced newsrooms. The present study extends that finding downwards, to producers with no institutional support at all. For them, perceived

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usefulness is not communicated through editorial policy or professional training, but discovered through peer demonstration and direct necessity. This places a premium on the visibility of use. Bloggers who had seen a peer apply a tool were more likely to try it themselves. The Thomson Reuters Foundation (2025) report similarly found that 80 per cent of AI users in the Global South were self-taught, a pattern that reinforces the importance of peer learning networks over top-down training.

The finding that competence mediates the awareness-adoption relationship complicates interventions that treat awareness and skills as separate phases. Where competence is low, awareness-raising increases frustration rather than adoption. This is consistent with prior work on AI adoption among African journalists, which notes that infrastructure limitations and technical knowledge gaps constrain adoption even among those favourably disposed towards the technology (Gbaden et al., 2024). It also aligns with the technology domestication literature's insistence that adoption is not a single decision but an ongoing process of appropriation (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996). Bloggers in Configuration 2 had begun that process and stalled, whereas bloggers in Configuration 1 had progressed through it. The difference was not their attitude towards AI but their capacity to operate it.

The third research question asked what conditions convert passive awareness into informed awareness and use. The findings identify peer demonstration as the trigger that consistently produces this conversion.

Peer demonstration was the clearest and most consistently evidenced trigger. Bloggers who had seen a peer apply a tool, whether in a WhatsApp group, a forum or a face-to-face meeting, moved from passive to informed awareness and, in several cases, to trial. R16's account is representative, "Someone in our group posted about a fact-checking tool and showed how he used it. That was how I started trying it myself." This pattern was concentrated among bloggers with several years of continuous engagement in online communities, and it is consistent with the Thomson Reuters Foundation (2025) finding on self-taught AI use and with the broader literature on informal communities of practice in low-resource media environments.

Structured training appeared in the accounts of two bloggers who had attended a workshop or seminar at which AI verification tools were demonstrated. Neither reported sustained use afterwards. One (R17) described the experience as "useful but I didn't have anyone to ask when I got stuck." This finding is consistent with the central argument of this study, namely that awareness-raising without embedded practice and follow-up support does not convert into adoption. Structured training is therefore a weaker trigger than peer demonstration, and its success depends on conditions such as follow-up support and hands-on practice that demonstration alone does not supply.

Crisis-driven necessity did not emerge in the analysed interviews. No participant in this subset described adopting a tool in direct response to a specific verification failure or reputational crisis, and the trigger is therefore removed from the claims of this study.

The findings on conversion should be read alongside the configurations identified in Table 2. Peer demonstration moves bloggers from Configuration 3, passive awareness with moderate competence, into Configuration 1, informed awareness with high competence, by supplying both procedural knowledge and a visible model of use. It does not move bloggers from Configuration 4, passive awareness with low competence, directly into Configuration 1, because the competence gap remains. Peer demonstration is most effective when the recipient already has a baseline of digital fluency, whereas for bloggers with low competence, demonstration must be paired with hands-on practice.

This study has limitations. The sample was all male and drawn from a registered bloggers' association, which over-represents bloggers already disposed towards verification. The findings therefore cannot be generalised to all Kwara State bloggers or to women bloggers, whose verification practices may differ substantially (Etinosa, 2025). Interviews were conducted by WhatsApp voice call, which precluded observation of non-verbal cues. Future research should address these gaps through longitudinal and comparative designs that include unregistered and female producers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Awareness of AI-based fake news detection tools among Kwara State's news bloggers is real but unevenly distributed, and it is not, on

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its own, a reliable indicator of use. The divide between informed and passive awareness mirrors established diffusion and technology acceptance theory, yet it also exposes a practical shortfall. Bloggers with the highest stakes in credibility often lack the exposure needed to move from recognition to routine use. Addressing this shortfall requires more than public information campaigns.

Media training bodies and journalism schools should prioritise hands-on AI literacy sessions that let bloggers test tools against their own content, rather than relying on general awareness messaging. Peer networks are the best-evidenced conduit for informal learning and deserve deliberate support through mentorship schemes and blogger associations. Structured training plays a secondary role and is insufficient on its own, requiring embedded practice and follow-up support to convert into sustained use. Policymakers in Nigeria, and in similarly positioned media markets, should treat independent bloggers as a distinct target population, one whose adoption pathway differs meaningfully from that of institutional newsrooms.

Future research should address three questions. First, how do awareness and use patterns differ among women bloggers and among unregistered, less visible producers? Second, how do specific triggers, whether peer recommendation, crisis-driven necessity or formal training, convert passive awareness into informed use over time? Third, do awareness-plus-skills interventions produce sustained adoption, and under what conditions? Longitudinal and comparative designs across Nigerian states, and across the Global South, would help establish whether the awareness-competence-trigger configuration identified here holds beyond Kwara State.

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