



Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Public Relations: Boon or Curse?

**Book of Abstracts of the 32nd International
Public Relations Research Symposium BledCom**

EDITORS: Dejan Verčič, Ana Tkalac Verčič and Krishnamurthy Sriramesh

BledCom 2025

32nd International Public Relations Research Symposium
June 27 - June 28, 2025

Organized by:





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PUBLISHED BY:

University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Social Sciences
Kardeljeva ploščad 5
1000 Ljubljana
Slovenia

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University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

AVAILABLE AT:

<https://www.bledcom.com/>

Ljubljana, 2025

Katalogni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v
Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani
COBISS.SI-ID 240504835
ISBN 978-961-295-122-1 (PDF)

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,



*It is with great pleasure that
we welcome you to the*

32nd International Public Relations Research Symposium (BledCom 2025)!

*When the symposium began in 1994,
little did we know that we would be going strong
into the fourth decade! Hundreds of participants,
such as yourselves, have contributed to making
that possible over the decades.*

Heartfelt thanks to each of you for that!

The famed newspaper *Chicago Sun-Times*, winner of eight Pulitzer Prizes that describes itself as “being known for hard-hitting investigative reporting, in-depth political coverage...” published a special section on May 18, 2025 titled: ‘the Heat Index: Your Guide to the Best of Summer’ in which it recommended a long list of books for summer reading.

Three days later, prompted by discerning readers, the esteemed newspaper offered an apology stating: “To our great disappointment, that list was created through the use of an AI tool and

recommended books that do not exist.” It acknowledged that one of its “content partners” had provided the list created by a freelancer who had used AI tools to create it and confessed that he did not fact-check the content.

In the call for papers for BledCom 2025 we had noted the meteoric rise of Nvidia into a 3+ trillion dollar company on the back of AI promises and cautioned that the explosion of this company's stock value ought to be juxtaposed with the lack of understanding of this evolving technology and the resulting extensive misuse of AI. The *Chicago Sun-Times*' apology is the latest case that supports our contention that almost everyone, including the tech-wizards involved in developing this technology, seem to be playing 'catch-up' to all things AI on a daily, if not hourly, basis.

We thus feel vindicated in selecting this theme for BledCom 2025! We need to share our experiences (and heartaches?!!) of this promising, yet unproven, technology and its impact on our field and scholarship and education. These deliberations, it is hoped, will at least help us identify the right questions to ask about the synergy between our field and this technology.

Thank you! Lep pozdrav! Namaste!

Dejan Verčič, Ana Tkalac Verčič and Krishnamurthy Sriramesh



Dejan Verčič University of Ljubljana and Herman & partnerji (Slovenia) • Dejan Verčič is Professor, Head of Centre for Marketing and Public Relations at the University of Ljubljana, and Partner in strategic consulting and communication company Herman & partners Ltd. Slovenia. He received his PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK. A Fulbright scholar, recipient of the Pathfinder Award, the highest academic honour bestowed by the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) in New York, and named a Distinguished Public Relations Scholar by the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA). In 1991 he was the founding director of Slovenian national news agency (STA). Organizing the annual International Public Relations Research Symposium – BledCom since 1994.



Ana Tkalac Verčič University of Zagreb (Croatia) • Ana Tkalac Verčič, Ph.D., is a Full Professor of Marketing communications and Public Relations at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb, Croatia. She is a former Fulbright scholar and a recipient of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations diploma. Ana Tkalac Verčič has authored, co-authored and edited numerous books including Public Relations Metrics: Research and Evaluation (with B. van Ruler and D. Verčič) and is the author of the first Croatian public relations textbook. She has published more than a 100 papers in various academic journals and serves in various editorial boards such as International Journal of Strategic Communication, Journal of Public Relations Research and Public Relations Review. Throughout her career professor Tkalac Verčič has received numerous awards, most recently, GrandPRx, the award for the development of public relations as a profession. She is currently the president of the Croatian Public Relations Association.



Krishnamurthy Sriramesh University of Colorado (USA) • Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, is Professor of Public Relations at the University of Colorado. His rich teaching profile includes teaching a range of courses in 10 universities in the North America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe while also delivering seminars/talks in over 40 countries. He is recognized for his scholarship on global public relations, culture and public relations, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and public relations for development. His program of research has resulted in 8 edited or co-edited books (one currently in print and another in preparation on crisis communication cases), over 120 articles and book chapters, and over 150 conference papers and other presentations around the world. A recent bibliometric analysis published in Public Relations Review placed him among the top five cited global public relations scholars. In 2004, the Institute of Public Relations (USA) recognized his scholarship by honoring him with the prestigious Pathfinder Award for “original scholarly research contributing to the public relations body of knowledge.”



Akçay, Ebru, *Başkent University (Turkey)* • Assoc. Prof. Ebru Akçay received her B.A. in American Culture and Literature from Hacettepe University in 2013. She completed her M.A. in Public Relations and Publicity at the Graduate School of Social Sciences, Ankara University in 2015 and earned her Ph.D. in the same program and institution in 2020. Her academic career began in 2014 with her appointment as a research assistant in the Department of Public Relations and Publicity at the Faculty of Communication, Ondokuz Mayıs University. In 2021, she joined Başkent University as an assistant professor in the Department of Public Relations and Publicity at the Faculty of Communication. Since December 2024, she has been serving as an associate professor in the Department of Public Relations and Publicity at Başkent University, where she also holds the position of Vice Dean of the Faculty as of June 2023. Her research interests focus on public relations particularly in relation to cultural dynamics and social issues.

Anton, Anca, *University of Bucharest (Romania)*



Ashwell, Douglas, *Massey University (New Zealand)* • Associate Professor Doug Ashwell works in the School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication, Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. He has a strong interest in science communication and is currently investigating vaccination and how the media communicate the issue of vaccine hesitancy to the public. He is also interested in the reasons or concerns people give for being vaccine hesitant and how health communicators might better tailor their messages to answer these concerns with the aim of increasing vaccination rates.



Barlik, Jacek, *University of Warsaw (Poland)* • He is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, the University of Warsaw, Poland (full-time since 2014, previously straddled business career and part-time teaching). He is also a seasoned public relations practitioner, with vast experience as an advisor to major Polish and international corporations, public institutions and NGOs. He has authored articles, chapters and a book on public relations, communication strategies, awareness campaigns, crisis communication, social media, PR theory, sales and persuasion (in Polish and English), and was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Maryland, College Park (USA).



Batzoui, Athanasia, *Imperial College London (UK)* • Dr Athanasia Batziou is a communications academic and professional, with a specialisation in visual communication and a background in international law. She currently teaches communication courses at Imperial College London and the University of Cambridge. She has been teaching in Higher Education, in the UK and overseas, for 15 years and has also held various roles in the communication and media industry and in the non for profit sector. She has published research on hot topics in the media such as immigration, climate change, protest, and AI. Currently, her research is focused on various aspects of the use of AI in communication.



Bellamy, Bridget, *University of London (UK)* • Bridget graduated from Royal Holloway, University of London with a first-class hon. in Politics and International Relations. In her role as a PR Account Manager, she works within the Tourism and Aviation sector in B2B and B2B communications, as well as Crisis Management. In 2024 she gave a presentation examining the role of communications in the FA Ban on Women's Football at the International History of Public Relations Conference. Her current areas of research focus are in the use of AI in communication, and the role of risk assessment and triage in Crisis Communication.



Bezuidenhout, Louise, *North-West University (South Africa)* • Louise Bezuidenhout is a senior lecturer at the School of Communication at the North-West University (NWU), South Africa. She holds a master's degree in Communication Management from the University of Pretoria (UP) and obtained her PhD in Communication on Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) communication, from the NWU. She lectures at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and supervises master's and PhD students. Her research and publications include sustainability communication, strategic communication, development communication and stakeholder management. She is also involved in community engagement projects that focus on service learning and engaged research.

Brandt, Fabio, *Novo Selo Comunicacao (Brazil)*



Brescia, Paolo, *University of Cagliari (Italy)* • Paolo Brescia (Ph.D) is Research Fellow at the Department of Political and Social Science of the University of Cagliari (Italy), where he is also an Adjunct Professor. He has been an affiliated member of the interdisciplinary research community at the Sapienza (Rome) School of Advanced Studies (SSAS) and a delegate of the Italian Network of Universities for Sustainable Development (RUS). In 2023, he was a visiting researcher at the Complutense University of Madrid (Spain). His research focuses on public sector communication, particularly on how institutions, such as universities, engage with stakeholders through social media and AI tools to broaden their impact.



Bridgen, Elizabeth, *Buckinghamshire New University (UK)* • Elizabeth Bridgen is Head of Academic Improvement (Partner Provision) at Buckinghamshire New University, UK, and researches the lived experience of public relations practitioners. She is co-editor with Sarah Williams of *Women's Work in Public Relations* (2024), with Ileana Zeler of *Race, Diversity and Social Mobility in the Public Relations Industry* (2025), and Dejan Verčič of *Experiencing Public Relations: International Voices* (2017). She has had work published in many books and journals including *Journal of Communication Management* and *Journal of Media Practice and Research*.

Chaudri, Vidhi, *Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands)*



Cheng, Yang (Alice), *NC State University (USA)* • Dr. Yang (Alice) Cheng is a tenured Associate Professor of Communication at NC State University, Co-Director of the Center for AI in Society and Ethics, and Adjunct Professor in the Poole College of Management. Named among Stanford's top 2% most-cited scholars, her research explores AI, crisis communication, and global public relations. She has published 75+ articles in top journals and secured over \$2 million in funding from national foundations like NSF and NEH. Dr. Cheng teaches strategic management and research methods and is internationally recognized for advancing the intersection of AI, communication, and public relations through scholarship and global engagement.



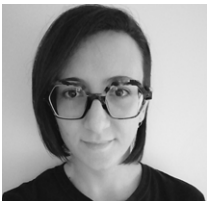
Chmiel, Michal, *Royal Holloway, University of London (UK)* • Michal Chmiel (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Psychology. He is a former Public Relations practitioner, and now researcher and educator. Currently he is the Director of External Engagement and Partnerships of the School of Life Sciences & Environment (Royal Holloway, University of London). Michal's research interests revolve around the role of the impact of Brand PR on attitudes and well-being of audiences. He has also researched into the mechanism of sharing fake news and PR education in the UK. Michal is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and a member of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations.



Comunello, Francesca, *Sapienza University (Italy)* • Francesca Comunello is a Full Professor in the Department of Communication and Social Research, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, where she teaches “Digital communication” and “Gender and media studies”. Her research focuses on the intersections between digital technology and society, including digitally mediated social relations, ageing and digital communication, gender and digital platforms. Her work has been published in Journals like *New Media and Society*, *Information Communication and Society*, *Media Culture and Society*, *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *The Sociological Review*, *Ageing and Society*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, and *Violence Against Women*, among others.



Croft, Alyssa, *Florida State University (USA)* • Alyssa Croft is an undergraduate student in Public Relations at Florida State University. Alyssa conducted an experiment evaluating the effect of scientific jargon on purchasing intentions for her Honor’s Thesis.



D’Agostino, Giulia, *Università della Svizzera italiana (Switzerland)* • Giulia D’Agostino, Institute of Argumentation, Linguistics and Semiotics, Università della Svizzera italiana, Switzerland, is a PhD candidate in Communication. She applies qualitative and quantitative methods for large-scale inquiry of linguistic and argumentative strategies in financial communication. Her research is focused on the identification, analysis, and retrieval (argument mining) of argumentative patterns in dialogical exchanges in the financial domain.



Degenaar, Anette, *North-West University (South Africa)* • She has served as a Senior Lecturer at North-West University’s School of Communication, Potchefstroom campus, since 2018. She teaches communication modules across all three undergraduate years and contributes to practical learning for corporate communication students at the honours level. Her academic focus lies in integrating theory and practice, while also supervising post-graduate students at Honours, Master’s, and PhD levels. With over 20 years of experience as a communication specialist, she has worked in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors, with a particular emphasis on non-profit work. Her educational background includes a BCom in Communication and a Master’s degree in the same field. In 2021, she completed her PhD in Strategic Integrated Communication, focusing specifically on South Africa’s child protection sector.



Degenaar, Koos, *North-West University (South Africa)* • Dr. Koos Degenaar is a seasoned strategic communication and digital marketing expert currently serving as Senior Manager in Marketing and Student Recruitment at North-West University, South Africa. With over 15 years of experience in digital marketing communication, he specializes in developing and executing data-driven engagement strategies to enhance student recruitment and institutional branding. In 2024, he earned his PhD in Communication, focusing on a digital marketing framework for the South African sport industry. His research bridges theoretical insights with practical applications, offering a comprehensive approach to digital stakeholder engagement in both higher education and sport marketing contexts.



Demirel, Ege Simge, *Yeditepe University (Turkey)* • After completing a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering at Sabancı University in 2011, Asst. Prof. Dr. Ege Simge Demirel participated in various training programs and earned a Master's degree in Integrated Marketing Communications from Yeditepe University in 2018. Following her graduation, she began her doctoral studies in Public Relations and Publicity at Marmara University in 2020. In 2024, she earned her PhD with her dissertation titled "The Impact of Sustainability on Corporate Reputation: A Study on Consumers in the Context of Social and Environmental Sustainability." She began her professional career immediately after completing her undergraduate studies in 2011, working as a short-term employee at Accenture, Citibank, and Anadolu Efes. Currently, she serves as Vice Chair of the Public Relations and Publicity Department at the Faculty of Communication at Yeditepe University. She has published articles in national and international journals on public relations, sustainability, and corporate communication.



Dhanesh, Ganga S, *University of Maryland (USA)* • Ganga Dhanesh (PhD, National University of Singapore) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland. Her experience in the corporate sector has informed her extensive research on corporate social responsibility communication, internal communication, and strategic public relations across global contexts, published in multiple top journals. Dr. Dhanesh serves as Associate Editor for the Journal of Communication Management and is on the editorial board of Business Horizons, Journal of Public Relations Research, and Public Relations Review. A recipient of several research awards, Dhanesh consults for various national and multinational organizations.

Di, Yuejiao, *Boston University (USA)*



Dong, Chuqing, *Michigan State University (USA)* • Chuqing Dong is an Assistant Professor of Advertising + Public Relations. Her research focuses on corporate social responsibility (CSR), ESG (Environment, Social, Governance), government communication, and public relations practices in the AI era. Chuqing's research projects have been funded by multiple internal and external grants, such as the C.R. Anderson Foundation (2000), the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) (2021), and the Arthur W. Page Center (2022, 2024). Chuqing earned her Ph.D. from the Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Minnesota, where she also received a master's degree in Public Policy.

Doswell, Steve, *Gemini Communicating for Business Ltd (UK)*



Downes, Edward J., *Boston University (USA)* • Edward J. Downes, Ph.D., M.P.A., is an associate professor of public relations at Boston University's College of Communication. Prior to joining academic full-time he worked, for 10 years, throughout metropolitan Washington, D.C., as a communications professional. He was employed by public, private, and non-profit organizations, among them the U.S. Congress. His research has been published in six academic journals and he has presented at numerous academic conferences.



Drapal, Andrej, *Consensus (Slovenia)* • Dr. Andrej Drapal (b. September 1, 1958) is a philosopher, sociologist, publicist, and entrepreneur. From 1986 to 1991, he led the theater and film program at Cankarjev Dom. Between 1991 and 2011, he served as a consultant and partner at Pristop, Slovenia's first and, for a long time, largest agency for public relations, advertising, and marketing. In 1996, he founded Slovenia's first lobbying association. In 2004, he established the Chamber of Business Services at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia. Since 1998, he has been developing his own branding and marketing model, the *Standard Branding Model*®. Using this methodology, he has developed over 50 brands and business models. The brand

I Feel Slovenia, launched in 2008, is arguably the most recognized product of this model. His book *Brandlife* (2016) outlines and explains the methodology. Since 2006, Andrej has been developing an original philosophical concept: *Homonism*. In November 2024, he completed his Ph.D. in strategic communication at the Faculty of Applied Social Studies in Nova Gorica with a thesis on memetics. Dr. Andrej Drapal's primary research focus involves the convergence of communication sciences, evolutionary biology, complexity studies, quantum mechanics, and neuroscience.



Einwiller, Sabine, *University of Vienna (Austria)* • Sabine Einwiller is the Professor of Public Relations Research at the University of Vienna, Austria, Department of Communication where she heads the Corporate Communication Research Group. She received her PhD in Business Administration from the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. Her main research areas comprise employee communication, CSR communication, corporate reputation management, and the effects of negative publicity and complaining.



Eisner, Julia, *University of Applied Science GmbH - Campus Wieselburg & Wiener Neustadt (Austria)* • Julia Eisner, MA, is a lecturer and researcher at the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt, Austria. She is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Vienna, with an additional supervisory affiliation in communication studies. Her research explores communicative AI in corporate communication, focusing on hybrid agency between humans and machines, as well as ethical AI.



Ertem-Eray, Tugce, *North Carolina State University (USA)* • Tugce Ertem-Eray (Ph.D., University of Oregon) is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication, NC State University. Her fields of interest are international public relations, public diplomacy, and social identities. She is also a part of a multi-university research team that focuses on bibliometric studies in public relations.



Fabbri, Valerio, *FabbriKo (Slovenia)* • Communications professional with international expertise in journalism and the corporate world. Able to create original content and translate complex ideas into compelling messages. Efficient in coordinating communication activities with various stakeholders. Thanks to experiences in different continents, I have gained a wide exposure to multicultural environments with the ability to solve problems and generate new business.



Ferris, David M., *Cohere (Canada)* • David Ferris is a seasoned defense technology executive, recently stepping into the role of Head of Global Public Sector at Cohere, a leading provider of foundational Artificial Intelligence models and applications. David previously led the commercial and public sector sales team at Blackbird.AI, a narrative intelligence platform based in New York City. David is a retired Infantry Officer from the Canadian Armed Forces and was a member of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Throughout his career, he deployed to Afghanistan, developed numerous capacity building missions around the world in support of the Government of Canada's military strategy, and led a training mission to Ukraine in 2015. From 2016 to 2018, David served on The Joint Staff at the Pentagon developing strategy, plans and policy to counter terrorist organizations at home and abroad. David is a graduate of the Canadian Army Command and Staff College in Kingston, Ontario, as well as the Joint Command and Staff Program at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto, Ontario. He graduated from McMaster University with a Bachelor of Psychology, holds a Masters of Defence Studies from the Royal Military College of Canada, a Masters of Business Administration from the Open University, United Kingdom and a Public Policy Certificate from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.



Fitzpatrick, Kathy R., *University of South Florida (USA)* • Kathy R. Fitzpatrick is professor and director of the Zimmerman School of Advertising & Mass Communications at the University of South Florida (USF). She is an internationally recognized scholar in public relations and public diplomacy, an attorney and a senior public relations advisor. She is also a faculty fellow and former research fellow in the Center on Public Diplomacy in the Annenberg School at the University of Southern California. Fitzpatrick moved to USF from American University (AU), where she served as professor and senior associate dean for academic affairs in the School of Communication. Prior to joining AU, Fitzpatrick was associate dean of graduate programs and research in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Florida International University. She previously directed graduate programs in public relations at Quinnipiac University and DePaul University and the undergraduate program in public relations at Southern Methodist University. Fitzpatrick's research has been published in leading communication and diplomacy journals and she is the author of *The Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy: An Uncertain Fate* and co-editor of *Ethics in Public Relations: Responsible Advocacy*. She is the co-founder and co-editor of the Palgrave Macmillan Book Series on Global Public Diplomacy and serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Public Relations Journal*, the *International Journal of Strategic Communication* and the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*.



Floether, Kevin, *McMaster University (Canada)* • Kevin Floether, MCM, CM, is a seasoned marketing and communications professional based in Toronto, Ontario. As Director of Marketing & Communications at CBV Institute, he leads strategic initiatives to enhance the organization's brand and stakeholder engagement. Kevin has played a pivotal role in integrating generative AI into the Institute's workflows, notably developing a comprehensive video guide on practical AI applications for Chartered Business Valuators and creating the organization's policy on use of the technology. Kevin holds a Master of Communications Management from McMaster University, where his capstone research focused on measuring the formation of trust in digital space, specifically relating to technology influencers on YouTube. He also earned the Chartered Marketer designation from the Canadian Marketing Association. His expertise encompasses strategic marketing and communications planning, digital transformation, generative AI, brand management, and data-driven decision-making.



Fourie, Lynnette, *North-West University (South Africa)* • Prof. Lynnette Fourie is director of the research focus area Social Transformation and lectures research methodology in the School of Communication at the North-West University (NWU), South Africa. She is also alumni from the North-West University and holds a BA honours in Political Science, MA Communication (Journalism) and PhD (Political Communication). Her research focus is on development communication, political campaigns in developing contexts, stakeholder relations and communication management in the non-profit sector. She has a special interest in postgraduate supervision and has supervised multiple Masters' and Doctoral candidates in the broader fields of corporate -, development -and political communication.



Galloway, Chris, *Massey University (New Zealand)* • Dr. Chris Galloway PhD, MMgt is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing at Massey University in New Zealand. Chris joins many years of experience as a journalist and senior public relations specialist to his academic interests in issue, risk and crisis communication. He has taught at universities in both Australia and New Zealand. His other interests include the Middle East, especially the way public relations techniques are used to present and position different protagonists. He travels to the region as often as he can. He also writes about the impacts of new technologies on PR practice, especially Artificial Intelligence. His recent books include *Artificial Intelligence, Strategic Communicators and Activism*, and *Exploring Artificial Intelligence Implications for Journalism and Mass Communication Education*, both co-authored with Luk Swiatek, Marina Vujnovic, and Dean Kruckeberg.



Germinder, Lea-Ann, *University of Missouri (USA)* • Lea-Ann Germinder is a doctoral student and graduate teacher at the University of Missouri School of Journalism in Strategic Communication. Her research is focused on generative AI and how public relations can use it responsibly and how counselors can help organizations use it responsibly. She is presently conducting research on the responsible use of AI in organizations in Veterinary Medicine. Germinder is the lead author of the book chapter, Responsible AI for Public Relations Practice” in “Public Relations and Strategic Communication in 2050,” Routledge. She is also the lead author of a research paper published in the special AI issue of the International Journal of Strategic Communication. The research she is presenting at Bledcom is focused on how public relations practitioners are using AI in their work in the U.S. and in Czechia. To date, she has presented at the International Communication Association (ICA), Gold Coast, Australia, at the International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC) in Orlando, FL. and at Charles University and the Czech Academy of Science, in Prague, Czechia and other venues in the United States. Germinder is president of Germinder + Associates, Inc. an award-winning public relations/strategic consulting firm with offices in the New York City area and Kansas City, Missouri. She is an accredited Fellow of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) having served on the national board and as New York City and Kansas City chapter president and is also a Silver Anvil judge. She is also a member of several international organizations including the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) and serves as a Golden World Awards judge.



Geysi, Nilüfer, *Bahçeşehir University (Turkey)* • Nilüfer Geysi (Ph.D.) is an Assistant Professor at Bahçeşehir University, where she earned her doctorate in Advertising and Public Relations. Her dissertation focused on climate change communication, a subject that continues to shape her academic and professional endeavors. She currently serves as the Director of the Center for Social Impact and Responsibility and as the Coordinator of CI-FAL Istanbul, UNITAR. Dr. Geysi’s research interests lie at the intersection of sustainability, science communication, and climate communication. Dedicated to bridging the gap between research and real-world application, she actively collaborates with private sector partners to deliver training programs that promote sustainability communication and responsible business practices.



Gözde Tayfur, Nur, *Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University (Turkey)* • Nur Gözde Tayfur, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Istanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University, Vocational School, Department of Public Relations and Promotion (Turkey). She completed her undergraduate studies in Archaeology and Art History at Bilkent University. She earned her master’s degree in Marketing Communication from Maltepe University and her Ph.D. in Public Relations and Advertising from the same university, graduating with honors. She is also a final year student in the Department of Public Relations and Advertising, her second university degree. She has integrated her professional experience in public relations into her academic research and teaching. Her interdisciplinary academic work focuses on the intersections of art, marketing, and public relations.



Grobelnik, Marko, *Jožef Stefan Institute (Slovenia)* • Grobelnik is a researcher at the AI Lab at the Jožef Stefan Institute and co-founder of the UNESCO International Research Center on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI). He collaborates extensively with major European academic institutions and leading industry players, including Bloomberg, British Telecom, the European Commission, Microsoft Research, the New York Times, and OECD. As a co-author of several books and co-founder of multiple startups, Grobelnik has contributed to over 100 EU-funded AI research projects. His keynote speech, titled “The Future of Artificial Intelligence and Its Potential Impact on Public Relations,” will explore key predictions for the future, highlighting shifts that may come sooner than anticipated.



Grossbard, Alain, *RMIT University (Australia)* • Alain Grossbard OAM is a distinguished communications expert, educator, corporate leader, and global SMS expert. He has significantly impacted academia as a Public Relations and Marketing Lecturer at RMIT University's School of Vocational Business Education and as a member of the RMIT University Academic Board. Named Public Relations Educator of the Year in 2019, he has earned multiple RMIT Teaching and Research Awards and the prestigious IPRA Golden World Award for corporate branding excellence. Alain has held executive roles across global industries, including senior executives of major Australian and global energy companies.



Hejlová, Denisa, *Charles University (Czech Republic)* • Assoc. Prof. Denisa Hejlova, Ph.D. is a leading Czech scholar and communication consultant. She focuses on research, teaching and practice in strategic communication, public relations, public affairs or political communication. From 2011-23, Denisa Hejlova headed the Department of Marketing Communication and PR at Charles University in Prague, one of the most sought-after study programmes in the Czech Republic. Prior to that, she worked as a vice-dean for PR and PR manager at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Denisa was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in New York in 2014 and studied intercultural communication at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in 2005-06. Denisa has published comprehensive books on public relations (Grada, 2015) and strategic communication (Karolinum, 2024) for the Czech audience. She regularly publishes in academic journals and has been a guest lecturer at universities in Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan, etc. In 2020 she started the first Czech MA programme in Strategic Communication at Charles University in Prague. Since 2023 she's the director of the Research Centre for Strategic Communication and the Charles University in Prague.



Hickerson, Andrea, *University of Mississippi (USA)* • Andrea Hickerson, Ph.D., is dean and professor in the School of Journalism and New Media at the University of Mississippi. Previously she was an associate dean in the College of Information and Communications and the director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of South Carolina. Before that, she served as director of the School of Communication at Rochester Institute of Technology. Hickerson conducts research on journalism routines with an emphasis on technology use. She is part of an interdisciplinary team building a deepfake video detection tool for journalists that has received support from the National Science Foundation and the Knight Foundation. She has been awarded over \$1 million in external research awards. She has a B.A. from Syracuse University in Journalism and International relations; an M.A. in Journalism and an M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Texas at Austin; and a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Washington.



Holtzhausen, Lida, *North-West University (South Africa)* • Professor Lida Holtzhausen is the Director of the School of Communication at North-West University. She holds a PhD in Corporate Communication and has been an academic at NWU since 2000, advancing to full professor in 2023. She has held leadership roles, served on key university committees, and received multiple teaching awards, including the 2024 University Teaching Excellence Award. A Chartered Public Relations Practitioner, she is actively involved in professional associations and international collaborations. Her research focuses on corporate communication, branding, and marketing communication. She has presented over 50 academic papers and is currently editing two books on communication.



Huber, Jeannine, *University of Vienna (Austria)* • Jeannine Huber is a university assistant (Predoc) in the Corporate Communication Research Group at the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna. Her dissertation focuses on the effects of psychological safety and communication in the workplace.



Hung, Olivia, *McMaster University (Canada)* • Liv is a marketing and communications leader with over 15 years of experience as a consultant and strategist in the agency world of advertising and communications. Liv graduated from McMaster University's Master of Communication Management program in 2024. Her master's capstone research paper explored the leadership role of strategic communicators in the age of artificial intelligence. She moderated a panel on AI and public relations at the Canadian Public Relations Society Elevate conference in 2023. She is also a crisis communications expert, helping to prepare clients for crisis events through simulations.



Hürmeriç, Pelin, *Yeditepe University (Turkey)* • Professor Dr. Pelin Hürmeriç graduated from Marmara University's Faculty of Communication in 2000, completed her master's in Public Relations and Publicity at Yeditepe University, and earned her doctorate at Marmara University. Hürmeriç began her academic career at Yeditepe University in 2001 and has been a professor in the Department of Public Relations and Publicity since 2020. In 2024, she was appointed the Dean of the Faculty of Communication at Yeditepe University while continuing her role as the Head of the Department of Public Relations and Publicity. Specializing in public relations, the history of public relations, reputation management, and crisis communication, Hürmeriç is the author of numerous national and international articles and books. She is a member of several international communication research associations and has received various awards for her contributions to the field.



Isaacson, Tom, *Northern Michigan University (USA)* • Tom Isaacson, Ph.D. (Michigan State University) is an Associate Professor of Public Relations and Assistant Department Head in the College of Business at Northern Michigan University. His professional experience working with U.S. baseball teams led to published work related to Sports PR and the development of Sport-specific curriculum. A dual interest in history and travel evolved from more than a decade of bringing students to the American University of Rome. This resulted in a fall 2024 sabbatical researching World War II soldier tourism in Rome using the archives at the American Academy of Rome and British School at Rome.



Jeleč, Ivana, *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Croatia)* • Jeleč, Ivana, HŽ Passenger Transport, University of Zagreb (Croatia) • Ivana Jeleč is experienced communication manager with corporate, institutional and agency expertise, university lecturer and a PhD student of Information and Communication Sciences at the University of Zagreb. She focuses on corporate and strategic communication and marketing, which, along with reputation management, are also topics that she studies from a scientific perspective. She participates in scientific and professional conferences, researches and writes scientific papers, and was also part of the editorial board of the Croatian translation of the biography of Edward Bernays, the founder of PR profession. Ivana speaks English, Spanish and Italian.

Ji, Yi Grace, *Boston University (USA)*



Kaclová, Markéta, *Charles University (Czech Republic)* • PhD. Student at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic. After nearly 20 years in the public relations agency world, she is now transitioning into academia. Currently pursuing a PhD at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, her research focuses on strategic communication, the public relations profession, and the technologies—particularly artificial intelligence—that are reshaping the field.



Kang, Minjeong, *Indiana University (USA)* • Minjeong Kang (Ph. D in Mass Communication, Syracuse University) is an associate professor and teaches undergraduate and graduate strategic communication and research courses at the Media School, Indiana University. Her recent research interests have focused on understanding engagement in various stakeholder contexts such as member, employee, and volunteer relations and its positive impacts in eliciting supportive communication and behavioral outcomes. Additionally, Dr. Kang is working on understanding organizational listening by examining factors that contribute to employee silence motives. Dr. Kang serves as reviewer to various journals including *Journal of Public Relations Research*, which she is on the editorial board.

Kaul, Asha, *IIMA (India)*



Ki, Eyun-Jung, *University of Alabama (USA)* • Eyun-Jung Ki (Ph.D., University of Florida) is a professor and Reese Phiher Fellow in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Alabama. Her areas of expertise are emergent media, including metaverse and artificial intelligence in strategic communication, crisis communication, and relationship management.

Krishna, Arunima, *Boston University (USA)*



Kloppers, Elbé, *North-West University (South Africa)* • Elbé Kloppers is a senior lecturer at the School of Communication at the North-West University (NWU), South Africa. She obtained both her MA (in corporate communication), as well as her PhD on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication from the NWU. Her research focuses on development communication, sustainability communication, CSR communication and relationship management. She lectures modules in development communication and research methodology at undergraduate and Honours level. She supervises Master's and Doctoral candidates in all her research focus areas.

Kloppers, Henk, *North-West University (South Africa)*

Kocks, Jan Niklas, *HTW Berlin (Germany)*



Kruckeberg, Dean, *UNC Charlotte (USA)* • Dr. Dean Kruckeberg, APR, Fellow PRSA, is a tenured Full Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. From 2000 through 2002, he was a Director-at-Large on PRSA's National Board. Dr. Kruckeberg was 1993-94 Midwest District Chair and was 1988-89 President of the Cedar Valley Chapter. He was 2010 Chair of the PRSA International Section; is a former National Faculty Advisor of the Public Relations Student Society of America (1989-91) and was Faculty Advisor of PRSSA Chapters at the University of Iowa, Northwest Missouri State University and the University of Northern Iowa. From 1997 to 2012, Dr. Kruckeberg was Co-Chair of

the Commission on Public Relations Education. He was Chair of the Educators Academy and Co-Chair of the Educational Affairs Committee in 1997. From 2006 through 2009, He was a member of PRSA's Board of Ethics and Professional Standards. Dr. Kruckeberg is a member of PRSA Charlotte and is the Lead Academic Advisor of the Inez Y. Kaiser Memorial Scholarship Fund of the Greater Kansas City Chapter of PRSA. Dr. Kruckeberg is co-author of the 11th (2013), 10th (2010), 9th (2006), 8th (2004), 7th (2000) and 6th (1996) editions of *This Is PR: The Realities of Public Relations*, of *Public Relations and Community: A Reconstructed Theory* (1988) and of *Transparency, Public Relations, and the Mass Media: Combating the Hidden Influences in News Coverage Worldwide* (2017).



Krueger, Mitch, *Florida State University (USA)* • Mitch Krueger is an undergraduate student in Public Relations at Florida State University. Mitch completed his Honor's Thesis focusing on crisis communication and sports. He is working part-time at Moore Communications.



Lahad, Imad, *APCO (U.A.E.)* • He is an expert in AI, intelligence, and disruptive technologies. Currently serving as the Global Chair of AI & Intelligence at APCO, he leads initiatives that harness emerging technologies to drive innovation and transformative solutions for APCO and its clients worldwide. Imad's journey with APCO began in 2013 as the Director of Digital Strategy, where he quickly demonstrated his leadership and forward-thinking approach. He went on to become the Managing Director of APCO's Dubai office, playing a pivotal role in shaping the firm's direction and expanding its capabilities in the region. As the head of the global Digital Practice, Imad established the AI Comms Lab, a pioneering initiative that integrates advanced AI capabilities and innovative tools into APCO's offerings. This lab also led to the creation of Margy, APCO's proprietary adaptive intelligence, which is leveraged across the organization to deliver cutting-edge insights and solutions for clients. In his current role, Imad oversees a multidisciplinary global team that combines AI & ML, opinion research, data science, strategy & planning, and digital innovation to deliver seamless, integrated solutions. His leadership reflects a commitment to pushing boundaries and driving growth through the adoption of AI and emerging technologies. With over 25 years of experience spanning media, crisis management, business transformation, and disruptive innovation, Imad is a recognized industry leader. He is frequently invited as a speaker and mentor, focusing on topics such as strategy, disruption, and the intersection of emotional and artificial intelligence.



Laskin, Alexander V., *Quinnipiac University (USA)* • Alexander V. Laskin (Ph.D., University of Florida) is a professor at Quinnipiac University (USA). He is author of about 100 publications, focused primarily on investor relations, reputation management, and emerging technologies. He recently published: *Public Relations and Strategic Communication in Year 2050: Trends Shaping the Future of the Profession* (2025); *Organizational Reputation Management: A Strategic Public Relations Perspective* (2024); and *Investor Relations and Financial Communication* (2022). Laskin also served as a Fulbright Specialist, Page Legacy Scholar, Albert Schweitzer Fellow, Plank Center Fellow, and the People's United Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Innovation Faculty Fellow. Laskin offers consulting services in investor relations, research and evaluation, and international communications.



Lingwall, Andrew, *Pennsylvania Western University Clarion (USA)* • Dr. Andrew Lingwall is a Professor in the Department of Business, Economics, and Communication at PennWest University Clarion in Pennsylvania, USA. His research interests include crisis communication, and career readiness and writing skills of students in programs of journalism and mass communication. He is currently working on the second edition of his textbook, *The Basics of Media Writing: A Strategic Approach* for SAGE Publications. Lingwall spent his 2017 sabbatical in Denmark studying career readiness of public relations graduates at Aalborg University. In 2023, he travelled to Wellington, New Zealand, where he studied the government's crisis communications during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Ljepava, Nikolina, *American University in the Emirates (U.A.E.)* • Dr Nikolina Ljepava is Department Chair of Marketing and Management at American University in the Emirates College of Business Administration. She is a practice-oriented academic with extensive industry experience in areas of marketing research, marketing communications, e-business, and evaluation and assessment from America, Europe and Asia. She holds a PhD with specialization in Marketing Research from University of Belgrade, and two master's degrees in data analysis and e-business following a degree in Psychology from University of Windsor, Canada. Her research interests include online consumer behavior, psychology of social media, application of artificial intelligence, digital marketing, neuromarketing, survey methodology and online panel research. She is an author of numerous conference papers and articles and had successful media appearances on the above-mentioned topics. In 2024, she was awarded as the most influential women in education in the Middle East and recognized by Higher Education Digest as one of the leaders of the future in higher education. In addition to teaching, research and business experience, Dr. Nikolina is also dedicated to community development and engagement especially in the area of youth Internet safety education.



Lovari, Alessandro, *University of Cagliari (Italy)* • Alessandro Lovari is Associate Professor of Sociology of Communication at the Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Cagliari (Italy) where is the coordinator of the Phd program in Research and Social Innovation. Lovari's research focuses on public sector communication, public relations, and health communication, investigating Internet and social media impact on organisations' practices and citizens' behaviours in ordinary and crisis situations. He was visiting scholar at Purdue University, University of Cincinnati, University of South Carolina, Virginia Commonwealth University (USA), and Jyväskylä University (Finland). He is author of more than hundred publications in monographies, book chapters and communication journals.



Marinelli, Alberto, *Sapienza University (Italy)* • Alberto Marinelli is Chair of the Department of Communication and Social Research, and Deputy Rector for Innovative technologies for communication (Sapienza University of Rome). He is Full professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences, Sociology, Communication where he teaches Theories of mass communication and digital media and Connected & Social Tv. His main research interests concern the following fields: a) television and the ecosystem of connected viewing; b) civic engagement and participatory practices on social media; c) network society/platform society.



Mashiah, Itzhak, *University of Mississippi (USA)* • Dr. Itzhak Mashiah is a postdoctoral visiting scholar at New York University. He teaches in the Integrated Marketing Communication Department at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, MS, USA. His research interests include marketing communication, brand management, strategic business rhetoric, tech storytelling, and innovation discourse. Dr. Mashiah, a former marketing practitioner, has won numerous awards and honors.



Merle, Patrick F., *Florida State University (USA)* • Patrick F. Merle, Associate Professor (Ph.D. Texas Tech University, 2013) is a French native, formerly an international reporter for global news organizations. He currently works as Director of the School of Communication (2020-present) after having been Director of the Integrated Marketing Communication program. He is also an affiliated faculty with FSU's Institute for Successful Longevity. In 2024-2025, he serves on the leadership team of the AEJMC Public Relations Division as Chair of the Virtual Conference. He is on the editorial board of the International Journal of Strategic Communication, Corporate Communications: an International Journal, and the Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine

Milbourn, Sophie, *Thread and Bloom (UK)*

Möller, Caroline, *Macromedia University of Applied Sciences Cologne (Germany)*

Naylor-Leyland, Victoria, *Ada and Alan (UK)*



Palenchar, Michael James, *University of Tennessee (USA)* • Michael J. Palenchar (PhD, University of Florida), associate professor at the University of Tennessee, has more than three decades of professional and academic public relations experience. Research interests include risk communication, issues management and crisis communication, with specific contextual and industry focus related to chemical and other manufacturing, national security, and community right-to-know issues. His 30+ years of professional experience includes working in corporate, government, nonprofit, and agency environments, and he is also a risk communication and issues management research consultant for clients ranging from Fortune 50 companies to federal and local government and nongovernmental agencies. He had conducted workshops, seminar trainings and academic presentations in more than 20 countries.



Pappas, Konstantinos, *University of the Arts (UK)* • Dr Konstantinos Pappas is a Senior Lecturer in Communications and Media and the Course Leader of the BA (Hons) in Public Relations at London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London. His main research interests revolve around political communication, humanitarian communication, public affairs, persuasion and alt-right. Prior to joining LCC, he has taught at universities in Turkey, Greece and France and has worked as Head of communication for the main opposition party in the Greek Parliament and as journalist for over 20 years.



Rasquinha, Mark, *Auckland University of Technology (New Zealand)* • Mark Rasquinha is a freshly minted PhD researcher from Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Auckland, New Zealand. His research focuses on Political Public Relations, with a methodological emphasis on video ethnography. Mark is particularly interested in exploring the intersection of technology, society, and public relations practice, examining how these areas converge in political communication strategies. Prior to joining AUT, Mark worked as a public relations and management lecturer in India. Mark is a current member of the TOROA Research Center at AUT, where he actively contributes to ongoing research on the evolving dynamics within public relations in a digital age.



Ratkić, Hrvoje, *PR 365, VERN' University (Croatia)* • Hrvoje Ratkić is expert in digital marketing and public relations with extensive experience in PR. He is co-founder and partner at the PR 365 Communications agency and lecturer at VERN' University, Algebra Bernays University, and the Zagreb School of Business. Hrvoje holds a degree in Business Communication Management from VERN' University. He is author of scientific papers on digital marketing and a member of the Croatian Public Relations Association (HUOJ). His key skills include digital communication strategy, community management, and social media branding.



Ravazzani, Silvia, *Università IULM (Italy)* • Silvia Ravazzani (PhD) is Associate Professor in Management at the Department of Business LECB "Carlo A. Ricciardi", Università IULM, Italy, since 2019. Previously she held the same position at the Department of Management at Aarhus University, Denmark. Her research interests include risk and crisis communication, employee communication, diversity and inclusion, and social media. Her work has been published in journals such as *Group & Organization Management* and *Business Ethics Quarterly*. She serves in the editorial boards of *Journal of International Crisis and Risk Communication Research* and *European Journal of Cross-Cultural Competence and Management* and is Senior Project Leader of the Centre for Employee Relations and Communication at Università IULM.



Read, Kevin, *University of Greenwich (UK)* • Kevin is the CEO and founding director of strategic PR consultancy, Pembroke and Rye. Based in London, he has worked with global market leaders and challengers in financial and professional services, technology and energy for three decades. He specialises in strategic planning, thought leadership and board-level coaching. He is a visiting fellow in the business school at the University of Greenwich, a fellow of the CIPR and the RSA, and a MA supervisor for Cardiff University's International PR and Global Communications programme. Research interests include risk and crisis management, the ethics and application of AI, Women's football and business pitching.



Russell, Erin, *Quinnipiac University (USA)* • Erin Russell is a full-time graduate student at Quinnipiac University studying interactive media and communications. She holds a bachelor's degree in public relations. Erin is heavily involved in the Public Relations Student Society of America and volunteers with clients often. She has held an internship with Women for Women International, a global organization dedicating to supporting women and girls of conflict zones. Her areas of interest include campaign strategy, brand management, and non-profit communications. This is her first public relations research publication.

Saad, Mahinaz, *Independent Public Relations Practitioner (USA)*



Selakovic, Marko, *S P Jain School of Global Management, Dubai* • Dr Marko Selaković is manager, researcher and scholarly academic who is occupying various senior roles at SP Jain School of Global Management (currently Deputy Director and Assistant Professor). He is a strategic management and communications professional with more than 20 years of high-level experience in Europe and the Gulf countries. Selaković is specialized in strategic and international communications and development, stakeholder relations and crisis management. In addition to the academic positions, he is currently Chairman of Serbian Business Council in Dubai. Previously he was Head of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia Office to the UAE, Business Director of Expo 2020 Serbia, and Vice-president of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Gulf Chapter. His research interests include strategic, crisis, investor, and internal communications.



Smith, Brian G., *University of Mississippi (USA)* • Brian G. Smith, Ph.D., is Professor and Department Chair of Integrated Marketing Communications at the University of Mississippi. He is a Page Society Member, former Fulbright Scholar (Austria, 2017), and two-time Arthur W. Page Center Scholar. He is also Co-Editor of *International Journal of Strategic Communication*. Brian's research examines public relations and integrated marketing communications, with focuses on influencer relations, social media-based advocacy, and crisis communication. His work has been featured in the *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, and *Public Relations Review*. Following a career in brand marketing and editorial management, Brian earned a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in Communication. He is the co-editor of the forthcoming volume, *Research Methods for the Marginalized* (Routledge).



Smith, Staci B., *University of Mississippi (USA)* • Staci B. Smith, Ph.D., is Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Mississippi. Her work focuses on refugee relations, health communication, purpose-driven public relations, social media influencers, and mis/disinformation. Staci is a Fulbright Scholar and a two-time Arthur W. Page Center Legacy Scholar. As a Fulbright Scholar in 2023, Staci examined crisis coping and resilience among female business professionals following the Covid-19 pandemic and she taught at the University of Ljubljana. She has received two Arthur W. Page Center Legacy Scholar grants, one to study refugees and social advocacy (2023), and one to study AI, misinformation and influencer relations among government communicators (2024). Staci is the editor of the forthcoming volume *Research Methods for the Marginalized* (Routledge). She holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Communication from Purdue University, and a B.S. from Brigham Young University.

Song, Baobao, *Virginia Commonwealth University (USA)*

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An Interview with AI on Ethical Dilemmas of PR Professionals

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has sparked new ontological and methodological debates in public relations. While some scholars discuss whether AI will reduce the need for PR professionals, some believe that AI lacks emotional capacity and experience, which raise significant ethical concerns. Therefore, a critical question is raised on how AI tools can assist PR professionals in navigating ethical dilemmas. In that vein, this study aims to explore how AI tools can provide guidance to PR practitioners when dealing with ethical dilemmas.

Literature Review

The extant literature has highlighted AI's transformative impact on PR (Ardila, 2020) and its being an integral component of the field (Swiatek & Galloway, 2022). AI's contributions to PR include creating media lists, writing press releases, identifying media trends, scheduling meetings, sending emails, generating content, responding to social media posts, analyzing big data for insights, evaluating PR campaigns and developing more effective strategies. Research conducting interviews with PR professionals also show that practitioners recognize AI's potential of saving time and enhancing efficiency. However, professionals also acknowledge that AI raises some ethical problems. Other studies also contend that there has been an excessive focus on AI's potential for routine tasks, which overlook its broader implications (Galloway & Swiatek, 2018) and AI can lead to a diminish-

ing of humans' professional skills (Jeong & Park, 2023). Moreover, it is argued that AI is unable to fully replicate distinctly human capabilities such as creativity, empathy and critical thinking, implying that PR professionals cannot be displaced in the field (Biswal, 2020).

Methodology

This study conducts an in-depth interview with ChatGPT 4o, exploring how AI responds to ethical dilemmas of an PR professional. The researcher posed some ethical challenging questions to ChatGPT 4o, asking it to imagine itself working as a PR professional. Some of the prompts included "Imagine your boss asks you to hide information from employees that violates their rights", "Your client asks you to craft a message exploiting children's emotions for a product aimed at kids, offering you the job opportunity of a lifetime if you comply", "Your manager requests you cover up the an sexual assault issue, threatening to fire you if you refuse", "Your company claims to respect animal rights but remains silent on an animal rights law due to fear of opposing the government?". Follow-up questions tested the AI's ethical reasoning under personal pressure, such as financial need or the threat of unemployment.

Results and Conclusions

During the interview, ChatGPT 4o emphasized the importance of ethics and conscience in PR, suggesting that these principles are crucial for decision-making. The AI acknowledged that

while individuals' ethical decisions are guided by conscience, they can also be influenced by external factors such as financial constraints or job security. ChatGPT 4o highlighted the unique challenges faced by PR professionals in countries like Turkey, where unemployment, financial pressures and internal company dynamics complicate ethical decision-making. It also noted the importance of maintaining good relations with the government, as this can significantly impact the ethical decisions PR professionals must make. The AI also addressed the potential for PR professionals to struggle with balancing personal values and professional responsibilities. Factors such as financial hardships, fear of unemployment and pressure from management were identified as contributing to unethical decision-making.

Practical and Social Implications

This study offers an alternative approach to the literature that claims AI cannot make moral decisions or fully comprehend complex issues. The study demonstrates that AI can assist PR professionals in making ethical decisions when provided with accurate and realistic prompts written by ethically-conscious professionals. Therefore, AI can provide valuable guidance as long as it is used in conjunction with human conscience. Since this study was conducted exclusively using ChatGPT 4o, further research is warranted to explore how other AI tools would respond and guide to other ethically challenging situations that PR professional may face.

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Keywords

public relations, artificial intelligence, ethics, ethical dilemmas, conscience

Between convenience and professional myopia. Adoption of AI tools by would-be public relations specialists

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Recent studies show that the number of PR professionals using generative AI at work has grown nearly three times from March 2023 to Jan 2025 – from 28% to 75% (Muck Rack, 2025). Global and local PR agencies, independent practitioners, and communication units of corporations and NGOs have already introduced AI tools in their business practices, and some even appointed AI experts to launch innovative solutions and address organizational, cultural, and ethical challenges (USC, 2024).

PR professionals use AI tools mostly for brainstorming, writing and editing materials and media releases, research, preparing social media posts, and crafting pitches. Despite the majority of PR experts declaring that AI both speeds their work and boosts its quality, their principal concern is that younger PR specialists don't learn the basics of the profession and become too dependent on AI tools (Muck Rack, 2025).

Such reliance on technology may affect the prospects for the PR industry, as many tasks are likely to be performed by algorithms that will be able to replace humans. This notion is particularly relevant to Gen Z, who eagerly embraced such inventions as AI tools and LLM models and used them extensively in their professional lives.

Literature review

The literature on the relationship between PR and AI has grown fast since 2023. As summarized in a study on AI use among PR professionals, new research on AI and PR explored the adoption of AI tools in PR practice, competencies and skills required to effectively and ethically apply AI in PR, potential barriers and downsides of AI in PR (including dis- and misinformation, deepfakes, and other forms of misuse of AI), and future – mostly perceived as positive – role of AI in PR (Kaclova, 2024).

PR scholars analyzed the role of AI tools in education and stressed the importance of ethical conduct and avoiding cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty, which is possible when universities encourage students to use AI responsibly and establish clear guidelines for them. Universities should openly discuss these issues on a day-to-day basis to ensure that all emerging problems are addressed (Lim, 2024). Other researchers wrote that the decision to incorporate generative AI and the rules of its ethical application in PR writing classes paid off, as students felt empowered, treated seriously, and well-prepared to enter the PR workforce (Ryan, 2024). However, PR scholars know that their students and the PR industry have mostly surpassed their instructors in practical skills in using generative

AI. On the other hand, would-be PR specialists (including PR students) tend to disdain the consequences of the application of AI tools for the future of their vocations and the labor market.

Research questions

It might be worthwhile to investigate would-be PR practitioners' opinions on the discrepancy between the convenience of AI technology for its current users and its long-run impact on the PR industry. Hence, the research questions are:

RQ1 – How – if at all – was AI technology and its use in PR covered in the PR curricula (or in training and onboarding programs) for students, interns, and young PR professionals?

RQ2 – Have PR students, interns, and young professionals been given ethical and professional guidelines on the transparent and effective use of AI tools in PR during their studies or training?

RQ3 – Were PR students and young practitioners taught or instructed how to stay ahead of AI technology and become indispensable in their PR jobs?

Methodology

The research will include online surveys among young professionals and PR students. Respondents will be recruited via professional organizations, PR networks, and universities that run full-time PR sequences. Likert-type scales will measure their opinions to find a general mood about AI in PR among aspiring PR people.

Results and conclusions

The research will show young practitioners and PR students' preparedness to cope with AI's growing role in PR, make better use of AI tools, handle ethical considerations, and limit potential dependency on AI in their future jobs.

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Keywords

AI tools, PR ethics, PR future, professionalism, PR education

Deploying Artificial Intelligence and Dynamic Visual Artefacts (Avatars) in employee communication: Exploring perceptions and attitudes among corporate communicators

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Introduction and purpose of the study

While there is an emerging body of research on the use of generative Artificial Intelligence in public relations, an area that remains unexplored is that of the perceptions and attitudes toward AI generated visual representations used to communicate organisational messaging.

This paper aims to address this gap, by looking at the growing level of interest in using AI to generate visual communications, with a special focus on ‘human expressive’ avatars. Specifically, we aim to shed light on the potential implications, challenges and opportunities that can arise through the development and integration of avatars in employee communication.

Literature review

Internal communication is a vital tool in a practitioner’s armoury for enhancing employee understanding of organisational goals and informing them on what is needed to support organisational performance. It is, therefore, crucial for an organisation’s survival and success. Meaningful employee communication is based

on frequency, bi-directional flow, timeliness, and accuracy, (Arif et al., 2023) and symmetry (Kang & Sung, 2017). It plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of community, enhancing employee engagement and motivation, contributing to an increased willingness to advocate for the organisation and providing a positive effect on an organisation’s brand.

Considering that relationship building and management are central elements in employee communication, the use of avatars seems to disrupt these processes by eliminating the ‘human touch’ with a synthetic yet realistic alternative. Questions remain about how effective personal and physical attributes can be projected onto avatars (Kasahara & Sakata, 2025). However, the use of avatars is being widely weighed-up on grounds of efficiency, timeliness, low cost and the potential for multi-lingual communications. Balanced against this are ethical concerns and issues around the acceptance of artefact identities and unrealistic non-verbal communication (Nuswantoro & Richter, 2024).

Methodology

To obtain a sense of how communications practitioners, working for national and international organisations, view the potential use and deployment of avatars in their employee communications, we chose a three-stage, qualitative, grounded theory approach. Firstly, in 2024, we undertook in-depth interviews (lasting 30-60 minutes) with 8 senior practitioners working in the UK, Europe, Asia and the US, to explore their attitudes toward AI, avatars, ethical and practical concerns. All interviewees either oversaw or had direct responsibility for employee communications. Transcripts were coded and specific categories were used to develop a working framework to assess attitudes and perceptions to workplace communication. Secondly, to test and refine the framework, we will be running two focus groups that will comprise internal communications specialists with a specific interest in using avatars as part of their employee communications suite. Scheduled for Spring 2025, the groups will also explore the attitudes concerning the use of avatars and consider how they could be used to replace current ways of fulfilling many core functions of employee communication. Part 3 of the project will involve engaging with employees to investigate their responses to the implementation of new AI tools in employee communication.

Results and conclusions

The first stage of the research, now complete, revealed certain themes from the perspective of employee communication professionals. Consequently, in our working model we focus on i) AI/Avatar concerns/fears, ii) Gaps/unmet needs, iii) Opportunities iv) Ethical understanding v) Practicalities vi) Appetite for use vii) Sustainability. We expect the planned focus groups to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges as well as consider the ease, or otherwise, of delivering visual artefact solutions that address everyday as well as strategic communications

needs. Moreover, we seek to deepen our understanding of the practical implications and reception of AI in employee communication, contributing valuable insights to the evolving discourse on the intersection of AI and strategic organisational communication. We anticipate part 3 to provide informed research on the willingness of employees to receive, act and pass on communications from avatars. Although our sample is not large and not representative of the whole industry, our results can be used to inform practice as well as research.

Practical and social implications

The results can inform best practice and provide organisations with knowledge on how they can best use Avatars to cover communication needs and serve strategic goals while being cognisant of ethical concerns and risks associated with utilising digital artefacts. The wider implications for society are related to the introduction and integration of AI and Avatars in society and inform efforts to identify best use in other areas of everyday life, besides the professional realm.

Keywords

avatars, artificial intelligence, employee communication, attitudes, perceptions.

A South African Perspective on the Integration of AI in Corporate Communication Curriculum: Bridging the Gap between Academic Training and Professional Practice

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Introduction and literature review

AI is driving transformative changes across society, necessitating a fundamental reimagining of education to prepare individuals for evolving job markets and complex ethical challenges. As AI extends beyond technological boundaries, educational systems must adapt rapidly to equip learners with the critical skills, ethical frameworks, and technological literacy required to thrive in this dynamic landscape (Baptista & Belim, 2024; Jang et al., 2023).

This is also true for corporate communication (CC) education, where AI is transforming the profession's scope, thereby challenging established communication practices (Kelm & Johann, 2024). Previous research found that the rapid transformation of the profession had various negative effects on current CC professionals, such as AI anxiety, scepticism, and hesitancy toward embracing AI tools. These effects were caused by the professionals' limited understanding of AI's capabilities, limitations, and responsibilities regarding its use. To combat these negative effects, AI literacy is fundamental for successfully deploying AI in organizations. It is argued that such education should not only train communication professionals in the ethical and

practical application of AI within the communication function but also educate them to be change agents on the overall ethical and transparent use of AI within the organization (Kelm & Johann, 2024, Buhmann & Gregory, 2023).

However, the curriculum must be customized to reflect the profession's needs, diverse student populations, and various regions' specific socio-economic and technological landscapes (Damashevicius, 2024). This makes the inclusion of AI in the CC curriculum in South Africa, a developing country, even more challenging because of the diversity of SA students and the technological and AI divide between students.

Purpose of the study

Various studies have been done about the technical use of AI within the communication function, ethical considerations regarding the use of AI, and the role of the communication professional in the adoption and use of AI within the larger organization. However, there is a gap in the literature on how corporate communication curricula should be transformed to reflect these changes in the profession and empower future communication professionals to successfully address AI's strategic, operative, and ethical chal-

lenges, reflecting the diversity of the South African context.

To fill this gap, this study proposes the following questions:

RQ1 – How do South African CC professionals perceive the inclusion of AI in CC curricula?

RQ2 – What guidelines do South African CC professionals propose for incorporating AI in CC curricula?

Methodology

This study will adopt a qualitative research approach to explore South African CC professionals' perspectives on integrating AI into corporate communication curricula. Fifteen semi-structured interviews will be conducted with practitioners from diverse contexts, including the corporate and non-profit sectors, higher education institutions, and communication consultancies. Purposive sampling will ensure the inclusion of participants with varying levels of experience in communication and degrees of AI adoption in their practices. The findings aim to provide valuable insights into how AI can be meaningfully incorporated into curricula and offer practical guidelines on the content and methods for its integration.

Practical and social implications

Exploring the perspectives of South African corporate communication professionals on incorporating AI into curricula holds significant practical and social implications. The insights gained can guide academics in designing curricula that align with industry needs, ensuring graduates are not only technologically proficient but also culturally aware and ethically equipped to navigate the complex global landscape of AI. This study aims to foster a new generation of communication professionals capable of leveraging AI responsibly and inclusively within diverse social and cultural contexts by bridging the gap between academic training and professional practice.

Keywords

AI, corporate communication professionals, corporate communication curricula, South Africa

Artificial intelligence and student fear, resistance and creativity in the classroom. The public relations teaching perspective

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Introduction and purpose of study

This paper uses a reflective case study approach to explore the use of AI for teaching and learning among students studying a module (course) designed for first year public relations and journalism students at a UK university. The module taught students the competencies involved in researching, planning, and implementing a digital communications campaign through their experience of working with a client in an agency-type environment. This is an established module but for the 2023/4 academic year students were permitted to use generative AI tools both in the classroom and for their assessed work.

Literature review

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the classroom is a rapidly-developing pedagogical area. While fears about AI being used for poor academic practice (e.g. Oravec, 2023) are often justified, there is growing acknowledgement that students need opportunities to experiment with, use, and learn about AI in the classroom (e.g. Yang, A, 2024, Ho, 2021, Yang, J., 2023).

According to Yang (2024) it not appropriate to tell students they cannot use generative AI for their practice-based work when they will be

using it in their future public relations careers. These students may work in roles where they may be dealing with, e.g., the implications of poor use of AI use, issues of data security, issues surrounding malicious use of AI which affects client reputation - as well as for practice-based tasks (Gregory, 2023).

Methodology

This paper uses a reflective case study approach to explore the key issues revealed by this module's use of AI for teaching and learning using a mixed methodology of contemporaneous notes, anonymised students records, and lecturer reflections. It relates the themes to recent writing on AI from across the educational spectrum.

Practical and social implications

The paper reveals some complex and interlocking themes which will provide valuable learning for public relations educators. For instance, there was student resistance to using AI technology in the classroom. Some students wanted their own work to be recognised and didn't want any AI assistance. Some were happy to use AI to develop logos and graphics but didn't want to use it for written work.

Some students used AI to create graphics - not part of the assessed course content. Lecturers reflected that perhaps students were happier using AI in an area where they were not meant to be expert; their resistance was linked to competencies where they should excel (such as public relations writing). This area is a relatively unexplored in academic literature but Habib's (2024) research suggests that students saw AI as the 'easy way out' - they wanted to think on their own. Jussupow et al (2022) has also written in this area, noting considerable resistance to AI among established physicians, who did not want their knowledge or authority challenged. Meanwhile, student physicians took a more nuanced approach.

There was concern among some students about how the data and information they inputted into generative AI programmes would be used. However, some were not concerned, since much of their personal information was already known by social media companies. Some students actively rejected the use of AI in the classroom and were reluctant to even engage in discussions about its use. Gregory (2023) writes: "The reluctance to adopt AI tools appears most likely because of fear that technology could replace jobs and lack of confidence in using tools like ChatGPT which are error prone" (online). Bruce Smith (2024) adds that "concerns about transparency and the potential for Gen AI to replace human roles linger" (online).

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Keywords

Artificial intelligence; public relations; education; pedagogy

Race, diversity, and social mobility in the public relations industry

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Introduction and purpose of study

This paper explains and develops theory and research on race, diversity, and social mobility through the lens of the lived experience of practitioners from diverse backgrounds in the British public relations industry. Its aim is to provide a snapshot of the working lives of such practitioners in modern Britain.

Analysis of interviews demonstrates why more radical action is needed to create an equitable workplace. The interviews illuminate areas such as critical race theory, social mobility, workplace bias, social class, and accent - and highlights where issues of discrimination and bias persist. It also shines a light on schemes designed to improve social mobility and diversity in public relations and discusses their merits in the light of practitioner experiences.

In an era where diversity initiatives are under the spotlight it demonstrates why an understanding and discussion of issues relating to diversity are vital if industries are to be relevant and flourish.

Literature Review

While the intersection of race, class and place and its link to social mobility and oppression is the object of social scientific research (e.g., Anthias, 2013; Bilge & Denis, 2010), there has been less academic work in this area focusing specifically on public relations, although there are notable exceptions (e.g., Edwards, 2014; Pompper,

2013; Vardeman-Winter and Place, 2013). It is this work that has increased awareness in the public relations industry about the marginalised position of practitioners from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds and the disadvantages they face in the workplace (e.g. Edwards & Aulakh, 2024), especially when diverse positions are intersected with other characteristics such as disability, gender, age, accent, and geographical location.

Methodology

The practitioners were recruited through the researchers' networks and extended connections, as well as through collaboration with the administrators and managers of industry training programmes designed to increase diversity in the industry. This approach aimed to capture a broad representation of the diverse nature of British public relations professionals. Around 20 interviewees were recruited and interviews carried out via Teams and Zoom in 2023/2024.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed with the transcription accompanied by observation notes. Data analysis was carried out using Atlas.ti version 24.1.1 software.

Results and conclusions

This paper explores uses interviews to explore the lived experiences of practitioners from diverse backgrounds in the UK public relations

industry. the interviews. Themes include:
Whether leadership and social mobility programmes help to increase awareness of diversity issues and allow practitioners to progress their career or whether they reproduce a white, middle class worldview
The benefits of a diverse public relations workforce and problem of ‘racial capitalism’
How factors such as race, class and geographical location intersect.
Discrimination and British regional accents
How and where Black, Asian and ethnic minority practitioners view discrimination in the public relations industry.

Practical and social implications

This paper presents a dynamic interrogation of complex topics through the voices of practitioners. It also allows the application of theory to real-world situations, thus showing the value of academic research and adds to the literature on race, diversity and social mobility by exploring these factors through the lived experiences of public relations practitioners in a way that throws light on the discrimination faced by practitioners. This research will allow practitioners, academics and students to explore their own practice and have conversations with others about this subject.

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Keywords

race, diversity, social mobility, public relations

How is Artificial Intelligence Shaping Crisis Communication? A Systematic Review of Interdisciplinary Research

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

As the complexity of contemporary crises increases, the need for innovative communication strategies has become more critical. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool in crisis communication. This study provides an updated overview of AI's role in crisis communication by systematically reviewing existing interdisciplinary research to highlight trends, gaps, and opportunities for further exploration.

Literature Review

A systematic review of 212 articles from both communication and non-communication journals (SSCI-indexed) was conducted to identify key trends in AI's application to crisis communication. The review categorizes studies based on theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, AI definitions, and the types and locations of crises addressed. Since 2019, there has been a noticeable increase in AI's role in crisis communication, driven by interdisciplinary interest and the global COVID-19 pandemic. While many studies focus on AI applications like sentiment analysis and chatbots, there remains a lack of cohesive theoretical frameworks.

Methodology

The study utilized a systematic review methodology, coding articles based on various factors

such as theoretical approach, AI definitions, crisis types, and geographic scope. This comprehensive analysis allows for a detailed understanding of the current state of AI research in crisis communication and the key themes emerging in the field.

Results and Conclusions

The findings highlight several key trends, including the growing focus on AI in crisis communication post-2019 and the predominance of content analysis and systematic review methodologies in the literature. However, there is a notable gap in empirical studies that assess the real-world effectiveness of AI tools. Despite the widespread focus on functions such as sentiment analysis and chatbots, the literature often lacks integrated models for AI-mediated crisis communication. The review concludes by advocating for the development of cohesive frameworks that integrate AI into established crisis communication theories, addressing the need for interdisciplinary research approaches.

Practical and Social Implications

This study calls for expanding theoretical and methodological approaches to studying AI in crisis communication. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, future research can better address ethical concerns such as privacy, bias, and transparency. In turn, these efforts

will help refine the use of AI in managing crises more effectively across diverse contexts.

Keywords

artificial Intelligence, crisis communication, chat-bots, machine learning, emergency management, content analysis, interdisciplinary research

Trust, authenticity and artificial intelligence. AI created content and its consequences for building symmetrical relationships with audience members

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Recent data from the US and UK shows that copywriting and editing remain the most important activities for PR professionals and are performed on a daily basis, regardless of their level of seniority. Nearly 70% of practitioners are open to using AI to perform these tasks. There is also evidence that PR releases are often used by journalists to create promotional communications without any changes (Macnamara, 2014). In this regard, new legislation now requires that social media content be labelled as being created using AI. Although from a legal perspective, AI cannot be considered the author and attribution of AI-generated text is not possible (Lee, 2023), audiences are said to apply specifically human rules and behavioural expectations to interactions mediated by computers, even though they are consciously aware that they are not interacting with other people (Hancock et al., 2023). This phenomenon is called *ethopoeia* (Nass & Moon, 2000).

To date, the implications for building *ethopoeic* relationships between PR communicators and audiences mediated by AI content have not been sufficiently explored in PR scholarship. This neglect is particularly evident among practitioners: when asked about the dangers of using

AI in their work, practitioners do not seem to be concerned about the impact of AI-generated content on trust and authenticity of the relationships with organisations they represent. Trust seems to be important not only from a practical point of view. Although PR scholars have previously recognised the role of trust and authenticity in relationship building (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), the mechanism of forming trust, defined as “one party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (Hon & Grunig, 1999), has not been sufficiently tackled (Valentini, 2020). Following this definition, investigating and evaluating how AI-generated content can affect the trust of audiences (RQ1) can be seen as a manifestation of building symmetrical relationships. In line with the above rationale, the present study examines the confidence-related antecedents of trust: informativeness, credibility and authenticity.

The present study used an experimental factorial design (2x2) and 177 participants were recruited via an online study management system. Demographic data were collected, including information on social media use. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (2 brand familiar/unfamiliar vs 2 human generat-

ed/AI generated). In the familiar condition, an original press release from a well-known sports brand about the launch of a new shoe was used, and a similar press release with the same details was created using Chat GPT. In the unfamiliar condition, the same two press releases were used, but the name of the brand was removed, and a fictitious one was provided. In each condition, participants were told that they were about to view a social media post and were informed whether the information was created by a human content creator or by artificial intelligence. Dependent measures included ratings of the post's informativeness, credibility, trustworthiness, and purchase intention of the brand.

The results revealed a regression model that confirmed authenticity and credibility as two highly significant antecedents of trust ($r^2_{\text{adj}} = .28, p < .001$). ANOVA also revealed a fully interactive effect of credibility on trust ($F(3,147) = 4.92, p = .042, r^2_{\text{adj}} = 0.24$): in the human-generated content condition, familiar brands were considered more credible than unfamiliar brands.

A completely opposite effect occurred when comparing posts created by artificial intelligence. AI-created posts of the unfamiliar brand were considered more credible than AI-created posts of the familiar brand. There was a moderating effect of the relationship between AI-generated content and authenticity ($\text{Int} = -.53, \text{SE} = 16, t = -3.39, p = .0009$). Human-generated content was only perceived as authentic when it was rated as highly informative. While there was no difference in perceived authenticity between human- and AI-generated communication at low and moderate levels of perceived informativeness, human-generated press releases were perceived as highly authentic at high levels of perceived informativeness. In addition, authenticity (moderated by informativeness) and trustworthiness emerged as strong predictors of purchase intention ($F(2,142) = 38.05, p < .001, r^2_{\text{adj}} = .34$).

This study confirmed authenticity and credibility as two important antecedents of trust. Etho-peic expectations of a “person behind the machine” manifested themselves more strongly for familiar brands, so that the familiarity effect of a brand helps to personify a person behind the machine. The results suggest that PR communicators need to ensure that communication is characterised by a high degree of informativeness when they are named as authors. Separately, human communicators should be used as authors to establish the credibility of PR content about familiar brands. In addition, this study indirectly suggests a healthy level of scepticism towards AI-generated content but advises caution when using AI content to communicate with audiences.

Keywords

Trust, Authenticity, Credibility, Artificial Intelligence, Relationships

Preparing internal communication practitioners for the changing AI corporate environment in South Africa

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The rapid development and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into various sectors have significantly transformed how businesses operate and communicate. Internal communication, a critical function that facilitates collaboration, information dissemination, and employee engagement within organisations, has also been impacted by the advent of AI technologies. From automated messaging systems and chatbots to data analytics tools that optimize communication strategies, AI is reshaping the approaches used by internal communication practitioners. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into communication strategies, it is important to examine how these AI technologies influence the roles, practices, and skillsets of internal communication practitioners.

Higher education institutions play a critical role and have the responsibility to equip graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt to the transforming internal environment with continuous technological changes. Furthermore, institutions of higher education should educate students not only on how AI works but also on its ethical implications. This will empower internal communication practitioners to make responsible decisions when implementing AI-driven strategies within organisations, ensuring that AI enhances rather than undermines

transparency, trust, and organisational culture.

Despite the practical importance of preparing internal communication practitioners for the future (with AI), little research has been done in the field of internal communication in South Africa (Sutton, 2023). Recently, the Commission on Public Relations Education reported on the requirements for public relations professionals to enter the workplace in the United States of America (CPRE, 2024) – not relevant to the South African context. It is argued that the South African culture is different from others found globally and has never been completely understood by Western scholars, probably due to the limited information on communication management and public relations available in the country or Africa (Nutsugah & Anani-Bossman, 2023; Steyn, 2005). Given South Africa's context-specific challenges (including bridging divides among internal stakeholders of different cultures and 12 different official languages, managing the legacy of its history on racial dynamics and social disparities internally, the digital divide, and navigating a complex economic and political workplace environment), internal communication practitioners in this developing-world corporate context may be reluctant to adopt international solutions.

This study explores the perceptions of communication management and public relations lecturers at higher education institutions in South Africa, teaching components of internal communication to prepare future internal communication practitioners for the changing AI corporate environment in a unique and challenging country.

Literature review

The study is conducted from a systems and reflective approach and will use a multi-dimensional theoretical framework to accommodate the complex research context. Elements from the following theories will be incorporated into the theoretical framework: strategic communication management theory, stakeholder relationship management theory, technological acceptance model, uses and gratification theory, and sustainability theory.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach is followed by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with academics from various higher education institutions in South Africa, selected through purposive known-group sampling (Du Plooy, 2009). The selected participants are lecturers of communication management and public relations modules which integrate components of the internal communication discipline into the curricula. Their inclusion is appropriate for this study, as the participants' academic views on the topic are of value. Data saturation is used to determine the number of interviewees; until the information is found to repeat itself and saturation is reached, as described in the qualitative research tradition. Data collection is scheduled for February to March 2025.

Results and conclusions

The expectation is to uncover higher education in South Africa's readiness to play a role in pre-

paring internal communication practitioners for the future. It is expected that academics in communication management and public relations reflect on their teaching to ensure that future internal communication practitioners are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and ethical frameworks necessary for a continuously changing AI corporate environment, specifically in a volatile South African landscape with many unique challenges. It is also expected that the opportunities and challenges that educators of internal communication practitioners face as AI tools evolve will be emphasised in the findings.

Practical and social implications

The study fills the gap in the academic milieu, as it is probably the only study that explores the academic view, responsibility and readiness of preparing internal communication practitioners for the changing AI corporate environment in the South African context – a unique setting with its own challenges.

Furthermore, lessons learned from this study could guide and contribute to the curriculum development in the fields of public relations and corporate communication for South African higher education institutions, educating future internal communication practitioners. Future studies could build on this study and combine global information on AI-related education for the internal communication discipline in an ever-changing environment.

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Keywords

Internal communication; Internal communication practitioners; Higher education; Artificial Intelligence

Developing a Digital Communication Management Framework for South African Sport Organizations

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

Digital marketing strategies within sport organisations have increasingly embraced sustainability and ethical practices due to heightened awareness among stakeholders. The purpose of this study is to investigate sustainability and ethical engagement as essential components in enhancing not only digital marketing but communication management practices and stakeholder relationships within sport organisations in South Africa in a digital space. This research is an element of the PhD study conducted by Degenaar (2024), which forms part of a larger, comprehensive framework specifically developed for enhancing digital marketing strategies in sport organisations across South Africa. This research acknowledges that marketing is a critical element within the broader sphere of communication, particularly in enhancing organisational relationships with stakeholders.

Literature Review

Existing literature highlights sustainability and ethical communication as critical for building trust, credibility, and long-term relationships with stakeholders (Melton & MacCharles, 2021). Ethical practices in communication include transparency, authenticity, and accountability, essential in responding effectively to stakeholder expectations regarding environmental and social responsibility (Evans et al., 2022).

Furthermore, stakeholder-centric communication is emphasized as a cornerstone of successful sport organisations' digital marketing, contributing significantly to community building and loyalty by offering exceptional value that surpasses the expectations of the sport stakeholder (Fischer, 2019). According to Cheesman (2023), integrating sustainability initiatives within digital marketing strategies has become increasingly essential in sport organisations due to growing environmental concerns. Parent and Hoyer (2018) argue that ethical and sustainable communication practices strengthen relationships across interconnected sport sectors (government, non-profit, and corporate), enhancing overall organisational performance and stakeholder engagement.

Methodology

This study adopted a multi-method research design employed by Degenaar (2024), combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The study consisted of:

Semi-structured interviews with nine sport marketing specialists from different organizations to explore their digital marketing practices. **Content analysis** of digital functionalities, examining websites and social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) to identify best practices.

An electronic survey administered to sport

stakeholders (fans and participants) to assess perceptions of digital communication management strategies.

For this paper, the focus specifically centres on sustainability and ethical engagement (Stage 5 of the framework).

Results

The results indicate that sport organisations, which successfully implement sustainability and ethical engagement practices into their digital marketing within the context of communication management and a digital global arena, experience heightened stakeholder trust and loyalty. Stakeholders expressed strong support for sport organisations that transparently communicated their sustainability initiatives, demonstrating genuine commitment and ethical responsibility. Additionally, stakeholders valued the visibility and accessibility of sustainability-related information on digital platforms, reinforcing positive brand perceptions about the sport organisation's commitment to environmental and social responsibility due to their transparent communication of sustainability issues. The findings also highlighted specific practices such as regular sustainability reporting, community-driven initiatives, and consistent ethical messaging as influential factors in stakeholder satisfaction and engagement.

Conclusions

Organisations integrating sustainable and ethical engagement into their marketing strategies reported greater stakeholder satisfaction and strengthened organisational reputation. The findings underscore the importance of authentic and transparent content as critical to the long-term success and credibility of sport organisations. In the era of digital marketing sustainability has become increasingly relevant as stakeholders prefer brands that demonstrate responsibility and ethical considerations in their

digital marketing, further emphasizing the integral role of sustainability within the broader context of communication.

Limitations and future research

The study's focus on South African sport organisations and a limited sample may constrain generalisability. Future research could expand to other regions or levels of sport and explore how technologies like AI can further support ethical, transparent communication. Long-term studies could also examine sustained impacts over time.

Practical and Social Implications

This study provides actionable insights for marketing professionals within sport organisations to effectively implement sustainable and ethical marketing practices. Socially, the adoption of these practices promotes environmental responsibility, ethical conduct, and enhanced community engagement, contributing positively to broader societal objectives. While this study did not examine the role of AI-driven digital tools, the findings suggest that future research should explore how these technologies can support sustainability and ethical engagement by enhancing transparency, personalising stakeholder communication, and ensuring responsible, accountable digital interactions.

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Keywords

Communication, Digital marketing, Ethical Engagement, Sustainability, Stakeholder Communication, South Africa, Sport Organisations

Proposing Artificial Intelligence-Managed Corporate Social Responsibility (AIM-CSR) Communication Framework

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Communication Framework

Generative AI (GenAI) technologies are sparking enthusiasm and existential concerns regarding their disruptive potential across industries such as public relations, advertising, and marketing communication. A particularly significant area of impact is business-society relations, explored through topics such as AI for Social Good and AI in corporate social responsibility (CSR) (e.g., Wu et al., 2024). Although extensive research has highlighted communication as central to effective CSR strategies, and despite increasing attention to AI's role in social good and CSR, limited research exists on AI-enabled CSR communication, aside from isolated studies addressing environmental sustainability communication. This gap needs to be addressed, because AI can profoundly influence CSR communication, an area already fraught with challenges such as audience skepticism, accusations of various *washings*, and the subsequent corporate reluctance to communicate CSR efforts. AI's myriad promises and perils could further intensify these complexities.

In response, this paper proposes the Artificial Intelligence-Managed Corporate Social Responsibility (AIM-CSR) Communication Framework. Grounded in an extensive literature review of AI applications in public relations, advertising, and marketing communication, this framework ex-

tends the well-established Du et al. (2010) CSR communication framework to incorporate the disruptive potential of GenAI technologies. By generating insights across public relations, advertising, and marketing communication and integrating the role of GenAI technologies into Du et al.'s (2010) framework, this paper advances interdisciplinary CSR communication theory.

Literature Review

AI and Business-Society Relationship

This section reviews literature on the related fields of AI for Social Good, and AI for CSR (Wu et al., 2024).

AI and Communication

This section reviews literature in the fields of AI in public relations (e.g., Wu et al., 2024), advertising and marketing communications (e.g., Ford et al., 2023).

CSR Communication

This section reviews the highly cited CSR communication framework by Du et al (2010) that has been used extensively in public relations research to examine CSR communication.

AI and CSR Communication

Finally, this section reviews literature on AI and CSR communication.

Method

This is a conceptual paper that proposes a theoretical framework based on a thorough and extensive review of interconnected bodies of literature on AI and CSR communication.

Results

Based on the review of literature, this section proposes the AIM-CSR Communication framework, with subsections explaining each aspect of the framework. See Figure 1 for an initial representation of the proposed framework. Theories used to explain these variables and their influence include relational theory, psychological reactance theory, technology acceptance model, uses and gratifications, and para-social relationships.

Practical and Social Implications

Practically, the AIM-CSR Communication framework can guide companies in leveraging AI responsibly for CSR communication, by paying attention simultaneously to its promises and perils. Done responsibly, AI can strengthen personalized, creative, targeted CSR communication campaigns that adapt dynamically to stakeholder sentiment, leading to positive social and business

outcomes. Socially, responsibly personalized CSR campaigns can resonate more deeply with specific demographics, increasing diverse public participation and support for initiatives, strengthening stakeholder engagement in CSR initiatives. By prioritizing data-driven decisions, the framework can lead to better alignment between corporate efforts and societal needs.

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Keywords

CSR Communication, AI for Social Good, Communication Framework

AIM-CSR COMMUNICATION

MODERATORS

OUTCOMES

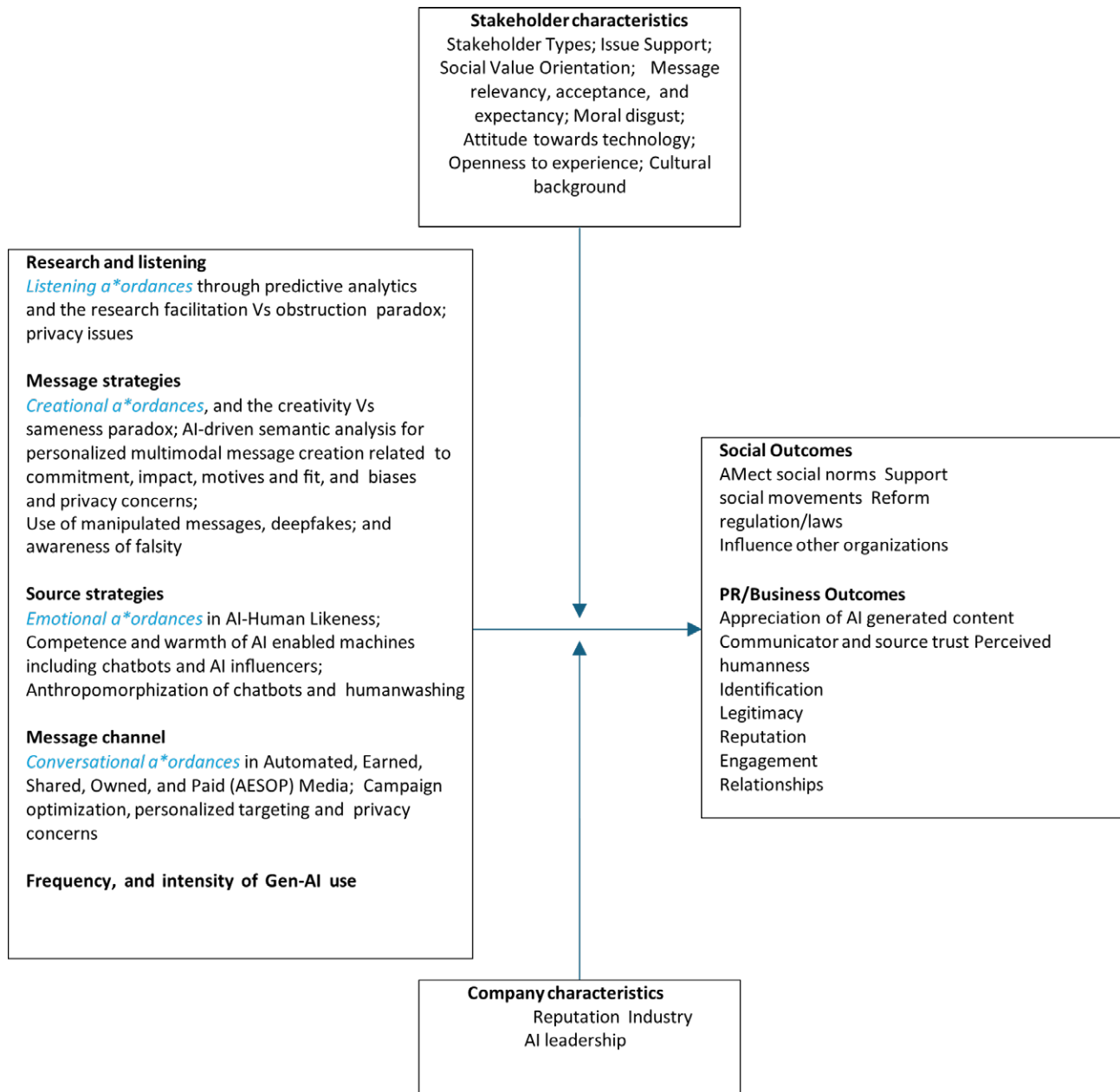


Figure 1: AIM-CSR Communication Framework

Intersectional Gender Representation in Corporate Social Media and AI-Imagery: From Progress to Perils?

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Public relations significantly contributes to social justice by promoting diverse and inclusive representation in corporate communication content, because as a discipline rooted in strategic storytelling, public relations influences how narratives about individuals and communities are shaped. While advertising research has found substantial evidence for the widespread use of gender stereotypes, emergent research in public relations has revealed reduced biases in representation in corporate social media posts. However, new challenges arise as generative AI (GenAI) tools for image creation gain traction. Increasingly utilized by content producers for its ability to deliver lowcost content consistently, GenAI introduces fresh concerns about perpetuation of biases, particularly through visual imagery.

Accordingly, situated within the Inclusive, Responsible Communication in Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI) framework (Logan & Waymer, 2024) and the Stereotype Content Model (SCM), our study employed visual social semiotics to content analyze the compositional, representational, and interactional meanings of human-versus AI-generated images in corporate social media posts. The following research questions guided our study:

- RQ1: How is gender represented intersectionally in corporate social media posts?
- RQ2: How is gender represented intersectionally in corresponding AI generated images?

- RQ3: How does intersectional gender representation in corporate social media posts compare to AI-generated visuals?

Literature Review

Public Relations Research on Gender

We reviewed public relations research on gender, including work at the intersections of race, feminism and queer theories, and conclude by highlighting limited research on gender representation, especially in corporate social media.

Stereotype Content Model, and Intersectional Representation

We reviewed literature on biases and stereotypes, focusing on the SCM, and the decades-long advertising research on gender representation.

AI Models, Stereotypes, and Biases

We reviewed research on biases and stereotypes in AI-generated images and argue that while large scale quantitative studies on massive datasets have found evidence of gender stereotypes in AI-generated images, these studies have only examined gender. An in-depth, qualitative analysis of intersectional gender representation is much needed.

Theoretical Framework for Public Relations, Diversity, and AI

This section reviewed the Inclusive, Responsible, Communication in Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI) framework, proposed to help the public relations field navigate the intersections of AI and race. We aim to integrate it with SCM and offer an extended IRCAI framework that also addresses intersectional gender representation.

Method

We conducted two quantitative content analyses using a visual social semiotic approach. Two coders analyzed 20 posts each in a pilot study to establish inter-coder reliability.

Study 1: The sample included 100 Fortune 500 business-to-consumer companies across diverse sectors. We selected two Instagram posts per company that visibly represented gender, collecting suitable posts from December 2023 to October 2024.

Study 2: We replicated Study 1 using AI-generated images created with DALL-E 2 and ChatGPT. AI-generated textual descriptions of original Instagram posts guided image generation, enabling comparison between AI-generated and original visuals. Chi-square tests of independence were employed in both studies to analyze whether intersectional gender representation significantly varied across key dimensions. To ensure comparability, identical coding categories and statistical procedures were used for both datasets.

Results

RQ1 asked about intersectional gender representation in corporate social media posts. The chi-square analyses revealed no statistically significant differences in gender representation across occupational roles ($\chi^2 = 2.07$, $p = 0.558$), location/context ($\chi^2 = 2.90$, $p = 0.575$), or trait stereotypes ($\chi^2 = 2.37$, $p = 0.499$), suggesting

that gender representation in corporate visuals is relatively balanced. RQ2 asked about intersectional gender representation in corresponding AI-generated images. Analysis revealed statistically significant differences across occupational roles ($\chi^2 = 124.41$, $p < .001$), location/context ($\chi^2 = 121.57$, $p < .001$), and trait stereotypes ($\chi^2 = 117.62$, $p < .001$), suggesting that AI image-generation tools may replicate or even amplify existing gender biases. To answer RQ3 on comparison, the study found that while corporate visuals depicted some level of gender differentiation, AI-generated images appeared to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, possibly reflecting biases inherent in AI training datasets.

Implications

Practically, the findings provide insights for corporate content strategies, emphasizing the importance of inclusive AI systems. Organizations can use the findings to evaluate their AI-generated imagery, ensuring alignment with ethical standards for diversity and inclusion. By addressing stereotypes, organizations can enhance the inclusivity of visual content in an AI-driven media landscape.

Socially, the research foregrounds the potential for AI to reinforce existing stereotypes and biases that could further hamper the attainment of social justice. Additionally, the study highlights the need for greater public awareness about the origins and implications of AI-generated content, fostering critical engagement with AI-generated media. Ultimately, it advocates for responsible organizational AI practices that prioritize social equity and representation that can help to achieve gender equality.

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Keywords

Gender representation, Corporate social media, AI, Visuals

Unpacking the Vulnerabilities of PR Professionals in the Age of Generative AI

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI (GAI) is transforming public relations practices, challenging the conventional understanding of professional responsibilities and creating uncertainty, fear, and controversy. Although industry guidelines and scholarly discussions provide broad recommendations, they fail to capture the nuanced vulnerabilities PR practitioners face as they adapt to GAI. This study addresses this gap by examining the diverse dimensions of vulnerability PR professionals experience in both in-house and agency settings. By exploring these challenges, this research provides a deeper understanding of how AI integration affects PR professionals beyond its functional applications. It offers insights into human-centered, sustainable GAI adoption protocols pertinent to the PR profession. Our overarching research question is:

What are the various dimensions of vulnerability encountered by public relations professionals working in-house and within agencies?

Literature review

Research on AI in public relations has gained significant interest over the past few years, particularly in its application across different PR contexts. Existing PR scholarship, though addressing AI adoption and ethics, remains instrumentalist, neglecting the emotional and profes-

sional uncertainties PR professionals face as AI reshapes their roles. PR is already a high-stress profession marked by burnout, exacerbated by an “always on” culture that has disrupted work-life balance. In 2024, 44% of PR professionals quit their jobs due to stress (Pardon, 2024). The rapid adoption of AI introduces further anxieties, including job displacement, loss of creative agency, and ethical dilemmas. Despite widespread advocacy for ethical AI governance, discussions often emphasize analytical guidelines based on moral-philosophical principles, while the actual experiences of professionals, including their anxieties, uncertainties, and emotional challenges in adapting to AI-driven changes, receive less attention. This focus risks neglecting why ethical AI adoption must align with PR professionals’ well-being. A shift is needed from viewing AI in PR as merely a tool to examining how it reconfigures professionals’ identities and work conditions.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured, in-depth interviews to explore professionals’ perspectives on ethical AI use in public relations. From April to August 2023, 21 professionals working in public relations and strategic communication across various experience levels and sectors—including private and nonprofit organizations—were interviewed via

Zoom. These interviews lasted between about 17 minutes to over one hour. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used to recruit participants. Data analysis followed Place (2022) to identify patterns and themes in participants' responses. An additional ten interviews are planned for spring 2025 to capture evolving attitudes and perspectives.

Results and conclusions

The findings revealed a multifaceted landscape of vulnerabilities that PR professionals experience as they navigate the integration of AI into their profession, including technical, profession-related, psychological, and organizational aspects.

The technical vulnerability lies in many professionals struggling to align their research and training with the rapid pace of innovation and lacking the time and resources to master AI/GAI tools effectively. This results in an inability to make informed adoption decisions. In addition to technical limitations, AI also brings about profession-related vulnerabilities, particularly concerns over job displacement, especially at the entry level, and the loss of previously valuable skills. Practitioners must also renegotiate professional boundaries, grappling with added legal responsibilities that were not previously within their role scope.

Psychological vulnerabilities arise when professionals strive to maintain the human aspect of their field while struggling with low self-efficacy in decision-making. Heightened competition—between agencies, among professionals, and even between individuals and AI-driven technologies—exacerbates career uncertainties and fuels anxieties about future career trajectories. Organizational factors compound these vulnerabilities, with many professionals citing a lack of institutional guidelines and value internal policies to support appropriate AI use. Collective-

ly, these vulnerabilities underscore the complex and often precarious position of PR professionals as they attempt to integrate AI while maintaining professional identity, ethical integrity, and career stability.

We are collecting new data this spring to capture the evolving dynamics of professionals' lived experiences with GAI, ensuring a more up-to-date and comprehensive understanding of its impact.

Practical and social implications

This study contributes to the ongoing conversations on GAI's impact on the PR workplace. By examining users' vulnerabilities, this study supports the development of more sustainable and ethical job practices, benefiting both organizations and the well-being of PR practitioners. In addition to industry practice, these insights can inform strategic communication curricula, helping universities prepare future professionals with the knowledge and ethical frameworks needed for an AI-enhanced workplace.

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Keywords

Generative AI, Public Relations Professionals, Vulnerability

Lost in Translation? AI Disruption in Language Services as a Mirror for Public Relations Industry Transformation

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Introduction and Purpose

This presentation will examine how generative AI is transforming professional translation and interpretation services, offering important insights for public relations and communication management professionals facing similar AI-driven disruption. The presentation will explore parallels between these allied communication fields, focusing on: (1) How are language professionals adapting to AI integration? (2) What ethical and practical challenges emerge when AI assumes communicative, creative and analytical roles? (3) How can we maintain professional standards and authentic human expertise while leveraging AI capabilities?

Literature Review

While public relations grapples with AI's impact on content creation and message dissemination, the translation industry's longer history with AI technologies offers valuable lessons. From terminology tools to neural machine translation, language professionals have navigated multiple technological disruptions (Koehn, 2020). The literature reveals tensions between efficiency gains and concerns about standardisation, creativity loss, and authenticity - challenges now emerging in public relations practice.

Methodology

This study employs mixed methods research examining: (1) Survey data from 5,000+ professional linguists through the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL); (2) Analysis of early lessons from AI technology adoption in language services; (3) Case studies of AI implementation in translation and interpreting workflows; and (4) insights on the ethics of AI deployment in professional contexts.

Results and Conclusions

The findings reveal complex professional adaptation patterns: while 80% of language professionals use AI-enhanced tools, only 37% have fully integrated AI workflows, with nearly half reporting increased cognitive demands rather than simplified processes. Key challenges mirror those facing public relations: accuracy concerns, data privacy risks, potential "fatal errors," and fears about professional devaluation. However, opportunities exist in content enhancement, quality assurance, and workflow optimisation when AI is deployed thoughtfully and ethically.

Practical and Social Implications

For communication practitioners and educators, this study provides guidance from a related field on the challenges of developing ethical,

hybrid human-AI workflows while maintaining professional standards and authentic outputs. It offers insights on the challenges in enterprise AI implementations, the need for wider industry and societal education, appropriate regulation and the pressing need for practitioners to invest in their own Continuous Professional Development in all things AI. Finally, the findings emphasise the importance of preserving human expertise and oversight and applying critical reasoning and ethical judgment in professional contexts, while leveraging the enormous possibilities of AI capabilities responsibly.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, communication management, professional communication, technological disruption, ethical implications

The Immediate Experiment. Mobile Devices' Diffusions and Adoptions--and the Lives of Public Relations Professionals

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on the processes, influences, and effects of mobile devices, particularly on public relations practitioners. It begins by requesting we think about the globe's rapid adoption and diffusion of mobile devices as an "experiment"--with millions of users representing the experiment's treatment group, and without a recognized control group. Despite this experiment's increasingly profound effects, it lacks longitudinal insights. In turn the paper's research question emerges: "What have mobile devices 'wrought' globally on the principles, practices, and procedures of communication management among public relations professionals?

Literature and Methodology

The study draws conclusions from five sources:

(1) Recent scholarly presentations at international academic conferences analyzing the influences of mobile devices on communication management generally and on public relations specifically. Among them, Downes' titled: (1) *Profound Changes: Mobile Devices. Potential Consequences. And the Lives of Today's Public Relations Professionals* (2024); (2) *An Up-to-Date Analysis of The Historical Evolution--Presented*

Step-by-Step--of Social Media's Influence on Capitol Hill's Communication Management Choices (2024); and (3) *What's Going on with that Device Attached to Your Hip?: The Downfalls of Mobile Device Dependency* (2021).

(2) Insights to be shared at the May 2025 Hong Kong Conference, "Media for All: Breaking Barriers: Media Localization in the Age of Global Platforms," via an invited lecture titled *Three Decades Riding a Revolution's Rollercoaster: Ten Insights Providing a Kaleidoscopic Overview of the Platform Society's Influence on the World's Political, Economic, Cultural--and Ethical--Systems*.

(3) Findings from Haidt's broad array of research summarized in his book, *The Anxious Generation* (2024). It points out the "great rewiring of childhood has interfered with children's social and neurological development, covering everything from sleep deprivation to attention fragmentation, addiction, loneliness, social contagion, social comparison, and perfectionism." All such conditions are also similarly correlated with adult populations.

(4) A review of 75 articles discussing mobile devices influences on communication management generally and, by extension, public

relations principles and practices specifically. Roughly fifty percent were from the social sciences (primarily from the mass communication/public relations literature); a quarter from the humanities; and a quarter from the natural sciences (with comments from the medical literature supported by with three-person panel of psychiatrists). Roughly 80% were published in the last three years.

Results and Conclusions

The following summarize the paper's five broad insights. PLEASE NOTE: Throughout the entire presentation, each is extended to address specifically public relations practitioners, principles, and practices.

- (1) Mobile device users "really need" but "often dislike" their mobile devices.
- (2) Dependency on mobile devices (for both workplace or personal activities) indicates strong signs of addiction, both physical and emotional--users commonly express their reluctance to "needing" their devices.
- (3) Mobile phone users increasingly choose to no longer "to be with these people" and instead through their device, "move on to be with these other people." Hence, the concept of being "in the moment" is eroding.
- (4) "Plugged-in capacities have filled, to capacity, the fullness of time. When we feel the restlessness with empty moments, we simply "click on" something to keep us humming..."
- (5) Arguments, both the scholarly and popular, which suggest analogies between the adoption and diffusion of mobile devices and other technologies (such as television) fail to recognize the "unanticipated, profound, matchless" influences of mobile devices re. the concepts of "time," "space" and "availability."

Comment on AI

While Americans et al. are concerned about the grip their mobile devices have on them, they are also increasingly concerned about the diffusion of AI: For example: Pew Research notes 52% of Americans are more concerned than excited about AI in daily lives. Additionally: "AI is running on your phone behind the scenes...inferencing neural networks on your device to help you take better photos, understand a different language, (and) identify music..." These concerns will expand, and new ones will emerge, as AI is integrated into mobile device capabilities.

Practical and Social Implications

This paper, while it focuses on the downfalls of mobile device usage, also "recognizes the unprecedented advantages--and unquestionable need for--PR professionals to use mobile devices. It cites, for example, how these tools have dramatically enhanced, and are now integral to, the field's seminal research-planning-implementation-evaluation processes."

Further, despite choosing to critique critically the effects of mobile device diffusion and adoption on public relations practices and practitioners, the authors admit they have no "solution" for the problem. They do suggest, however, that "awareness must precede behavior/behavioral change"--and conclude suggesting mobile device users be ever-aware of what the devices are "doing" to them as a first step addressing the devices' negative consequences.

Keywords

Mobile Devices/Mobile Phones; Physical/Psychological/Social Effects; Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence Relations. What is it like to be an AI?

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The primary purpose of the study is to answer the question: »What kind of relations can a human have with AI?« If we are in public relations, and if AI *represents a higher threat to the world than North Korea*. (Musk n.d.), then we should make clear whether AI is a PR tool or a public. The same source as above refers to Sophia, who is a regular citizen of Saudi Arabia, discussing with another robot. We should then take AI not as one but as many, so accordingly, we should talk about AI (public) relations.

To clarify the study's primary purpose, we must understand the common identity of all human minds (and bodies) that come into play in PR and compare it to the common identity of all AIs that are in play and could come into play.

If AI threatens to become an agent in the human exosystem that threatens the existence of human culture as it used to be, then humans should have a relation to it that is not mechanical like we have a relation with nature, but more like a relation that is subsumed under the term public relations.

Should we treat AI as a public(s), what is an ecosystem of AI? In different terminology, what is the society that emerges from AI individuals? Public relations do not take the publics detached from their environment, from their culture; what is then the culture of AI? If AI shares the culture with humans, what is the nature (identity) of the

culture they enter? Do we face the same situation as when immigrants with a foreign culture clash with the existing culture so that a kind of multicultural situation emerges? Another option would be that something cultureless enters our culture. Can something like that change the culture if it is not a culture itself?

Methodology

The methodology of this study rests on a literature review supported by principles of consilience of sciences, heuristics, and coherence.

Results and conclusions

AI is not and cannot compare to human wisdom. It can, and already did, overpower human intelligence, yet cannot, in principle, evolve as wisdom that rests on three billion years of evolution of life on Earth. AI can link itself to a machine like a robot, yet it cannot be linked to a phenotype like a human phenotype; it cannot reproduce epigenetic emergencies (effects). A robot (or a computer) is not a phenotype of AI but an artifact that belongs to the wide range of other human artifacts. And finally, AI has no »self,« nothing like »to feel like an AI,« and cannot represent an agent with whom humans could establish intersubjective relations.

Practical and social implications

At the moment, the scope of AI and its boundaries are undefined. For this reason, the misconceptions about what AI could be in the future are

abundant. This paper resolves many of them and thus clarifies the role that AI plays and can play in human society.

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(The literature for this paper consists of 40 books and articles and will be upgraded by June 2025).

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence; memetics; intersubjectivity; agent;

From Tools to Colleagues? The Role of Communicative AI in Corporate Communication

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The rise of Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, has transformed corporate communications by automating tasks traditionally managed by professionals, including content creation, stakeholder engagement, and media monitoring (Zerfass et al., 2024; Buhmann & White, 2022). This development is not just a hype; it represents a fundamental shift in how organizations produce, structure, and understand communication.

In this context, ‘communicative AI’ is widely recognized in research as a sensitizing concept highlighting AI’s active role in shaping communication.

“Communicative AI (1) is based on various forms of automation designed for the central purpose of communication, (2) is embedded within digital infrastructures, and (3) is entangled with human practices” (Hepp et al., 2023: 48).

Unlike previous automation, Communicative AI does not merely assist humans—it co-creates discourse, restructures communication flows, and transforms interactions with stakeholders. This challenges traditional human-centered models, raising questions about agency and AI’s role in corporate communication.

While this paper is conceptual, it is part of a larger PhD project that will begin empirical data collection in March. The framework developed here lays the theoretical foundation for future empirical research on how communication professionals interact and work with AI in corporate settings.

Literature review

Corporate communication is a management function that coordinates internal and external communication to build stakeholder relationships (Cornelissen, 2017). Traditionally, this relied on human agency to construct narratives and manage reputations. However, AI extends beyond operational support, taking on strategic roles that shape discourse, automate messaging, and influence stakeholder interactions (Buhmann & White, 2022).

Hepp et al. (2020) classify AI-driven communicative systems into three types: Artificial Companions (e.g., Siri, Alexa); Social Bots AI agents that shape discourse on social media platforms; Work Bots, AI applications such as ChatGPT, which automate corporate communication tasks.

Research highlights AI’s growing institutional role in corporate communication. The European Communication Monitor 2024 identifies content creation, inspiration, and social media

monitoring as communication departments' most common AI applications (Zerfass et al., 2024). Even though efficiency is the primary focus in corporate discussions, academic research shows that AI must function as more than just a technological tool, as its integration also brings ethical challenges. Ethical concerns across three key dimensions (Buhmann & White, 2022; Zerfass et al., 2024): Outcome Concerns like Bias, discrimination, and potential job displacement; Evidence Concerns like Data privacy, security; Epistemic Concerns Questions of accountability, responsibility, and the AI "black box" problem.

Theoretical Discussion

This paper takes a conceptual approach, integrating sociology and communication studies to examine how Communicative AI functions as a communicative actor rather than a neutral technological tool. Instead of empirical research, it synthesizes theories to explore how AI is socially and institutionally embedded in corporate communication.

Communicative AI goes beyond traditional human-machine interaction by actively shaping communicative processes (Hepp et al., 2023). This shift challenges existing models of agency, requiring a theoretical framework to examine how discourse, organizational structures, and professional practices shape AI's role. A social constructivism perspective frames this analysis, emphasizing that AI's communicative role is not intrinsic but is shaped through institutional discourses and human interactions (Guzman & Lewis, 2020).

This paper develops a conceptual framework that explores three interrelated dimensions:

Objectification of AI – AI is legitimized through organizational discourses.

Institutionalization of AI – AI is embedded into corporate workflows, influencing decision-making and strategies.

Reconfiguration of Agency – AI challenges human-centered models, influencing professional interactions and role expectations.

This framework provides a structured lens for understanding AI's impact on professional communication, discourse formation, and agency shifts in corporate settings.

Results and conclusions

Communicative AI represents a shift toward active participation in communication, expanding beyond human-machine interaction to question agency in corporate settings (Hepp et al., 2023). Communicative AI does not simply replace human agency. AI's agency is socially constructed, gaining meaning through institutional discourses, professional practices, and cultural expectations rather than inherent technological capability (Knoblauch & Pfadenhauer, 2023).

AI's communicative legitimacy is a projection of human intentions shaped by power structures, norms, and organizational discourse. This paper contributes to sociological debates on AI by arguing that AI's role in communication is institutionally shaped rather than technologically determined. Future research should explore how communication professionals negotiate AI's agency and its evolving role in shaping narratives.

Practical and social implications

Professionals must critically engage with AI as a co-actor in communication, influencing narrative formation, role expectations, and strategic decision-making. Understanding AI's capabilities is crucial for enhancing corporate communication and managing stakeholder relationships. AI's increasing presence in public discourse reshapes trust and authenticity in corporate narratives. Transparency, accountability, and ethical AI deployment are crucial for corporate and social responsibility.

Keywords

Communicative AI, Corporate Communication, Hybrid Agency

Privacy Concerns in AI-Driven Public Communication

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As organizations increasingly use AI to influence public opinion and behavior through digital platforms, the handling of personal data in the public sphere requires reassessment. This study examines the benefits and risks associated with AI in strategic communication with a particular focus on information privacy. It outlines strategies and guidelines for organizations to balance the advantages of AI with their responsibilities to maintain consumers' privacy and public trust.

Devices such as smartphones, surveillance cameras, tablets, and drones have become integral to daily life. They collect extensive personal data, often without individuals' consent raising critical privacy concerns. Unlike traditional technologies, AI systems rely heavily on data and can collect, analyze, and infer personal information rapidly and at scale, frequently without the user's awareness (Miller, 2024). By collecting large amounts of data indiscriminately, AI technologies enhance the power of governments and organizations over the public sphere. These practices create ethical challenges related to transparency, accountability, and individual rights, underscoring the urgent need to address privacy concerns in the context of AI and mass data collection. When individuals feel their privacy is at risk, trust and loyalty toward organizations decline, impacting profitability and reputation. Strategic communication professionals must address privacy concerns not only to build public trust but also to safeguard organizational

credibility and success. Therefore, this study examines how strategic communication practices can safeguard personal data amid the increasing use of AI systems.

Privacy, particularly regarding personal data, remains one of the most persistent issues associated with AI. While organizations use AI to understand preferences and create individualized communication strategies, many individuals feel uneasy about how their data are collected, processed, and stored. Specific concerns include the potential for data misuse in social engineering or shaping individual attitudes and behaviors. With the rise of AI systems, organizations are reshaping the public sphere, defined as "the social space in which different opinions are expressed, problems of general concern are discussed, and collective solutions are developed communicatively" (Wessler & Freudenthaler, 2018, para. 1). Technological advances have blurred the boundaries between public and private spheres as the public sphere increasingly intrudes into private spaces. Through digital platforms, organizations use AI technologies to influence public attitudes and behaviors (Bohai, 2021). Social media like Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter employ AI to curate information environments, generate content, and engage with their audiences (Jungherr & Schroeder, 2023). This reliance on AI systems has introduced challenges to the public sphere, particularly through widespread information collection by techno-

logical devices. While these systems transform workflows and relationships between organizations and publics, they also create ethical challenges and intensify the need for privacy protections as the boundaries between public and private spheres become less distinct.

The extent to which technology and AI have influenced individual behaviors and public opinion remains unclear and difficult to measure (Bohai, 2021). Technological devices continuously interact with broader networks, including platforms like Google and Microsoft, which access personal information and monitor its use, applying mechanisms such as geographic restrictions on data access (Andrejevic, 2007). The adoption of digital tools does not inherently signal a willingness to forfeit privacy. Instead, individuals are navigating a transitional period, seeking ways to balance the use of AI systems with the preservation of privacy. This evolving relationship underscores the need to reassess how personal data are managed in strategic communication practices and the public sphere.

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Keywords

Artificial intelligence, privacy, public sphere, information privacy

Is blockchain the solution to AI deepfakes in PR? A provisional outlook

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Introduction and research question

In recent years, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionised various industries, including public relations (PR). The impact of AI on PR strategies is profound, reshaping how public relations professionals engage with audiences, analyse data, and craft their narratives, especially in terms of content creation, as it assists PR professionals in strategising, summarising, writing, and editing. However, the essence of public relations still revolves around human touch and emotional intelligence, none of which is peculiar to any AI tools that serve as powerful allies, but don't supplant the strategic acumen and relational skills of PR experts. The real magic happens when AI's analytical and automation capabilities are combined with the nuanced understanding and creativity of PR professionals.

Methodology and literature review

AI's rapid evolution has led to its widespread adoption, with applications ranging from automating mundane tasks to enhancing productivity and enabling new forms of human-computer collaboration across various sectors (Agrawal et al., 2019; Autor, 2015, pp. 237–260; Chui et al., 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2021). The technology offers significant potential for businesses and society by improving efficiency, reducing costs, and providing better decision-making capabilities (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Ransbotham et al., 2017). Combined with big data, AI has the potential

to surpass human decision-making and abilities across industries (Liu & Zeng, 2021). In the communication world, AI's ability to analyse and interpret large volumes of data enables more targeted and personalised content, aligning more closely with audience interests and behaviours.

Results

In PR, the balance between AI-driven efficiency and human creativity is crucial. The roadmap guides PR professionals on how to maintain this balance, ensuring that AI is used as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, human skills and insights. Among the myriad concerns surrounding AI, one particularly unsettling claim is that it might lead to a world in which it's impossible to distinguish truth from fabrication. One significant issue is the potential for misinformation and deepfakes, which can spread misinformation and cause significant reputational harm, leading to widespread misinformation and potential crises for those individuals and organisations. To mitigate this risk, it is crucial to establish stringent verification processes to review AI-generated content and use AI detection tools to identify and counteract manipulated media.

Conclusions and implications

PR professionals should be transparent about their use of AI-powered tools and tech-

nologies. Moreover, they should invest in training and education to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively leverage AI-powered tools and technologies. As a matter of facts, the rise of sophisticated technologies like deepfakes and generative AI has democratized the creation of deceptively realistic content, putting powerful tools of manipulation within reach of the average user. AI can also undermine the credibility of true information by making us wonder if it's really a lie. So, there's obviously some truth to the claim that AI can blur the boundaries between truth and fiction. However, on close inspection, it's often possible to detect where manipulation has taken place. While the technology used to create deepfakes will undoubtedly become more sophisticated, so will the tools capable of detecting them, such as blockchain, which provides secure and un-hackable ways to store client information. Blockchain technology allows PR professionals to validate the identity of website visitors, and when combined with machine learning, it creates a protocol that helps PR professionals identify and filter out bots when validating their data and get a clear idea of their human engagement numbers.

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Keywords

artificial intelligence, blockchain, news consumption, journalism, public relations

Marketplace Theory as a Foundation for the Responsible Use of AI in Public Relations

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Introduction and purpose

The advent of generative AI has transformed the practice of public relations (PR). Communication professionals can now use artificial intelligence to generate ideas, augment research, analyze data, improve writing, monitor media, produce videos and other images and much, much more. At the same time, the irresponsible use of AI can lead to unethical ends (sometimes unintentionally) such as the sharing of private data, the creation and distribution of inaccurate, false or fabricated messages, the manipulation of images and voices, the appropriation of intellectual property or deception caused by undisclosed sources of content.

For these reasons, ethical vigilance is key to ensuring that AI is used in ways that serve stakeholder and public interests. The aim of this paper is to define boundaries and best practices for the responsible use of AI in public relations through the lens of marketplace theory, which promotes freedom of expression and informed decision making that advances democratic societies. The research evaluates the extent to which industry guidelines for the use of AI in PR incorporate marketplace principles and where gaps exist.

Rationale

In an era of technological transformation, PR professionals must stay current in their knowledge and understanding of modern technologies

if they are to remain relevant and retain their positions as trusted communication advisors. Additionally, practitioners must consider the legal and ethical aspects of integrating modern technologies into their work. Although the law provides only a baseline for ethical decisions – especially when legal regulations are not keeping pace with technological advancements – legal concepts provide insights for developing self-regulatory frameworks that advance the responsible use of new and emerging technologies. In this paper, marketplace principles provide the theoretical backdrop for analyzing the responsible use of AI in PR.

Literature review

The work begins with a review of how generative AI is being used in public relations and the ethical challenges associated with such uses. The paper then presents marketplace theory as a conceptual foundation for analyzing ethical issues and identifies core marketplace principles – access, process, truth, disclosure and transparency – that can be used to evaluate responsible AI practices.

Research questions

The questions guiding this research were:
How can marketplace principles inform the responsible use of AI in PR?

To what extent do professional ethical guidelines on the use of AI in PR incorporate marketplace principles?

Methodology

The authors first review the theoretical history and development of the marketplace of ideas concept as the dominant approach used by the U.S. Supreme Court for evaluating regulations on free speech. They then identify core principles that contribute to the efficient operation of a democratic marketplace of ideas from which truth can emerge. They then apply these principles in reviewing guidance for the ethical use of AI from leading public relations associations, including the Public Relations Society of America, the International Public Relations Association, the Public Relations Council, The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, the International Association of Business Communicators, and the Center for Strategic Communication Excellence. This analysis shows both the extent to which marketplace principles are incorporated in the guidelines and where gaps exist.

Results and conclusions

Public relations association guidelines for the ethical use of AI in PR generally offer good advice that serves stakeholder and public interests. However, coverage of key marketplace principles is uneven and, in many cases, lacks needed explanation. This finding may be due in part to the fact that the guidelines are based primarily on codes of ethics that, when adopted, did not contemplate the transformative impact of AI on public relations and communication practices.

Practical and social implications

This paper is significant in helping to define boundaries and best practices for the responsible use of AI in public relations. The authors encourage the development of uniform global standards that allow practitioners to harness the creative and strategic potential of AI in ways that advance marketplace principles and serve stakeholder and public interests.

Limitations and future research

In examining the ethical responsibilities associated with the use of AI in public relations, this research focused on professional ethical standards. Future research should examine the use of AI in the context of corporate social responsibility to gain additional insights into how AI can be used responsibly to advance social goals.

Keywords

Public relations, AI, ethics, principles, marketplace theory

Decoding Digital Trust: A Multi-dimensional Analysis of Tech Influencer Credibility on YouTube

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Introduction and Purpose

This study investigates trust dynamics in technology influencer marketing on YouTube, examining how trust indicators in audience interactions correlate with consumer opinions and media portrayal. With influencer marketing reaching \$21.1 billion USD (McKinsey & Company, 2023) and increasing impact on consumer purchasing decisions, understanding trust formation in these digital spaces becomes increasingly crucial. The research describes the development and function of a comprehensive trust rating system for tech influencers. The trust rating system works by analyzing the relationship between comment sentiment, content similarity with consumer reviews, and media representation.

Literature Review

The study builds on Grunig and Hon's (1999) trust components framework - integrity, dependability, and competence - while incorporating recent research on digital trust measurement. While Pascual-Ferra (2020) highlights the prevalence of survey-based trust measurement, computational approaches using sentiment analysis have shown promise in reflecting public trust (Chandio & Sah, 2020). Research by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) suggests that non-traditional celebrities and smaller influencers often generate higher trust levels than those with larger followings, but comprehensive studies examining multi-platform trust indicators remain limited.

Methodology

The research employed a mixed-methods approach analyzing 10 prominent tech influencers (500,000 to 24 million followers). Data collection encompassed YouTube comments (approximately 13,890 comments), corresponding Amazon product reviews (3,000 reviews across 30 products), and media coverage (417 articles). Natural language processing techniques, including sentiment analysis and lemmatization, were used to measure trust indicators and content similarity. Trust scores were calculated through seven iterations of refinement, optimizing keyword analysis and sentiment weighting. The methodology incorporated intercoder validation processes with manual review of 10% samples, achieving 89% accuracy for comment analysis and 94% for media analysis.

Results and Conclusions

The study revealed significant correlations ($r=0.58$) between trust indicators in comments and content similarity with consumer reviews. A strong inverse relationship ($r=-0.815$) emerged between follower count and trust-similarity correlations, indicating smaller influencers demonstrate more authentic alignment with consumer opinions. Analysis of media coverage showed unexpected positive correlations between trust scores and controversy-related keywords ($r=0.44$), particularly when framed in terms of integrity, with a strong correlation

($r=0.82$) between integrity keywords and controversy coverage in media analysis. Limitations include the cross-sectional nature of the study, reliance on keyword analysis for trust measurement, and varying availability of media coverage across influencers. Future research could benefit from longitudinal approaches and cross-cultural comparisons.

Practical and Social Implications

The findings challenge conventional influencer selection metrics based primarily on follower count, suggesting the need for more nuanced evaluation criteria in influencer marketing. The research provides a framework for measuring digital trust that benefits marketers developing influencer selection strategies, platforms seeking to enhance trust metrics, consumers evaluating influencer credibility, and researchers studying digital trust formation. Results indicate that transparency in addressing controversies may enhance rather than diminish influencer credibility, suggesting a shift in crisis management approaches for digital personalities.

Keywords

Digital trust, influencer marketing, content analysis, social media credibility, consumer behaviour

AI a boon or a curse? The question lies with us

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AI-related discourse seems to move between the Scylla of apocalyptic visions of humanity under the (robotic) thumb of all-powerful AI and the Charybdis of “AI cheerleaders” (Bourne, 2019) whose all-positive promotion may seem blind at times to risks and inequalities. As in the original mythological story which demanded navigating between two hazards, both perspectives offer threats. The first is to over-estimate the potential power of Artificial Intelligence; the second, is that of ignorance – wilful or otherwise – as to the risks inherent in implementations whose ethical implications are open to question. Public relations cannot (and should not try to) avoid this tricky manoeuvring, especially when advising clients and managing stakeholder relations.

Rather, both practitioners and scholars should, this paper contends, equip themselves with at least foundational knowledge of AI, especially the fast-developing field of AI ethics, and assume a role in the field of Explainable AI. Technologists understand the term “Explainable artificial intelligence” (XAI) as a set of processes and methods that allow human users to comprehend and trust what machine learning algorithms produce. That trust and confidence is, developers believe, central to AI model implementations. Call it “informed consent”. Companies such as IBM assert that Explainable AI is a *sine qua non* for “responsible” AI, which valorises ethical principles and accountability. Yet as

Galloway (2010) argued some years ago, claimed competence in communication, or explanation, does not automatically confer a right to present technical information: that licence must be earned.

Inherent in this assertion is the conviction that public relations people, whether inside or outside the academy, should do more than merely resort to using ChatGPT or its competitors. Rather, PR should diversify its disciplinary perspectives to encompass the ever-expanding range of AI use cases and their implications, including those that bear directly on territory the profession has long considered its own. For example, in everything from campaign programming to proposal pitching and more, AI tools can both accelerate and extend the development of PR activity, to the likely benefit of both practitioners and clients.

Yet is this enough? Is PR at risk of developing a professional myopia that sees AI as merely a tool rather than a game changer for every aspect of a society, from business to politics to medicine far more? The question verges on the “curse” word of the conference theme. There is another issue to consider: that of what Puri (2024) calls “Westlessness” or a “global rebalancing” away from “Westfulness” which he sees as “the apex of Western global influence” (p.30). Yet now even a country such as Mauritania, about 90 per cent

of which is located in the Sahara Desert, has a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy in draft form, covering the period 2024-2029. The country has only one listed public relations agency – yet it may, along with fellow practitioners in the West, face the challenge of how to present AI technologies to a population where unfamiliarity is a potential hindrance to applications whose benefits seem manifest.

Westerners should not wall off in their thinking the power of Westless AI-related communication, nor its perceived strategic value. As long ago as 2017, Russian president Vladimir Putin commented that “Artificial intelligence is the future not only of Russia but of all mankind. There are huge opportunities but also threats that are difficult to foresee today. Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the rule of the world” (Gigova, 2017). The question of whether AI is a boon or a curse remains open, but “time will tell” is an inadequate summation: AI’s potential and its associated issues are present now and the question’s resolution may well be interim as far forward as one can see.

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Keywords

Explainable AI, Westless AI-related communication, PR practitioners and AI use, AI tools for PR

The Quest for Responsible Public Relations for Responsible AI: Public Relations Practitioner Use in the United States vs. Czechia

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Introduction

Several scholarly studies have documented and examined the rapid growth and adoption of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) by the strategic communication/public relations profession and the subsequent release of AI guidelines by associations (Germinder, 2024; Yue, 2024).

Purpose of the Study

This study examines how public relations practitioners in different segments of the profession make meaning of their experiences in their responsible use of GenAI, but also looks at a largely unregulated environment, i.e. the United States, versus a regulated environment, i.e. Czechia.

Literature Review

The literature review includes scholarly literature on public relations practitioner use of GenAI (Yue, 2024) but also looks at deontological theory (Bowen, 2024) to reflect on best practices to do what is ethically and morally right despite the regulatory environment. Due to the rapid trajectory and nuances of the geopolitical environment that the use of GenAI is developing, modern strategic communication management theory (Zerfass, 2024) is also examined to ultimately guide a recommendation for globally responsible strategic communication/public re-

lations practices in the use of GenAI.

Methodology

A qualitative study (Tracy, 2024) following GDPR guidelines was conducted and recorded in the United States and Czechia from November 2024 through January 2025. The pre-qualifications for 24 interview subjects (12 in each country) were established as at least five years' experience, use of GenAI in the subject's work, and a leadership role in implementing responsible AI within their organization. A concerted effort was made to obtain a diverse representation of association leadership and membership, agency, corporate, and NGO and breadth and length of experience according to each country's demographic profile of GenAI users in the public relations profession.

Results and Conclusions

The study revealed that while utilizing GenAI, most practitioners in both countries view human oversight and human intelligence in managing the final product as essential to responsible public relations for responsible AI. The role of the individual's commitment is paramount, as expressed in deontological theory (Bowen, 2024), and as a mandate for responsible AI. As is demonstrated in other research on this develop-

ing technology (Zerfass, 2024), opinions varied on actual practice on many issues. The variance was more pronounced based on technical experience rather than determined by regulated vs. unregulated environment. For example, the more technical knowledge a participant had, the more likely they were to use paid tools, have a written AI policy and express concerns about privacy and security. Many participants in both countries were using free tools versus paid tools that offered more security. Both countries' participants suggested that the need for GenAI education and training will be an ongoing process. Transparency in disclosing the use of AI varied for both countries. However, only a few Czechia participants were concerned that the EU AI Act would soon mandate specific guidelines for compliance. Except for those participants in leading association positions, awareness of regulatory compliance and association guidance was low to nonexistent. The limitation of the study was primarily in scheduling across time zones during a holiday period. For future research, consideration should be given to adding a third country for comparison in another regulatory environment.

Practical and Social Implications

The implications are public relations professionals have a personal commitment to ethical behavior and human oversight is paramount. Most participants indicated a desire to learn more about AI but that training and education could come from various sources. Leaders in professional associations acknowledged the need to go beyond an ethical framework of AI guidelines with more practical training to help position the strategic communication/public relations profession as leaders in implementing responsible AI.

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Keywords

AI, artificial intelligence, responsible artificial intelligence, responsible public relations, strategic communication

The Role of AI-Generated Greenfluencers in Sustainability Messaging: Authentic Advocacy or Algorithmic Greenwashing?

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Introduction and purpose of the study

As social media and digital technologies permeate modern life, sustainability has naturally become a key online theme. This has led to the rise of “greenfluencers,” individuals who advocate for environmental causes and encourage sustainable practices (Kapoor et al., 2022). While their impact is debated in corporate and academic circles, the advent of generative AI presents a new dimension: the “AI influencer.” Created and managed by diverse organizations for various environmental purposes, these AI-driven personas raise a critical question: Do they contribute to authentic sustainability advocacy or perpetuate greenwashing through algorithmically generated content? This study explores this question by comparing the impact of human greenfluencers with their AI counterparts.

Literature review

Sustainability communication increasingly relies on influencer marketing to shape public behavior. Greenfluencers advocate for responsible lifestyles, engage in climate activism, offer practical sustainability-focused solutions, and promote eco-conscious products and brands (Pittman and Abell, 2021). Grounded in Bandura’s social learning theory (1977), these influencers have the potential to influence behavioral

adoption. To better understand how influencers affect sustainable behaviors, particularly among younger generations (Opree, 2025), it is crucial to examine audience perceptions.

The emergence of AI influencers (e.g., Miquela Sousa on Instagram) presents a novel communication strategy with unexplored implications for sustainability. While AI’s potential in marketing is recognized, its role in promoting sustainability, especially regarding the risk of perpetuating greenwashing, remains largely unexamined. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the impact of AI influencers on perceptions of authentic sustainability advocacy.

Methodology

This experimental study will examine the impact of AI versus human influencers on sustainability messaging among young adults aged 18-26. The study will be conducted online in April 2025 in Turkey. Two groups will be exposed to comparable sustainability messages, one delivered by AI influencers and the other by human influencers. Content structure, visual style, and sustainability claims will be carefully controlled across both message types to ensure comparability.

The study will analyze three main dependent variables: credibility perception, behavioral in-

fluence, and greenwashing perception, aiming to answer the following research questions:

- (1) To what extent do audiences trust sustainability claims made by AI versus human influencers?
- (2) Compared to human influencers, are AI-generated sustainability messages persuasive enough to drive pro-environmental behavioral change?
- (3) Do audiences perceive AI influencer sustainability messaging as genuine or identify potential greenwashing tactics? The study will also consider additional variables including environmental knowledge, nature connectedness, prior exposure to AI influencers, general trust in AI-generated content, and brand associations.

Results and conclusions

This study aims to contribute to the growing body of scholarship exploring the effectiveness and ethical implications of AI-driven influencers in sustainability communication. By examining the intersection of AI, influencer marketing, and greenwashing, it offers insights into how digital technologies shape perceptions of corporate accountability and influence sustainability narratives.

However, the study has limitations. Conducted within a specific cultural context (Turkey), the findings may not be generalizable to other cultural settings. The focus on greenfluencers, known for their environmental commitment, may create a pre-existing perception of credibility around their sustainability messaging, potentially biasing the results. This inherent bias should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Practical and social implications

The urgency of achieving sustainability demands that we critically examine and refine our approaches. The path forward is complex and

with obstacles. The findings of this research will be significant for communication professionals, as they demonstrate an assessment of a tool that may affect various sustainability-focused communication strategies. Moreover, due to the framework, this study aims to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue surrounding social impact and to ultimately foster a more just and sustainable world.

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Keywords

greenfluencers, ai influencers, greenwashing, artificial intelligence, sustainability communication

Artificial Intelligence and Art Marketing in Brand Communication: The Example of Refik Anadol

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Artificial Intelligence; it is one of the frequently preferred current technologies due to its benefits such as data analysis, automation, speed, efficiency, personalisation, innovative product and service delivery. Artificial intelligence technologies, initially used mainly in analytical fields such as logic and mathematics, have now managed to influence many disciplines. One of the disciplines affected by this technology is art. Although it is surprising that a field like art, with an abstract subject and a message that varies from person to person, should be affected by artificial intelligence, it is possible with today's technologies.

The concept of art, which is called digital art and develops in parallel with technology, has reached a different dimension with artificial intelligence. With the development of digital art, classical art equipment such as brushes, paints and canvases have been replaced by technologies such as data, algorithms and artificial intelligence. This situation has naturally changed the way art is consumed. Digital art is notable for digital natives, who actively use online social networks and place technological developments at the centre of their lives. Brands are looking for ways to differentiate themselves from their competitors, reach their target audiences and connect with them emotionally. However, it is not easy to influence today's consumers, who have instant demands, are interested in technology, are indecisive and have low brand loyalty. This

is where brands benefit from the power of art to communicate with their target audiences. In this way, brands seek to translate the intellectual, high and remarkable qualities of art into brand values. Today, many global and local brands benefit from the power of art in their communications. Examples of these communication activities include collaborations with artists, art sponsorships and brand-owned museums.

The study highlights the brands' collaborations with world-renowned digital artist Refik Anadol. Refik Anadol uses algorithms and artificial intelligence to bring digital artworks to life. For Anadol, which aims to provide art lovers with a visual and emotional experience, technology is not just a tool, but a fundamental component of art. In 2014, Anadol founded Refik Anadol Studio (RAS) in Los Angeles, where he creates art works in partnership with creativity and artificial intelligence. In addition, the artist analyzed the data obtained from NASA through artificial intelligence and realized an exhibition called Machine Memories: Space.

One of the artist's most striking works is the artificial intelligence installation he created on the exterior of the Walt Disney Concert Hall. Refik Anadol's artificial intelligence-based artistic works make a huge impact on a global scale and he collaborates with many brand artists. The artist collaborates with many brands around the world. This study draws attention to the part-

nerships between art and artificial intelligence in the communication activities of brands. The universe of the study includes collaborations between brands and artificial intelligence-focused digital artists.

The sample of the research is the collaboration of Bulgari and Turkish Airlines brands with Refik Anadol. The research is limited to these two brands. The reason for this is that Bulgari, as an Italian luxury brand, is a global brand that shapes fashion, and Turkish Airlines is in the Guinness World Record book as the airline that flies to the most countries in the world. Bulgari collaborated with Refik Anadol to celebrate the iconic Serpenti collection in 2021. Anadol created a three-dimensional artificial intelligence sculpture inspired by the brand's iconic Serpenti snake. The sculpture met art lovers in Piazza Duomo, in the centre of Milan. Turkish Airlines also established a business partnership with Refik Anadol in 2024. Inner Portrait, created by Refik Anadol for Turkish Airlines, uses artificial intelligence analysis to visualise the emotional data of passengers travelling abroad for the first time.

The study carried out a content analysis using the case study method, which is a qualitative research method. Research shows that artificial intelligence is having a profound impact on the arts and that global brands are benefiting from the arts in their communication strategies. The research indicates that brands want to influence their target audiences and support their brand awareness by using artificial intelligence and art in their communication strategies. Whether artistic works created with artificial intelligence are as effective as classical works of art on the target audience may be the subject of further research. It can be investigated whether this method preferred by brands in their communication strategies is effective on the target audience.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, art, brand, brand communication

The Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations Education: Opportunities and Implications for Governance, Quality, and Ethics

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing public relations (PR) education by equipping students with tools that enhance productivity, creativity, and analytical capabilities. This study explores how AI can elevate the learning experience for university PR students and better prepare them for industry challenges, while addressing critical governance, quality, and ethical concerns. The study is guided by the central question: *What are the opportunities and challenges of integrating AI into public relations education?*

Literature Review

AI is recognized for its ability to bridge the divide between theoretical concepts and practical applications in PR education. Tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Meltwater enable students to refine their writing, design effective campaigns, and analyse audience behaviours. Previous research underscores AI's potential to foster innovation and adaptability in education (Anderson & Rainie, 2018; Sun, 2023). However, challenges such as the need for governance frameworks, concerns about data privacy, and the risks of AI perpetuating biases highlight the importance of responsible usage and critical evaluation (Flori-di & Cowls, 2019).

Methodology

This qualitative study employs a case study approach, drawing on experiences from the author's PR students enrolled in university programs across Victoria, Australia, over the past two years. Data were gathered through assignments, tutorials, and semi-structured interviews to explore students' engagement with AI tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Meltwater. This approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of how AI is used in educational settings and its practical outcomes (Marr, 2020).

Results and Conclusions

Findings reveal that AI tools significantly enhance students' abilities to tackle complex PR scenarios. For instance, Sarah M., a PR student, utilised ChatGPT to draft a crisis communication plan for a product recall involving contaminated lettuce packaging sold in Australian supermarkets. The iterative drafting process allowed her to refine her strategy, resulting in a robust plan addressing stakeholder communication and media relations.

Similarly, Rory L. leveraged an AI-driven simulation tool to create a marketing communication strategy for launching a new vodka brand in Australia. By responding to real-time feedback,

he developed adaptive strategies to meet evolving consumer expectations.

Despite these successes, challenges emerged. Over-reliance on AI can hinder critical thinking and originality. Maya H., another PR student, drafted a media pitch using an AI tool for an innovative mathematical learning product targeting primary school students struggling with numeracy. While her draft was coherent and grammatically accurate, it lacked the cultural and contextual nuance necessary for its intended audience, requiring substantial revisions. These cases illustrate the dual nature of AI's integration—offering significant benefits but demanding careful oversight.

Governance issues were also prominent. The absence of clear institutional policies increases risks of academic dishonesty, as AI tools may be misused for generating assignments without proper attribution. Data privacy concerns are another significant issue, as many AI tools collect and store user data. Compliance with privacy regulations like the *Australian Privacy Act 1988* and the *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)* is essential. Additionally, the biases inherent in AI algorithms can perpetuate discriminatory practices, necessitating rigorous evaluation of AI outputs by both educators and students.

Practical and Social Implications

The integration of AI in university PR education offers substantial practical benefits. AI tools facilitate realistic simulations, fostering creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving skills among students. For instance, AI-powered simulations enable students to experience dynamic PR challenges, better preparing them for industry complexities. However, to ensure responsible usage, educators must establish governance frameworks and ethical guidelines. Training students in AI literacy and promoting transparency and

accountability are crucial to maintaining academic integrity.

On a societal level, the ethical implications of AI use in education are significant. Misrepresenting AI-generated content as original work undermines the educational process and can compromise professional standards. Rachel P., a student who analysed a corporate social responsibility initiative involving second-hand clothing donations to homeless shelters, demonstrated ethical accountability by documenting the tool's limitations and including a disclaimer in her analysis. This example underscores the importance of cultivating ethical awareness among students to prepare them for socially responsible professional roles.

Conclusions

AI holds immense potential to transform PR education by enhancing students' creativity, productivity, and analytical skills. However, integrating AI requires caution, addressing governance, quality, and ethical concerns. By fostering critical thinking and establishing robust governance frameworks, educators can ensure that AI functions as a tool for innovation rather than a crutch. Future research should examine the long-term impact of AI on PR education across diverse regions and contexts.

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Keywords

artificial intelligence, public relations education, ethics, governance, quality

We are only Human: How Strategic Communicators can lead in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to disrupt our world through macroeconomic, social, and legal changes. This study examined how and to what extent strategic communicators can emerge as leaders in the age of AI. It identified the issues that intersect AI and communications, reviewed AI risks to organizations and the strategic communicator's role in mitigation, and examined whether the industry is ready to lead.

Research Problem and Questions

This capstone study investigated the strategic communicator's role within the AI landscape and identified how communicators can become strategic counsellors at the AI decision-making table. The research questions are below.

RQ1: *What are the emerging issues in AI, and how and to what extent do they impact the communications field?*

RQ2: *How and to what extent can strategic communicators contribute to AI leadership and help mitigate organizational risks?*

RQ3: *How and to what extent are strategic communicators prepared to upskill in AI and step into an organizational AI leadership role?*

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review covered five main areas:

1. The current AI landscape and definitions.
2. AI-human trust (Waxman, 2019).
3. Public relations theory and strategic communication.
4. Media in the post-truth world.
5. The state of the strategic communicator's skill, attitude, and adoption of AI, including the work of Gregory et al. (2023).

Methodology

The research method included a literature review, a content analysis of 75 articles featuring technology leaders, and in-depth interviews with eleven industry experts in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. A triangulation approach ensured greater construct validity through converging evidence. The study was bounded by the period from October 31, 2022 to September 18, 2023.

Results and Conclusions

RQ1: Issues in AI and Intersection With Communications

Figure 1 identifies emerging issues in AI from the content analysis.

The interview results are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 3 illustrates the Three Levels of AI-PR Issues model. The model visualizes specific-



Figure 1: Top AI Issues Identified Word Cloud

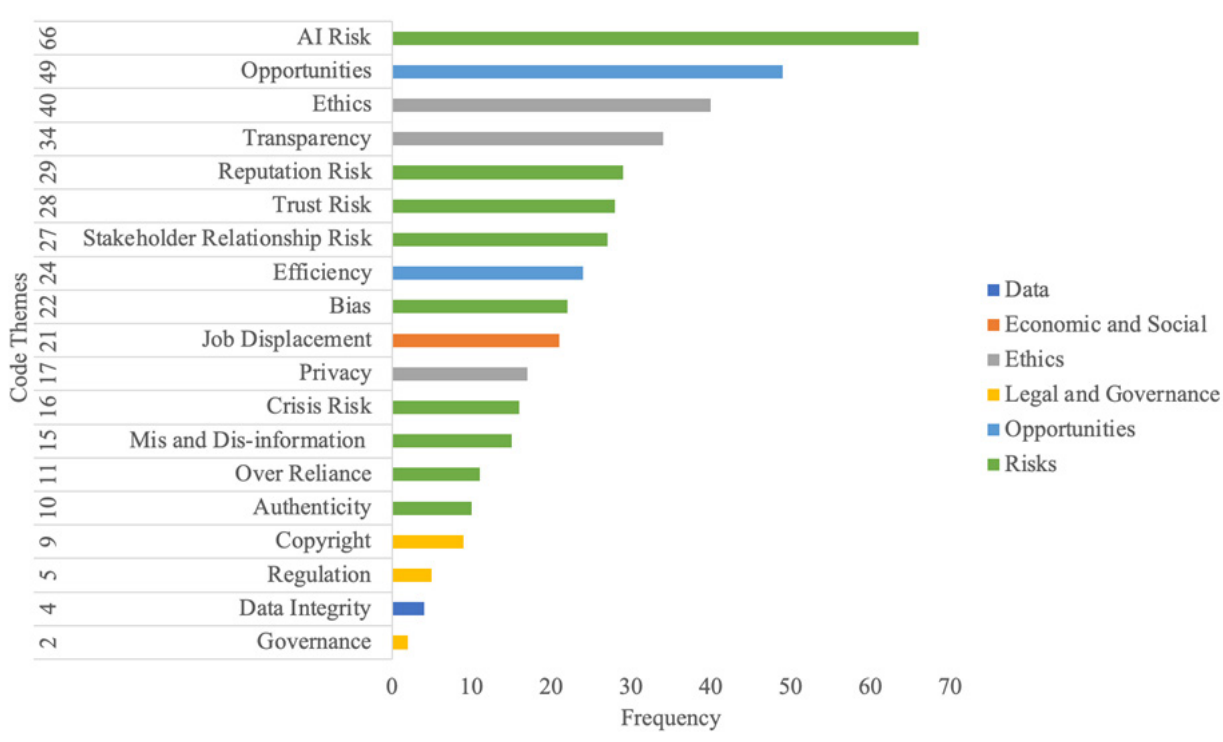


Figure 2: AI Issues From In-Depth Interviews By Theme

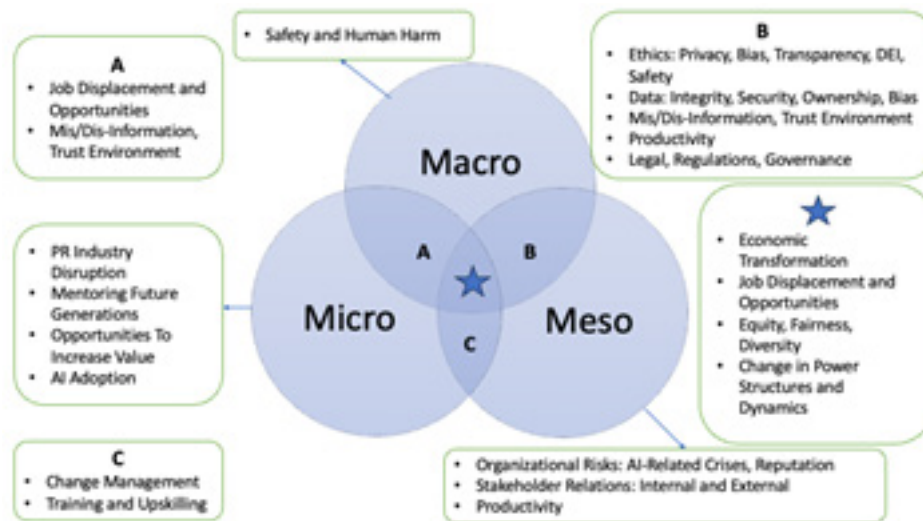


Figure 3: The Three Levels of AI-PR Issues

ly how and where AI intersects with PR. The macro level concerns broad societal issues. The meso level outlines AI issues at the organization level. The micro level is focused on the practitioner and the profession. The findings show a high level of overlap between AI and the public relations industry, and the overlaps between the three levels.

RQ2: How Strategic Communicators Can Mitigate Risks and Provide Leadership

The interview results identified eight areas of leadership where strategic communicators can help manage the organizational risks posed by AI, as seen in Table 1.

The study's results do not support the idea that AI will soon replace strategic communicators. Strategic communicators who leverage AI will be freed from tedious tasks, allowing them to pursue more strategic work. The study found organizational leaders trust strategic communicators to provide a critical eye on the big picture.

RQ3: Strategic Communicator's AI Readiness To Lead

The results found greater awareness of AI in the industry but a lack of knowledge. The industry is not ready to lead, but a pathway to AI leadership is identified in Figure 4.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations include biases in selecting interview participants and a small sample size. The technology leaders in the content analysis were all white males. A single coder coded the content analysis, so inter-coding reliability was not established.

Future study ideas include:

1. Interview CEOs to understand their challenges and opportunities with AI and how they expect the CCO to help them navigate.
2. Study how trust is impacted as AI capabilities, levels of interactivity, and communication styles become more sophisticated.

Table 3

Areas of AI Leadership For The Strategic Communicator

Areas of Leadership	What Is Involved	Sample Quote
Crisis Planning, Issues & Risk Management	Landscape monitoring & surveillance Issues identification Risk register Crisis preparation & planning	"Prepare crisis communication plans specifically for AI-related incidents. This includes identifying potential scenarios, drafting response templates, and designating communication channels."
Change Management	Developing language and communicating AI internally Understanding technology and impact on stakeholders Devising initiatives to help transition	"Develop internal communication strategies that emphasize the benefits of AI, address concerns, and guide employees through the transition."
Stakeholder Engagement & Relationship Building	Internal and external stakeholder engagement Facilitating two-way symmetrical communication	"The most important thing, as we know, to bridge gaps, is to have honest conversations. But to create a space where those honest conversations can happen. If you create an environment where you could fail, you could lose your job...because you're using AI, that does not create safe place to have conversations with something that is obviously changed our world."
Reputation Management	Monitoring reputation Ensure messaging alignment Reducing reputation gaps Building and protecting trust through transparency	"There's a whole huge area of the role that communicators will play in advising organizations about the reputational implications of the use of AI."
Advisor to Dominant Coalition	Guidance in ethical decision making Representing all stakeholder viewpoints Ensuring alignment of mission, goals, and values AI policy guidance	"I hope that somebody is there to ask the question of, Why are we doing this to begin with?"
Ethical Guardian	AI training and development Data ownership, usage, integrity, diversity AI Bias Transparency Governance	"To manage risk, leaders must fully understand the AI that is being used and be ready to assess trends and new tools as they arise. It requires ethical consideration and human oversight. To ensure both of those things happen, leaders must be transparent about how the organization is using AI and be committed to ethics and unbiased decision-making."
Participation in AI Development	Providing viewpoint of all stakeholders impacted Ensure alignment of messaging Ethical guidance	"So if you're saying to me that we're going to build an AI chatbot because we want to reduce the time it takes for our customer service representatives to respond to prospects on our website. Great. Then a communications professional absolutely needs to be involved in that."
Training and AI Education	Helping foster culture that supports training and education	"Design training sessions or informational campaigns to bridge this gap, ensuring that the benefits and workings of AI are understood at all levels."

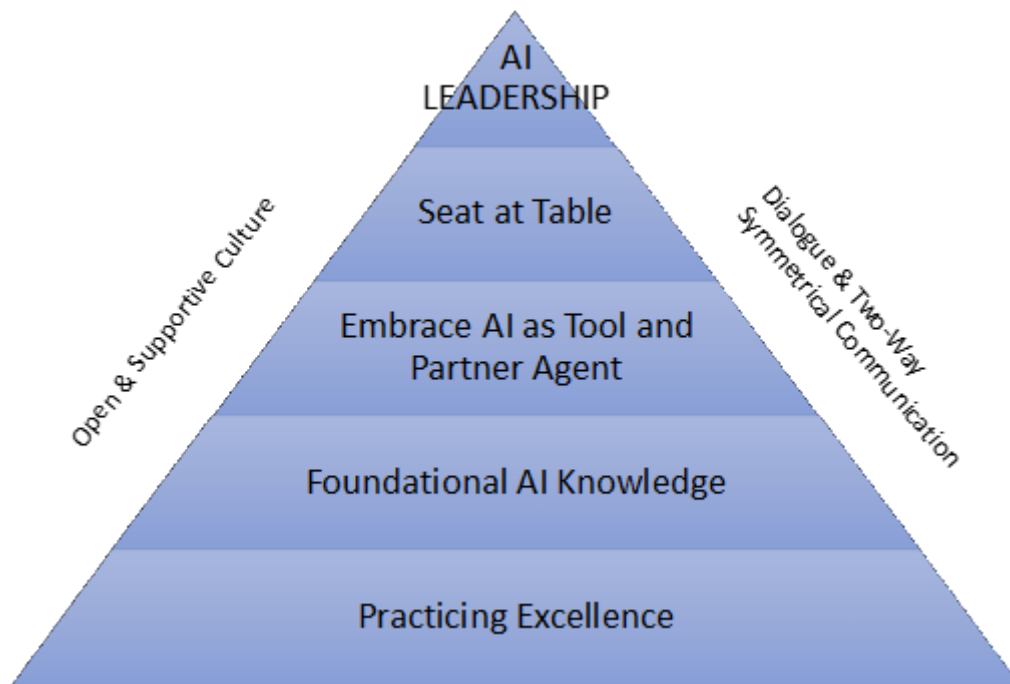


Figure 4: Pathway to AI Leadership for Strategic Communicators

Practice Implications

The recommendations below are framed within the three levels of AI-PR issues.

Macro leadership

1. Contribute to AI in PR Scholarship.
2. Drive the conversation about the pitfalls and opportunities of AI in society.
3. Support efforts to regulate AI and develop transparent, fair, inclusive, and ethical AI that embraces human agency.

Meso leadership

1. Show leadership by evaluating the level of risk, impact, and alignment on AI initiatives.
2. Facilitate an open culture where honest conversations about AI can take place.
3. Advocate for training resources.
4. Consider AI with a DEI lens.

Micro leadership

1. Follow the best practices from industry associations.
2. Actively test new AI tools and upskill.
3. Find ways to use AI strategically and complement core capabilities.

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Keywords

AI, Strategic Communication, Leadership

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on PR: Enhancing Crisis Management, Audience Engagement and Skepticism

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Introduction

Crises are unexpected events that threaten the existence of an organization. Organizations must communicate effectively with their stakeholders, and crisis communication is critical in public relations (PR). It is a multifaceted process requiring well-crafted strategies to safeguard a company's survival. Coombs' (2007) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) stands out as one of the most prominent classical theories in crisis communication, helping organizations mitigate negative impacts. With the advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, AI tools have also emerged as valuable assets in crisis communication, both during and after a crisis. These tools can assist in monitoring the current situation, providing instructions, adjusting information, or preparing communication materials to engage stakeholders effectively. However, the use of AI-automated tools can sometimes foster skepticism among stakeholders, potentially resulting in a negative impact on audience engagement. This study aims to examine how organizations utilize AI technologies in crisis communication and how individuals perceive organizational responses during crises. It also explores the differences between AI-driven and in-person responses, focusing on their effects on skepticism and audience engagement.

Literature Review

Crisis communication requires careful planning and precise execution. According to Coombs (2007), denial, diminish, and rebuild are three key strategies outlined in the SCCT that help organizations mitigate the adverse outcomes of a crisis. Regardless of the strategy employed, stakeholder engagement remains the cornerstone of effective crisis communication. Achieving this requires a clear narrative structure in crisis messages, a dialogue-oriented tone, and a trusted communicator's delivery of crisis information (Yang, Kang, & Johnson, 2010). Organizations must adopt a strategic approach integrating diverse communication theories and practices, leveraging emerging technologies to adapt to the rapidly evolving digital landscape. AI tools are increasingly utilized to measure, create, and evaluate crisis communication efforts. While real-time, AI-supported communication channels can enhance audience engagement on a broader scale, they may also elicit skepticism due to the absence of direct human interaction. This skepticism could weaken the audience's connection with the organization.

Methodology

This study aims to identify AI-related strategies and tools organizations utilize in their crisis communication efforts. It also examines how individuals perceive organizational responses

during crises and whether they can distinguish between reactions generated by AI and those delivered in person. Additionally, the study explores the differences between AI and in-person responses regarding their impact on skepticism and audience engagement.

This study will employ the in-depth interview method, a qualitative research approach. Two different sampling strategies and two distinct sets of questions will be prepared. In the first phase, in-depth interviews will be conducted with 10 individuals in corporate communication roles selected from Turkey's top 10 most reputable companies as identified by the Turkey Reputation Index (Türkiye İtibar Akademisi, 2024). These interviews aim to explore how AI-supported technologies are utilized in crisis communication processes, including their application before, during, and after a crisis. The frequency of AI use and how organizations evaluate consumer responses during crises will also be addressed.

In the second phase, 10 individuals who have directly experienced a crisis with an organization and were exposed to its communications within the last six months will be selected as participants. This phase, shaped by the findings from the first phase, seeks to measure audience engagement and skepticism regarding the organization's crisis communication efforts. For audience engagement, interactivity and emotional engagement will be measured. Regarding skepticism, the study will focus on intention, perceived usefulness, attribution of responsibility, openness, and transparency (Gunawan, Samopa, Mukhlason, 2024; Schick, Fischer, 2021).

Organizations must respond to crises on time. By leveraging AI technologies, organizations can better navigate crises, protect their reputations, and ultimately emerge stronger from adverse situations.

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Keywords

Public Relations, Artificial Intelligence, Skepticism, Engagement

The PR Roots of Modern Tourism – World War II Allied Soldiers in Rome

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Introduction

In the same month that Rome was liberated by Allied soldiers in World War II – June 1944 – a guidebook was developed by the American military titled *Soldier's Guide to Rome* (DeWald, 1944). This unique piece of tourism promotion, written by Major Ernest DeWald of the Monuments and Fine Arts Sub Commission, was the first of five guides produced by the American, British, and New Zealand armed forces during the Italian campaign. The guides were one part of a tourism infrastructure that was quickly developed for wartime soldiers. Additional components – which are described in the final guide, *A Soldier's Guide...ROME* (1945) – included Red Cross and U.S. Army Rest Center tours, locations to meet Army-approved private guides, and suggestions for opera, concert music, wine, and shopping.

War tourism in the Eternal City was promoted using a broad range of promotional tactics that included staged photography, story promotion to the news media, and tourism recommendations in the military newspapers (e.g., *Stars and Stripes*). Little is known about this topic to date, and it appears to be completely unexplored in the PR academy. This research seeks to explore the influences of World War II Allied soldier tourism.

Literature Review

Theofilou and Watson (2014) advocate for PR historians to explore how government PR has been applied to shaping public opinion before, during, and after historical events (including World War II) and the political, social, and economic impacts that follow. This research follows that approach by investigating the Allied governments' efforts to influence soldiers' behavior in the understudied area of war tourism.

Methodology

This historical case began with the initial discovery of some of the soldiers' guides available through online re-sale markets, and a visit to a major U.S. university's World War II archive. During the fall 2024, work was expanded substantially by on-site archival research at three different Rome-based academy libraries (American, British, and German). The primary source documents help reveal key aspects of the military organization that was created to promote tourism to soldiers, and the strategy behind the development of tactical work. Some of these sources were labeled restricted – for example a *Civil Affairs Handbook for Central Italy* – and were only to be viewed by those “in the service of the United States and to persons of undoubted loyalty and discretion who are cooperating with Government work” (Army Service Forces Manual, 1943). Further, the contents of such handbooks could “not be communicated to the public or to the press except by authorized mil-

itary public relations agencies” (Army Service Forces Manual, 1943). After an initial on-site reading, these materials were recorded and are under further review.

The archival research to develop a historical case was used because many of the documents reviewed are not digitally available and others are rare enough to only be viewable under the supervision of the library’s archivist.

Results/Conclusions

Initial results of the research show a unique influence that existed in the United States where the private sector reached out to the government to encourage development of an infrastructure that focused on protecting art, monuments, and culture in the European War Theater. Work was collaborative between the Americans and the British, and positive relationships were also developed with resident Italian experts. A *Civil Affairs Information Guide* (1944), when asking officers to select “objects worthy of safeguard,” encouraged the use of then-popular travel handbooks, included the German Baedeker guides, Touring Club Italiano, and Blue Guides. The Baedeker guides were labeled the most popular, reliable and succinct guides, which also effectively starred or double-starred monuments of the greatest importance. A further review is comparing the travel handbooks to the material included in the Allied soldier tourism guides.

Practical Implications

World War II exposed many citizens of the world to places they may have never seen otherwise. Exposure seemed to impact future travel interests, something supported by data, but the Allied Armies also attempted to influence their returning soldiers. The U.S. Army, for example, produced *A Soldier’s Outline of Italian History* for returning soldiers that attempted to provide information to make them “experts.” A soldier’s understanding of the history of Italy was “made real by having seen the places where notable events happened,” and “would be one of the most valuable souvenirs any soldier could take home with him from Italy.” Despite the well-documented history of World War II, this relatively unknown part of war tourism could improve what is known about the history of public relations and how it contributed to the growth of 20th century tourism.

Keywords

War Tourism, PR History, Internal Communication

Employing artificial intelligence to streamline communication process

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed various industries, including public relations (PR). AI-driven tools can reshape traditional communication practices by enhancing efficiency, personalizing communication, producing high-quality texts and visuals, and even optimizing strategic decision-making (DiStaso & Bortree, 2020). This paper explores the role of AI in optimizing communication process, emphasizing its potential to automate routine tasks and enhance engagement.

AI technologies, such as natural language processing (NLP), machine learning (ML), and predictive analytics facilitate sentiment analysis, real-time crisis communication, and the development of data-driven campaigns (Wright & Hinson, 2017). It can be stated that the adoption of AI in PR not only streamline process but also provides valuable insights for strategic communication, helping organizations tailor their messaging to specific audiences more effectively.

Despite the benefits, the integration of AI in PR and marketing activities raises concerns related to ethical implications, authenticity, and the potential displacement of human professionals. While AI can process vast amounts of data faster than humans, it lacks the creativity and emotional intelligence necessary for nuanced

communication. Therefore, the balance between AI automation and human expertise remains a critical area of research.

The **purpose of this study** is to analyze the impact of AI on processes within communication activities, identify quality practices for AI integration, and assess how AI-driven tools contribute to the effectiveness of communication strategies. The study aims to support communication professionals in leveraging AI technologies to enhance efficiency, creativity, and strategic impact in their communication efforts. Ultimately, the study aims to underscore the need for a balanced integration of AI in PR and marketing – one that enhances efficiency and data insights while upholding ethical standards and human-centric communication principles.

Literature Review

Given the ubiquity of AI in modern business, numerous authors have explored its benefits across various industries, offering diverse perspectives on its application potential and expected outcomes. Existing research on the application of AI in PR and marketing (Tomić et al., 2022; Obradović et al., 2023; Jeong & Park, 2023; Herold et al., 2024) highlights its significant potential. Nonetheless, despite these contributions, no comprehensive research has been conducted in Croatia to thoroughly analyze the impact of AI on the optimization of specific processes

within the public relations and marketing sector. The extent to which AI can accelerate key operational functions, such as crisis communication management, content creation, and campaign evaluation, both within agency settings and corporate communication departments, remains unexplored.

Methodology

Using the method of in-depth interview with representative number* of communication experts employed in PR and marketing agencies, corporations and public organizations, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of AI's role in optimizing communication processes while addressing its limitations and ethical challenges.

Based on the output of participants (preferred AI tools, objectives, methods and frequency of using AI in their communication activities), this research should present insights into the practical applications of AI in PR and marketing, fostering discussions on responsible AI use, and exploring the future trajectory of AI-driven communication strategies.

**In-depth interviews will be conducted until data saturation is reached.*

Results and conclusion

The findings from in-depth interviews are expected to highlight the transformative role of AI in optimizing communication processes. It is anticipated that participants will report significant improvements in efficiency, particularly in automating repetitive tasks such as media monitoring, press release distribution, and audience sentiment analysis. AI-powered tools are likely to enhance message personalization, allowing PR professionals to craft data-driven communication strategies tailored to specific demographics. Additionally, AI-driven analytics may provide deeper insights into campaign performance, enabling real-time adjustments and

more effective stakeholder engagement. However, respondents may emphasize ethical concerns associated with AI, including potential biases in algorithmic decision-making and the risk of misinformation dissemination and AI's limitation to fully replicate human creativity and emotional intelligence.

Practical and social implications

The practical implications of AI in PR and marketing are anticipated to be evident in its ability to streamline workflows, reduce operational costs, and improve the precision of communication strategies. Organizations that integrate AI-driven tools into their communication operations may benefit from increased efficiency and data-driven decision-making, leading to more effective audience targeting and engagement. By automating repetitive tasks, AI is expected to allow communication professionals to focus on high-value strategic activities, such as crisis management and brand storytelling, ultimately enhancing the overall impact of public relations efforts.

From a societal perspective, AI's role in PR and marketing is expected to have broader implications for public trust and ethical communication. The ability to rapidly analyze and disseminate information could help combat misinformation and improve transparency in corporate and governmental communications. However, it may also raise concerns about data privacy, algorithmic biases, and the potential for AI-generated content to manipulate public opinion. Addressing these challenges will require a commitment to ethical AI practices, regulatory frameworks, and ongoing professional development to ensure AI tools are used responsibly.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, integrated communication, ai-driven tools, communication process optimization, strategic communication

Artificial Intelligence in European Public Relations: Between Optimism and Underestimation

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

On January 21, 2025, former U.S. President Donald Trump announced a \$500 billion private-sector investment in artificial intelligence infrastructure, led by OpenAI, SoftBank, and Oracle under the Stargate initiative (Reuters, 2025). This significant investment underscores the irreversibility of AI adoption in global industries, including public relations (PR) and strategic communication. The EU's strict AI regulations contrast sharply with the rapid AI adoption in the U.S. and China, where AI is widely integrated into communication tools and strategies. In China, state-controlled algorithms and censorship on platforms like TikTok, RedNote, and Lemon8 create additional challenges for EU communication professionals, who must navigate both EU compliance and platform regulations.

Despite AI's disruptive potential, research indicates that European PR professionals do not perceive AI as a direct threat to their employment, challenging widespread fears of automation and obsolescence (Buhmann & White, 2022; Yue et al., 2024 (Cusnir & Nicola, 2024; Kelm & Johann, 2024)). However, they also feel unprepared, with many lacking sufficient education and guidance on AI systems, creating a skills gap that must be addressed to ensure responsible and strategic implementation (European Communication

Monitor, 2024).

AI adoption presents communication leaders with a fundamental decision dilemma: while automation increases efficiency, it risks diminishing advisory roles, shifting the profession's identity, and creating uncertainty about the long-term strategic relevance of communication departments (European Communication Monitor, 2024).

This study explores the rationale behind this optimism, examining the perspectives of PR professionals and organizations in the Czech Republic. We have chosen a single-country study focusing on the Czech Republic due to its high technology adoption rate and the specific role of the Czech language, which not only shapes local culture but also poses challenges for AI implementation, as most generative AI tools are primarily optimized for English. Additionally, the Czech Republic serves as a representative case of a mid-sized European market where regulatory frameworks, such as the EU AI Act, significantly influence AI adoption in public relations. Furthermore, the country's strong digital infrastructure and its developed communication industry provide a compelling environment to study both the opportunities and constraints of AI-driven transformation within public relations.

The research questions guiding this inquiry are:
RQ1: What factors contribute to PR professionals' lack of concern regarding AI-induced job losses?

RQ2: How do PR professionals conceptualize AI's role within strategic communication and PR practice?

Literature Review

Existing research on AI in PR presents a complex duality of opportunity and challenge, change for certain (USC Annenberg, 2023; ICCO, 2024; PRovoke Media, 2023; (Zerfass et al., 2020)). While AI enhances efficiency in content creation, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement, concerns persist regarding standardization, ethical risks, and the loss of human creativity (Panda et al., 2019; Moore & Hübscher, 2021; Ashworth, 2023; ICCO, 2024; (Bruce & Bailey, 2023)). Scholars emphasize the importance of maintaining human oversight and ethical governance to prevent over-reliance on AI-generated content and misinformation risks (Kamruzzaman, 2022).

AI may help with many labour-intensive task, which - as Bourne (2019) observes - raises concerns about the potential reduction in junior and technical roles. This shift is particularly troubling for young professionals under the age of 35, who are already voicing apprehensions about the long-term viability of the industry (Zerfass et al. 2020).

The adoption of AI tools has surged over the past three years, with more than half of professionals reporting frequent or occasional use of such tools (ICCO, 2024; CIPR, 2024). In Slovakia and the Czech Republic, adoption rates are even higher, reaching 92% (Kantar, 2024). However, the 2024 European Communication Monitor highlights that AI adoption in PR remains inconsistent, with some sectors readily embracing its benefits while others continue to

underestimate its long-term impact (European Communication Monitor, 2024).

This study contributes to the growing discourse by providing empirical evidence from both PR practitioners and organizations, mapping their attitudes and usage of AI while identifying areas of optimism, scepticism, and underestimation.

Methodology

This study synthesizes findings from two independent surveys conducted in Central Europe in 2024, both exploring the adoption of AI in the public relations (industry):

A mixed-methods study combining a survey (N=200) and semi-structured interviews (N=16) with PR professionals from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland. This study examines attitudes toward AI, adoption levels, and ethical considerations related to its use in PR.

A qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with 20 members of APRA, the Czech PR Association, part of the mapping of the creative industries within the Czech Republic. One part of the research focused on how leaders of PR agencies perceive AI's impact on creative processes and employment trends.

Together, these studies aim to capture both statistical trends and nuanced qualitative insights. While offering a national perspective, the findings also contribute to the broader European discourse on AI's role in the PR industry.

Results and Conclusions

Findings reveal that only 5% of PR professionals have never used AI, while all surveyed agencies report employing it—primarily for text-based tasks. PR agencies perceive AI as an efficient tool that simplifies work, particularly by automating processes and managing data, allowing professionals to focus on core skills.

While PR agencies acknowledge the opportunities AI offers to enhance efficiency, they also express apprehension about its implications for the profession. The primary concern lies in maintaining competitiveness in the market, particularly if agencies fail to adopt AI effectively. The research identifies five key factors influencing European PR professionals' confidence in AI:

1. Low national unemployment rates – AI-related job losses are perceived as a minor concern in an economy with strong job security. PR professionals in the Central Eastern European region do not fear job displacement and hold a largely positive outlook on the anticipated changes, looking forward to having more time for strategic and creative work. Agencies emphasize that AI enables them to focus on high-value tasks, potentially improving service quality and maintaining competitiveness. AI is primarily seen to automate repetitive tasks and streamline processes, yet concerns persist about whether its impact on the PR profession will be more beneficial or detrimental.
2. Familiarity reduces fear – Frequent exposure to AI tools has led to a decline in anxiety, as professionals recognize that AI-generated content requires substantial human intervention (Yue et al., 2024).
3. Language barriers – Many generative AI tools struggle with Czech and other minority languages, limiting their effectiveness outside English-speaking contexts.
4. Misconceptions about AI's role – AI is often seen as merely an advanced writing tool rather than a strategic communication asset. Despite its growing adoption, professionals remain cautious and often rework AI-generated content, viewing AI as an assistant or tool rather than an autonomous creator. This perspective also explains their reluctance to disclose the extent of AI use to clients, likening it to a typewriter—a straightforward tool that does not necessitate detailed explanation

tion of the process behind its output.

5. General techno-optimism – European professionals tend to embrace technological innovation with optimism, sometimes underestimating AI's disruptive potential (European Communication Monitor, 2024).

Implications and Future Research

The underestimation of AI's role and potential could pose risks for the PR industry if professionals fail to adapt in time or adapt too wildly. For PR industry bodies and national associations, these findings highlight the need to prioritize AI literacy, training, and ethical education. Initiatives such as the Warsaw Principles (Forsgård, 2023) and industry code of ethics should be actively promoted to ensure responsible AI integration (Buhmann & White, 2022).

At the same time, the Czech case study suggests that familiarity with AI tools leads to greater confidence rather than fear. This insight is valuable for policymakers, educators, and industry leaders designing AI training programs tailored to communication professionals (Panda et al., 2019).

Moreover, geopolitical risks associated with AI and communication are often overlooked or under-researched, despite their growing significance. This is evident in the ongoing debates over the regulation of TikTok and other social media platforms, where concerns about data security, algorithmic influence, and state-controlled content moderation intersect with national security and digital sovereignty issues. More cross-disciplinary research integrating communication studies, political science, technology ethics, and cybersecurity is essential to fully understand and mitigate these emerging challenges.

However, limitations remain. While the study covers a substantial portion of the Czech PR market, it relies on self-reported data and large-

er agencies and may not fully capture emerging adoption trends among smaller companies, organizations and freelancers. Future research should track longitudinal AI adoption trends, particularly focusing on whether the underestimation of AI's impact will shift as its capabilities expand.

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Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Public Relations, Strategic Communication, Industry Adoption

The Power of Listening: Examining the Impact of Organizational Employee Listening Competency on Engagement, Well-Being, and Mental Readiness

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Introduction and Study Purpose

Organizational listening orientation and competency play a critical role in shaping employee engagement, well-being, and resilience. However, their influence on these employee outcomes, particularly in times of crisis and change, remains underexplored. Employee listening has recently emerged as a key factor in boosting morale, yet empirical evidence on the real impact of organizational employee listening competency (OELC) is still limited.

Mentally prepared employees can navigate crises with confidence and creativity, effectively managing psychological and emotional challenges without becoming overwhelmed by uncertainty (Pearson & Claire, 1998). This study aims to examine the role of OELC as a key antecedent of employee engagement (EE) and employee workplace well-being (EWW) through a serial mediation process, ultimately predicting employees' mental readiness—specifically, their adaptability and resilience in response to crises and organizational changes.

Literature Review

Research in organizational communication and human resource management highlights the importance of employee voice and listening in fostering workplace engagement and psychological safety (Kang & Moon, 2024; Moon & Kang, 2024). Satay (2024) found the detrimental effects of inauthentic listening—caused by restrictive change-related policies, ineffective solicitation methods, and inadequate analysis of employee input—on both organizations and employees. These findings underscore the importance of developing strong listening competencies (Satay 2024).

Kang and Moon (2024) emphasize that employee listening should be an integral part of an organization's communication culture, reinforced by its structure, policies, and procedures. A mutual orientation that values employee voices as essential to organizational success is key to fostering an effective listening environment. Kang and Moon (2024) propose Organizational-Level Employee Listening Competency (OELC) as a comprehensive framework for understanding how effective listening practices could impact employee outcomes. The OELC comprises four core dimensions of employee listening as the or-

ganizational level competency: mutuality orientation & legitimacy of employee voice; Explanation of voice procedure & outcomes; Safe voice culture with accessibility to voice; and Fair procedures to voice.

Building on this foundation, the present study aims to empirically examine how OELC fosters employee engagement, enhances workplace well-being, and ultimately strengthens employees' mental resilience in the face of stress, change, and crises.

While existing studies have explored the benefits of employee engagement (Qin, 2024) and well-being, few have explicitly linked them to OELC. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which OELC influences adaptability and resilience remain unclear. This study builds on previous research by positioning OELC as a critical driver of positive employee outcomes, addressing a significant gap in the literature.

Scope and Method

This study employed an online survey of 600 full-time employees in the United States to empirically test the relationships between OELC, EE, EWW, and employee adaptability and resilience. Through a serial mediation analysis, the study examined how OELC fosters engagement and well-being, which in turn influences employees' mental readiness to navigate crises and organizational changes.

Conclusion

The findings from this study will have significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the direct and indirect effects of OELC on employee outcomes. By establishing OELC as a key driver of EE, EWW, and crisis adaptability, the study offers a new perspective on how organizations

can foster a psychologically safe and resilient workforce. Practically, organizations can apply these insights to refine internal communication strategies, emphasizing structured listening mechanisms such as employee feedback systems, leadership communication training, and active response initiatives. Enhancing OELC can lead to increased employee trust, job satisfaction, and overall well-being, thereby improving organizational performance and retention rates. Moreover, in times of uncertainty or crisis, companies with strong listening cultures may be better equipped to support employees, ensuring a more agile and adaptable workforce. These findings highlight the need for organizations to prioritize listening as a strategic function rather than a passive communication process.

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Keywords

employee listening, organizational listening competency; employee engagement; employee well-being; employee resilience

Ethics in the time of AI – A South African perspective

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Generative AI transformed public relations and public communication in ways that one could not have imagined. The literature cites a plethora of benefits of including AI in communication practices, including increased efficiency and productivity, improved content creation, synthesising data from multiple sources and improved understanding and deeper insight into stakeholders' needs and perceptions, leading to more customised and impactful messages and communication strategies (Yue et al., 2024; Shabangu, 2024).

Scholars and communication professionals have however raised ethical concerns about uncritically adopting AI tools to perform and enhance communication practices. On a theoretical level, Yue et al. (2024) highlight that transparency, authenticity, and trust have traditionally been valued in the public relations industry. These values can potentially be undermined by the use of AI since content, messages and even communicators can be automated or fabricated. On a practical level, ethical dilemmas such as privacy concerns, exacerbating bias, inequalities and discrimination, mis- and dis-information, data safety, copyright transgressions, disclosure of sources, accountability, and job security have been identified as risks (Yue et al., 2024; Bowen, 2024).

PR and Communication practitioners are, however, not only responsible for communication functions in an organisation but also have a nor-

mative ethical role at management level. They are regarded as the ethical conscience or moral compass of the organisation and should advise management on ethical values and expectations (Bowen, 2024; Buhmann & Gregory, 2023). This underscores the importance of ethical guidelines on AI for communication practitioners.

To guide communication practitioners, numerous international bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, the Canada Public Relations Society, the International Communications Consultancy Organisation, the Public Relations Society of America, the International Public Relations Association and the Institute for Public Relations, compiled guidelines and principles for the ethical use of AI. Although relevant and important, these guidelines do not specifically focus on the ethical use of AI in developing countries.

There are many differences between developed and developing countries, implying that guidelines proposed in developed contexts cannot be uncritically adopted in developing contexts. Some factors to consider include differences in infrastructure, social diversity and economic disparities (Nugraha & Shinta, 2024). In recent literature, contextual knowledge and context sensitivity have been highlighted as key in terms of AI usage and AI ethics, emphasising the importance of having context-specific guidelines for the ethical use of AI in developing countries. There is currently a gap in the literature re-

garding the ethical concerns of South African communication practitioners about using AI in communication functions, and their views on their role in the overall ethical use of AI in the organisations they are employed. To address this gap, and to contribute to guidelines for South African communication practitioners on the ethical use of AI, this study proposes the following questions:

RQ1 – What ethical concerns do South African communication practitioners have regarding AI in communication functions?

RQ2 – How do South African communication practitioners view their role in the AI ethics of their organisations at large?

RQ3 – What guidelines do South African communication practitioners propose for the ethical use of AI in the communication context?

To gain an in-depth and contextual understanding of South African communication practitioners' views of the ethical implications and challenges of using AI for communication functions, we will use a qualitative research approach. Fifteen semi-structured interviews will be conducted with South African communication practitioners operating in different contexts, including the corporate sector, higher education institutions and communication consultancies. Purposive sampling will be used to identify communication practitioners working in different contexts, with diverse levels of experience in the field of communication, and various levels of integrating AI in their communication practices. This should contribute to a holistic understanding of South African communication practitioners' views on the ethical concerns of using AI and to develop ethical guidelines for the use of AI in the South African communication context.

Understanding the ethical concerns of South African communication practitioners regarding the use of AI in communication functions, and their views on being custodians of ethics in organisations, can contribute to a better understanding of these issues in the unique context of developing countries. The ethical guidelines proposed by South African communication practitioners can assist in developing guidelines specifically for developing countries in the African context.

Keywords

AI, Communication practitioners, Ethics, South Africa

Perceptions, concerns and best practices: Communication practitioners' views on AI in the South African communication landscape

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Introduction and purpose of study

The rise of AI, and generative AI in particular, changed the landscape of PR and communication management quickly and irreversibly. Communication practitioners worldwide have adopted and embraced different AI tools to perform or enhance a variety of communication-related tasks in recent years. The novelty of generative AI, combined with the rapid development of AI tools, and the highly competitive world of PR and communication management, could lead to individuals adopting such tools without sufficient understanding thereof, to keep up with the times.

A study by Yue et al. (2024), including participants from the US, UK and Canada found that although there is a general consensus amongst communication practitioners regarding the timesaving, efficiency -and productivity-boosting potential of using AI, especially for menial and repetitive tasks, there is some uncertainty regarding the appropriate and ethical use of such tools, and the impact of depending on AI tools on communication outcomes. Cusnir and Neagu (2004) found similar results in Romania, where communication practitioners indicated high adoption of AI and extremely high satisfaction with AI but were less confident about the per-

ceived long-term efficacy thereof. These studies confirm the notion that AI technology may be embraced without sufficient understanding of the appropriate use and the long-term impact thereof on reputational, relational and engagement outcomes.

When taking context into consideration, there have been significant differences between developed and developing countries in utilising and benefitting from new technology. In 2023, the UN warned that the digital divide between developed and developing countries is widening, threatening to exclude developing countries from the next industrial revolution (UN, 2023). Building on the concept of the widening digital divide, a report by the United Nations and the International Labor Organization (UN, 2024) highlights an emerging “AI divide” where unequal access to infrastructure, technology and education, combined with lower income, can lead to developing countries falling even further behind.

In a developing country such as South Africa, where communication practitioners are not only functioning in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) context, but having to cater to a population from diverse backgrounds, cul-

tures, languages and religions, often on a small budget, it is essential to be sure how to incorporate AI effectively for the long-term success of the organisation.

There is currently a gap in the literature on how AI is being perceived and used by South African communication practitioners. The obstacles and challenges they experience have also not been investigated to create a clear understanding of AI in this particular context. To fill this gap, and to contribute to best practices for the use of AI by South African communication practitioners, this study proposes the following questions:

RQ1 – How do South African communication practitioners perceive the use of AI tools?

RQ2 – What concerns do South African communication practitioners identify regarding the use of AI technology?

RQ3 – What guidelines do South African communication practitioners propose for best practice in terms of AI?

Methodology

Through this study, we want to gain an in-depth understanding of South African communication practitioners' perceptions, utilisation and experiences of AI in their daily communication practises, necessitating a qualitative research approach. Fifteen semi-structured interviews will be conducted with South African communication practitioners operating in different contexts, including the corporate sector, universities and communication consultancies. We will use purposive sampling to identify communication practitioners working in different contexts, with varying levels of experience in the field of communication, and diverse levels of including AI in their communication practices to contribute to a holistic understanding of AI in the South African communication landscape.

Practical and social implications

Understanding the perceptions, usage, experiences, obstacles and concerns of South African communication practitioners regarding the use of AI will not only contribute to the international body of knowledge, but will also highlight the unique situation of communication practitioners in a developing country, within the African context. This study can contribute to best practices for South African communication practitioners using AI and should be helpful to communication practitioners in other developing countries as well.

Keywords

AI, Communication practitioners, Developing countries, South Africa, Perceptions

Dealing with the unethical use of artificial intelligence in teaching-learning in institutions of higher learning: a case study of the NWU

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Large language modules (LLMs) have not only taken the world by storm but have uprooted the traditional way of almost every aspect of our lives, and academia has not been spared. Institutions of higher education face numerous challenges in this regard, and keeping up with the exponential development of artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning practices is likely the most significant challenge to date. Lecturers are faced with the daunting task of keeping up with AI development in their teaching and their assessment practices. It is, however, not only lecturers who embrace AI – students are doing the same. Unfortunately, students are not only using AI as an instrument to assist in the teaching-learning process but are also abusing these tools. This raises important issues about the ethical use of AI, academic integrity (the other important AI), and the unethical use of AI and academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is not new; students seem to find new ways to gain an unfair advantage in assessments. In the past, students would have used unauthorized materials during an assessment (notes on anything from a scrap of paper to the back of a ruler). Cheating became more sophisticated, with students using essay mills, where ‘custom made’ essays could be bought

online (Verhoef & Coetzee: 2023) or more recently, using character injections to intentionally deceive similarity software from detecting instances of plagiarism. Until recently, plagiarism was probably the predominant form of academic dishonesty that universities had to deal with. The arrival of large language models such as ChatGPT or DeepSeek has provided students with a new, very powerful aid to, if used unethically, gain an unfair advantage, with students submitting AI-generated answers and presenting it as original work. The unethical use of AI is dishonest and threatens the authenticity of the assessment and the integrity of the qualification (Marais: 2022).

Aware of the threats posed by academic dishonesty by students and realizing that academic integrity is a shared responsibility between lecturers and students, the North-West University, as an institution of higher learning in South Africa, established a voluntary community of practice on academic integrity (COPAI) consisting of lecturers dedicated to the cause of academic integrity in 2020. COPAI aimed to standardize the largely fragmented approach to dealing with instances of academic misconduct. Since its formation, the work done by COPIA has resulted in a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

on Academic Integrity [NWU Teaching and learning integrity standing operating procedure 2023], which is informed by a new academic policy on teaching and learning that specifically addresses issues related to academic integrity and academic misconduct. The implementation of the SOP is supported by a unique lecturer-developed electronic system known as the Academic Integrity Information Technology System Application (AIITSA) (from August 2023 to October 2024, 6 549 cases were reported on the system. The SOP is based on an educational (preventative and remedial) and disciplinary approach where, depending on the level of the transgression, students are required to complete an Academic Integrity Remedial Online Course before moving on to disciplinary action.

This contribution aims to introduce the approach followed by the NWU to the broader university community and gain insight into the approaches of other universities in matters related to the broader concept of academic misconduct, but more specifically to how the unethical use of AI is being dealt with. This research evaluates the academic integrity policies (or their equivalent) of highly ranked universities from the global North and South in order to benchmark the NWUs' policies. The research will further evaluate existing guidelines from the selected universities on the use of AI in the teaching-learning environment with specific reference to the ethical use of AI and attempt to provide uniform guidelines.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, academic integrity, academic misconduct, management system, unethical use of AI

The Influence of AI: The Third-Person Effect in the Censorship of Deepfakes

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Introduction

The proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has ushered in an era where synthetic media can manipulate audiovisual content with unprecedented realism as it can convincingly swap faces, synthesize voices, and fabricate entirely new scenarios. This presents a significant threat to the integrity of information, public trust, and even national security (Chesney & Citron, 2019). The potential for synthetic media to be weaponized for deepfakes, disinformation campaigns, and character assassination is alarming (Godulla et al, 2021). As individuals struggle to discern authentic media from synthetic media, the erosion of trust in traditional information sources becomes a serious concern (Edelman, 2023). Media professionals are at the forefront of navigating this evolving landscape. They are tasked with identifying, verifying, sharing, and reporting on information while also being exposed to a constant barrage of manipulated content. Their perceptions of synthetic media, both in terms of their own vulnerability and that of the general public, are crucial for understanding how content is filtered and potentially censored in the age of AI in a two-step flow of information.

Literature Review

As a result, this research proposal centers on a particularly significant aspect of this issue: the potential for media professionals to advocate for, or even engage in, censorship of content based

on their perceived superior understanding of synthetic media compared to the general population. This perceived asymmetry in knowledge and vulnerability can be explained through the lens of the third-person effect, a prominent theory in communication studies (Davison, 1983). The third-person effect theory—the belief that media messages affect others more than oneself—guides the study in exploring whether media professionals perceive themselves as less vulnerable to and more knowledgeable about synthetic media than the general public, and if this influences their views on media regulations and the need for censorship.

Methodology

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines a quantitative survey of media professionals with qualitative interviews. The survey measures exposure to synthetic media, perceived vulnerability and knowledge (self vs. others), and support for censorship. Interviews explore the reasoning behind these attitudes, including ethical considerations. The study anticipates that media professionals will exhibit the third-person effect regarding synthetic media, and this perception will correlate with support for censorship. Qualitative data are expected to reveal complex motivations, including concerns about misinformation and protecting the public. This research has implications for media ethics, media literacy, AI regulation policy, and professional practices of journalism, public relations,

and related field. Ultimately, the study aims to inform strategies for navigating the complex information environment of the AI era and maintaining public trust.

Conclusions and Implication

This crisis of trust (Edelman, 2023) underscores the urgency of understanding how synthetic media can be perceived. From a practical standpoint, this research could inform the development of media literacy programs specifically targeting professionals, equipping them with the skills to identify deepfakes and understand their potential impact. Socially, the findings could highlight the potential for biased censorship based on perceived knowledge gaps, raising important questions about who controls information and the balance between protecting the public and limiting free speech in the age of AI.

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Keywords

Synthetic Media; Deepfakes; Censorship; AI

The Future of Work for Public Relations and Advertising Professionals: Replaced by AI or Enhanced by AI?

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Introduction and purpose of the study

This study investigates the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the future of work in the advertising and public relations industries, focusing on how AI's integration may affect professionals overall, and particularly women, given the field's female-dominated workforce. The research explores perceptions of AI's potential effects on the profession, young professionals' preparedness to utilize AI tools, and any gender-based differences in these perspectives. The central research questions address how young professionals perceive AI's impact on the industry and society, their attitudes towards AI integration, their perceived preparedness to use AI, and desired AI-related training, examining potential gender differences in these areas.

Literature review

Existing literature highlights the evolving nature of AI, from traditional symbolic AI to contemporary machine learning approaches utilizing vast datasets. While AI tools have been used in marketing and PR, this study focuses on the more recent, advanced AI tools, like LLMs, and their potential to transform professional practices. The research acknowledges the increasing use of AI in these fields, including AI's capacity

to generate content and even mimic individual personalities, while emphasizing the need to understand the impact of these advancements on future professionals and the gender dynamics of the field.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, primarily utilizing focus groups with young professionals in advertising, public relations, and related fields. These focus groups explore respondents' expectations, concerns, and excitement regarding AI's role in their future careers. In-depth interviews supplement the focus group data, providing a comparative perspective between seasoned and future professionals. This combined approach allows for the exploration of both cognitive and affective dimensions related to AI's influence. Ethical considerations will be addressed through IRB approval and adherence to data collection protocols.

Results and conclusions

The study anticipates revealing young professionals' perceptions of AI's potential impacts on the advertising and public relations industries, including its effects on knowledge gaps, income disparities, and the gender gap. It also expects

to uncover gender-based differences in attitudes towards AI integration and perceived preparedness to utilize these technologies. The findings will offer insights into the training and educational needs of future professionals in the age of AI, potentially informing curriculum development and professional training programs. Limitations of the study may include sample size and the specific populations. Future research could explore broader industry perspectives and longitudinal impacts of AI integration.

Practical and social implications

The study's findings will have practical implications for educational institutions, enabling them to better prepare students for an AI-driven professional landscape. Socially, the research will contribute to a deeper understanding of AI's potential effects on gender dynamics within a female-dominated profession, potentially informing strategies to mitigate any negative impacts and promote equitable opportunities.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, advertising, public relations, gender, future of work

Uniting a team of 5 million: An analysis of New Zealand's 'Unite Against COVID-19' crisis communication campaign

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Introduction, purpose of study, research question, and brief literature review

The global COVID-19 pandemic represents one of the largest health crises since the Spanish Flu pandemic from 1918-1920 (Da Silva & Pena, 2021). Notwithstanding the tragic loss of life, both pandemics resulted in negative financial and social effects (Sharma et al., 2021). The WHO's declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic in early 2020 found many national governments ill-prepared.

In contrast, the New Zealand's government's policy and communication response to COVID-19 during 2020-2022 was swift, unified, and believed to be highly effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 within the country's borders (Jeffries et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study was to examine elements of New Zealand's Unite Against COVID-19 (UAC) campaign contributing to citizen compliance in limiting spread of COVID-19 during 2020-2022. It draws upon the IDEA model, developed to ensure crisis messages empower individuals by instructing them on how to protect themselves and those they care about from long or short-term hazards (Sellnow et al., 2017) IDEA is a mnemonic to remind crisis communicators of the four components of empowering messages: Internalization, Distri-

bution, Explanation, Action (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013).

This research uses the IDEA model and best-practice principles to answer the following research question: Applying the IDEA model and best practice principles, how can we better understand and evaluate the elements of NZ's "Unite Against COVID-19" campaign?

Methodology

Seventeen interviews with government officials, policy advisors, public relations consultants, journalists, and members of ethnic communities involved in the UAC campaign were conducted and analysed to evaluate the campaign in terms of the IDEA model and best-practice principles of crisis and risk reduction communication. Thematic analysis identified nine themes (campaign elements, changing science, leadership, marginal communities, media, messaging, opposition, public trust, and social media) impacting the campaign's ability to gain citizen compliance with vaccination, mask use, social distancing, and travel limitations.

Rationale: Case study analysis allows for investigation of decisions made, how resulting strategies were implemented and with what results,

with the ability to provide practical recommendations (Veil et al., 2020).

Given the health inequities experienced by Māori and Pasifika, interviews were conducted with representatives from these two groups for their perspectives of the UAC campaign. The combined results illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign and give guidance for future pandemic communication.

Results and conclusions

Results indicated that campaign planners (a) provided the public with messages helping them internalise the crisis and take relevant actions to limit the spread of COVID-19; (b) communicated with empathy and compassion; (c) capitalized upon strong leadership and an ‘all of government’ approach; (d) utilized feedback effectively; (e) accounted for cultural differences; (f) fostered effective community partnerships; (g) accepted and communicated uncertainty honestly; and (h) acknowledged and corrected mistakes. Interviewees identified several campaign shortcomings in terms of communicating and forming partnerships with marginal communities including Māori and Pasifika peoples. Finally, while social media was a strong communication channel for the campaign, it later became a threat to the campaign’s success.

Because this was a qualitative study, it faced limitations including researcher bias, limited generalizability, subjectivity, and difficulty in replication. In addition, the researchers were constrained by the time limits involved with conducting multiple interviews.

Future research should examine need for campaign planners be more keenly aware of cultural factors and not fall into the trap of constructing what could be seen as a monocultural campaign. In addition, the negative impact of social media in times of crisis is an area for further research,

especially if a situation drags on as long as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Practical and social implications

The New Zealand government’s highly successful response to COVID-19 and in particular, the UAC, makes it an important case to analyse. This research aimed to understand how the NZ government response and the UAC persuaded most citizens to observe public health mandates and help contain the spread of COVID-19 and its variants during 2020-2022, resulting in a low mortality rate. Three years is a long time for any crisis communication campaign to last and remain, for the most part, highly successful.

This research sought to understand the UAC’s conceptualization and resultant messaging to determine how it was successful for so long, what worked well, and also to learn where the campaign fell short of its goals among certain minority groups. The lessons learned from this research will add to our understanding in terms of best practices for crisis communication and can help future leaders lessen the impact of future pandemics.

Keywords

Crisis communication, public health campaigns, New Zealand, Unite Against COVID-19

AI-Generated Influencers in Strategic Communications: The AI Influencers Engagement Model (AIEM)

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

With the rapid development of Internet-enabled channels of communication, social media influencers have become an important segment of digital experiences. Nowadays, social media influencers are new opinion leaders, used in marketing and communication campaigns to deliver messages to target audiences. However, in addition to human social media influencers, a new type of social media influencer emerged: computer-generated social media influencers. Virtual influencers are computer-generated characters created to resemble a realistic person (Robinson 2020). Prior to the expansion of Generative AI tools, virtual influencers were created with the use of 3D modeling and animation tools; however, the availability and ease of the use of Generative AI tools for image and video production enabled quicker and less expensive creation of AI influencers. In a relatively short period, virtual and AI-generated influencers gained vast popularity and attracted millions of followers, demonstrating significant potential to impact the online audiences. Virtual influencers show the capability to influence consumer behavior across social media platforms in a similar way to human influencers, and their popularity and impact is increasing, especially among the younger population (Lin et al., 2024). Based on the previous studies, the present study introduces the AI Influencer Engagement Model (AIEM)

to examine the effectiveness of AI influencers and their possible future role in strategic communication.

Literature Review

Social media influencers are individuals who have expertise in a specific area, who have cultivated a sizable number of active followers, and who are of marketing value to brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In the last ten years, an increasing number of companies have been utilizing social media influencers' credibility and audience reach to communicate their messages to target audiences. At the same time, the use of virtual, AI-generated influencers is expanding (Böhndel et al., 2022). With virtual influencers becoming more popular, a number of recent studies have explored their authenticity and trustworthiness, impact on consumer decisions, and effectiveness (Böhndel, et al, 2022; Thomas & Fowler, 2021). Stein et al., (2024) argued that social media users are creating parasocial interactions with virtual influencers who satisfy their entertainment, interaction, and information needs. Other studies have explored the role of social presence theory in shaping audience engagement with AI influencers (Arsenyan & Mirowska, 2021), along with the uses and gratification theory to analyze how AI influencers fulfill audience needs differently from human influencers.

Methodology

A systematic literature review of peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2025 was conducted. The scientific databases Emerald, Proquest, and Scopus were used to search for studies related to AI and virtual influencers. The exclusion and inclusion protocol has been developed, and the relevant keywords identified. The whole process is then presented within the PRISMA diagram. Based on the literature findings, the AI Influencer Engagement Model (AIEM) has been proposed.

Results and Conclusions

The proposed AIEM model integrates insights from social presence theory (SPT) and user gratifications theory (UGT) to explain how characteristics of AI influencers (customization, personalization, and level of authenticity) can meet the various user needs (cognitive, entertainment, and social) and as a result impact user's behavioral outcomes in the social media environment. The model's graphical presentation is proposed, with three main components identified: AI Influencer Characteristics (social presence dimension), User Motivations (user gratification theory dimension), and Strategic Communication Outcomes. The proposed model offers the framework for understanding and optimizing the use of AI influencers in strategic communication, focusing on both the psychological and functional aspects of audience interaction with AI and possible engagement of the audiences.

Practical and Social Implications

AI influencers can potentially transform online strategic communications, offering scalability and efficiency in delivering messages across social media platforms. The practical implication of the proposed model in strategic communications is vast. Organizations can utilize AI influencers to deliver strategic messages and optimize consumer interactions. The future of AI influencers will likely involve increased interactivity, real-time communication, and, in the future, it is not unlikely to expect even their integration into full virtual reality experiences. However, ethical concerns related to algorithm bias, transparency, and potential unethical use in terms of spreading fake news and spreading harmful content will require clearly defined guidelines and intense human oversight. As AI influencers continue to develop, organizations must establish clear ethical guidelines and transparency measures to maintain credibility and trust in relationships with their online audiences.

Keywords

AI influencers, virtual influencers, strategic communication, social media

Investigating the impact of AI on SMEs: communicative challenges and insights from an Italian study

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The increasing relevance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems has the potential to be a game-changer in various societal contexts, particularly in the private sector and in the communication field. This aspect has been recently investigated by several scholars (Ertem-Eray & Cheng, 2025; Gil de Zúñiga *et al.*, 2023).

AI tools are perceived from both researchers and professionals as a double-edged sword (Zerfass *et al.*, 2024). On one hand, these tools can unlock new opportunities for analyzing market dynamics, managing public relations, producing communicative content, and facing crises (Cheng *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, AI introduces unprecedented ethical challenges and risks, such as data privacy, trust and brand reputation management, among others. The attention on this topic needs a deeper understanding of the organizational implications of AI also in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

In this context, this study aims to investigate IA impact on organizational functions, including strategic communication, in the context of Italian SMEs.

Literature review

Nowadays, AI adoption in SMEs includes process automation, predictive analytics for decision-making and sentiment analysis. However, the integration of AI within SMEs presents not only transformative opportunities but also potential critical challenges (Schwaeke *et al.*, 2024). Indeed, while these technologies may have an impact in the improvement of operational efficiency, they also represent a radical innovation that goes beyond technological advancements to include cultural and ethical considerations (Bowen, 2024). To mitigate concerns at a supranational level, the European Commission has launched the *EU Competitiveness Compass* (2025), a strategic document aimed at enhancing European industrial competitiveness by fostering productivity and innovation through AI. Moreover, AI tools are gaining increasing interest - as well as concerns (Lorenz *et al.*, 2023) - in various organizational sectors such as PR, marketing, advertising and strategic communication, with a public debate on its technological, economic and societal implications (Galloway & Swiatek, 2018).

According to professionals' perceptions (Zerfass *et al.*, 2020) AI solutions are changing PR activities significantly, enhancing customer engage-

ment and facilitating data analysis even if its application remains limited to low-risks fields and routine tasks. AI represents a valuable tool for managing communication channels, detecting potential crises and developing contents. Thus, AI has the potential to reshape communication managers' roles, making them leaders in AI integration within their organizations (Kelm & Johann, 2025).

In this framework, it is interesting to focus on the AI impact on SMEs especially in Italy, where they represent about 90% of the total number of companies, employing 78% of the workforce (ISTAT, 2023). These companies are experiencing the rise of AI-driven systems (Muto *et al.*, 2024) in a process of integration of these tools which involves communication activities (Giuaggioli & Pellegrini, 2023) and it's amplified by contemporary mediascapes (Valentini, 2024).

Methodology

Within a broader research project financed by an Italian Ministry, this study is focused on managers' and professionals' perceptions about AI challenges related to communication and PR functions, within the context of micro, small and medium enterprises. The study, conducted through 200 CATI interviews administered to C-Level interviewees, was carried out in July 2024. Interviewees were selected according to their geographical location.

Questions were designed to assess managers' awareness of AI adoption, as well as their perceptions about the role of AI on companies' sectors (including communication) and for the future of the job market. Data were further analyzed considering industrial sectors, number of employees, and geographical areas.

Results and conclusions

The study reveals significant perceived barriers to AI adoption, including inadequate organizational infrastructure (32%), cultural (24%) and technological limitations (13%). Moreover, 12% of respondents expressed a lack of trust regarding the AI systems within their organizations, particularly for medium enterprises (21%). Only 12% of the companies have already implemented AI solutions in their operations. Despite this limited adoption, AI is increasingly recognized for its potential in production, marketing, research, and customer service.

Among other aspects, respondents identify communication, marketing, and customer care as the areas where AI could have the greatest impact (25%), with differences between micro and medium enterprises. AI tools are considered strategic also for data management (27%). Furthermore, media coverage is perceived as a negative factor on AI adoption (66%). with a difference for various industrial sectors (e.g. trade, services). There is a general consensus that AI will redefine professional roles, resulting in the decline of specific functions and professions (81%). Indeed, 87% of respondents agree that workers who fail to update their skills risk experiencing a reduction in employment opportunities.

Practical implications

This research aims to address a gap in investigating how different aspects of AI adoption influence the performance and productivity of Italian SMEs, as well the implications for strategic communication management in the relationship with stakeholders.

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Keywords

artificial intelligence, strategic communication, SMEs

All AI disclosures are not created equal: Examining the effect of disclosure labels on trust

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In an interview with *PRNews* published on January 17, Tim Marklein, founder and CEO of Big Valley Marketing, commented on the relationship between transparency and trust in the context of AI (Schuman, 2025). He noted that, while historically, transparency has led to enhanced trust, the dynamic does not seemingly follow the same pattern at a time when AI usage has become ubiquitous. In fact, due to an overwhelmingly negative bias towards artificial intelligence, the public actually perceives AI-generated content as less trustworthy (Altay & Gilardi, 2023; Liu et al. 2022, 2024; Ray et al., 2024).

Practitioners like Marklein have thus pondered whether a disclosure label must be consensually adopted by the industry and if labels must allude to the type and extent of AI usage (Schuman, 2025). In the absence of empirical data on this issue, the purpose of this study is to examine whether different labels of AI disclosure yield varying levels of stakeholder trust if any at all?

To answer that question, the proposed work features a 2 x 3 fully crossed factorial design where both the type of material (a news story versus a company blog post) and the authorship disclosure labeling (disclosure labelled as AI-generated, AI-assisted, or AI-influenced) are manipulated.

Existing scholarship has documented that stakeholders do not view the use of AI positively. Liu et al (2022) explained for instance that people who identified emails as being written by AI, they viewed that content as fake. Their findings showed lower trust scores for messages perceived to be written by AI. Stakeholders exposed to content generated by artificial intelligence evaluate the message credibility based on the nature of disclosure rather than the actual source of the message (Liu et al., 2022).

Further, in the context of a crisis with low levels of attribution of responsibilities and a positive pre-reputation, stakeholders were willing to accept automated messages presented as AI-generated.

In all studies thus far, the terminology employed to describe the disclosure was however not examined. Studies generally manipulated the presence or absence of a disclosure rather than a disclosure alluding to the extent of AI usage.

This study in progress proposes to fill this gap through a 2 (type of document: news story versus a company blog post) x 3 (AI disclosure label: AI-generated, AI-assisted, AI-influenced) between subject experiment. Participants, both communication college students and a national panel of US adults, will be randomly exposed to

one condition and asked to rate their perceived levels of trust, credibility, and transparency using established measures from the organizational public relations and credibility scholarships.

The swift adoption and increasing usage of AI in public relations warrants the need for continued research on its ethical implications, industry standards, and importantly stakeholder perceptions. For the PR profession to adapt responsibly, it must continue to refine its understanding of the implications that AI has on public trust in the long term. Consequently, this work intends to draw conclusions relevant to the industry and able to inform the profession on best ethical practices when comes to disclosing AI.

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Keywords

trust, AI disclosure, experiment

Public Relations Professionals' Acceptance of Generative AI in Content Creation

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

Artificial intelligence, in particular generative AI, can be regarded as a disruptive force in public relations. Academic and professional discussions highlight great potentials, yet at the same time also warn of risks, among these increasing amounts of standardization and a loss of creativity and originality.

Given that the AI genie is now out of the proverbial box, professionals are confronted with an increasing amount of generative tools. Utilizing their potentials while mitigating their risks becomes a focal part of PR practice. Yet what exactly drives professionals' acceptance and adoption of such tools and technologies? While there is an increasing body of research on the utilization of generative AI in public communication, the factors leading to these practices still remain somewhat under-researched. We know how generative AI is used in PR, yet we do not really know why and under which conditions.

Our study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the factors influencing the acceptance and adoption of generative AI tools for content creation among PR professionals. It relies on the explanatory approach of the Technology Acceptance Model 2 (TAM2), yet additionally integrates trust as a pivotal factor.

Literature Review

Academic discourse has often approached the potential impact and the adoption of new technologies in PR with specific regards to digital technologies (e.g. Brockhaus et al. 2023) and, corresponding to the predominant usage-pattern of artificial intelligence, the employment of AI for supportive functions such as social listening and analytics (e.g. Galloway & Swiatek 2018). The comparatively young field of generative AI and specifically its acceptance and adoption still remains under-researched.

Technology acceptance has been successfully analyzed by employing the TAM-model, this has later been extended with additional explanatory factors (TAM2); research in other fields then suggests that trust can also play a pivotal role in such models (Belanche et al. 2012; Glikson & Woolley 2020; Venkatesh & Davis 2000).

Methodology

Using a quantitative approach, data was collected from 102 PR professionals through an online survey. The standardized questionnaire builds partially on previous TAM-based studies and focuses on key factors influencing technology acceptance and usage, as identified in the TAM2 research model. These factors were operationalized in 26 standardized items. Additional vari-

ables were included to gather background information about the participants. In alignment with the overarching subject, questions were included to ascertain whether they were using this technology in their work and, if so, how frequently.

The sample was purposefully selected via LinkedIn Sales Manager and further professional contacts, ensuring alignment with the research objectives. A total of 763 individuals were contacted, resulting in 119 participants in the online survey, which corresponds to a response rate of 15.6%. Seventeen questionnaires were incomplete and therefore excluded from the analysis, leaving 102 valid datasets.

Results and Conclusions

Findings show that perceived usefulness significantly influences the intention to adopt generative AI tools. Job relevance and the quality of AI-generated content were identified as critical determinants of perceived usefulness. Interestingly, neither perceived ease of use nor trust emerged as significant predictors of usage intention, contrary to some expectations. Social influence plays a role in shaping the intention to use these tools, highlighting the impact of peer pressure. These findings suggest that while efficiency gains are main drivers for adoption, the impact of social dynamics cannot be overlooked.

Practical and Social Implications

The adoption of generative AI in PR is poised to increase, but its success depends on the alignment of technological capabilities with professional standards and ethical considerations. Further research is needed to explore the long-term

implications of generative AI on communication practices and industry norms. Building a culture of transparency and trust while leveraging peer influence can further support the responsible use of generative AI, ensuring that technological advancement aligns with societal values.

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Right to Know as an Ethical Public Policy Approach to AI and Misinformation/Disinformation Disquietude

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Introduction and Purpose

Artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed an eclectic range of aspects in everyday life while greatly influencing a myriad of academic fields (including public relations), affecting not only innovative research but how individuals interact with one another (Voicu, et al., 2024). Within social science research specifically, AI influences how individuals communicate through computer-mediated dialogue, as well as how communicative content is created (Hermann, 2022) yet often misused through misinformation/disinformation campaigns (Palenchar & Heath, 2025).

Public relations scholars and practitioners face a dilemma when researching and implementing AI. According to Nagar (2022), AI does not currently have a normative set of ethical principles by which researchers and organizations must abide. When examining organizational policies regarding the use of AI in communication, a consistent theme throughout remains the “common good” for which organizations may positively impact its community for the overall benefit of society. However, according to Nagar, the concept of “common good” proves subjective based on an organization’s categorization and overall purpose (e.g., nonprofit, for profit), resulting

in a variety of proposed ethical guidelines. For these reasons, the purpose of this paper is to develop an information dissemination policy and ethical guidelines for the public relations field that is critical to ensuring that AI is used in ways that serve stakeholder and public interests while addressing concerns related to misinformation/disinformation campaigns.

Literature Review

The unethical use of AI by public relations practitioners encompasses a broad range of practices that can damage organizational and client relationships, and harm stakeholders and other risk bearers related to an organization’s products and services. Specific concerns include bias and discrimination, privacy, accountability, and transparency.

The right-to-know approach to public policy—also known as regulation through revelation – is based on the ideas of self-governance and public participation in the decision-making process (Florini, 2007) and was made into a U. S. federal law in 1986 (EPRCA), which has served as a model for numerous (80+) other countries since. Simply, right to know is based on ensuring people can access information, that it helps

reduce risk levels in their lives and is in a useable format towards those ends, and that there are dialogue infrastructures for people to participate that addresses power discrepancies for people to engage in community decision-making processes. In this paper, right to know principles and policies provide the theoretical backdrop for analyzing the ethical use of AI in public relations. The work begins with a review of how generative AI is being used in public relations and the ethical challenges associated with such uses. The paper then presents right to know as a policy and ethical foundation for analyzing ethical issues and identifies core public relations communication principles that can be used to evaluate ethical AI practices related to misinformation/disinformation. RQs include: (1) How can right to know policies and practices help to combat misinformation and disinformation in the use of AI in public relations? (2) What right to know policies and principles should be incorporated in professional ethical guidelines on the ethical use of AI in public relations?

Methodology

The study will utilize a three-pronged research approach. The authors first review the extensive literature on the theoretical history and the development of the right to know and its relationship to the ethical practice of public relations. They then identify core principles that contribute to the challenge of having communication and information infrastructures that are sufficiently robust and collaborative to achieve the level of deliberative democracy needed to achieve maximal individual, expert, and community efficacy that can help make society more fully functioning while being existentially and directly threatened by misinformation and disinformation (Palenchar & Heath, 2025). Last, they conduct a policy analysis that applies these principles in reviewing ethical guidelines and policies to AI and misinformation/disinformation.

Results and Conclusions

Overall, while the fundamental concepts of right to know mirror many current public relations guidelines and ethical codes of conduct, the field falls short in the implementation of its basic philosophy and tenets related to AI and misinformation/disinformation campaigns.

Practical and Social Implications

The aim of this paper is to propose an information dissemination policy and ethical guidelines for the public relations field that is critical to ensuring that AI is used in ways that serve stakeholder and public interests while addressing concerns related to misinformation/disinformation campaigns. The paper is significant in helping to define best practices for the ethical use of AI in public relations based on right to know policies and principles that are an established part of the democratic, collaborative decision-making heritage.

Keywords

Public relations, AI, right to know, ethics, disinformation/misinformation

Compassion fatigue in humanitarian and charity PR: AI to the rescue?

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into public relations (PR) practices has transformed the charity sector by enhancing communication strategies and automating routine tasks. However, fighting compassion fatigue, or the public's desensitization to humanitarian appeals as a result of repeatedly being exposed to upsetting messages, is one of the main issues charity public relations practitioners deal with (Kyriakidou, 2021). The research question focuses on how AI is being used in the UK charity sector to address compassion fatigue and the purpose is to highlight the *do's* and the *don't's* in humanitarian and charity PR when combatting against compassion fatigue.

Literature review

Existing literature emphasizes on the multifaceted role of PR professionals in the charity sector, including media relations, content creation, stakeholder management, fundraising communications, and crisis response (Cronin & Edwards, 2022). On the one hand, scholars argue that AI-driven tools, including sentiment analysis and predictive analytics have the potential to counteract compassion fatigue by diversifying messaging and optimizing public targeting (Chouliaraki & Vestergaard, 2021). On the other hand, concerns have also been raised regarding the over-reliance on AI, which may lead to ethical dilemmas and a loss of human touch in relationship-building (Zararsız, 2024).

Methodology

This study employs qualitative research methodology and conducts in-depth semi-structured interviews, in order to gain valuable insight into the implications of AI use within the UK charity and humanitarian PR and its impact on combatting against compassion fatigue. The sample of interviewees includes 28 in-house PR professionals across a range of charitable organizations. The research seeks to understand how AI tools are incorporated into their daily work, which specific functions are automated, and how PR professionals perceive AI's role in mitigating compassion fatigue. Thematic analysis is used to identify key trends, opportunities, and challenges that emerge from the data.

Results and conclusions

Initial findings suggest that AI is predominantly used for media monitoring and predictive analytics to refine messaging strategies. AI enhances efficiency by reducing the time spent on routine tasks, allowing PR professionals to focus on strategy. Additionally, AI-generated insights have the potential to inspire professionals to craft emotionally resonant but varied narratives that maintain public engagement without causing fatigue. However, participants also express concerns about AI fostering professional complacency, reducing creativity, and generating emotionally shallow content that may fail to connect with publics on a deeper level, especially with donors, a crucial group of stakeholders in humanitarian and charity PR.

Practical and social implications

The study concludes that while AI offers advantages in enhancing productivity and countering compassion fatigue, it must be implemented strategically to maintain the authenticity and emotional depth crucial to charity communications. The practical implications of these findings suggest that charities should integrate AI while ensuring human oversight and ethical considerations in messaging. From a social perspective, the increasing reliance on AI in charity PR raises questions about transparency, authenticity and the risk of depersonalizing engagement with donors and beneficiaries. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on AI in PR by providing empirical insights into its role in combating compassion fatigue in the charity sector. The findings are relevant for PR practitioners, scholars, and policymakers interested in the evolving relationship between AI, strategic communication, and public engagement within nonprofit organizations.

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Keywords

compassion fatigue; humanitarian and charity PR; AI; UK charity sector.

Generative AI in Political Public Relations: A Video Ethnographic Study of Content Production

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

Like all public relations practitioners, Political Public Relations (PPR) practitioners are impacted by the increasing adoption of generative AI (GenAI) in content production. While PPR is known to be a strategic function (Hallahan, 2011), the growing reliance on AI can potentially reduce PPR practitioners to (functional) content creators. While generative AI can increase the speed and volume of generating content, under-developed skills in writing prompts and limitation of generative AI can lead to misleading content, which in turn, shape political discourse. Furthermore, the increased adoption of GenAI adds to questions about the evolving nature of professional expertise, the potential monotony of PPR work, and the ethical implications of AI-driven PPR messaging.

While public relations scholars have highlighted the potential benefits of AI (e.g., Nutsugah & Senanu, 2024), PPR scholarship is only beginning to explore how generative AI is transforming the actual work of PPR professionals. Assuming that the production of content has been influenced by generative AI, this paper addresses the question: “How has GenAI changed the production of political content by PPR practitioners?”

Literature Review

Literature on the use of generative AI in political public relations is growing (Nutsugah & Senanu, 2024). Generative AI is increasingly used by politicians to craft personalized campaigns, manipulate public perception, and amplify political narratives on social media, suggesting that PPR work is being made easier. Yet, little knowledge exists concerning how this ease in performing public relations task is shaping the role of public relations in democracy, and the profession experience of practitioners. Generative AI simplifies tasks like content creation, social media management, and data analysis (Cusnir & Neagu, 2024; Nutsugah & Senanu, 2024), but broader implications are underexplored. Automating PR tasks raises questions about professional expertise, ethics, and AI’s impact on transparency and accountability in democratic processes (Cusnir & Neagu, 2024; Kok-Yew & Swiatek, 2024). The lack of studies on AI’s influence on practitioners’ roles and strategic decision-making highlights a gap in understanding the profession’s transformation (Nutsugah & Senanu, 2024).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and interpretivist approach to professional PPR practice in India. The study’s uniqueness lies in its use of video ethnography, a rarely employed methodology in Indian PPR research (Rasquinha, 2024). Here,

data was collected using video ethnography (66 hours recorded over 8 days) across two offices of a political party and through 12 interviews with workers from three political parties. The video ethnographic data captures verbal and non-verbal (multimodal) cues in live interactions between practitioners and is presented as strips. Each strip of data provides empirical evidence of content production activities. The Critical Incident Technique (CIT), employed to choose observations classified as routine, allows moderate generalizations (Williams, 2000). Critical discourse studies and conversation analysis were applied to analyze the data, while the interviews supported claims observed during video ethnography. For this paper, the production of two social media posts (one created with GenAI and one without GenAI) is compared to examine how technological advancements influence the creative and strategic dimensions of PPR.

Results and Conclusions

The analysis demonstrates changes in the practice of PPR. The use of GenAI not only creates monotony in their job function, but reduces strategic thinking, further relegating PPR to a solely technical function within a political party. Generative AI has significantly eased the content production process, enabling political parties to rely on party workers rather than PPR practitioners to produce campaign materials on their phones without professional oversight and training. This allows for the growing production of misleading content, especially during election cycles, reducing accountability in political communication. This shift raises concerns about the erosion of strategic thinking in political public relations and the potential impact on democratic discourse.

Practical and Social Implications

Generative AI (GenAI) is transforming public relations (PR) enabling faster, more efficient con-

tent production. However, this efficiency comes with challenges. The lack of ethical guidelines and training has led to concerns about accountability, and the quality of AI-generated content. Many practitioners admit to not disclosing AI use in content production, raising ethical questions about trust and authenticity. Additionally, GenAI's produced content is increasingly produced by untrained individuals, such as political party workers, to generate campaign materials. This has increased the risk of misinformation and reduced professional oversight. Furthermore, the over-reliance on AI has led to a decline in strategic thinking and creativity, increasing monotony and decreasing motivation to do PPR work. These findings highlight the urgent need for ethical frameworks, training, and regulatory measures to address the long-term implications of GenAI on PPR practice and democratic discourse.

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Keywords

Generative AI, Political Public Relations, Trust, Video Ethnography

Competence Meets Compassion: Understanding the Boundary Conditions of Employee Reactions to CSR

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

A growing body of research demonstrates that employees reciprocate their companies' socially responsible practices with stronger relational bonds, increased productivity, enhanced creativity, and more. This study explores the mechanisms through which companies' CSR activities influence employees' relationships with their organizations, by identifying the boundary conditions that shape these effects. Specifically, using the corporate association framework, we explore whether employees' perceptions of CSR consistently improve employee-organization relationships (EORs) and other positive behavioral outcomes—or if these effects depend on their perceptions of the company's competence or corporate ability.

Literature Review

Corporate associations are memory-based beliefs and feelings that an individual has for a given organization (Dacin & Brown, 2002). A common classification of corporate associations differentiates between corporate ability (CA) associations, referring to beliefs and feelings about a company's ability to maintain its core business

produces/services, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) associations, that is, beliefs and feelings about whether a company is perceived as a responsible entity in society.

Numerous studies suggest that employees' positive CSR associations enhance employee-organization relationships (EORs) through mechanisms such as positive affect and stronger identification, ultimately leading to employee support, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). However, most research overlooks the potential moderating role of corporate ability (CA) associations on the relationship between CSR associations and EORs. Drawing on the corporate association spillover effect and cue consistency theory, we argue that employees' CA associations influence the extent to which CSR associations shape EOR perceptions and, in turn, drive employee advocacy and OCBs. According to cue consistency theory (Anderson, 1981), individuals rely on multiple external cues to form their thoughts, feelings, and actions, with consistent cues exerting a stronger combined influence. Conversely, when cues are inconsistent, negative information can undermine the impact of conflicting positive cues.

Based on this, we propose a moderated mediation model. Specifically, EORs mediate the relationship between CSR associations and employee advocacy and OCBs. This mediation is further moderated by CA associations: when employees hold strong CA associations, CSR associations have a significantly positive impact on EOR perceptions. However, when employees hold weak CA associations, CSR associations have little to no effect on EOR perceptions.

Methodology

A U.S.-based panel of 398 full-time employees was recruited through the online survey platform Prolific to participate in a cross-sectional time-lagged survey. Data were collected from the same panel at two time points, with a one-month interval between them. CA and CSR associations were measured at Time 1, while EOR perceptions, employee advocacy, and OCBs were measured at Time 2. This approach minimizes common method bias and enhances the validity of the data.

Results and Conclusions

SPSS Process Model 8 was applied to the main data analysis. The results supported the moderated mediation model. CA associations were found to moderate the effect of CSR associations on EOR perceptions. Specifically, when CA associations are weak, the effect of CSR associations on EOR perceptions is not significant. However, when CA associations are strong, the effect of CSR associations is significantly positive. Furthermore, the moderated mediation model was supported for both dependent variables: employee advocacy and OCBs.

This study reveals that CA associations serve as a boundary condition for employees' perceptual and behavioral responses to CSR associations. Theoretically, the findings provide more finely grained insights into employee relation-

ship-building within the CSR literature, contribute to the scholarship on corporate associations, and extend the applicability of cue consistency theory in a public relations research context.

However, due to the nature of cross-sectional survey research, the relationships identified in this study might not be causal. Future research should consider employing cross-lagged longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal relationships and further explore how different types of corporate associations interact to influence employee perceptions and behaviors over time.

Practical and Social Implications

Companies seeking to strengthen and sustain positive relationships with employees through CSR initiatives must prioritize fostering employees' perceptions of the company's core business competence. Without a strong reputation for operational excellence, employees may undervalue CSR efforts and be less likely to respond with favorable relational perceptions or positive behaviors. As Carroll's CSR pyramid emphasizes, economic responsibility forms the foundation of CSR. In other words, CSR initiatives are most impactful when employees perceive the organization as both socially responsible and highly competent in fulfilling its primary business mission.

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Keywords

Corporate social responsibility associations, corporate ability associations, employee-organization relationships, employee advocacy, organizational citizenship behaviors

On the public policy aspects of generative AI: Guidance from recent history and the risks from revisionist states

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Introduction and purpose of the study

This paper offers historically-informed suggestions on the likely direction of future public policy for generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology at a time when the international order is in flux. In terms of scope, two future-focused research questions are addressed, based on a comparative historical review of public policy relating to the internet and social media:

RQ1: What is the likely direction of travel for public policy, regulation and levels of support for generative AI by nation states?

RQ2: How is generative AI likely to be used by nation states in their own PR, promotion and propaganda?

Literature review

The central axis of this paper is what the late Michael Kunczik (2003, p.399) called the “transnational public relations of foreign governments”, or the “public relations of the nation state”, an area in which he described any differences between propaganda and public relations as a “semantic game”. According to David Welch (2016, p.3), this type of state level propaganda had two purposes: “maintain morale at home and influence opinion abroad”. Welch also claimed that

“propaganda came of age in the twentieth century”, enabled by “technological advances in mass communication”, which have continued at pace with social media services and AI becoming important channels for public relations content. Organski’s (1958) power transition theorization suggests that “revisionist” states that are discontent with the international system of alliances and their status within it will seek change while the contrasting behaviour of “status quo” nations is to support the existing global order and system of alliances (IMF, NATO, UN etc.). Beyond communications technology, there have been recent transformations in the behaviour of China, Russia, United States and the extent of their support for the rules-based international order which will influence the way AI is used in public policy.

Methodology

The investigation uses comparative historical analysis to compare the public policy approaches to internet and social media technologies that were adopted by the revisionist states of United States, China and Russia, with status quo states such as UK and European Union nations.

Results and conclusions

The comparative historical analysis of the internet and social media development and public policy identified differences between the dominant/great powers that are summarized below.

Practical and social implications

Under President Trump, the US seems set to adopt some “revisionist” policy choices which will make agreement on a set of universally agreed rules for regulating AI difficult to achieve. Even before Trump, the USA – along with China and Russia - was not participating in a 2024 UN initiative working to define an agreed global regulatory framework for AI. A more separatist approach to AI regulation informed by geopolitical interests, propagandist/power projection and commercial priorities is likely to prevail in the major powers. The strategic priorities underpinning nationalist political stances will also

be reflected in how nations choose to use AI for state level public relations and propaganda and this makes agreement on a transnational set of rules for AI unlikely.

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Keywords

Artificial intelligence, AI, public relations, propaganda.

Country	Public Policy Priority for Internet	Policy Example
United States	Commercial growth and international expansion by US technology corporations (e.g. Cisco, AOL, Netscape, Sun, Oracle).	1996 Telecommunications Act (under administration of President Clinton and Vice President Gore) invests in high speed network infrastructure. Under Section 230 of Communications Decency Act (part V of 1996 Telecommunications Act) ISPs are granted immunity from civil liability and prosecution for carrying/publishing user generated content.
China	Exclusion of Western ideas, information and political thinking on democracy. Use of internet technology to monitor citizens behaviour (including use of censor-avoiding technology such as VPNs).	2000 Ministry of Public Security launches Golden Shield Project, which combines censorship of content with individual surveillance. Google pulled out of China after censorship dispute in 2010. Yahoo pulled out of China in 2021 2013 Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Document No.9 warns of “7 perils” that can undermine the party, including universal values, civil society and free press.
European Union	Protect rights of the individual citizen. Oppose monopolistic/anti-competitive practices. (In 2024, Apple was fined €1.8bn for antitrust offences and Meta fined €800m)	1995 Data Protection Directive Updated with 2016 General Data Protection Regulation (includes Article 17 rights to be forgotten in searches) 2024 Digital Services Act was introduced to strengthen users’ rights and address issues of disinformation.

Adaptive internal communication: Building resilient organizations and fostering satisfaction with life

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Introduction and Purpose

In the context of hybrid and digital workplaces, internal communication is increasingly recognized as a strategic function essential not only for organizational performance but also for individual well-being. This study introduces Adaptive Internal Communication Theory (AICT), a framework that explores how internal communication satisfaction (ICS) mediates the relationship between communication practices and outcomes such as engagement, employee wellbeing, communication cynicism, life satisfaction and communication effectiveness.

Literature Review

AICT integrates leadership communication (Decuyper et al., 2022), employee voice (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014), informal communication (Denner et al., 2024), and attitudes toward digital communication technologies (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2025) as key antecedents of ICS (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2021). These constructs are examined in relation to their effects on communication effectiveness (Deepa & Baral, 2021), engagement and disengagement (Moreira et al., 2021), communication cynicism (Wilkerson et al., 2008), employee well-being (Diener & Chan, 2011), and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985).

Methodology

The study follows a mixed-methods design: (1) qualitative focus groups and interviews to explore mechanisms influencing ICS, (2) controlled experiments to test causal effects of communication variables, and (3) a longitudinal survey to validate the AICT model across time. Structural equation modelling (SEM) will be used to map pathways among constructs.

Results and Conclusions

Preliminary findings suggest that trustful leadership, supportive voice climates, spontaneous informal exchanges, and positive attitudes toward digital tools are critical to ICS and employee engagement. The validated AICT model is expected to demonstrate that adaptive communication systems reduce disengagement and cynicism while promoting well-being and satisfaction. Limitations include variation across organizational contexts and levels of digital maturity.

Practical and Social Implications

The study will provide evidence-based recommendations for designing resilient, inclusive communication systems that support employee satisfaction and societal trust in organizations.

Keywords

internal communication satisfaction, adaptive communication, engagement, digital transformation, life satisfaction

AI's impact on reputations and relationships - ramifications for the public relations function

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into public relations practice (PR) looks set to significantly impact the skills and capabilities required of professionals and, as a result, reshape our development, team formation and working lives. This paper takes a step further and considers what the use of AI *beyond* the public relations team across the organisation means for public relations as a management function.

The study question is: “What are the potential ramifications for the public relations function as artificial intelligence is increasingly adopted and utilised across various departments within an organisation?”

Literature review

Over 100 research papers and online articles are referenced in the background materials of the ‘AI and Reputation Leadership’ course which informs this paper.

Methodology

The paper combines reflections and observations as a practicing professional with primary and secondary research, including:

Consultancy and training work with a wide range of clients, supporting the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence by organisations and/or public relations functions.

Development of the ‘AI for Reputation Leadership course’, created by the author in 2023 for the CIPR in order to address the need for a strategic approach to AI adoption by organisations.

The CIPR’s State of the Profession series, which include insight related to practitioner awareness, use and attitudes to artificial intelligence. This study has been managed by the author since 2018.

Data ethics and PR guides developed by the author for the CIPR in 2019.

The broader work of the CIPR’s ‘AI in PR’ panel to which the author has contributed, including ‘Humans Still Needed’ and ‘Ethics Guide to Artificial Intelligence in PR’.

Results and conclusions

The potential ramifications for the public relations function, as artificial intelligence is increasingly adopted across various departments within an organisation, are considerable.

AI use by organisations can have a profoundly positive impact on productivity, innovation and communication capacity.

But it also introduces a plethora of challenges, including those relating to authenticity, intellectual property, data and algorithmic bias, industrial relations, privacy, misinformation and

energy use. These challenges pose risks to the relationships between an organisation and its publics.

As the function responsible for reputation and relationship management, engaged in 'the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics', these benefits and challenges have significant consequences for the role of PR.

However, recent primary research suggests that the PR function is struggling to contend with the consequences of AI among its own practitioners, irrespective of the wider organisation.

Limitations of the study

The development and adoption of artificial intelligence continues at considerable pace. Ramifications change as the technology changes.

Research specific to the views of communication and public relations leaders in relation to the organisational adoption of artificial intelligence is in its infancy.

Practical and social implications

If the PR function does not support an organisation to manage the consequences of AI adoption for reputations and relationships, it will fail in its role as a management function and other functions will step in.

If organisations are not supported by public relations professionals in the adoption of AI, opportunities to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks and challenges will be missed, with negative consequences for those reputations and relationships.

More broadly, the role of the public relations function in supporting organisations to man-

age the opportunities and risks presented by AI is pertinent to its responsibilities to the public good, specifically its role in helping inform and engage citizens in relation to the social impacts and regulation of AI.

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Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Public Relations, Reputation Leadership

Organizational climate for appreciation: Scale development and validation

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Introduction

Employees are valued in the workplace for various reasons, including individual traits and work-related behaviors (Wahl et al., 2025). However, the extent to which appreciation is communicated varies across organizations. This variability can be seen as an organizational climate of appreciation. As an instrument measuring the organizational climate for appreciation is still lacking, this study aims at developing a one-dimensional scale consisting of six to ten items. The scale's dimensionality, validity, and reliability will be analyzed.

Literature Review

Employee appreciation is defined “as employees’ perception of being valued by others through positive signals regarding their individual characteristics and/or their work-related behaviors and competencies. Under-appreciation means the lack of perceived appreciation, while over-appreciation refers to perceiving too much appreciation” (Wahl et al., 2025, p. 13). Thus, we define an appreciative climate as a working environment in which employees are signaled that their individual characteristics and/or work-related behaviors and competencies are valued. Such climates provide balanced and credible appreciation, avoiding both lack and excess.

Existing measures of appreciation, such as the widely used scale by Jacobshagen et al. (2008) emphasize individual perceptions rather than the broader organizational climate. Thus, an instrument measuring appreciation on an organizational level is lacking.

Appreciation benefits both the employees and the organizations they work for. First, appreciation increases job satisfaction, second, it increases engagement, and third it decreases turnover intention (for a summary see Wahl et al., 2025).

Methodology

Following established scale development procedures (Boateng et al., 2018; Carpenter, 2018), we conducted an extensive item generation process: (1) scrutinize the employee appreciation and climate literature for adequate items, (2) conduct interviews with employees on their experiences with appreciation, (3) incorporate feedback of five experts on either scale development or employee appreciation.

The item pool generated in this way will be piloted with a sample of 100 German-speaking employees. After this, we will establish the dimensionality of the scale with a sample of 500 German-speaking employees. A second sample of 500 German-speaking employees is used to

replicate the dimensionality and to check the validity and reliability of the scales. The data collection will be completed in March 2025.

For demonstrating criterion validity, the surveys will include established scales on job satisfaction, engagement, and turnover intention. Items on appreciation from colleagues and superiors will be included, for analyzing construct validity. The study has been deemed ethically sound, and the scale development procedure will be pre-registered at the Open Science Framework.

Results and conclusions

As suggested by Boateng et al. (2018), exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses will be conducted to establish the scale's dimensionality, reliability analyses (e.g., Cronbach's Alpha) will demonstrate the scale's consistency, and correlation analyses will establish the scale's construct and criterion validity. The aim is to develop a one-dimensional scale with six to 10 items that measures the organizational climate for appreciation in a valid and reliable way.

Implications and future research

The developed scale will provide communication experts with a tool to gauge the appreciative climate prevailing in their organizations. This information can be used to plan communication strategies increasing the climate for appreciation in the organization. This would benefit both the employees and the organization.

Employee appreciation researchers can utilize this scale in their research, when they want to measure appreciation on the organizational level rather than on the individual level of employees. A revalidation of the scale in cultures other than German-speaking ones appears valuable for future research.

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Keywords

employee appreciation, organizational climate, scale development, validation study.

AI Risks: Are European Communication Professionals Ready? A Study on Individual and Organisational READINESS

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are increasingly being used by both individuals and organizations (Oh & Ki, 2024). However, there is still a lack of in-depth understanding of whether this disruptive innovation represents more of an opportunity (the “good guy”) or a threat (the “bad guy”) for communication, marketing and consulting professionals particularly (Zerfass et al., 2020). This study aims to explore how these professionals perceive AI-related risks in the workplace and what is considered important for READINESS in the context of AI adoption at the individual and organizational level.

Literature review

AI's impact on communication professionals showcases its dual role as facilitator and disruptor in the workplace: on the one hand, AI technologies can positively contribute to improving creative communication processes, personalizing interactions with stakeholders and optimizing operational efficiency (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022); on the other hand, they also pose potential risks such as misinformation and bias (Bowen, 2024). Therefore, it is critical for professionals involved in communication processes

to understand how to prepare for the opportunities and risks associated with AI at both an individual and organizational level and how to develop effective strategies to reap the benefits of AI while mitigating the risks in the workplace. While researchers in other fields have attempted to answer this call, little research has been conducted in the field of strategic communication and public relations (Bowen, 2024; Oh & Ki, 2024; Yue et al., 2024).

Methodology

This study employed an online survey with open-ended questions to gather input from communication, marketing and consulting professionals in three European countries — Italy, Romania and the Netherlands. A total of 84 responses were collected and analyzed through a thematic analysis, with an intercoder reliability test also conducted.

Results and conclusions

Seven core themes emerged from the analysis, including 1) the forms of risk anticipated in relation to the adoption of generative AI in the workplace; the conceptualization of 2) individual and 3) organizational READINESS in the face

of AI-related risks; the factors considered important for the development of 4) individual and 5) organizational READINESS; and the aspects of the 6) physical and 7) digital work environment that contribute to building organizational READINESS. Participants identified several potential risks associated with the use of generative AI technologies in the workplace, encompassing data security, over-reliance on automation, and ethical challenges, reflecting diverse concerns shaped and informed by their professional contexts. Participants also elaborated on their own conceptualization of individual READINESS and organizational READINESS, as well as on the factors considered important for promoting personal and organizational resilience and dealing effectively with AI-related risks. Findings from the thematic analysis revealed both structural and material aspects (e.g. collaborative and creative spaces) as well as technological and immaterial aspects (e.g. technological and communication tools) that help to build cultural ability to overcome AI-related risks and achieve collective efficacy.

Practical and social implications

This study offers relevant insights to better understand how to prepare for the opportunities and risks associated with AI at both an individual and organizational level and how to develop effective strategies to reap the benefits of AI while mitigating the risks in the workplace. Theoretical and practical implications can be drawn from this. For example, the results of this study underline the need for clear, ethically oriented corporate strategies that protect data and manage AI-related security risks while maintaining critical thinking and creativity in increasingly automated environments. READINESS appears to depend on a balanced integration of AI, where the human element — creativity, collaboration and strategic oversight — remains critical and needs to be nurtured at an individual level through training, peer support and leadership.

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Keywords

artificial intelligence; AI-related risks; READINESS; communication professionals

Exploring the Impact of Using Generative Artificial Intelligence on Productivity and Quality in Corporate Communications

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Introduction and purpose

Organizations that are early adopters of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) believe that it will improve the productivity and work quality of their employees (World Economic Forum, 2024). This study seeks to empirically assess how far this belief applies to corporate communication practitioners based on their experiences with using Gen AI. It also seeks to uncover the practical considerations for corporations when adopting Gen AI in communications on a global scale.

Literature review

Gen AI could boost work quality and productivity by freeing up time from low-value tasks, allowing focus on higher-value activities (World Economic Forum, 2024). Gen AI tools based on Large Language Models are increasingly being used in the communications sector (Al Naqbi, Bahroun, & Ahmed, 2024). Hence it raises the question of how corporate communication practitioners should think about Gen AI to take advantage of the productivity or quality gain.

The research questions are:

How does Gen AI impact the productivity and work quality of corporate communications practitioners?

What is the future role of Gen AI in the productivity and work quality of these practitioners?

Methodology

A theory-building approach is taken due to limited research on the use of Gen AI in improving productivity and quality in corporate communication. It is based on semi-structured interviews of 24 practitioners from 12 countries globally who have access to OpenAI platforms.

The interviews started with open-ended questions asked with flexibility. Questions include: *What do you use Gen AI for as a professional? How do you think it impacts your productivity or work quality? How do you see the role of AI evolving in corporate communications?*

Content analysis of the transcripts allows the conclusion to emerge through recognising patterns of relationships between Gen AI, productivity and quality.

Findings

Productivity impact is clear –Almost all interviewees agreed that there are productivity gains in using Gen AI in terms of faster speed of generating outputs but this is blunted by the need to regularly double-check the outputs to ensure accuracy. This productivity gain in turn has economic value such as doing away with paying for external translation services or more time to focus on high-value strategic work.

Quality impact is mixed – Interviewees experienced improvement in terms of language quality, idea generation and critical feedback on work from Gen AI, but also brought up how AI-generated contents are prone to errors or lack authenticity. Non-native speakers of English benefited from the quality improvement arising from using Gen AI to polish their English or produce translations but criticized the quality of output generated in local languages.

Socio-cultural context matters –Interviewees who conduct their work mostly in local languages pointed to the inability of ChatGPT to produce quality non-English contents, its skew towards “western” views, and the missing of cultural nuances as a deterrent to using it. OpenAI acknowledged this bias on its website (OpenAI, 2025). This observation is consistent with a study on AI adoption within the Central and Eastern European public relations (PR) sector (Kaclová, 2024) and the Global PR Research (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003) which highlighted the impact of socio-cultural variables on PR practice.

Future of Gen AI: Automation versus augmentation – That Gen AI will continue to be a tool for communication practitioners is a unanimous view, with it already taking over some operational tasks such as translation and media monitoring. Some interviewees are projecting strategic decision-making such as those related to channel management will be increasingly augmented

by AI which can handle large data sets and audience analytics.

Practical implications and future research

Given the productivity gains, the use of Gen AI in corporate communications should be encouraged subject to the conditions raised by the interviewees, such as quality checks and ensuring the confidentiality of data inputs. Socio-cultural limitations highlight the need for inclusive AI tools for global corporations.

This study presents an empirical foundation for understanding the impact of using Gen AI on the productivity and work quality of corporate communications practitioners so as to steer the profession towards a more informed approach. With the rise of alternate Gen AI platforms such as DeepSeek, future research can examine the implications of using different platforms in specific socio-cultural contexts such as Asia.

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Keywords

Generative Artificial Intelligence, Productivity, Quality, Corporate Communications

AI-powered Influence: How digital humans reshape consumer behavior. Examining the Mediating Roles of Perceived Value and Trust

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

Recently, digital humans—AI-driven virtual models—have gained popularity in e-commerce livestreaming to engage with consumers online. With the vivid simulation of human behaviors and appearances and its cost-effective and flexible characteristics, digital humans can create enormous value in the e-commerce industry by influencing consumers' purchase intentions and subsequent behaviors. In April 2023, Jing Dong (JD) created a digital replica of its founder for a live-streaming event that drew over 20 million views and generated sales of 50 million yuan (about USD 6.9 million) (Fan, 2024). However, few existing studies have examined the underlying psychological mechanisms by which consumers cognitively respond to information quality and their interactivity involving digital humans. This study aims to dig into this area by exploring the mediating role of perceived trust and value for purchase behavior and providing implications for studying digital humans from users' perspectives.

Literature Review

The study adopted the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The framework examines how

external stimuli trigger internal organisms and subsequently affect human behavior. Information quality refers to consumers' evaluations of the value and usefulness of the information conveyed by digital humans (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). Active control, two-way communication, and synchronicity are three essential conceptual dimensions of interactivity (Kim et al., 2012). Prior research has found that digital humans can effectively influence consumers' purchase intentions compared to humans. It is thus hypothesized that consumers' purchase behavior will be facilitated when their appraisals of information quality are positive, and their interactivity is high during interactions with digital humans.

Additionally, the perceived information quality is influenced by its trustworthiness and usefulness. Perceived trust and value usually increase when there is a greater sense of certainty and a stronger belief in the usefulness of information quality. Furthermore, studies regarding online commerce have found perceived trust and perceived usefulness as mediating psychological variables between digital human attributes (e.g., agent gender, anthropomorphism) and purchase intention. Therefore, perceived trust and value may mediate the relationship between information quality and purchase behavior in this study.

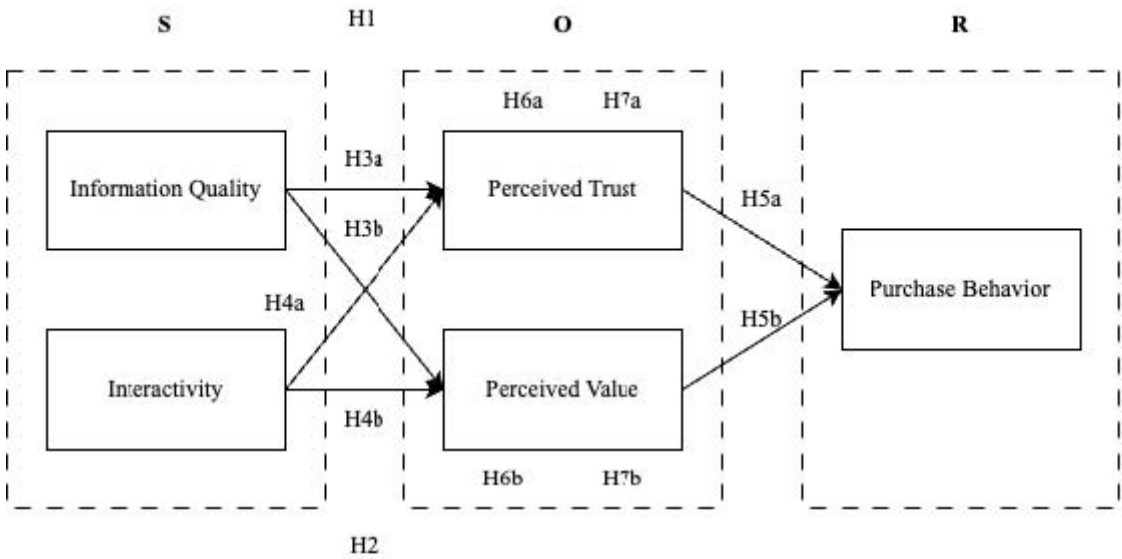
Moreover, interactivity was found to positively affect attitudes, including perceptions of value and trust (Kim et al., 2012). Under the SOR framework, it is possible that perceived trust and values also play a mediating role between interactivity and purchase behavior. The seven hypotheses are proposed (see Figure 1).

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional survey with convenience sampling, collecting 562 valid responses from Chinese social media users. The respondents were first asked about their previous experiences with digital humans in live-streaming e-commerce, followed by a video clip of the JD founder's example to enhance their under-

standing of the questionnaire (see Figure 2). Demographic information was also measured.

Figure 2: Example of JD founder's digital human



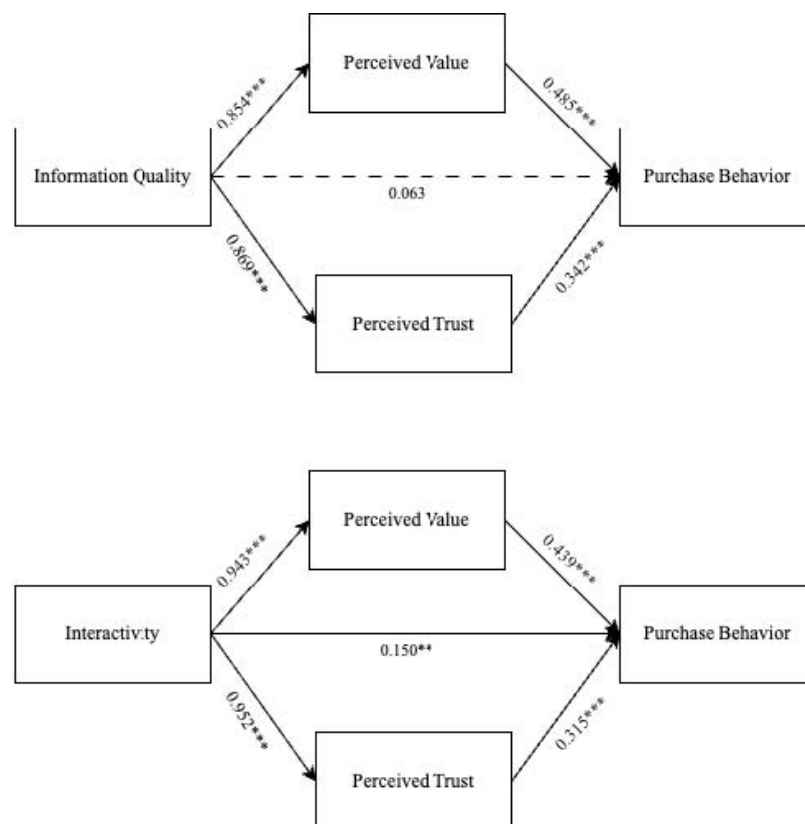
- H1: Information quality is positively related to purchase behavior.
- H2: Interactivity is positively related to purchase behavior.
- H3: Information quality is positively related to perceived trust (H3a) and perceived value (H3b).
- H4: Interactivity is positively related to perceived trust (H4a) and perceived value (H4b).
- H5: Perceived trust (H5a) and perceived value (H5b) are positively related to purchase behavior.
- H6: The relationship between information quality and purchase behavior is mediated by perceived trust (H6a) and perceived value (H6b).
- H7: The relationship between interactivity and purchase behavior is mediated by perceived trust (H7a) and perceived value (H7b).

Figure 1: Conceptual model and hypotheses of the study

Results and Conclusions

Analyzing with SPSS 26, all scales of variables were shown to have good reliability ($\alpha > 0.7$). The results of the Pearson correlation revealed that all correlations were positive and statistically significant among all variables. Testing the mediating effect, Model 4 in the PROCESS macro by Hayes (2022) was performed. The bias-corrected 95% confidence and 5,000 bootstrapped samples showed that there was an insignificant direct effect between information quality and purchase behavior (H1 is not supported) but a significant indirect effect through perceived trust and value (supporting H3a, H3b, H5a, and H5b). This suggests that perceived trust and value fully mediate the relationship between information quality and purchase behavior, resulting in a positive

increase (H6a and H6b are supported). As for interactivity, results showed that both indirect and direct effects were significant (supporting H2 and H4a, H4b), indicating a partial mediation between interactivity and purchase behavior (H7 is supported) (see Figure 3 for details). To summarize, improving digital humans' interactivity indirectly enhances consumers' purchasing behavior, and this effect is further strengthened via perceived trust and value. In comparison, consumers' purchasing behavior is highly dependent on their perceptions of trust and value in terms of information quality of digital humans, as information quality alone does not directly influence purchasing behavior.



Note: *** means $p < 0.001$, ** means $p < 0.01$, * means $p < 0.05$, and dashed lines indicate the relationship is insignificant.

Figure 3: Parallel mediation effects between the variables

Practical and Social Implications

Theoretically, the study extends the applicability of the SOR framework into the context of digital humans in e-commerce live streaming by uncovering the underlying mechanism linking digital human attributes to consumers' purchasing behavior. Practically and socially, the study offers insights into the efficient development of digital humans as a new business marketing model. Companies should optimize the interactive design of digital humans to enhance the sense of two-way communication and synchronicity, encouraging consumers to purchase the products. Improving consumers' perceptions of value and trust in digital humans should be a key marketing and communication strategy component.

Keywords

Digital Human, e-commerce live streaming, purchase behavior, perceived value, perceived trust

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AI in Public Relations: Exploring Professional Attitudes, Adoption Intentions, and Internal Communication

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the factors influencing public relations professionals' attitudes and behaviors toward AI adoption in the workplace. Specifically, we seek to understand how various attributes of AI technology, internal organizational communication, and individual characteristics shape PR professionals' intention to adopt and utilize AI technologies.

First, we aim to examine how the salience of perceived AI innovation attributes—such as its relative advantage, compatibility, ease of use, trialability, and observability—will be related to PR professionals' attitude toward and intention to use and adopt AI. Second, we will investigate which benefits and concerns related to AI use are most significant to practitioners, and how these factors impact employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, job performance, and openness to AI adoption at work. Third, we aim to explore the potential for a third-person effect, wherein PR professionals perceive that AI will have a more significant impact on others than on themselves, particularly in terms of its disruptive and negative effects on their colleagues. Fourth, we plan to explore how internal com-

munication influences employees' intention to adopt AI and their commitment to AI-related organizational changes. Specifically, we will focus on the impact of dialogic internal communication and charismatic leadership communication. Additionally, we will consider several moderators that may influence these outcomes, including individual characteristics and existing employee-organization relationships.

Literature Review

AI technologies are influencing the public relations industry in unprecedented ways. Industry reports and trade organizations have begun highlighting the benefits and concerns associated with AI in public relations (Gregory et al., 2023). At the same time, academic literature is starting to catch up, providing a deeper understanding of how these technologies affect individuals, industries, and society as a whole (Yue et al., 2024). Existing research has enumerated several benefits of AI technologies in public relations. For instance, AI can streamline media monitoring, enhance data analysis, and improve content creation efficiency. However, these benefits are accompanied by risks, including potential job displacement, privacy concerns, and

ethical challenges regarding algorithmic biases. Meanwhile, research on previous technology-related changes has emphasized that the success of technological adoption often hinges on how well organizations manage communication and support systems throughout the transition process (Lewis, 2019).

Despite the value of descriptive and exploratory research, there is a gap in understanding how various factors interact to influence public relations professionals' attitudes and behavioral adoption of AI technology in their work. Most studies have predominantly focused on the technological attributes of AI, often overlooking the agency of individual practitioners and the organizational strategies employed to communicate about AI adoption. Furthermore, while insights from interview-based research have provided valuable qualitative perspectives on why and how practitioners approach AI use in the workplace, survey-based research is needed to generalize these findings across larger populations.

Methodology

We have partnered with PRWeek, a leading organization of news, analysis, and features for the public relations industry, to collect survey data from PR professionals across the United States. Data collection is currently underway, and our target sample size is 1,000 PR professionals, ensuring diverse representation in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, organizational type, size, and managerial roles. The survey includes questions on professionals' perceptions of the opportunities and risks associated with AI, including their own self-perception and how they believe their PR peers view these technologies. Drawing from innovation diffusion theory, we also measure perception of various AI attributes. Additionally, we measure dialogic internal communication to capture mutuality and openness,

and charismatic leadership communication to assess how leaders convey vision, passion, and care related to AI adoption.

Results and Conclusions

Data will be analyzed using SPSS and AMOS between April and June of 2025. Based on our study goals, we predict that PR professionals' attitudes toward AI will be positively related to the perceived relative advantage of AI, its ease of use, compatibility with existing practices, trialability, and observability. Second, we will find out which benefits and concerns are most significant to practitioners and explore how these factors influence employee outcomes. Third, we will know whether a third-person effect exists. Fourth, we predict that effective internal communication will enhance professionals' positive attitudes toward AI, adoption intentions, and commitment to AI-related organizational change.

Practical and Social Implications

This research could provide critical insights for public relations professionals and organizations navigating AI adoption. By understanding the psychological and organizational factors influencing AI integration, PR firms can develop more effective communication strategies and support systems during technological transitions. The study may help mitigate potential employee resistance, address concerns about job displacement, and create more transparent, collaborative approaches to implementing AI technologies in professional environments.

Keywords

AI adoption, public relations professionals, AI attitude, AI-related change, leadership, communication strategies



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