

### Communication management 2.0: A qualitative survey on the effects of AIs on the competence portfolio in communication management

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# The Dynamics of Digital Influence

Communication Trends in  
Business, Politics and Activism

Edited by Alexander Godulla, Christopher Buller,  
Vanessa Freudl, Isabel Merz, Johanna Twittenhoff,  
Jessica Winkler and Laura Zapke



# Imprint

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on the competence portfolio in  
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## A qualitative survey on the impact of AIs on the competence portfolio in communication management

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### Abstract

The ongoing digital transformation has a profound impact on corporate communications, underscoring the growing relevance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This study examines the impact of AI development on the competency profile of communication managers. The research employs a cross-sectional design and involves 15 experienced communication managers in German companies undergoing both systematic surveys and qualitative, open-ended interviews. The findings reveal the current utilization of AI and the evolving perceptions of the role of communication managers. Notably, operational skills are becoming less significant in comparison to strategic acumen. However, operational tasks are still required, but in streamlined forms. Furthermore, the integration of AI has led to a redefinition of managerial roles, with the inclusion of correction, design, and AI integration responsibilities. It is of great importance to note that this integration necessitates a competency shift, which highlights the rising importance of skills in content creation, application, technology, and analysis. While the study highlights a recognizable shift in competencies, it also acknowledges the non-uniform AI implementation across companies. These insights provide a foundation for future research, enabling a nuanced understanding of evolving communication landscapes.

*Keywords: digital transformation, Artificial Intelligence, communication managers, competency profile*

### Introduction

In today's digital era, Artificial Intelligence (AI) increasingly influences various aspects of daily life. From automated decision-making processes to personalized advertising, AI is already shaping society in multiple ways. AI's presence in the workplace is also ubiquitous, serving as an indispensable resource and effective tool across numerous professional areas (Zerfass et al., 2020). The expansion of AI into various professional areas, particularly communication management, has been transformative (Iaia et al., 2023). Communication managers now utilize AI to analyze large data sets, optimize communication strategies, and automate routine tasks, greatly influencing how they engage with their audiences (Toteva, 2023). The role of AI redefines from a mere tool to a strategic asset in communication management

(Holmlund et al., 2020). The application of AI has expanded beyond traditional fields and is increasingly used in communication management (Osei-Mensah, 2023).

Historically, communication managers were primarily responsible for developing messages and choosing the right communication channels (Zerfass & Volk, 2020). However, their role has broadened to include the implementation and monitoring of AI-driven technologies. This shift reflects the onset of a new era where AI is not seen as a supportive tool but as a key driver of a company's communication strategy (Zerfass et al., 2020).

The current research in this area shows an increasing engagement with the topic of digitalization in communication management. However, little research specifically addresses AI's impact on the roles and tasks of communication managers (Zerfass et al., 2020). This study fills this gap by providing detailed insights into the changes resulting from the integration of AI. The methodology of this project includes a qualitative analysis involving expert interviews to gain insights into the practical application of AI in communication management. The total population comprises communication managers from various industries and companies, offering a wide diversity of perspectives and experiences. Throughout this work, various aspects are outlined that aim to contribute to developing a comprehensive understanding of the topic and providing guidance for further research and practical applications. This paper aims to examine the extent to which the competency profile of communication managers is influenced by the development of Artificial Intelligence in companies.

The influence of AI on the professional profile of communication managers is a complex phenomenon that affects traditional tasks and responsibilities and introduces new demands and competencies. Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly examine this change to understand its impacts on the practical work of communication managers and to develop appropriate measures for adapting and advancing their skills. By exploring this topic, the project can expand scientific knowledge and derive concrete recommendations for companies to successfully meet the challenges and opportunities associated with the use of AI. This paper seeks to explore the extent to which the competency profile of communication managers is impacted by the integration and advancement of Artificial Intelligence within corporate environments, encapsulating the research leading question:

*RLQ: How does the evolution of Artificial Intelligence in businesses influence the competency profile of communication managers?*

## **Theory**

### **Business and communication management**

Communication management is the control and design of communication activities and processes that contribute to value creation in organizational contexts through planning,

organization, management and control (Zerfass & Dühring, 2022; Zerfass & Link, 2022). Communication managers are those "who deal with the management and implementation of controlled communication processes between organizations (companies, associations, authorities, non-profit organizations, etc.) and their respective stakeholders. [...] Corresponding persons can be found in the communication departments of companies" (Zerfass & Dühring, 2014, p. 164). Due to the increasing relevance of involving other stakeholders besides a company's shareholders, value-based management and the associated increase in stakeholder value is becoming more and more important (Freeman & Reed, 1983; Zerfass, 2021). Strategic decisions, as described by Zerfass (2021), focus on defining corporate goals and utilizing existing potential. Operational decisions, as outlined by Schreyögg and Koch (2020), choose the right means to achieve these goals while taking into account efficiency for all stakeholders. Zerfass (2021) assigns certain corporate communication activities to the dimensions of strategic and operational management as well as the economic and social dimensions. Strategic-economic activities such as investor relations and corporate branding stand alongside strategic communication, while stakeholder dialogs and lobbying fall into the strategic-social dimension. Reputation management and corporate listening act as interfaces between the two dimensions. The operational dimension includes activities such as product advertising and employee communication, which fall into the economic dimension, as well as CSR communication and sponsoring, which fall into the social dimension. Crisis communication is located between the two dimensions, while employer branding is integrated into the economic dimension both strategically and operationally.

The 2016 European Communication Monitor (ECM) study also looked at the activities of communication managers that characterize their daily work. The first point is setting organizational goals, monitoring public issues and stakeholder expectations, discussing visions and business strategies with management and other departments, developing scenarios and building legitimacy, which accounts for around 18.8% of the day-to-day work of communication managers. Operational communication, talking to colleagues and journalists, writing press releases and texts for print and online media, creating communication materials, monitoring the results of activities and organizing events, accounts for a considerable 36.2%. Equally important is the management of communication activities and staff, including planning, organization, personnel management, budgeting, evaluation of processes and strategies, which accounts for 27.8%. In addition, communication work includes coaching, training, advising and empowering members of the organization or clients on vision, mission and other communication-related topics, as well as improving their communication skills and preparing them to communicate with the media and stakeholders accounting for 17.2%. There is an increasing focus on strategic activities, while operational tasks remain relevant and make up a significant part of the daily work of communication managers. (ECM, 2016)

### **The development of the competence portfolio of communication managers**

Communication management studies focus on core competencies, skills, and roles of communication managers. Communication managers are considered competent if they not only have the ability to solve problems, but also demonstrate the willingness and are authorized to act on behalf of others (Kiesenbauer, 2022). Competencies, according to Tench and Moreno (2015), arise from a mix of skills, knowledge and personal attributes that are used to deliver performance. According to Dozier and Broom (1995), roles are created and describe organizational behavior and its consequences. Identifying roles is critical to understand the effective elements of the profession (Tench & Moreno, 2015). In contrast to roles, competencies remain more stable over time and are fundamental to task performance (Jeffrey & Brunton, 2011).

The ECOPSI project (European Communication Professional Skills and Innovation Program) is a research project by Tench et al. (2013) to investigate the skills of communication professionals in Europe. Four pre-defined roles were examined: The role of CCOs, crisis communication managers, internal communication managers, and social media managers. The competence and role profile of the four roles was recorded using the competence classification of the ECOPSI communication role matrix (Tench & Moreno, 2015). The communication role matrix, developed by Tench et al. (2013), outlines six competencies and associated skills for four roles. It identifies key qualifications for communication managers, including social empathy, message effectiveness, organizational research skills, and knowledge of society and stakeholders (ECM 2023; Tench et al., 2017).

The Communication Management Grid by Volk et al. (2017) comprises eight core roles that map strategic and operational capabilities. Strategic capabilities secure the company's positioning and define the scope for future success, while operational capabilities support the implementation of communication strategies (Zerfass & Volk, 2019).

The strategic role of the ambassadors involves representation and securing fundamental positioning, requiring skills like mediation and leadership, with empathy and charisma being essential traits (Zerfass & Volk, 2019). In the ECOPSI project by Tench et al. (2013), the supporting and guiding core competency aligns closely with these skills, encompassing communication of vision, standards, ethical guidelines, and developing others. Multipliers support the implementation of communication strategies, ensuring stakeholder understanding of company goals, utilizing editorial and communication skills. Their role falls within the operational dimension (Zerfass & Volk, 2019). Communication strategists align communication activities with long-term corporate strategy, emphasizing analytical skills and strategic understanding. They require deep knowledge of public opinion, industry, and company specifics (Zerfass & Volk, 2019). The management core competency, encompassing cross-functional awareness and business-focused skills, aligns with this role (Tench et al., 2013). Professional communicators



execute goals set by communication strategists, requiring editorial, communication, and creative skills, along with cross-media expertise (Zerfass & Volk, 2019). This operational role involves disseminating messages through various channels and aligns with core competencies such as service provision and creation, including writing, designing, and presenting skills (Tench et al., 2013).

Strategic managers focus on long-term development opportunities like Big Data and AI, and oversee employee and manager skill management, needing strategic management skills. Operational managers handle day-to-day business, including budgeting and performance measurement, requiring leadership and people management skills (Zerfass & Volk, 2019). This aligns with the organizing and implementing core competency from the ECOPSI project, encompassing planning and implementation skills, as well as the analyzing and interpreting competency (Tench et al., 2013). Consultants assist top management in identifying and addressing communicative risks, requiring specialist knowledge and consulting skills. Coaches facilitate professional communication for managers and employees, necessitating mediation, feedback, and media competence (Zerfass & Volk, 2019). These roles align with the consulting function emphasized by Zerfass and Franke (2013), which includes process and expert consulting. Coaching and counseling, as identified by Tench et al. (2013), overlap with relationship building, consistent with the ECM 2021, which highlights a strong correlation between ambassadors and consultants. Therefore, communication managers often fulfill both roles. According to the ECM 2023, the role of advisor will become increasingly important for companies, and it is predicted that there will be many new opportunities to fulfill this role within companies.

The ECM 2021 identifies five roles (communicator, coach, consultant, manager, and ambassador) based on the Communication Management Grid. These roles are categorized as outbound (communicator and ambassador) and inbound (coach and consultant), referring respectively to external stakeholders and internal support. The study reveals that many communication managers take on multiple roles simultaneously, with the communicator role being the most common (42.8%), followed closely by the manager role (31.1%). Around 25% of practitioners perform coaching and consulting roles. The fast-evolving communication landscape, marked by digitization, Big Data, and advanced AI technologies, requires research into the roles and skills of communication managers. (ECM, 2021)

Lee and Meng (2021) stress the importance of cognitive analytics, data management, technical proficiency, and the ability to create meaning in the digital transformation context. Employees must acquire these skills to adapt to the transformative potential of digitization and AI. While 70% of European communication managers acknowledge the importance of business, technology, and data competencies, significant skill gaps exist, with 32.2% lacking adequate skills and 18.4% critically underqualified in data competencies. Additionally, about 44.4% are deemed inadequately qualified in technological skills. Addressing these competency gaps

through training is crucial for the field's advancement, with a need for prioritizing continuing education tailored to professionals' competency levels. Training priorities vary among organizations and age groups, with younger professionals typically dedicating more time to continuing education. (ECM, 2023)

### **Artificial Intelligence and Communication Management**

Communication management must address changes in the corporate environment, and digitalization significantly shapes how companies communicate with their stakeholders (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023). Given the deluge of information, competitive pressures, volatility, and changed network structures, companies will increasingly need to rely on digital tools such as automation and Artificial Intelligence to adequately respond to changing circumstances (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023). Therefore, corporate communication is directly affected by current technological changes. One approach to addressing this challenge is the integration of AI into corporate communication (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023).

Artificial Intelligence is understood as the ability of a system to interpret external data accurately, learn from this data, and adapt it flexibly to achieve specific goals and tasks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). Due to technological changes, communication departments within organizations must continuously adapt to keep pace, needing a "targeted use of digital technologies" (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023, p. 26). These technologies, including AI applications, support PR and communication units and are collectively known as communication technology (CommTech) (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023), a term introduced by the Arthur W. Page Society in 2019 and popularized in Europe by ECM 2021. CommTech encompasses digital technologies for both primary activities — such as stakeholder communication and consulting tools — and function-specific supporting activities like strategic alignment and digital asset management, all aimed at enhancing the value and efficiency of communication strategies (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023). While communication units can independently manage CommTech tools, they have no control over the organization-wide supporting technologies referred to as "OrgTech" (Zerfass & Brockhaus, 2023, p. 32).

The integration of AI applications like ChatGPT is a strategic move for companies to align their communication with the evolving demands of digital transformation and effectively respond to these challenges (Karakose et al., 2023). Utilizing such technologies enhances the adaptability of communication strategies, allowing companies to better meet the changing needs of their stakeholders (Spajić et al., 2023). However, it appears that few organizations have implemented AI in their communication departments (Zerfass et al., 2020). AI also significantly impacts data analysis, enabling communication managers to gain insights for real-time trend identification and response, precise audience segmentation, and the creation of personalized communication that strengthens stakeholder engagement (Jhaveri et al., 2023).

The rapid digitalization of communication has dramatically increased the speed and volume of information, presenting significant challenges in managing dynamic and expanding stakeholder relationships. Awareness of Artificial Intelligence among communication managers has grown significantly, from less than a third in 2019 believing in its substantial impact (ECM, 2019) to over two-thirds in 2023 (ECM, 2023). The shift towards Corporate Communication 4.0 and stakeholder management needs a re-evaluation of resource distribution within corporate communication. Despite the accessibility of AI through advanced, often free tools, its integration requires more than basic application; it demands a holistic approach including strategic training, digital mindset cultivation, data security, procurement navigation, and change management. Successfully implementing AI involves a continuous learning curve and a deeper understanding of its potential to transform stakeholder engagement, indicating that effective AI implementation is complex and requires a firm commitment to digital communication technologies. Such thorough management allows communication departments to reshape their strategic contributions and drive the organization's digital transformation (Bhima et al., 2023).

## Methodology

This chapter outlines the research-guiding question, research questions, methods, unit of analysis, instruments, and timeline.

### Research-guiding question and research questions

The transformation of the work environment, largely driven by technological advances such as AI, is creating new challenges for organizations. A critical aspect of this evolution is corporate communications, which plays a key role in adapting to changing conditions by facilitating stakeholder exchanges and influencing the flow of information. In the face of hyper-competition and information overload in various communication arenas, effective corporate communications is essential for successful positioning in the digital age. Despite its importance, research on the impact of AI on the competency profiles of communication managers is lacking. (Zerfass, Hagelstein, & Tench, 2020) This project aims to contribute to a better understanding of the changing role models, skills and competencies of communication managers due to AI. Therefore, the following research-guiding question (RGQ) is posed for this study:

*RLQ: How does the evolution of Artificial Intelligence in businesses influence the competency profile of communication managers?*

To comprehensively address the RLQ, the following research questions (RQs) were developed:

*RQ1: What specific AI applications and technologies are currently being used in communication management and how do they support communication managers in their tasks?*

*RQ2: To what extent are the role perceptions and job profiles of communication managers evolving as a result of AI integration within organizations?*

*RQ3: What specific competencies are needed now and in the future to effectively address the challenges and opportunities arising from the influence of AI?*

The objective of this research is to gain insight into the current practices and challenges of communication management in the context of AI, as well as to identify the skills and knowledge that future communication managers will require for success.

## **Methods**

The research questions were explored through a cross-sectional study and qualitative open-ended guided interviews. Using an inductive approach, findings were derived directly from interviews. Respondents were selected using a quota sample based on a deductive approach. Qualitative content analysis according to Mayring and Brunner (2009) was used to evaluate the guided interviews, where categories were formed inductively. Communication managers from companies in Germany were the unit of analysis. The sample included 15 participants from companies with at least 40 employees. The selection criteria focused on managerial positions. The participants represented a variety of industries, as shown in table 1. The sample consisted of ten female and five male participants. The average age was 39 and the average years of experience was 13. The companies ranged in size from 40 to 273,000 employees.

**Table 1***Overview of the analysis unit*

Industry sector	Title/position	Size of the team (in persons)
Financial services	Junior brand manager	12
Chemicals	Manager Employer Branding	10
Waste disposal and re-cycling	Press spokesperson & head of press department	4
Financial Services	Communications Manager	12
Telecommunications	VP Communication, Strategy & Development	10
Information Technology	Lead Communication & Change Market-2-Cash	7
Information Technology	Internal Communication Manager	1
Insurance	Specialist Marketing Communication	51
Consulting	Specialist Internal Communication	13
Intralogistics	Director Global Marketing and Communication	7
Metrology	Executive Vice President Human Resources	3
Trade fair and event management	Head of digital communication department	11
Software company	Head of Marketing/ Customer Centricity	5
Consumer Goods	Junior Brand Manager	15
Auditing	Communications Manager	6

**Instruments and Timeline**

Prior to the interviews, participants received a briefing that included information about the study, a definition of AI, the interview process, and a privacy agreement. An interview guide was developed to provide a structured basis for the interviews. It included an introduction, an icebreaker question, twelve specific questions to address the research questions, and demographic questions. The introduction set the context of the study and emphasized data confidentiality. A question about personal enjoyment of work lightened the tone. To answer RQ1, the first four questions covered the current use of AI, the resulting internal discussions, the

acceptance of AI applications in the team, and integration challenges. For RQ2, the next four questions focused on the manager's daily tasks, the impact of AI on internal and external communications, changes in the understanding of communication manager's roles, and their involvement in implementing AI in their departments. To answer RQ3, the last four questions collected information on how they deal with AI, what skills they consider crucial, and what expectations they have for mastering AI applications. Expectations regarding the future impact of AI on communication management and preparations for future requirements were also addressed. Demographic questions covered age, gender, years of work experience, and team size. Interviews were conducted and recorded online using *ZOOM* and *Microsoft Teams*. Transcripts were created using transcription tools and analyzed using *MAXQDA 2024*. The study took four months, from November 2023 to February 2024. Participants were recruited in November 2023. Interviews took place from December 2023 to January 2024 and lasted a maximum of 90 minutes each. Data were transcribed and analyzed in February 2024.

## Results

### Use of AI in communication management

The first research question asks which AI applications and technologies are used in communication management and in which task areas they support communication managers. A total of 56 text passages were coded under the category of AI applications used, which can be summarized in five codes. The communication managers use *text AIs*, *design AIs*, *translation AIs*, *language AIs* and *network AIs*. All interviewees use at least one AI tool, and most even use more than one tool. It is concluded that AIs have already become part of everyday communication management, even if implementation is still in its infancy. Twenty times in total, and therefore most frequently *text AIs* were mentioned, with *ChatGPT* AI being mentioned first and foremost. In addition, *text AIs* based on ChatGPT software but integrated into an internal company program were also described. This shows that socially popular AI tools such as ChatGPT are increasingly being used and further developed using the software for corporate purposes. In addition to *text AIs*, *translation AIs* are also used by eleven respondents and thus also by a majority. The tool *DeepL* was brought up particularly frequently. It can be interpreted that well-known and widely used tools are used more rapid in communication management. Although *design AIs* came up 14 times, only six people used them. It is noticeable that established programs with integrated AI technology, such as *Photoshop* or *Canva* are referred to the most. This indicates that the development of autonomous AIs in design has yet to reach a stage where they can be meaningfully used in communication management. *Voice AIs* and *network AIs* are not yet used as extensively as the previously mentioned ones. Based on the company

data, it can be interpreted that companies from the IT sector or with access to high human and financial resources are already further along than other companies.

Six codes with 56 text passages that deal with the use of AI emerged from the transcripts. When it comes to the tasks that the communication managers surveyed perform with the support of AI tools, it quickly becomes clear that the AIs mentioned are mainly used to create communication products and facilitate operational tasks. The *translation of texts* (17 mentions) and *text creation* (20 mentions) stand out. The interviewees explained that not only standardized texts, but more sophisticated products are created with the help of AI. I6 describes: "What I also like to use, sometimes standard responses to emails, having them prescribed to me and then just adapting them" (I6 [translated]). Moreover, I5 explains that AI support also becomes relevant "when creating speeches, mainly at board level" (I5 [translated]). Therefore, AI is not only used for lower-level activities. The codes primarily refer to operational skills, which is why it can be concluded that AIs are used in operational activities the most and increasingly support communication managers in these activities. It is interesting to note here that it was frequently emphasized that AIs never create the final version, but that the products always must be finally checked. Trust in AI, both in the review of texts and in the creation of such texts, is not as high as in humans with specialist knowledge. That can lead to the conclusion that activities and skills still need to be eliminated, as specialist knowledge is still required to check products. However, operational tasks such as design, text creation, and research tasks are less time-consuming and can be greatly supported by AI.

As the communication managers surveyed are embedded in a social environment in their work, we also investigated how the atmosphere and mood regarding Artificial Intelligence are currently perceived in the respective departments. Five codes were developed, and 65 text passages were coded. *Negative attitudes towards AI* were only mentioned three times. It was primarily stated here that some individuals have a negative attitude towards the new developments, not that a collective negative attitude prevails. With 18 mentions, *positive attitudes* predominate here. In addition to the positive characteristics, a relatively *neutral atmosphere* was mentioned 13 times, with a certain openness and curiosity being perceived. However, ten people also reported that they perceived a *diversity of opinions towards AI technologies* (20 mentions). As no interviewee perceived an exclusively negative mood, it can be assumed that opinions regarding AI are not yet firmly established and are still evolving. A perceived uncertainty towards using Artificial Intelligence was also mentioned eleven times, indicating that opinions towards AI still need to be fully consolidated.

It should be addressed in these results that the departments or teams in which the respondents operate are permanently embedded in the respective companies. For this reason, internal communication on AI topics within the companies was also examined. This category aimed to find out at which points in the company which AI topics are already being used. Seven

codes with 69 text passages were generated from the transcripts. The *topic of user behavior* was mentioned most frequently (18 mentions). Eight people described conversations within the company when discussing *how the technologies and tools can and should be used*. Respondents also frequently cited *concerns and worries* about AI technologies (16 mentions) as triggers for AI-centered conversations within the company. Both of the frequently mentioned codes illustrate that the respondents' companies still need to be sure about the use of AI technologies but that employees are willing to discuss the possibilities and consequences of AIs. In addition to these topics, it became clear that AI is mainly discussed in the context of *training and further education* (13 mentions). Following on from the existing uncertainty, this code shows that the discussion and responsible use of AI technologies are also relevant for higher management levels when they offer training on the topic. *AI departments* (three mentions), *AI policy* (five mentions), and *AI as part of the corporate strategy* (one mention) are mentioned less frequently. Nevertheless, the topic of AI is also being discussed at a high level and is increasingly being incorporated into the activities and actions of companies.

The codes and categories presented can be used to answer the first research question. Several different types of AI tools are already being used in communications management. However, text AIs, particularly the ChatGPT tool, are mentioned frequently. Building on the capabilities of these widely used AIs, the technologies primarily support activities such as text creation, text translation or the design of various communication products. It is, therefore, mainly AIs that support operational activities and make those more efficient. It should be noted that the use of and attitudes towards AIs are still very diverse and varied. The results prompt the formulation of the following initial hypothesis.

H1: *The utilization of AI has a favorable influence on the quality and duration of operational activities in communication management.*

### **Role perception and job profile**

In order to address the second research question, the participants were asked to provide their perceptions regarding the influence of AI, the change in their own role perception, and the activities they perform on a daily basis. In the 15 interviews, the influence of AI was more often described as either *low* or *high*, with the majority of respondents indicating that the influence was *low*. 12 of the participants rated the influence of AI as rather *low* at least once, while eight rated it as rather *high* at least once. Five respondents provided contradictory responses at least once. This discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that the change is not actively perceived, organizational changes or technological developments are perceived with a time lag, or that the interviewees may utilize the support of AI without explicitly perceiving or acknowledging it as such. It is crucial to engage in self-reflection regarding one's own approach to work and to recognize AI as a supportive element. This is essential for a realistic perception.



An alternative hypothesis is that AI is not transforming communication management, but rather reinforcing existing developments.

The following section presents the identified roles and classifies the associated findings in the literature. The role of the *corrector* is the most frequently mentioned, with 13 mentions. This role has not yet been identified in previous studies. In light of the growing influence of AI, communication managers are increasingly tasked with the role of a *corrector*, with a particular focus on content created by AI. On the one hand, the role of the *corrector* includes quality control, whereby the manager ensures that the content generated by AI meets the quality standards that apply to the company's communication goals and guidelines. This may entail the identification and rectification of errors, inaccuracies, or inappropriate content in order to ensure the maintenance of certain quality standards in communication. The primary responsibility of the *corrector* is to conduct a plausibility check. Furthermore, the *corrector* is responsible for ensuring the coherence and consistency of AI-generated content.

The role of the *strategic manager*, as defined in Chapter two, was referenced nine times by the interviewees. This role includes the identification of long-term development opportunities. One-third of respondents perceive themselves as increasingly *innovators* within the company due to the rapid development of AI. "The expectation of the communications team is to integrate AI," states one respondent (I15 [translated]). The interviewees perceive themselves not only as reactive to the developments of AI, but rather as proactive designers and integrators of this technology in corporate communications. This underscores the significance of an inclination towards innovation and the capacity to integrate novel technologies into the communication strategy as indispensable competencies for communication managers in a rapidly evolving environment, influenced by the advent of AI. One-fifth of the interviewees indicated that AI has a positive impact on the existing understanding of the role of *consultant* as defined in chapter two. AI could automate operational tasks and perform data analysis, allowing strategic advisors to focus on higher-value tasks such as strategic consulting and active participation in decision-making processes. Due to the rapid pace of AI developments, communication managers have the task of advising internal groups within the company and supporting them in the implementation of AI applications and appropriate implementation strategies. This task is mentioned by a third of the respondents and describes the role of the *coach*, which was also defined in chapter two. The role of the *professional communicator* introduced in chapter two has been mentioned once in relation to the influence of AI.

The roles described above exemplify the day-to-day work of communication managers, encompassing specific activities that can be divided into four core activities by the ECM (2016). An indispensable core activity is the alignment of communication with customers and stakeholders (ECM, 2016). Three individuals prioritize the *development of strategic communication plans*, while two others prioritize the *automation of communication processes*. Fewer than 20%

of respondents indicated that they consider strategic or technological aspects on a daily basis in order to ensure the effectiveness of communication. Another core activity is operational communication. The activities of *crisis communication* and *customer contact* are each mentioned by one individual. Two individuals are engaged in *event planning*, while three are involved in *research activities*. The *analysis* and *further development of communication channels* were each mentioned by four individuals. Eight interviewees indicated that they perform *text work* on a daily basis, which was mentioned a total of 13 times. The frequency of *text work* indicates that it is a more intensive activity than other activities. This may be due to the importance of AI for increasing efficiency. The core activity of managing communication activities and employees encompasses *project management*, *process management*, *knowledge management*, and *administration*. Each of these areas was mentioned by one respondent. Three individuals are engaged in *editorial planning*, while four are involved in *daily support*. The *coordination of activities* was mentioned a total of 15 times by nine individuals, indicating a higher intensity compared to other activities. The fourth core activity of ECM (2016) encompasses coaching, training, consulting, and the empowerment of both the organization and its customers. A third of respondents mentioned *consulting* a total of seven times.

The results show that AI does not have a significant impact on the activities of communication managers. This could indicate that the capabilities of AI in communication management do not replace human expertise, but only weight it differently. Human interaction and creative decision-making remain essential. Empirical data shows that AI is changing the perception of the role of communication managers. A new role, the “corrector”, has emerged to ensure the quality and coherence of AI-generated content.

H2: *In the context of AI, communication managers assume the role of corrector.*

## **Competencies**

The following section presents the results of the third research question, which was to determine which specific competencies are required of communication managers due to the influence of AI. The ability to empathize is essential for AI to be sensitized. Communication managers must possess *empathy* and be able to empathize with their target groups. *Empathy* is referenced on three occasions throughout the interviews. *Empathy* is a crucial skill that falls under the category of social and empathic skills, as defined by Tench et al. (2017). *Empathy* is of particular importance in the role of the coach, who provides guidance to internal company groups on AI and supports the implementation of AI applications and suitable strategies. The competence of *targeted communication* involves creating clear and consistent messages for the right audience at the right time. This encompasses the strategic selection of content, channels, and timing to interact effectively and consistently with communication objectives. A third of respondents consider *targeted communication* to be essential, for example, to introduce AI to employees. *Targeted communication* can be considered a core competence of service

provision and creation, which is primarily required by the role of professional communicators (Tench et al., 2017). The *content competence*, which was mentioned on 11 occasions by the interviewees, can also be assigned to the core competence of service provision and creation (Tench et al., 2017). It describes the ability of managers to differentiate content and categorize it according to importance. In addition, they must possess an understanding of their own work and that of the company, as well as a general understanding of strategic communication. It is imperative that communication managers possess an understanding of the capabilities and limitations of AI, as well as the strategies for effectively engaging with AI to achieve desired outcomes. This competence is initially required of professional communicators who are responsible for performance and creation.

Furthermore, the *content competence* can be extended to the role of the corrector, who is responsible for checking the content of the AI for correctness and coherence. Seven of the interviewees discussed the necessity of *technical competence* in the context of AI, which encompasses the capacity to comprehend AI technologies and integrate them into communication strategies. This encompasses the ability to comprehend user interfaces, adjust settings, and utilize the full range of functions to achieve communication objectives. It can be attributed to the domain of organizing and implementing. Furthermore, *application competence* is also required. This refers to the appropriate application of AI. In the future, communication managers will be expected to possess the requisite knowledge and skills to utilize AI in an appropriate manner, thereby ensuring its effective and efficient deployment. *Analytical competence* can be considered a core competence of analyzing and interpreting, although it is also a requisite for operational managers (Tench et al., 2017). This entails comprehending and dissecting intricate data, thereby extracting meaningful insights. This encompasses the capacity to examine data in a critical manner, discern patterns, and formulate well-founded conclusions. As the competence most frequently cited in conjunction with AI, communication management has emerged as a crucial skill.

Finally, the presentation of the results addresses the competencies that respondents believe are required for dealing with AI in communication management. This comparison reveals changes in the competence profile compared to the previously developed literature basis. As a consequence of the growing prevalence of AI in communication management, the importance of *content competence*, *application competence*, *analytical competence*, and *technical competence* is increasing. This leads to the assumption that roles are linked to competencies and the introduction of new roles could require new skills or reassess the relevance of previously less important skills. This results in the following hypothesis.

H3: *The use of AI in communication management increases the relevance of analysis, content, application and technical competence of communication managers.*

## Limitations

Various influences at different times limited the project. The methodological criticism and limitations listed below must be considered when interpreting and understanding the results presented. The chosen methods of guided interviews and qualitative content analysis are characterized by subjectivity. The predefined guidelines are intended to counteract any bias by the researchers during the interview. Due to the literature review phase, there is nevertheless a certain degree of expectation on the part of the researchers in the interviews, which can lead to a bias in one response direction. Although the predesigned guideline could counteract a certain subjectivity, it also limited the researchers to some extent, as interesting points were not addressed in depth. Another disadvantage of qualitative guided interviews is that the interviewees can be influenced by the fact that they represent a company despite the anonymity of the survey and respond accordingly. Social desirability can also be a problem in interviews. An attempt was made to counteract this by emphasizing in the interview introduction that there are neither right nor wrong answers and that personal impressions and experiences count. When conducting the interviews, it became clear that the interviewees only sometimes adopted the understanding of roles that emerged from the scientific literature. A more detailed briefing during the interview could have counteracted this. One criticism of the guidelines is that the questions were sometimes built on each other, and the interviewees repeated themselves and explained things several times. Due to the small sample size, the project needs more generalizability. This is exacerbated by the fact that the communication managers surveyed work in different sectors and management levels. The differences between the companies' sectors were not the focus of the study. On closer inspection, however, these differences could provide essential insights. The interviews were partly limited by the fact that the interviewees needed more knowledge about the attitude towards AI technologies within the companies. The younger interviewees sometimes found it challenging to recognize how roles and competencies are changing, as developments in AI and digitalization have occurred since they started their careers. It is sometimes difficult to draw comparisons between before and with AI.

A mutual check between the researchers could uncover differences in interpretation. However, complete intercoder reliability cannot be guaranteed. The coding was carried out by the researchers one after the other, which may mean that the results of the previous researcher influenced the coding. Time constraints also limited content analysis and evaluation. Several rounds of coding could have resulted in higher code quality. All interviews were conducted online due to time constraints. In contrast to face-to-face interviews, the online format has some areas for improvement, such as technical challenges, the lack of facial expressions and gestures, and a certain reticence. Due to the research questions formulated at the start of the project, the concepts of roles and competencies were initially considered separately in the evaluation. However, they are interconnected complexes. An early combination of the two

could have provided more precise information. In principle, the concepts of roles, competencies, characteristics and skills cannot be separated. Accordingly, the codes and categories could be more clear-cut.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study summarizes key findings and offers insights into future trends concerning the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the field of communication management. The research aims to explore how AI is reshaping the roles and competencies of communication managers as they adapt to rapid technological advancements. AI's integration into communication management is transforming how businesses interact with their audiences and affecting the duties and responsibilities of managers. The conclusion encapsulates these central insights and speculates on future developments. This study contributes significantly to the evolution of the profession and provides guidance for further research and practical applications.

## Key Results

The study explored AI's use in communication management through interview analysis, revealing diverse applications like text, design, translation, voice, and network AIs. Text AIs, especially *ChatGPT*, are the most commonly used, mainly for creating communication products and operational tasks. Positive attitudes towards AI generally prevail, though uncertainties and mixed opinions exist. Internal discussions often revolve around AI usage, concerns, and training needs, although some companies rarely discuss AI, perceiving minimal impact. Emerging roles include quality controllers for AI content, with essential competencies identified as empathy, targeted communication, content expertise, and particularly analytical skills. Traits like innovativeness and curiosity are vital for AI management. Challenges include data protection and information verification, while AI also presents opportunities for efficiency and innovation. The study underscores AI's significant impact on communication manager roles and the competencies needed to manage these changes effectively.

## Central Answer to the Leading Research Question

The research question, which addresses the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) development on the competency profile of communication managers, is crucial for analyzing the current dynamics in the communication industry. Recent studies have shown that AI integration in companies is not merely a marginal phenomenon but rather indicates a fundamental shift in how communication managers work and what is required of them. The impact of AI on their competency profile is extensive, going well beyond simple process automation. One key role that has emerged is the quality controller, responsible for ensuring the quality and integrity of AI-generated content. Moreover, analytical skills have become increasingly important to

understand, interpret, and, if necessary, correct the outputs of AI algorithms. As a result, the competency profile required of communication managers has expanded to include not only traditional communication skills but also technical capabilities. Additionally, qualities such as innovation, self-initiation, and a commitment to continual professional development are essential in an AI-driven work environment. Despite the opportunities AI integration offers, communication managers also face challenges, particularly concerning data protection, information verification, and ethical considerations. Therefore, a comprehensive competency profile that combines traditional communicative abilities with technical knowledge, analytical skills, and readiness for innovation is essential. Overall, the study indicates that AI development influences the competency profile of communication managers, underlining the critical importance of adapting to these changes by continually enhancing and developing their skills and competencies.

### Outlook

The future research outlook for AI in communication management is promising. Focus areas should include examining how AI integration influences the skills and competency profiles of communication managers and its effect on operations, structures, and dynamics within communication teams. Studies should explore how managers use AI to refine strategies and meet audience needs, alongside case studies on AI's effectiveness. Research should also consider the ethical and legal implications of AI and the need for adapted training programs to equip managers for AI's challenges and opportunities. These efforts are crucial for understanding and responsibly implementing AI in communication management.

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