

The Impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on Public Relations Strategies: A Shift in Practitioner Roles and the Future of Corporate Communication

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the transformative impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) on public relations (PR) strategies, the evolving roles of practitioners, and the future trajectory of corporate communication. Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) refers to artificial intelligence models capable of producing novel content (text, images, code) based on learned patterns. Its relevance to PR stems from its potential to automate communication tasks, enhance personalization, and provide data-driven insights. This study employs an integrative literature review methodology, synthesizing and critically analyzing existing academic and industry research to develop a conceptual understanding of GenAI's impact on the PR field. The analysis indicates that GenAI significantly alters PR practices, particularly in content creation, research, and personalization, offering unprecedented efficiency and scale. Concurrently, this transformation establishes a clear shift in practitioner skill sets toward strategic oversight, ethical judgment, critical thinking, and prompt engineering. Ethical priorities—including ensuring accuracy, mitigating bias, maintaining transparency, and addressing intellectual property considerations—stand at the core of responsible practice. The future of corporate communication is defined by a hybrid human–AI model in which GenAI actively augments human strategic capabilities rather than replacing them. These findings directly inform PR practice through the imperative of adaptation and continuous upskilling, guide education through necessary curriculum innovation, and advance future research by underscoring the importance of empirical investigations into implementation, ethics, and long-term impacts.

Keywords: generative AI, artificial intelligence, public relations, corporate communication, strategic communication, PR roles, PR ethics, future of PR

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The contemporary landscape of corporate communication and public relations (PR) is being profoundly reshaped by rapid technological advancements. Among the most disruptive innovations is Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)—a category of AI leveraging complex machine learning models to create original content, simulate human interaction, and

automate sophisticated tasks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). Prominent examples such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, and Google's Bard illustrate GenAI's capability to generate diverse outputs, offering novel opportunities for enhancing efficiency, creativity, and personalization within PR (Kietzmann et al., 2023). The integration of these tools signifies a potential paradigm shift, moving beyond incremental automation to fundamentally altering traditional methods of message development, stakeholder engagement, and strategic analysis. While GenAI promises to augment practitioners' abilities to produce tailored content at scale and derive insights from vast datasets, its adoption introduces complex challenges related to ethics, potential role displacement, and the need for new competencies (Chang & Baniyassen, 2024).

1.2 Context

Technology has historically served as a catalyst for evolution within the PR profession. From the printing press enabling mass communication to the internet and social media fostering two-way dialogue and relationship management, each technological wave has required adaptation (Phillips & Young, 2009; Wright, 2019). The digitization of communication and the rise of big data analytics have already repositioned PR as a data-informed discipline, demanding analytical competencies alongside traditional communication expertise (Macnamara, 2016). This trajectory clearly demonstrates that technological disruption continuously drives the acquisition of new skills and strategic recalibration to sustain relevance and effectiveness (Waddington, 2020). Within this continuum, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) stands not as an incremental enhancement but as a transformative force that redefines core PR functions and elevates its strategic value (Ordóñez, 2025).

At a deeper philosophical and epistemic level, however, this transformation extends beyond tools and practices into fundamental questions about cognition, consciousness, and the nature of communication itself. GenAI systems simulate language, reasoning, and creativity through probabilistic pattern recognition, yet they do not possess consciousness, intentionality, or self-awareness. As argued by , AI operates without epistemic agency; it produces outputs that resemble knowledge without genuinely "knowing." This distinction is critical: human cognition is grounded in lived experience, reflexivity, and ethical intentionality, whereas AI-generated content is a statistical reconstruction of patterns derived from data.

Accordingly, GenAI demonstrably augments human cognition by expanding analytical capacity, accelerating synthesis, and enabling large-scale pattern detection. It enhances the practitioner's ability to process complexity, generate alternatives, and simulate scenarios. However, it does not replace human cognition in its full sense—particularly in domains requiring judgment, meaning-making, ethical reasoning, and contextual awareness. Human synthesis involves not only combining information but interpreting it within cultural, moral, and experiential frameworks that AI cannot authentically replicate.

This leads to a central epistemological tension: the distinction between appearance and reality. AI-generated communication can convincingly mimic human reasoning, coherence, and even empathy, creating an appearance of understanding. Yet this appearance does not equate to genuine comprehension or consciousness. As highlighted in the MDPI article (Bennett & Roy, 2024), the persuasive fluency of AI risks obscuring the absence of intentional thought, thereby challenging traditional assumptions about authorship, authenticity, and truth in communication. The danger lies in conflating simulated intelligence with actual cognition, which may erode epistemic trust if not critically managed.

In the context of public relations, this reinforces the necessity of a human-centered epistemology. AI becomes a powerful instrument within the communicative process, but the locus of meaning, responsibility, and ethical accountability remains human. PR professionals do not merely transmit information; they construct narratives, negotiate meaning, and sustain relationships grounded in trust—functions that depend on conscious awareness and moral agency.

Therefore, GenAI unequivocally augments human cognitive and strategic capabilities while simultaneously reaffirming the irreplaceability of human consciousness in authentic communication. The future of PR is thus not defined by substitution but by epistemic integration: a model in which AI extends the reach of human intelligence, while human practitioners preserve the depth, intentionality, and ethical grounding that distinguish genuine understanding from its simulation.

1.3 Problem Statement

The emergence of GenAI presents both significant opportunities and considerable challenges for the Public Relations profession. On one hand, AI-driven tools offer substantial potential to enhance operational efficiency, augment creative processes, and improve strategic decision-making through task automation, personalized content generation, and predictive analytics. On the other hand, the widespread adoption of these technologies raises critical concerns regarding ethical implications (e.g., authenticity, bias, misinformation), the potential for automation to displace certain human roles, and the emergence of significant skill gaps within the workforce (Tench & Moreno, 2019). PR professionals must navigate the complexities of integrating GenAI capabilities while preserving the essential human elements of empathy, ethical

judgment, and authentic relationship-building. This necessitates a comprehensive examination of GenAI's impact on PR strategies, practitioner roles, and the overall future of the corporate communication function.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

This study aims to critically analyze the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on public relations strategies, practitioner roles, and the future trajectory of corporate communication through a synthesis of existing literature.

Objectives:

- To identify and analyze current and potential applications of GenAI within PR strategies (e.g., content creation, research, personalization, crisis communication).
- To examine how GenAI is likely to reshape the roles, responsibilities, and required competencies of PR practitioners.
- To evaluate the primary ethical considerations and challenges associated with integrating GenAI into PR practice.
- To explore the implications of GenAI integration for the future evolution of the corporate communication function within organizations.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research offers timely insights for PR practitioners, agencies, educators, and professional bodies navigating the integration of GenAI. It highlights practical adaptation strategies, necessary skill development pathways, and critical ethical considerations. For academics, the study contributes to strategic communication and PR theory by exploring how AI technologies are reshaping established practices and roles, potentially informing models like Technology Acceptance or Roles Theory within this new context. It provides a synthesized overview to guide future empirical research on this rapidly evolving phenomenon.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations

This study focuses conceptually on the impact of GenAI within the domain of corporate public relations, primarily considering its application by practitioners in organizational and agency settings. It does not extend to a detailed analysis of other communication disciplines (e.g., advertising, internal communication, journalism) nor does it delve into the technical intricacies of AI model development. The primary emphasis is on the strategic, operational, and ethical implications for PR practice based on existing literature.

1.7 Structure of the Paper

This paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 presents an integrative literature review examining the historical interplay of technology and PR, current GenAI applications, shifts in practitioner roles, and ethical considerations. Section 3 outlines the integrative literature review methodology employed. Section 4 provides an analysis and discussion synthesizing the literature to address the research objectives. Section 5 discusses the practical and theoretical implications arising from the analysis. Section 6 acknowledges the study's limitations and suggests directions for future research. Section 7 offers concluding remarks summarizing the key findings and contributions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The relationship between technological innovation and public relations practice is characterized by continuous adaptation and evolution. Historically, advancements from mass media to digital platforms have consistently reshaped how organizations communicate and build relationships with their publics (Phillips & Young, 2009). Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) emerges as the latest technological force with the potential to significantly transform PR, offering capabilities in automated content generation, hyper-personalization, and predictive analytics that surpass previous tools (Kietzmann et al., 2023). While the potential benefits for efficiency and strategic insight are considerable, significant concerns regarding ethical risks, the future of practitioner roles, and requisite skills accompany its integration (Tench & Moreno, 2019). This review synthesizes existing literature to explore the historical context of technology in PR, examine current GenAI applications, analyze the consequent shifts in practitioner roles and skills, identify key ethical challenges, and consider the future strategic integration of AI within corporate communication.

2.2 The Technological Evolution of Public Relations

The history of PR is inextricably linked to technological advancements. Initial practices relied heavily on print media, followed by the integration of radio and television. The digital revolution, marked by the internet's advent, introduced websites, email, and online newsrooms, fundamentally altering dissemination strategies and enabling more direct, albeit often asynchronous, communication (Phillips & Young, 2009). The subsequent rise of social media platforms in the 2000s

ushered in an era of real-time engagement, user-generated content, and dialogue, demanding greater transparency and responsiveness from organizations (Breakenridge, 2008; Wright, 2019b). More recently, the integration of big data analytics and earlier forms of AI allowed PR professionals to segment audiences more precisely, monitor online sentiment, measure campaign impact with greater sophistication, and make data-informed strategic decisions (Macnamara, 2016). This evolution highlights a persistent need for practitioners to adapt their skill sets, incorporating technological literacy alongside core communication competencies (Waddington, 2020).

GenAI tools represent a qualitative leap beyond previous technological advancements in public relations. Earlier digital technologies—such as social media, analytics platforms, and automation tools—primarily enhanced the *distribution, measurement, and management* of communication. They supported human decision-making but did not encroach upon the core cognitive domains of meaning-making, creativity, and synthesis.

In contrast, GenAI systems actively simulate cognitive functions by generating text, interpreting data, and producing strategic narratives that resemble human reasoning. This marks a shift from *augmentation of communication processes* to *partial automation of cognitive and creative labor*. Tasks that once required human judgment, interpretive skill, and contextual awareness—such as drafting narratives, framing messages, or synthesizing insights—are now increasingly delegated to algorithmic systems.

This transformation introduces a fundamental epistemic distinction. While previous technologies mediated communication, GenAI participates in the production of knowledge and meaning itself. As emphasized in , such systems generate outputs that convincingly *appear* reasoned and intentional, yet lack consciousness, understanding, and epistemic agency. Consequently, the boundary between authentic cognition and its simulation becomes blurred.

Therefore, the current moment is defined not only by increased efficiency, but by a deeper tension between human consciousness and machine-generated representation. GenAI both augments and destabilizes professional practice: it expands strategic capacity while simultaneously challenging assumptions about authorship, expertise, and the nature of communicative authority (Ye et al., 2024).

2.3 Generative AI Applications in Current PR Strategies

GenAI is increasingly being explored and implemented across various PR functions. Its most prominent application lies in content creation, where tools can rapidly generate drafts of press releases, blog posts, social media updates, speeches, and even multimedia elements, often tailored to specific platforms and audience segments (Kietzmann et al., 2023). This capability promises significant efficiency gains, freeing practitioners from routine writing tasks. Furthermore, GenAI enhances research and analysis by processing vast amounts of data to identify trends, monitor media coverage and social conversations, analyze sentiment, and profile stakeholders with unprecedented speed and granularity. Personalization represents another key application area, with GenAI enabling the dynamic customization of messages at scale based on individual user data, behavior, and preferences, potentially increasing message relevance and engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants are also being used for initial media inquiries and stakeholder service. In crisis communication, GenAI can assist in scenario planning, drafting initial response statements, and monitoring the information environment in real-time (McAllister & Taylor, 2015). However, scholars caution against over-reliance, noting that current GenAI models can lack nuanced understanding of context, tone, cultural sensitivity, and emotional intelligence, potentially producing generic or inappropriate content if not carefully managed by human experts (Cave & Dihal, 2020). The risk of generating factually incorrect information ("hallucinations") also necessitates rigorous human oversight.

2.4 Shifting Roles and Required Skills for PR Practitioners

The integration of GenAI is poised to significantly reshape the roles and required competencies of PR professionals. Routine tasks, particularly in content generation and data collection, are increasingly susceptible to automation. This shift suggests a potential decline in demand for purely technical or execution-focused roles and an increasing emphasis on strategic, analytical, and ethical capabilities (Cipr, 2018, 2018). Future-focused practitioners will likely need to cultivate AI literacy, understanding how GenAI tools work, their capabilities, and limitations. Prompt engineering—the skill of crafting effective inputs to guide AI outputs—is emerging as a crucial competency (Ye et al., 2024). Beyond technical skills, strategic thinking, critical analysis, creativity in developing campaigns leveraging AI, ethical judgment, and sophisticated relationship management skills are expected to become even more vital (Waddington, 2020). Practitioners will increasingly act as strategic orchestrators, overseeing AI-driven processes, interpreting AI-generated insights, ensuring quality and ethical compliance, and focusing on high-level strategy and stakeholder engagement (Wilson, 2018). However, concerns persist regarding potential skill gaps and the need for robust training and professional development programs to equip the current workforce for this transition (Galloway & Swiatek, 2020).

2.5 Ethical Considerations and Challenges

The use of GenAI in PR introduces a complex array of ethical challenges that demand careful consideration. A primary

concern is truthfulness and accuracy, as GenAI models can generate plausible but incorrect information (hallucinations) or potentially be used to create sophisticated misinformation and disinformation, including deepfakes, threatening brand reputation and public trust (Floridi et al., 2020). Transparency and authenticity are also critical; failing to disclose the use of AI in generating communications may be perceived as deceptive by stakeholders, eroding trust (Diakopoulos, 2019). The potential for algorithmic bias, where AI systems perpetuate or amplify existing societal biases present in their training data, raises concerns about fairness, equity, and inclusion in communication efforts (Binns, 2018). Intellectual property and copyright issues arise regarding the ownership of AI-generated content and the potential for models to replicate copyrighted material. Furthermore, the use of AI for hyper-personalization raises data privacy concerns (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). Addressing these challenges necessitates the development and adoption of clear ethical guidelines, governance frameworks, and potentially industry standards for responsible AI deployment in PR (Taddeo & Floridi, 2018; Tench & Moreno, 2019).

2.6 The Future of Corporate Communication: Integration and Strategy

The future of corporate communication appears likely to involve a synergistic integration of human expertise and AI capabilities, often described as an "augmented intelligence" model (Wirtz et al., 2019). Rather than wholesale replacement, GenAI is expected to augment practitioners' abilities, handling repetitive tasks and providing data-driven insights, thereby freeing humans to focus on higher-order strategic thinking, complex problem-solving, ethical deliberation, and building authentic relationships (Gruber et al., 2023). PR practitioners are envisioned evolving into AI-savvy strategists and ethical stewards, guiding the use of technology to achieve organizational goals responsibly (Bourne, 2019; Ordóñez, 2025). Strategic communication will increasingly involve managing AI-driven content ecosystems, navigating the complexities of AI ethics and regulation, and ensuring human judgment remains central, particularly in sensitive situations like crisis management. This integration has the potential to elevate the strategic contribution of the PR function within organizations if managed effectively (McAllister & Taylor, 2015).

3. Methodology

This study adopts an Integrative Literature Review (ILR) approach, enabling the synthesis and critical evaluation of interdisciplinary research on GenAI and public relations (Torraco, 2005, 2016). This method is particularly suited to examining a rapidly evolving and conceptually complex phenomenon, allowing for the development of a coherent analytical framework rather than a purely descriptive summary.

The review draws on approximately 40 scholarly and industry sources published between 2018 and 2024, identified through major academic databases and targeted searches using keywords related to GenAI, public relations, corporate communication, and AI ethics. Sources were selected based on relevance to strategic, operational, and ethical dimensions of GenAI in PR, while purely technical or non-communication-focused studies were excluded.

A thematic synthesis approach guided the analysis, involving iterative coding, theme development, and integrative interpretation. This process enabled the identification of key patterns across the literature, particularly regarding strategic transformation, role evolution, and ethical challenges.

As a conceptual review, the study is inherently limited by its reliance on existing literature, potential selection bias, and the rapid pace of technological change. Its interpretive nature also reflects the researcher's analytical framing. However, these limitations are offset by its ability to provide a structured, critical synthesis and identify directions for future empirical research.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The integration of GenAI into public relations represents a qualitative transformation that extends beyond automation to reshape strategy, professional roles, and the ethical foundations of communication.

At the strategic level, GenAI redefines core PR functions by enabling large-scale content generation, predictive insights, and hyper-personalization. This shifts the practitioner's role from content creation to curation, verification, and strategic orchestration, where human oversight becomes essential to ensure accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and alignment with organizational values. While GenAI enhances analytical capacity and efficiency, it simultaneously introduces risks related to misinformation, bias, and over-standardization of communication.

This transformation is accompanied by a profound reconfiguration of practitioner roles. Routine and execution-based tasks are increasingly automated, elevating the importance of higher-order competencies such as strategic thinking, critical evaluation, creativity, and ethical judgment. New skill domains—including AI literacy, prompt engineering, and ethical auditing—emerge as essential, while uniquely human capabilities such as empathy, relationship management, and contextual interpretation become more valuable. The practitioner evolves into a strategic orchestrator and ethical gatekeeper, mediating between algorithmic outputs and human meaning-making.

The ethical implications of this shift are significant. GenAI challenges foundational principles of public relations, particularly

regarding truthfulness, transparency, and authenticity. Its capacity to generate plausible yet inaccurate information necessitates rigorous human verification, while embedded biases in training data require active mitigation. Furthermore, the increasing use of AI in personalization raises concerns حول privacy and potential manipulation. These challenges underscore the urgent need for institutionalized ethical frameworks and professional standards governing AI use in communication.

At a deeper level, the integration of GenAI introduces an epistemological tension between appearance and reality. AI systems simulate reasoning and communication without possessing consciousness or intentionality, producing outputs that appear meaningful but lack genuine understanding. As argued in , this raises concerns about the erosion of epistemic agency and the potential conflation of simulated and authentic knowledge. In the context of PR, this reinforces the centrality of human judgment as the locus of meaning, accountability, and ethical responsibility.

Consequently, the future of corporate communication is best understood as a hybrid human–AI model, in which GenAI augments—rather than replaces—human capabilities. This model holds the potential to elevate the strategic role of PR within organizations by freeing practitioners from routine tasks and enabling greater focus on high-level decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and ethical leadership. However, its success depends on maintaining a balance between technological efficiency and the preservation of human-centered communication.

5. Implications and Future Directions

The findings carry important implications across practice, education, and theory. For practitioners and organizations, successful integration of GenAI requires proactive adaptation through skill development, workflow redesign, and the establishment of governance frameworks addressing ethics and data use. For educators, curricula must be updated to incorporate AI literacy, data analytics, and ethical reasoning, ensuring graduates are prepared for an evolving professional landscape.

Theoretically, GenAI challenges existing models of public relations by redefining practitioner roles, communication processes, and the nature of human–machine interaction. It contributes to emerging discussions in human–machine communication and calls for the refinement of PR theories to account for AI-mediated environments.

Despite growing interest, the field remains underdeveloped empirically. Future research should prioritize empirical and longitudinal studies examining real-world adoption, human–AI collaboration, ethical implementation, and audience perceptions of AI-generated communication. Investigating how trust, credibility, and authenticity are negotiated in AI-mediated contexts is particularly critical.

6. Conclusion

Generative Artificial Intelligence represents a transformative force in public relations, reshaping strategies, redefining professional roles, and introducing complex ethical and epistemological challenges. While it offers substantial opportunities for efficiency, personalization, and strategic insight, its integration necessitates continuous human oversight to preserve accuracy, authenticity, and trust.

The evolution of the PR practitioner toward a strategic, ethically grounded role underscores the enduring importance of human cognition and judgment in an increasingly automated environment. Ultimately, the future of corporate communication lies not in technological substitution, but in epistemic integration, where AI enhances human capability while human agency safeguards meaning, responsibility, and relational integrity.

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