

Mass Communication Specialist Today: New Competencies, Challenges, and the Impact of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technologies and artificial intelligence has introduced new challenges to the field of mass communication and to the professionals working within it. For the modern mass communication specialist, traditional professional skills are no longer sufficient, acquiring more diverse competencies essential. This paper examines the emerging professional challenges within the field of mass communication. It is based on a qualitative approach and draws on an analysis of contemporary scholarly literature, current trends, and international practices. At the same time, it identifies key ethical challenges related to disinformation, data bias, and professional responsibility. In conclusion, the paper emphasizes the need to update skills and academic programs to ensure they align with the demands of the modern media environment.

Keywords: Mass Communication, Artificial Intelligence, Education, Ethics

1. Introduction

The development of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) has, in recent years, once again placed the field of mass communication before the necessity of adapting to a new reality. Professionals working in this field have also faced a range of challenges; however, it must be noted from the outset that neither technological change nor emerging challenges are unfamiliar to this field.

Historically, whenever humanity advanced to a new technological stage, the resulting innovations and transformations quickly permeated various branches of mass communication, presenting new challenges for practitioners in the field. This process will be discussed further in the paper.

Those who understand the pace and nature of this field tend to adapt to change relatively quickly, while for others, each new development may be more or less disruptive. One thing, however, is clear: anyone who chooses a profession within mass communication must always be prepared for its rapid dynamics and ongoing transformations. The field is so turbulent that, at times, one development has not yet been fully understood before another emerges.

Indeed, the contemporary media environment is characterized by the rapid dissemination of information, the proliferation of communication platforms, changes in audience behavior, and the growing influence of digital technologies on all of these processes. As a result, traditional professional skills are no longer sufficient for mass communication specialists, and the need for broader, more diverse competencies has

become increasingly evident.

In the past, it was sufficient for a journalist, PR specialist, or media professional to gather information, write texts, work with a camera, and utilize traditional media tools. Today, however, professional activity requires a much wider range of knowledge and skills. A modern mass communication specialist must continuously develop competencies in strategic communication, social media management, digital marketing, visual and multimedia content planning, audience analysis, personal branding, and crisis communication. At the same time, the effective use of artificial intelligence tools has become one of the key indicators of competitiveness.

The necessity of adapting to modern demands is clearly illustrated by the observation of British-American journalist and communications trainer Edie Lush, who notes that most of her interviews are now conducted electronically and distributed through digital channels. “Around 80% of my interviews are conducted via Zoom, Riverside, WhatsApp or FaceTime. My content is distributed across TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram,” she states (Lush, 2022).

This observation was made at a time when artificial intelligence was only beginning to enter everyday use. Today, however, a new question arises: what competencies have become essential for the modern mass communication specialist in the era shaped by AI?

While digital platforms and AI significantly increase efficiency and speed, they simultaneously introduce new ethical and professional challenges. Concerns arise regarding the reliability of AI-generated content, the difficulty of verifying information, the spread of misinformation, and society’s general unpreparedness to address these issues. What mechanisms do we have to counter these challenges? The answer lies once again in human capabilities: professional ethics, responsibility, integrity, and rigorous fact-checking.

Against the backdrop of these challenges, the healthy functioning of the field of mass communication becomes even more critical. In an era of rapid transformation, academic programs and professional standards require continuous updating.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the new professional challenges present in the field of mass communication and to identify possible responses and adaptation strategies. On the one hand, it is necessary to examine the challenges associated with the digital era and the development of AI; on the other hand, academic programs and educational standards must align with this reality to prevent a growing gap between theoretical preparation and real-world professional practice.

The paper adopts a qualitative approach and analyzes past experience, contemporary scholarly literature, international studies, trends, and professional practice. Both theoretical sources and empirical research addressing the impact of artificial intelligence on mass communication and education in this field are utilized. This method was selected due to the complexity of the research topic, which requires a new interpretation of ongoing and highly relevant processes. The analysis was conducted by comparing and critically evaluating various sources, enabling the identification of key trends, challenges, and future development prospects in the field of mass communication.

2. The Adaptive Nature of Mass Communication in Relation to Technological Progress

2.1. What Is Mass Communication

Before addressing other issues, it is important to define the essence of mass communication itself, its main directions, and the professional fields in which mass communication specialists operate.

In general, mass communication refers to the process of creating, transmitting, disseminating, and sharing information with a broad audience through various media channels. Its fields include journalism, public relations (PR), advertising, marketing communication, film and television broadcasting, and, in the contemporary era, digital and social media have gained particular importance. Over time, new subfields continue to emerge while others diminish; however, this list remains relatively comprehensive.

The primary aim of mass communication is to deliver information, ideas, and messages to a large audience simultaneously within a limited timeframe. It serves to inform, educate, entertain, and persuade the public, while also playing a significant role in raising awareness and shaping public opinion.

The dissemination of information occurs through the following main channels: broadcast media - television and radio; print media - newspapers, magazines, and books; the internet - websites, online media, social media, blogs, podcasts, and film; as well as billboards, outdoor advertising, mobile communication, email, and other digital channels.

Professionals in this field include journalists, PR specialists, content creators, media managers, social media managers, strategic communication specialists, directors, producers, and others.

This field experienced significant development particularly from the 19th century onward, when large-scale technological transformations occurred. Industrialization, population growth, urbanization, the expansion of trade and the economy, the production of surplus goods and the need to distribute them, increased competition, and the necessity of reaching broader audiences all contributed to the emergence of new trends in this field.

For example, marketing specialists typically divide human economic and production activity into two main phases: the pre-marketing period and the marketing era. Before the 20th century, the dominant logic of production was that people created what they were able to produce and then attempted to sell it - "I produce and sell what I have." In the 20th century, however, with the development of markets, the focus shifted.

Production, business, and services became more consumer-oriented, and the main principle evolved into: "I create and offer what the consumer actually needs" (Peradze, 2010).

The formation of mass communication as an independent academic discipline is closely associated with Western Europe and North America, where innovative ideas and technologies contributed to the establishment of global standards. The growing demand for continuously updated information drove the development of mass media, making it an essential part of everyday life.

Surguladze and Iberi, in their book *Mass Communication* (2003), argue that the origins of mass

communication theory are linked to the increased demand for propaganda in the post World War I period. According to the authors, this theory is based on data from general and social psychology, sociology, linguistics, cybernetics, information theory, semiotics, and other disciplines, and it examines the general laws governing the creation, transmission, and reception of mass information. They further note that this scientific discipline developed extensively in foreign countries, particularly in the United States, primarily driven by the intensification of advertising, pre-election political campaigns, and especially the goals of 'psychological warfare' (Surguladze & Iberi, 2003).

The authors also define mass communication as a specific form of social communication, characterized as the process of creating and disseminating information, including knowledge, spiritual values, moral and legal norms through technical means to a large, geographically dispersed, and anonymous audience. They identify five main characteristics of mass communication: the mass nature of the audience, its heterogeneity (diversity), the high speed of information transmission and reproducibility, the rapid dissemination of messages, and the relatively low consumer value of received information.

Surguladze and Iberi further argue that the development of modern information technologies has significantly transformed the nature of communication, blurring the boundaries between private and public, as well as between interpersonal and mass communication. According to them, the internet has enabled individuals to create their own communication spaces and make information accessible to a broad audience. At the same time, users can satisfy their informational needs on a global scale, accessing content from any country and source, as the internet effectively has no geographical boundaries. In such conditions, the variety of cultural, entertainment, and other types of information increases, while the proportion of value-oriented content within the overall information flow declines. Consequently, the characteristics of the globalization era pose new challenges for both society and the field of mass communication research (Surguladze & Iberi, 2003).

It is also emphasized that all forms of mass communication fundamentally depend on technology, and the concentration of technological resources in particular hands is by no means a neutral issue for society (Surguladze & Iberi, 2003).

Mass communication plays a crucial role in many processes of contemporary social life, including business development, advocacy for social issues, electoral campaigns, and the protection of human rights. In the context of globalization and modern technological progress, change occurs rapidly. Whereas even a century ago individuals had to visit newspaper kiosks to obtain information, today they can access information across any field globally via smartphones immediately upon waking.

2.2. The Historical Development of Mass Communication

Even a brief overview of the history of mass communication helps us better understand its nature. The process of historical development clearly demonstrates how communication forms, as well as the skills and competencies required of professionals in the field, have evolved alongside social, technological, and cultural progress. This evolutionary analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the contemporary functions of mass communication, its transformative nature, and the challenges that are relevant today.

The dissemination of information to large audiences dates back to ancient times and has always been an integral part of societal life.

From cave paintings to the present digital era and the age of artificial intelligence, forms of communication have continuously evolved, developed, and influenced political, social, and cultural processes.

The development of mass communication is closely intertwined with human civilization and can be traced back to the prehistoric era. The earliest forms of information dissemination were visual, oral, and written. Cave paintings created by Homo sapiens are considered one of the earliest stages of communication. Visual representations found on cave walls clearly demonstrate the cognitive and communicative abilities of prehistoric humans. Scholars argue that cave artists were not merely creating art but were actively engaging in communication through their work. As linguist Professor Shigeru Miyagawa, co-author of *Cross-modality Information Transfer: A Hypothesis about the Relationship Among Prehistoric Cave Paintings, Symbolic Thinking, and the Emergence of Language*, notes, “it’s very clear that these artists were talking to one another... It’s a communal effort,” (Dizikes, 2018).

Historically, the dissemination of information was often associated with stories shared by travelers, sailors, and merchants. In antiquity, more organized forms began to emerge. For example, in ancient Rome, designated individuals collected and distributed political and social information, which can be considered an early form of modern journalism. Additionally, in 59 BC, governmental decisions were communicated to the public through clay tablets - *Acta Senatus* and *Acta Diurna*, displayed in public spaces, representing one of the earliest institutional forms of mass communication (Vekua & Rue, 2017).

A major milestone in the history of mass communication was Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in Germany around 1440, which radically transformed the dissemination of information by enabling mass printing. This technological advancement significantly contributed to the development of mass communication as a scientific field (Vekua & Rue, 2017).

The 18th and 19th centuries were marked by the rise of the printed press, while the 20th century saw the dominance of radio and television. In the 21st century, the internet has absorbed nearly all communication channels. Information dissemination has become instantaneous, interactive, and global. Social media platforms have actively engaged audiences in the communication process, and, at the present stage, the development of artificial intelligence has further expanded the possibilities of mass communication, transforming content creation and distribution while generating new challenges for both media and society.

Against the backdrop of technological progress, the development of various branches of mass communication, journalism, PR, advertising, and marketing has consistently aligned with these transformations.

By its very nature, mass communication is a technology-dependent process, as the creation, processing, and dissemination of information to a broad audience is practically impossible without technical means.

Accordingly, throughout history, mass communication has been one of the first fields to adopt

technological innovations and actively integrate them into practice. Technological progress directly influences both the forms of communication and its core domains: journalism, public relations, advertising, and marketing, which continuously adapt to the evolving technological environment. Therefore, for professionals working in mass communication, readiness for technological change, the ability to use new tools effectively, and adaptability in a rapidly changing environment have always been essential and are becoming even more critical today.

3. The Impact of New Technologies and Artificial Intelligence on Mass Communication

3.1. Competencies and Skills Required for Work in Mass Communication

In the early 2000s, students of journalism across various faculties were taught how to write well-structured texts, the specifics of video production and editing, as well as the characteristics of print media and radio. They were typically prepared for employment in print, television, and radio organizations.

From the 2010s onward, this was supplemented by the concept of “multitasking,” requiring solo journalists to be capable of filming, editing, uploading content to YouTube, and promoting it through social media. Today, however, even this is no longer sufficient. A professional working in mass communication is no longer solely a journalist or solely a PR specialist.

Today, in addition to writing skills, professionals are expected to be able to produce video and photo content, create and promote content, in other words, manage the entire process from idea to tangible outcome. For example, a PR specialist today is responsible for the following functions:

- Monitoring major daily developments in the media and planning client communication with media outlets, including preparing articles, interviews, program appearances, and comments for commissioned reports
- Take part in and planning the creation and distribution of press releases
- Evaluating media coverage and audience feedback, and assessing the outcomes
- Participating in crisis management processes
- Contributing to the planning and monitoring of long-term PR strategies
- Managing emails and phone communications
- Assisting in the development of new marketing strategies
- Participating in the design and production of brochures, advertising materials, and logos
- Contributing to marketing campaign implementation
- Engaging in internal communication processes within the organization
- Contributing in event planning and monitoring media coverage
- Organizing media tours

Engaging in continuous self-development, including education, training, staying informed about new trends, and adopting new technologies (Wilcox & Cameron, 2011)

At a minimum, what tools are required today for professionals in the field of mass communication to effectively “package” a product?

- Photo
- Video
- Editing software
- Story/text
- Article
- Presentation
- Social media
- Online media
- International platforms
- Sponsored posts
- Content creation applications

Today, in addition to traditional mass communication channels such as print media, radio/television, and online publications, the following platforms are widely used for information dissemination:

- Facebook – used for reaching broad audiences; allows the distribution of articles, photos, and videos and sharing within target groups
- Instagram – focused on high-quality visual content
- LinkedIn – targets professional and investment audiences; used for publishing expert content
- YouTube – suitable for long-form videos and detailed explanations
- TikTok – enables rapid information dissemination through short, dynamic videos; often used to attract a wide audience and redirect it to other platforms
- Telegram – serves a closed, loyal audience; allows sharing of exclusive information
- WhatsApp/Viber – provide direct and fast communication with clients
- Pinterest – less popular in Georgia, but useful for visual presentation and international audiences

At the same time, professionals in this field must constantly think creatively, as modern audiences quickly lose interest in repetitive content.

Marketing communication itself represents a large system that includes advertising, public relations (PR), sales promotion, direct marketing, and digital communication. In the 21st century, advertising has largely shifted into the digital space, social media, targeted advertising, and data-driven marketing (Peradze, 2010). Consequently, the planning and implementation of marketing and PR campaigns are rapidly evolving.

Moreover, for a modern professional to stay “one step ahead,” it has become essential to understand digital platform algorithms, plan and manage social media advertising, analyze audiences, and make data-driven decisions. Today, even the timing of posting content on social media plays a crucial role. At the same time, various online platforms assist users with content scheduling, automated publishing, analytics, and recommendations, making familiarity with these tools equally important.

Knowledge of SEO (Search Engine Optimization) fundamentals is also essential, including optimizing content based on platform-specific requirements and effectively using artificial intelligence tools. SEO involves structuring written and digital content in a way that ensures higher visibility in search engines

such as Google, thereby increasing audience reach.

“We are living at a moment of profound and prolonged media transition: the old scripts by which media industries operated or consumers absorbed media content are being rewritten,” note Henry Jenkins and Mark Deuze in *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008). According to the authors, media act as a key force linking culture and commerce. Whereas media companies once dominated and audiences functioned primarily as consumers, the contemporary media environment is characterized by a “hybrid media ecology,” in which individuals actively participate in content creation and distribution, and communication increasingly relies on social networks (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008).

3.2. The Development of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is a broad, umbrella term referring to systems capable of performing tasks associated with human intelligence, such as pattern recognition, language processing, and decision-making. Historically, two main approaches have shaped AI development: symbolic (rule-based), which relies on predefined rules, and data-driven (machine learning), in which systems learn from data. Modern AI is largely based on machine learning, particularly deep learning, which enables the identification of complex patterns through neural networks (Swiss Cyber Institute, 2026).

According to McKinsey’s *The State of AI* (2025), most organizations are still in the early stages of AI adoption, primarily engaging in experimentation and pilot projects. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicate that large-scale AI integration has not yet begun. Additionally, 62% report that their organizations are already using or testing AI agents, software systems that independently perform specific tasks, analyze data, and operate with minimal human intervention (McKinsey & Company, 2025).

It is important to note that artificial intelligence did not emerge overnight. The Swiss Cyber Institute (SCI), which specializes in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies, cites AI expert Ayaz Karimov, who emphasizes that “What we’re seeing today didn’t come out of nowhere... Modern AI is the result of decades of research across statistics, computer science, and cognitive modeling,” (Swiss Cyber Institute, 2026).

The same source outlines a brief timeline of AI development:

- 1950 – Alan Turing proposes a practical method for evaluating machine intelligence, later known as the Turing Test
- 1956 – The term “artificial intelligence” is introduced at the Dartmouth workshop
- 1960s–1970s – Early optimism; symbolic AI and rule-based systems dominate
- 1970s–1980s – Decline in funding and interest due to unmet expectations
- 1980s–1990s – Development (and later stagnation) of expert systems; growth of machine learning
- 1997 – IBM’s Deep Blue defeats world chess champion Garry Kasparov
- 2011 – IBM Watson wins *Jeopardy!* and popularizes data-driven AI
- 2012 – Breakthroughs in image recognition mark a turning point in AI development
- 2016 – AlphaGo defeats Lee Sedol, demonstrating the potential of deep learning in complex decision-making

- 2017 – Development of transformers, forming the basis for modern language models
- 2016–2019 – Emergence of voice assistants (Siri, Alexa) and strengthening of social media algorithms
- Since 2020 – Increased reliance on digital technologies during the pandemic; widespread adoption of foundation models and generative AI; AI governance becomes a key business issue
- Since 2022 – Generative AI becomes widely accessible to users and is actively used for writing, design, video and content creation, learning, and research (Swiss Cyber Institute, 2026)

3.3. Artificial Intelligence in Mass Communication and Education

At this stage, it is necessary to examine the impact of artificial intelligence on the field of mass communication in the present day.

Historically, mass communication has rapidly adopted technological innovations from Gutenberg's printing press to radio, television, and digital and social media. A similar process is currently unfolding with artificial intelligence. Today, AI has become a powerful technological force that mass communication fields are actively integrating into their practices.

In the article *AI and the Impact on Journalism Education*, American researchers Debora Wenger, Md Sazzad Hossain, and Jared Robert Senseman note that AI, as a new communication tool, adds to the technological changes that journalists, educators, and students have had to adapt to in recent years (Wenger, Hossain & Senseman, 2025). This process requires the development of skills such as multimedia reporting, web design, and data analysis as part of adapting to the digital ecosystem.

According to the study, early uses of AI in professional practice (prior to the rise of generative AI) were associated with creating and distributing online content. Automated systems were widely used to produce content based on structured data, such as sports results, financial reports, and weather forecasts.

Today, AI is used on a much broader scale. It is employed in generating newsletters, social media posts and headlines, transcribing and translating interviews, and producing article drafts. The ability of algorithms to transform data into text resembling human-generated narratives significantly simplifies large-scale content production with relatively limited human resources.

At the same time, the authors highlight key challenges, including ethical concerns, the risk of misinformation, and biases in data. They emphasize the need for a collaborative approach between humans and AI.

Accordingly, as AI becomes more widely used in journalism, educational programs must reflect these emerging challenges and requirements (Wenger, Hossain & Senseman, 2025).

The study also reports that in-depth interviews were conducted with leaders of 14 ACEJMC-accredited journalism programs in the United States. The findings indicate that all respondents acknowledge the necessity of responding to AI developments; however, the process of change remains slow and many issues are still unclear.

Five main areas of challenge were identified: faculty expertise, partnerships, curriculum development, AI

policy, and ethical considerations. One of the key issues is the lack of sufficient faculty expertise in AI, leading universities to address this gap through training and professional development programs.

Additionally, institutions are actively seeking partnerships with technology and business sectors to access knowledge and resources. Arizona State University's journalism school holds an advantage due to its partnership with OpenAI, the developer of ChatGPT.

Regarding curricula, AI has not yet been systematically integrated and often depends on individual courses or instructors. Interview participants noted that integrating AI-related content into academic programs remains challenging, partly due to differing perspectives among faculty - some view AI as a threat to the profession, while others see it as a tool for improving media production.

Ethical issues emerged as one of the most significant challenges, including concerns about misinformation, data bias, and authorship.

Ultimately, the study concludes that journalism programs in the United States are approaching AI integration cautiously, although all program leaders recognize the need for timely adaptation. A major challenge remains insufficient faculty preparation, which some institutions attempt to address through professional development and partnerships. At the time of the study, no program had developed a comprehensive AI strategy, although all agreed on the critical importance of establishing ethical foundations for AI use.

The findings also suggest that partnerships with technological and other sectors are an effective way to access knowledge and resources, particularly for smaller programs. Additionally, the development of clear AI policies and innovative learning environments that allow students and faculty to experiment with new technologies is recommended (Wenger, Hossain & Senseman, 2025).

4. Conclusion

Based on the reviewed literature and data, it can be concluded that the field of mass communication has historically evolved alongside technological progress and has always been in a state of transformation. While traditional skills have never been entirely sufficient, the rapid development of digital technologies and especially artificial intelligence in recent years, has significantly accelerated and complicated this process.

Artificial intelligence represents both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, it enhances efficiency and speed; on the other, it introduces significant concerns related to ethics, misinformation, and authorship, which remain unresolved.

The findings also indicate that journalism education is still in a process of adaptation, with AI integration occurring in a fragmented and unsystematic manner. This highlights the ongoing gap between theoretical education and the practical demands of the labor market.

Based on the above, the following key recommendations can be identified: Academic programs must be continuously updated, including the integration of AI-related tools and approaches

- The U.S. example demonstrates the value of partnerships with technological and industrial sectors
- Greater emphasis should be placed on faculty professional development
- Educational environments should enable students to experiment with new technologies
- A balance must be maintained to preserve existing media standards in democratic societies
- Ethical standards, responsibility, fact-checking, and integrity remain essential for producing reliable content

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