DYNAMICS OF COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONS AND COMPETENCIES

Stella Angova
Maria Nikolova
Ivan Valchanov[1]

Introduction

Technological advances have seriously affected the identities of the various professions over the last few decades. In a number of industries, the concept of professional roles and their core characteristics has changed.

The factors that lead to the enrichment of the communication professions with new roles and competences can be summarized as follows:

a) development of software information tools and services that are readily available and easy to adapt to;

b) hypermedia ecosystem and continuous information exchange;

c) the development of the information industry (i.e. the content industry) and its transformation into one of the most important economic sectors;

d) businesses reaching a global audience by developing their own social websites and social media profiles;

e) the digital behaviour of the audience that has become an active part of the information process;

f) transformation of the idea of narrative and communication context by developing specific forms of audiovisual content such as infographics, video infographics, 360-degree videos and photos, various types of podcasts, augmented and virtual reality, etc. (Angova et al., 2019).

Literature Review

There is still limited research in the scientific literature outlining the contemporary profile of communication professionals in the fields of journalism, public relations and advertising. Partial attempts are made for each communications sector, but the literature does not provide a clear conceptual framework to comprehensively and

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[1] Stela Angova, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Department of Media and Public Communications, email: sangova@unwe.bg

Ivan Valchanov, PhD, Chef Assist. Prof., Department of Media and Public Communications, email: valchanov@unwe.bg

Maria Nikolova, PhD, Chief Assit. Prof., Department of Media and Public Communications, email: mnikolova@unwe.bg

systematically integrate the communications sector research, as well as to define the current profiles of journalists, PR experts and advertisers; to acknowledge the emerging roles and competencies and analyse convergence points.

Rintala (2005) provides a comment on what is happening in a more general sense: "In many industries, work has changed from specialized, often monotonous, manufacturing work to non-routine, complex and autonomous knowledge work that produces outputs characterized by information content". Van Dijk (2006:19) also notes that "an economy with all values and sectors, even the agrarian and industrial sectors, is increasingly characterized by information production". The content industry is being enriched and its scope of action expanded.

The analysis of the scientific literature revealed more studies on the journalistic professional profile. We have found few authors who focus on changes in the professions of PRs and advertising experts.

Journalism

A number of researchers are discussing the emergence of a multimedia journalist who is committed to performing multiple tasks at once. In the literature, having professional skills in several directions makes an individual a multi-skilling journalist, cross-media trained and universal one.

Feldman (1997) explains that true transformation or convergence is required in the journalistic profession. According to him, when creating effective digital products and services, the professions of information specialist, designer, programmer, system analyst, film director, financier and publisher should merge in an effective and creative way. Pavlik (2001) calls these changes retrofitting. Rintala et al. (2005) expose the following changes: transfer of tasks from one professional group to another; merger of two or more job descriptions; adding new tasks to traditional job descriptions. Scolari et al. (2007) point out that changes have occurred in areas of competence that characterize the previously known occupational profiles. They see two types of closely related transformations: (1) technological transformation due to the need for digital tools knowledge and (2) functional transformation – when the professional profile also involves new tasks or tasks previously performed by others. Deuze (2001; 2004; 2008) is looking for the dimensions of a changing professional journalistic culture at three levels: technological, socio-cultural and professional.

Bradshaw (2008) defines some new professional roles in journalism and noted that "Information is changing, and so journalists must too" and that "we might move from a generic, hierarchy of 'reporters', 'subs' and 'editors' to a more horizontal structure of roles based on information types". Oberst (2011) also proposes specific new roles with the motive: "For journalists thinking about the future, learning digital skills and being open to new things seem to be common themes of success". Guo and Volz (2019) examine the conceptual and practical

implications for the journalistic profession in the context of a changing media environment.

Public relations

Partial attempts to define new professional roles in the field of public relations are made by Aced (2013), who analyses changes occurring in the profession since the introduction of Web 2.0. Her research focuses more on the impact of the internet and digital platforms (in particular blogs) in communicating with different audiences. In another research of hers (2010), she highlights the so-called "Skills 2.0", which are shaped after the development of online communications. They are essentially related to creating and managing content across social and media platforms.

Advertising

Roca-Sales (2014) describes transformations in the advertising industry at different levels – the introduction of new business models; transition from audience storytelling to audience involvement; new professional profiles that combine several professional roles into one; building strong customer relationships; integration and interaction of digital and non-digital advertising strategies. According to the same survey, completely new professional profiles have been created, with employees adapting to performing the functions demanded by the digital environment. Garcia et. al. (2017), however, notes that because of the rapid development of digital communication, the acquisition of a number of new skills over short periods of time is also required, leading to a lack of professionals that are trained well enough. Schmidt (2015) also points to the growing need for skills related entirely to working with digital technologies as part of the professional life of advertisers.

Context and Definitions

The development of the communication environment after the introduction of digital technologies has largely brought closer together the competencies in the professional profiles of journalists, PR experts and advertisers. They work together, contribute to the formation of public relations, and are united by the fact that professionals create content for different general and target audiences and target groups. In addition to the traditional genres in which the journalistic and some of the texts in the PR profession and advertisements are created, social media has imposed and continues to develop specific forms of audiovisual content. This has significantly changed both the communication context and communication capabilities, as well as the requirements for professional competencies and skills that PR professionals, journalists and advertisers should presumably possess.

There are two major changes in the communication profession. Firstly, the professional paradigm is being rethought and new professional roles emerge for

communication experts (for each profession we have outlined the new positions with their main characteristics in *Tables 1, 2, 3*). The continued development of information technologies leads to the creation of well-prepared specialists with specialized knowledge. With the emergence of professional roles new jobs are created and job descriptions are transformed with additional requirements. Secondly, before the introduction of digital technologies, there was a clear differentiation in the communication professions. Nowadays there are already specific markers that define the specificity of each profession. One may say that there is an upgrade of the professional status quo and convergence of the three groups of communicators, while at the same time each profession retains its identity and social role.

By 'professional roles' we mean a professional position in an organization to perform specific tasks with the respective job descriptions. We define professional competences as a system of clearly formulated skills that reflect the dynamics of the professional environment.

Research Design

In recent years, job postings for journalists, PR experts and advertisers have included requirements for additional expertise, mainly related to digital skills – technological skills, digital content creation and social media knowledge. Professionals employed in the movie industry as well as in animation, music, gaming, book publishing and video (TV and web programming) remain outside the scope of the research.

Our thesis is that in the communication professions there is a convergence in expertise regarding the creation of digital audiovisual content for different platforms with all accompanying factors (technology, management, marketing, creativity, ethics, etc.) and at the same time each profession preserves its own social significance and identity.

After reviewing over 1000 job offers, 142 information units were selected for analysis. Documentary analysis, content analysis and comparative analysis has been done of ads on global job placement and recruitment sites such as indeed.com, careerbuilder.com, linkedin.com, journalismjobs.com, journalism.co.uk, as well as analysis of The New Tork Times*, The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, Cox Media Group, NBCUniversal, Tribune Media Company, BBC, The E.W. Scripps Company, Cision, PR Week, Women in PR North America, Canadian Public Relation Society, Public Relation Society of America, job postings platforms such as PR Jobs, multilingualvacancies.com, etc. The selection and analysis of the job postings were carried out in the period 2018-2019. The research does not claim to be representative, but the goal is to point out the growing tendencies regarding the digital content, to specify the new professional communication roles and to show the business requirements for professional expertise.

Findings

Contemporary professional roles and competencies in journalism

The research found that global media brands have identified specific new professional roles and are looking for experts with well-defined competencies. The review of job postings in the media, the processing and the analysis of the requirements description helped to identify specific new professional roles and their characteristics, which are presented in our own table below.

Table 1. Professional Roles and Competencies in Journalism

Professional roles	Traditional competencies	New competencies
Multimedia reporter *Optional:* **Web reporter**	- discovering, creating and distribution of content	- discovering, creating and distribution of content for **various media platforms**
Mobile reporter *Optional:* **mojo; Mobile journalist; Mobile platform editor**	- discovering, creating and distribution of content	- discovering, creating and distribution of content through **portable electronic devices with network connectivity; - link checking; - viewing on small screens and via apps; -** platform strategy opimization – content, design, user experience [1], navigation, personalization
Desktop platform editor	- discovering, creating and distribution of content	- the selection, organization and management of **homepage and landing pages for a desktop edition;** – developing of **new templates** and layout options for the desktop homepage
Off-platform editor	- discovering, creating and distribution of content	- adjusting the style and length of **the titles**, **graphic sizing** and legibility, **photos, hyperlinks** etc.; - implementing tactics for **paid promotion; -** measurement of **the effectiveness of all social media activities**; - **changing history components** to optimize performance.

On-platform editor	- discovering, creating and distribution of content	- focus on home screens of **mobile and desktop devices**, pushing content and ensuring its continuous circulation; - engaging the audience through **new programming and promotion tactics.**
Social media strategist *Optional:* **Social media coordinator, Social media manager, Social media editor**	- discovering, creating and distribution of content	- manage, create and distribute original high quality content in **social media** - creating **infographics** - administration of all **media profiles** - regular **online monitoring of the reputation** of the company and of consumer engagement - generate incoming traffic to the primary web site
Audience engagement editor *Optional:* **Audience strategy editor, Audience growth strategist**		- building a whole **video content strategy across multiple social platforms** – Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and more.; - planning and setting up **journalistic content for various platforms;** - making of **social media headlines;** - developing strategies for **User Generated Content (UGC)** - knowledge of Google Analytics.

Contemporary professional roles and competencies in public relations

In 2018, the third report of the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism came out, as part of the Global Communication Report series, addressing the changes and challenges of communication at a global level. The biggest drivers of change, quoted by the PR professionals in the report, are the changing media landscape (87%) and new technologies (82%), followed by broader access to data (77%) and changing business models (65%) (Global Communication Report, 2018). Interestingly, the opinion of PR professionals is that in the changing media landscape, after five years, the average consumer will not differentiate between own, paid, won and shared media. After analyzing the job postings in the field of PR, nine main professional roles have been defined, whereas the qualification level of the position held is expert or managerial. The following table summarizes the basic competences of the old and new types, which are relevant for the various professional roles.

Table 2. Professional Roles and Competencies in Public Relations

Professional roles	Traditional competencies	New competencies
PR specialist	- liasing with the media; - planning media strategies - writing press releases, briefs, offers - organizing events, holding press conferences, drawing up campaign plans - crisis communication management	- making of **text and video content for social media**, writing blog posts - **SEO optimization** - managing social media profiles - **measuring the effectiveness of online campaigns**. Use appropriate **content publishing and planning tools** on social media - performing the **data analysis and evaluation** when managing corporate accounts
PR manager	- Strategic communication planning skills, knowledge of the media environment - monitoring of the business environment, maintaining relationships with partners and stakeholders - writing positions and media statements - теam management - advising clients on communication campaigns - case studies reasearch - negotiation skills, budgeting skills	- measurement of **return on investment (ROI)** and the effectiveness of **business goals (KPI)** - skills for analyzing campaign results through software applications - generate ideas for **social media campaigns, virtual community management**
Corporate communications specialist	- maintaining the image of the company, creating original content for internal and external audiences – newsletters, corporate positions, reports, presentations, public speeches, concepts for CSR initiatives - crisis communication management	- making of **videos and infographics** - **storytelling** - maintaining the company website - **measuring the online reputation of the company**. - **creating a podcast**
Press secretary	- keeping in touch with advisers, experts, consultants, ministers and other government representatives - Liaison with the civic and NGO sectors - media relations - arranging interviews	- maintaining the institutions online communication channels - creating **specific content for each online institutional platform** - maximizing audience reach through a mix of communication channels - using **news aggregators**

Digital content manager	- planning and creating content for websites - creating video content for websites	- content planning for various online platforms - **creating a content marketing calendar** **-** writing texts that include specific keywords - developing and implementing SEO strategies - **knowledge of Google Analytics** - knowledge of **content management systems**
Community and social media manager	- creating audiovisual content for social media	- knowledge of software applications for **measuring the effectiveness of online campaigns** - Moderation of different communities, creation of promotional and advertising campaigns on social media - **Monitoring and selecting user-generated content** - knowledge of video processing programs.
Digital communications coordinator		- using **tools for creating online content** and its promotion - using **content management systems** - using **Adobe Creative Suite and video production programs**
Public relations and online engagement	- knowledge and use of social media - blogs and websites – creating an editorial calendar for blogs and publishing content - maintaining a newsletter.	- tracking metrics for readings and interactions with content online - **planning online campaigns and measuring the return on investments (ROI) and the effectiveness of business goals (KPI)**

Public relations influencer specialist		- monitoring seasonal influencer campaigns – photo shoots, video production and other online content **- optimizing partnerships with influencers** - online monitoring of company results – knowledge and use of Adobe InDesign, iMovie (or other video processing software), Dreamweaver, FTP programs, Microsoft Office Suite (Word, PowerPoint), Microsoft Publishing or InDesign, Adobe Photoshop/ Illustrator. Google Ads, Google Tag, Facebook Advertising

Contemporary professional roles and competencies in advertising

Requirements for applicants for most job postings in the field of advertising begin with the basic elements: bachelor's degree in a relevant field; compulsory fluency in foreign languages; serious interest in advertising and marketing; for positions that include a management function – previous experience in a similar position; excellent writing and literacy skills; creativity. Communication skills are also inevitable, given the field of work: communication with clients and audience; skills for writing the right message; giving a presentation; developing and presenting your own ideas; asking and answering questions; negotiating, establishing and maintaining contacts with clients and partners; adherence to deadlines and good organization of work; planning and coordinating of campaigns; excellent teamwork. Added to these are also the new professional competencies described in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Professional Roles and Competencies in Advertising

Professional roles	Traditional competencies	New competencies
Copywriter	- writing and communication skills - creativity - understanding customer needs - creating effective messages for traditional media	- creating EVPs, websites, email campaigns, banner advertising, social media, mobile marketing, gaming, creative rationales, RFPs, presentations and pitches - **employer branding** - **experiential marketing**
Digital advertising expert	- organizing campaigns - customer relations - reporting on the effect of advertising	- **optimization** of customer websites - keyword selection for **SEO** - **reporting** the results of SEO campaigns - development of **distribution strategy** in different markets - ensuring **maximum ROI** and conversion
Expert in advertising and marketing	- product marketing - running campaigns - manage subscriptions - creating a marketing strategy and reporting on sales	- maintaining the company website - management of **social media channels** - implementation of email strategy - working with **Adobe InDesign** - working with a website **CMS systems** - involvement and expansion of the client community
Advertising and sales expert	- identification of potential partners for signing new deals - securing income from advertising - entrepreneurial and business flair	- work in traditional and digital environments - understanding digital media and social media sales - working with **specific tools and platforms** such as: Salesforce, LinkedIn, and LinkedIn Navigator & Point Drive, Microsoft Dynamics, Excel, DocuSign
Advertising and marketing coordinator	- monitoring of competitors - communication with clients - coordination of advertising budgets - general administrative obligations	- maintaining websites, online chat rooms and social profiles - working with **Office suite** - working with **Adobe Creative Suite** - photographic skills - working with software for **data analysis and statistics**
Content specialist for digital marketing	- organizing campaigns - customer relations - reporting on the effect of advertising	- knowledge of digital marketing and opportunities for **monetization** - working with Google Ad Manager, AdSense and other **SSP solutions** - knowledge of the technical part of creating advertising messages - understanding of **web based services** / HTML/CSS/basic JavaScript/APIs/URL and link management

| Social media advertising expert | - organizing campaigns
- customer relations
- reporting on the effect of advertising | - creating advertising campaigns for Facebook and Instagram
- working with Facebook Advertising, Google Ads, etc.
- skills to attract **specific audience**
- selection of specific content according to the specificity of social media work
- knowledge of **influencer marketing** |

The analysis of job offers in the fields of journalism, public relations and advertising allowed us to highlight the convergent competencies shown in *Table 4* below.

Table 4. Convergent communication competencies

Communication profession	Convergent competencies
Journalist PR expert Advertising specialist	(1) Technological skills - SEO – URL and link management, link checking, keyword selection - user experience design (UX) - graphic design – working with specific software design tools - knowledge and work with tools to measure the effectiveness of social media activities - working with software for data analysis and statistics - basic knowledge and use of computer languages **(2) Digital content competencies** - creating and distributing content across platforms – desktop, mobile, applications, social media and ensuring continuous circulation - creating custom content - skills for creating and processing photos for different platforms - visual storytelling skills - a strategy for creating, editing and distributing video content on social media **(3) Strategic competencies** - working with digital communities and user-generated content - managing social media profiles and maintaining a website - implementation of advertising tactics

Discussion

The researched topic offers a variety of opportunities for discussion. As potential discussion topics we outline:

- **quality of content** – a current question is whether the enriching of professional profiles would lead to both significant for the society and ethically presented content;
- **economic effect** of the advanced professional profiles;
- **social effect** of the emergence of new professional roles;
- **professional identity** – and whether it will continue being clearly specified regarding the ongoing technological development;
- **concepts of professionalism** for the employees in media, PR and advertising – will they withstand the pressure, or will they be challenged by the consumer-authors;
- **context of the messages** – is there a danger of preferring superficial and avoiding significant topics.

Conclusion

The research allows us to structure the conclusions, firstly, with regard to each profession – journalist, PR expert, advertiser, and, secondly, to summarize the current picture in terms of the communication professions.

First, the contemporary profile of the journalist is an integration of journalistic practices, technical skills and strategic activities such as measuring certain indicators and audiences. The new professionals are flexible and adaptable and go beyond performing just one task. They have the combined competencies required across the digital media production route – both inherited from the traditional sector, and acquired through the technological impact and transformations in the communications environment. Today's media professionals are *simultaneously journalists, advertisers, PR experts, technical experts, IT specialists, data analysts* and others. We have yet to see if journalists will use the rich toolkit to deliver socially significant content, or be tempted to stay within the safe confines of a multimedia product without much information value. The results obtained can lead to a discussion about the path that journalism is taking – whether it will rely on innovative ways of presenting content and neglect fundamental principles or whether it will use the new technological arsenal to properly play the role of a 'watchdog'.

Second, digital platforms and social media have added additional requirements to the daily responsibilities of PR professionals. Particularly important to them is knowledge of *software applications* to measure the effectiveness of online campaigns, the metrics that summarize return on investment (ROI) and key

performance indicators (KPIs) results. Especially important for managing online reputation is the knowledge of *SEO optimization, writing skills suitable for online environment, infographic design, video content creation and video processing skills*, *storytelling skills*, knowledge of *the variety of genres and the adaptation of writing style to different segments of the target audience*. Writing video scripts, knowing brand management principles, maintaining a dialogue with consumers on social media (answering user queries, reviews, monitoring online feedback), good judgment for selection and re-publishing relevant user-created content are all skills that are considered an advantage.

Third, due to the rapid development of digital communication, it is also necessary *to master a number of new skills in short periods of time*. There is a growing need for skills, related *entirely to working with digital technology* as part of the professional life of advertisers. In addition to preparing and editing text and creating multimedia presentations, advertising professionals must be able to work with social media; tools for distributing digital advertising; tools for *search engine optimization (SEO)*; tools for *analysing the effect of advertising* (*Google Analytics*); image and video processing software for creating banner ads, creating content across different platforms. Albeit optional, it is recommended to have the skills to work with *content management systems (CMS) and to have knowledge of computer languages*.

Fourth, there is a flow of competencies from one group of communicators to another and convergence of professional expertise. Traditional roles are also changing as new requirements are added to them, building on previous skills. We have structured similar professional practices into (1) technological skills, (2) digital content competencies, and (3) strategic competencies (*Table 4*).

The empirical analysis allows us to conclude that in the communication professions there is less and less division between the different positions, there is a convergence of professional expertise and an overflow of competences – both within each of the professional groups, and between the three groups of journalists, PR experts and advertisers.

A crucial requirement for modern communicators remains the ability to create text. Another important required skill is the creation of a visual narrative, which entails knowledge of various applications and programs. At the same time, one should be well familiar with the specifics of the different platforms and their audiences to determine the type of digital content.

Another very important conclusion is that the requirement for convergent competences does not lead to the deletion of individual communication sectors and their transformation into a hybrid model, but raises them to a new level of technological-narrative, while at the same time their independence and social importance are preserved.

Notes

[1] User experience design (UX) – creates the emotional connections between the user and the website. For successful interaction the design needs to be pursuant with the website audience, its needs and demands.

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Abstract

In this text we identify the current professional profile of those employed in the communications sector – journalists, PR experts and advertisers. The main argument is that the introduction of technology leads to a redefinition of communicators' expertise and the emergence of specific new professional roles. There are major transformations going on in each of the professions – new professional roles and requirements appear that demand advanced competences, which we have examined from the point of view of technological competencies, digital content competencies and strategic competencies. Our documentary and content analysis of open positions in global job offering and finding websites has shown that in the communication professions there is a convergence of professional expertise and at the same time preserving the professional identity. The presence of convergent competencies does not result in a blurring of the boundaries between the different communication sectors, but elevates those sectors to a new level of technological narrative, without depersonalizing their autonomy and social role. The research shows the growing tendencies regarding the digital content, concretises the new professional communication roles and highlights the expertise requirements of the business sector.

Key words: communication, journalism, public relations, advertising, communication competencies, professional roles, job descriptions, professional identity, profession, convergence

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