

PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNICATION DIRECTORS REGARDING THE PROFESSIONAL CONFLICTS POSED BY GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of generative artificial intelligence tools in corporate communication is transforming professional practice and generating new ethical, strategic, and organizational conflicts. This article explores communication directors' perceptions of these challenges, mediating between process automation, audience management, and organizational reputation. Between November 2024 and January 2025, 92 corporate communication professionals participated in the study, and 90 identified risks associated with implementing generative artificial intelligence. The main perceived risks, in order of frequency, include: dependence on technological tools, the spread of misinformation, the introduction of bias, difficulties in humanizing communication, loss of control over the narrative, uniformity in corporate communication, and degradation of creative thinking. The results allow for an analysis of how communication directors perceive and address these conflicts, contributing reflections on strategic leadership, professional ethics, and adaptation to technological innovation.

KEYWORDS

artificial intelligence, corporate communication, communication directors' perceptions, professional conflicts, ethics and automation

PERCEÇÕES DOS DIRETORES DE COMUNICAÇÃO SOBRE OS CONFLITOS PROFISSIONAIS DECORRENTES DA INTELIGÊNCIA ARTIFICIAL GENERATIVA

RESUMO

A adoção de ferramentas de inteligência artificial generativa na comunicação corporativa está a transformar a prática profissional e a gerar novos conflitos de natureza ética, estratégica e organizacional. Este artigo explora as percepções dos diretores de comunicação relativamente a estes desafios, num contexto de mediação entre a automatização de processos, a gestão das audiências e a reputação organizacional. Entre novembro de 2024 e janeiro de 2025, participaram no estudo 92 profissionais de comunicação corporativa, dos quais 90 identificaram riscos associados à implementação da inteligência artificial generativa. Os principais riscos percecionados, por ordem de frequência, incluem: dependência de ferramentas tecnológicas, disseminação de desinformação, introdução de enviesamentos, dificuldades em conferir um carácter mais humano à comunicação, perda de controlo sobre a narrativa, uniformização da comunicação corporativa e degradação do pensamento criativo. Os resultados permitem analisar de que forma os

diretores de comunicação percebem e gerem estes conflitos, contribuindo para a reflexão sobre a liderança estratégica, a ética profissional e a adaptação à inovação tecnológica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

inteligência artificial, comunicação corporativa, percepções dos diretores de comunicação, conflitos profissionais, ética e automatização

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) calls for deep reflection among communication directors (DirCom). This technology offers an opportunity to develop new organizational dynamics by enabling tools that streamline message creation and distribution (Bick et al., 2024). In this context, the DirCom's role centers on overseeing these systems and balancing innovation with the quality of communication offered to different publics.

Traditionally, the DirCom's work has been linked to narrative management and the coherence of institutional image (Capriotti, 1999; van Riel, 1995). The presence of GenAI prompts reflection on how authorship and message essence can be preserved in an environment where algorithms collaborate in content production (Esposito, 2022). This phenomenon suggests a transition toward models in which human judgment remains the central axis for ensuring information veracity, particularly amid growing demands for transparency in corporate communication (Buckley et al., 2025).

Building on this general aim, the study pursues four specific objectives (SO): (SO1) to identify and classify the main risks and professional conflicts perceived by DirComs in relation to the implementation of GenAI in their organizations; (SO2) to analyze the distribution of these conflicts across analytical dimensions; (SO3) to explore, through qualitative analysis of open-ended responses, the experiential frameworks and interpretive logics through which DirComs make sense of these conflicts in their daily practice; and (SO4) to contribute to the academic debate on the impact of GenAI on strategic communication leadership, identifying implications for professional ethics, narrative sovereignty, and the future redefinition of the DirCom's role.

This article examines how communication leaders in Spain perceive these transformations in their professional practice. This research adopts Spain as an exploratory laboratory situated at a strategic crossroads: within the European regulatory and strategic framework, characterized by the pioneering Artificial Intelligence Act (European Union, 2024) and its focus on ethical governance, and as a leading member of the Ibero-American professional sphere. This dual position justifies the case study, as Spanish communication leadership often bridges professional trends and ethical standards across both regions.

Current academic and professional discourse, as reflected in the *European Communication Monitor 2025/2026* (Zerfass et al., 2025), has shifted towards elite-based sampling to capture the strategic insights of senior decision-makers. Following this trend, our research focuses on 86 communication leaders to understand how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the profession's ethical and structural foundations. By focusing on senior decision-makers in highly regulated sectors such as healthcare, finance, and consultancy, the study offers a unique perspective on how organizations manage the tension between AI-driven efficiency and preserving institutional reputation. This context ensures the findings are not merely local but indicative of broader professional shifts within the European and Ibero-American Mediterranean digital economies. By analyzing their opinions, it is possible to identify issues that generate greater interest or caution.

This study examines the tension between algorithmic efficiency and ethical governance, identifying leadership patterns that macro-level reports cannot capture with this level of granularity. While global reports, such as the one published by Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2024), provide a broad overview of AI adoption, their findings are often diluted by geographical diversity. In the Global Alliance sample, only 27% of respondents represent Europe and North Africa, which may explain why “risk management” ranks as a low priority (7.7%) globally. In contrast, this study delves into a specific strategic area where risk perception and ethical governance are prioritized, providing a granular analysis that global datasets miss. By focusing on the Spanish context, a key bridge between European regulation and Ibero-American governance sensibility, this research identifies a critical divergence: what is a secondary concern globally is a strategic imperative for communication leadership in this region. The results show strong engagement with this reflection: nearly all respondents (97.8%) identify specific areas of concern, emphasizing the importance of preserving the human essence of messages and responsibly managing autonomy in relation to technological tools.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To support the analysis, the theoretical framework is structured around three fundamental dimensions that organize executives' perceptions in coherence with academic literature. First, the “identity” dimension addresses the evolution of the communicator's role and the tension between automation and the human factor. Second, the “ethics and responsibility” dimension focuses on challenges related to truthfulness, transparency, and bias supervision in the digital ecosystem. Finally, the “strategic control” dimension examines sovereignty over the institutional narrative and the need for brand differentiation amid algorithmic standardization. This structure connects classical communication theories with recent research on AI, providing a solid conceptual map for interpreting the results.

2.1. “IDENTITY” DIMENSION: THE DIFFERENTIAL VALUE OF THE HUMAN FACTOR

Concern for the communicator’s professional identity in the face of technology dates back to early reflections on media as extensions of human beings (McLuhan, 1964). However, GenAI poses an unprecedented situation by emulating cognitive faculties of creation. In today’s network society (Castells, 2001), now with GenAI generating content within the “internet galaxy”, professionals are confronted with what Esposito (2022) defines as “artificial communication”, where the algorithmic interlocutor is no longer a simple channel but a generator of meaning capable of “comforting or controlling” (pp. xi–xii, 8, 14) the user.

This reality requires a redefinition of the communicator’s profile toward what has been described as “cobotization” (Túñez López, 2021), with AI’s impact becoming a priority area of study (Pilo-García et al., 2024), alongside the growing importance of critical thinking and the ability to evaluate the quality of intelligent systems (Codina et al., 2025).

The acceptance of AI in communication departments depends not only on its technical usefulness but also on how transformative processes affect internal culture (Kelm & Johann, 2024). Classical authors such as Lasswell (1948) and Marston (1963) focused on the sender and the nature of public relations; today, that identity is threatened by potential technological dependence that dilutes authorship. The DirCom’s challenge is to maintain the “humanization” of the message, ensuring that AI functions as a support rather than a substitute for the human sensitivity required in communication management (L’Etang, 2008/2009).

While Marston’s (1963) RACE model remains a foundational pillar for public relations, the advent of GenAI introduces a disruptive layer that redefines its four stages. In the research and evaluation phases, the shift from manual data processing to algorithmic synthesis enables real-time strategic adjustments. However, the most profound paradigm shift occurs in the action and communication stages, where the professional is no longer the sole “creator” of the message but a strategic curator and ethical supervisor. As noted by recent reports (e.g., Zerfass et al., 2025), this evolution does not render the RACE model obsolete; instead, it demands a new form of human agency to ensure that automated outputs align with institutional integrity and the critical judgment that Marston (1963) originally envisioned as the core of professional practice.

2.2. “ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY” DIMENSION: TRUTHFULNESS IN THE ALGORITHMIC ECOSYSTEM

Professional ethics are the pillar that sustains organizational credibility (Argenti, 2013/2014; L’Etang, 2008/2009). In an environment where misinformation can be generated and distributed at scale, the communicator’s role as a guardian of truth becomes critical. Algorithms can introduce unintended biases or distort informational reality, directly challenging the gatekeeping function (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Zamith, 2018).

Responsibility toward society requires transparency in communication. Recent research underscores that the effectiveness of narratives in areas such as corporate social responsibility depends directly on how clearly AI use is disclosed (Buckley et al., 2025). It is not merely about issuing messages but about managing agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) with integrity. Institutions such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (2023) already set clear standards: AI tools cannot be considered authors, and their use must be permanently audited to prevent algorithmic biases from undermining equity and truthfulness in public discourse (Kitchin, 2017).

The shift from technical production to ethical oversight, driven in part by the new regulatory framework of the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act (European Union, 2024), positions DirComs as guardians of quality control and critical judgment. This shift goes beyond the operational execution originally defined in Marston's (1963) RACE model, suggesting that the professional's value now lies in providing human agency and strategic governance over automated processes.

2.3. "STRATEGIC CONTROL" DIMENSION: SOVEREIGNTY OF THE INSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVE

Strategic control is defined by an organization's ability to manage its own narrative and differentiate itself in a competitive environment (Capriotti, 1999; Cornelissen, 2020). The rapid and widespread adoption of GenAI (Bick et al., 2024) introduces the risk of "corporate uniformity": if all organizations rely on the same language models to generate messages, brand distinction — essential in modern marketing and communication (Kotler, 2000; van Riel, 1995) — may be diluted.

The DirCom must lead narrative sovereignty in the face of the "language of new media" (Manovich, 2001), where automation tends to standardize content. Moreover, strategic visibility in the digital environment — particularly presence in search engines and AI platforms (Vállez et al., 2026) — must not compromise institutional authenticity. As Lewis et al. (2025) argue, GenAI represents an institutional challenge that compels organizations to reinforce their informational authority. Only strong strategic leadership can ensure technology enhances the organization's voice rather than dilutes it within a sea of algorithmically generated content.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research aims to understand and analyze DirComs' perceptions of the professional conflicts posed by GenAI use. The study used an exploratory, descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach to address the research objective. This methodological strategy allows, on the one hand, quantification of the prevalence of perceptions through quantitative techniques (Cea D'Ancona, 1996) and, on the other hand, a deeper examination of the nature of professional conflicts through qualitative analysis.

This comprehensive design provides an integrated view of an emerging and complex phenomenon such as the reflection generated by GenAI in institutional communication.

3.1. SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Fieldwork was conducted between November 2024 and January 2025. The final sample consists of 92 directors and heads of corporate communication from organizations operating in Spain. Following López-Roldán and Fachelli's (2015) guidelines on case selection in social research, the study used strategic convenience sampling to ensure that all participants held direct responsibility for decision-making and for directing their organizations' communication policies. The sample comprises high-level communication professionals with significant decision-making authority within their organizations. The participants hold strategic leadership positions, including heads of communication and communication managers, representing key sectors such as healthcare, finance, and consultancy, among others. To promote transparency and minimize social desirability bias around integrating GenAI into corporate routines, all responses were collected through an anonymous structured questionnaire. While detailed sociodemographic data were not collected in order to protect anonymity and minimize social desirability bias, the sample was strategically selected based on participants' decision-making authority. All participants had direct responsibility for shaping their organizations' communication policies, making them particularly relevant informants for the phenomenon under study. However, the anonymity of the process did not preclude cross-sectional analyses (cross-tabulations) between variables. This methodology allowed for the identification of significant patterns and correlations in their perceptions based on the interrelation of their responses across the different sections of the survey.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Data collection used a structured questionnaire distributed electronically. The core of the instrument was an expandable multiple-choice question, a technique that captures the phenomenon's multidimensionality without restricting responses to closed categories. In addition, participants were informed that data would be processed in aggregate to guarantee anonymity. The questionnaire also included an optional open-ended response section, allowing executives to express opinions, nuances, or personal reflections on their experience with the technology.

This mixed data collection format, combining quantitative and qualitative elements, enabled respondents to indicate concurrent risks and to offer a nuanced view that faithfully reflects current professional reflections in the sector.

3.3. CATEGORIZATION AND ANALYSIS SYSTEM

A highly relevant preliminary finding is that 90 of the 92 participants, representing 97.8% of the sample, identified risks associated with GenAI, confirming an almost unanimous reflection within the sector. For data processing, a hybrid categorization system was applied, combining the flexibility of inductive analysis with the theoretical rigor of deductive analysis based on prior theory (López-Roldán & Fachelli, 2015).

In a first phase, responses were grouped by thematic affinity based on the nature of the spontaneously expressed answers provided by participants. In a second phase, this classification was validated and systematized by linking it to strategic communication frameworks, which distinguish between the “identity” dimension, linked to the subject and professional culture; the “ethics and responsibility” dimension, related to social responsibility and truthfulness; and the “strategic control” dimension, focused on narrative management and brand authority. This process ensures the analysis interprets how technology is influencing leadership and authority within the communication profession.

4. RESULTS

A key finding is the strong consensus among professionals about the disruptive nature of GenAI. Of the 92 DirComs who participated in the study, nearly the entire sample (97.8%, equivalent to 90 individuals) explicitly identified risks and professional conflicts arising from implementing these tools within their departments. This result shows that GenAI is not perceived as a neutral or merely technical innovation, but as a source of tension that requires reassessing competencies, ethical responsibilities, and the DirCom’s strategic sovereignty in the current corporate environment.

Table 1 shows that professional conflict related to GenAI manifests across multiple aspects, with the greatest intensity in professional identity and autonomy. It summarizes the frequency and percentage weight of each category and the specific conflicts they include.

DIMENSION	SPECIFIC CONFLICTS	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Professional identity	Technological dependence (47), need for humanization (41), creative degradation (1)	89	96.7
Ethics and responsibility	Misinformation (44), presence of bias (43)	87	94.6
Strategic control	Loss of narrative control (32), risk of corporate uniformity (1)	33	35.9

Table 1. Perception of professional conflicts related to generative artificial intelligence among communication directors (n = 90)

More than half of the executives (51.1%) identify technological dependence as the main risk, suggesting a crisis of self-perception: the fear that human judgment may be displaced or subordinated to algorithmic processes. This concern is closely linked to the difficulty of “humanizing” the message (44.6%), placing the conflict at the very heart of the DirCom’s professional essence. Surprisingly, the risk of creative degradation remains

low (1.1%), suggesting that professionals still trust their capacity for ideation but fear losing control over execution and the human essence of their processes.

At a second level, ethical and social conflicts show almost identical consistency, with misinformation (47.8%) and bias (46.7%) emerging as critical threats. These results suggest that DirComs act as “ethical watchdogs” in response to the generative models’ opacity. Finally, although the “strategic control” dimension was statistically less frequent, it is notable for the concerns it raises about losing control of the narrative (34.8%). When integrating these findings, it becomes evident that reputational risk is not an isolated category, but rather the final consequence of a chain of challenges: excessive technological dependence that dehumanizes communication and allows biases or misinformation to enter, ultimately eroding organizational coherence and trust, and therefore the reputation of both organizations and communication leaders.

A cross-analysis reveals a correlation between strategic planning and organizational governance. In organizations where GenAI is already integrated into the communication strategy, “company-defined platforms” (corporate governance) are more prevalent than in organizations without a formal plan, where usage remains largely dependent on individual employee initiative. This suggests that strategic maturity is a prerequisite for moving from fragmented experimentation to institutionalized, secure AI environments.

Data suggests an association between specialized training and the depth of risk perception. Professionals who have undergone specific AI training identify more sophisticated ethical and technical threats, such as “algorithmic bias” and “privacy infringement”. In contrast, untrained users focus primarily on surface-level concerns like “lack of humanization”. This finding emphasizes that professional education is critical for developing the “critical supervision” role required to mitigate high-level reputational risks. Finally, regarding the 2.2% of experts who indicated that no risks are associated with GenAI, a qualitative review of their responses reveals a purely operational pattern of use. These participants utilize AI exclusively for basic, low-stakes tasks such as translation and text correction. For this group, AI is perceived as a basic technical utility (similar to a spell-checker) rather than a strategic narrative agent, which helps explain their lack of concern regarding ethical or reputational implications.

4.1. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: PERCEPTIONS AND DIRECT EXPERIENCES

Beyond the quantification of risks presented in Table 1, the optional open-ended section of the questionnaire captured nuances related to executives’ daily experiences. Analysis of these responses shows that concerns about identity and ethics are not abstract, but rather reflect concrete operational tensions identified by 97.8% of the sample.

Testimonies indicate that the “ethics and responsibility” dimension manifests itself as a constant struggle against information saturation. Executives perceive that AI’s capacity to generate massive volumes of content has reduced access to information of real value. As Informant 1 notes, professionals may risk accepting algorithmically generated

information as valid without adequately verifying it, particularly under time pressure. This perspective reinforces the need for verification tools that complement professional judgment and ensure that engagement with the media is based on truthful data.

Regarding the “professional identity” dimension, qualitative results show clear resistance to dehumanizing communication processes. Informant 2 argues that AI should be an ally that enhances work when accompanied by appropriate training, describing it as a tool that evolves work practices. However, this evolution clashes with the false belief that quality content can be created instantaneously. Informant 3 highlights that, in a system that prioritizes quantity over quality, the DirCom must act as a “defender of human talent”, drawing attention to the errors generated by technology amid demands for immediacy.

Finally, in the “strategic control” dimension, executives emphasize the urgency of establishing internal governance frameworks. Informant 4 considers it essential to develop specific brand manuals to ensure data protection and preserve institutional values. According to Informant 5, leading AI lies in the capacity to guide it through expert use of commands or prompts. Some testimonies elevate this transformation to a broader level, suggesting that AI represents the beginning of a new stage of anthropological evolution in which humans must retain sovereignty over technological systems.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings enable a deeper dialogue between executives’ subjective perceptions in Spain and theoretical currents analyzing advanced digitalization. The study’s most significant finding is that 90 of the 92 professionals consulted explicitly identify risks. This 97.8% consensus supports Pilo-García et al. (2024) on the centrality of AI in the communication agenda, but above all reveals a professional imaginary marked by vulnerability. GenAI is not perceived merely as an efficiency tool, but as a disruptive force that compels DirComs to reassess their own value within organizations, reactivating classic dilemmas about their managerial function that now take on renewed relevance.

The perceived tension between technological dependence (51.1%) and humanization (44.6%) evokes the historical dichotomy between the communicator’s role as a technician or as a strategic manager (Marston, 1963; van Riel, 1995). In today’s executive mindset, there is fear that excessive delegation to generative systems may lead to a regression toward purely tactical functions, weakening the seat at the strategic decision-making table consolidated over recent decades (Argenti, 2013/2014). This subjective construction of risk becomes clear when Informant 3 describes the “false idea” of creative immediacy driven by a neoliberal logic of “more is better”. From this perspective, the DirCom projects itself as a “defender of human talent”, assuming its primary role is now to protect the brand’s relational essence against what Esposito (2022) defines as “artificial communication”.

In the “identity” dimension, the perceptions collected suggest that the predominant fear is not substitution, but the loss of autonomy of judgment. Informant 2 reinforces this view by perceiving AI as an “ally” to be fully leveraged, indicating that professionals seek to maintain control over the intellectual process. This perception aligns with the acceptance determinants identified by Kelm and Johann (2024), where technology is seen as a factor that redefines internal power dynamics. The importance attributed to humanization suggests a mental framework in which empathy is perceived as the only non-automatable value, echoing excellence theory by placing human relationships at the core of corporate success. For Informant 5, the future is perceived as a scenario of dominance in which “those who give the orders” retain narrative sovereignty, an idea that resonates with McLuhan’s (1964) theories of technology as an extension of human capacities requiring conscious direction.

Regarding the “ethics and responsibility” dimension, the perceived parity between misinformation (47.8%) and bias (46.7%) confirms that DirComs self-identify as the ultimate guarantors of truthfulness. This supervisory role reflects a mental framework in which corporate credibility is viewed as a fragile asset dependent on honest disclosure of AI use (Buckley et al., 2025). Informant 1 describes a perception of saturation in environments such as LinkedIn, where algorithmic noise reduces access to quality content. This view situates the DirCom in a role of neo-gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Zamith, 2018), filtering truthfulness in an ecosystem that operates at a speed threatening the integrity of traditional agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Professionals fear not only falsehoods, but also the erosion of their authority as a source of reliable information in the public interest, as anticipated by Lasswell (1948). Beyond operational efficiency, the ethical governance of GenAI must be understood as a strategic imperative to preserve institutional trust. As the findings suggest, the transition towards an algorithmic communication model necessitates a “human-in-the-loop” approach. In this framework, the communication leader’s role shifts from tactical message execution to critical ethical oversight, ensuring that automated outputs do not compromise corporate authenticity, infringe on data privacy, or perpetuate unintended algorithmic biases.

Finally, in the “strategic control” dimension, the perception of loss of narrative control (34.8%) emerges as the most concerning conflict. Although the risk of corporate uniformity (1.1%) is perceived as statistically low, the literature warns that algorithmic standardization poses a real threat to differentiation (Cornelissen, 2020; Kotler, 2000). This low perceived risk may reflect overconfidence in technical personalization, even as authors such as Manovich (2001) and Lewis et al. (2025) emphasize that GenAI logic inherently tends to repeat patterns. Informant 4 channels this concern into the need for “specific brand manuals”, revealing governance as a perceived refuge for institutional identity. The desire to lead narrative sovereignty to ensure visibility without sacrificing authenticity (Vállez et al., 2026) brings the discussion back to Capriotti’s (1999) strategic image planning. In Castells’ (2001) *La Galaxia Internet* (Internet Galaxy), the DirCom

perceives brand coherence as the only asset capable of resisting algorithmic informational entropy, reaffirming their position not merely as a manager, but as an intellectual leader within the organization.

The very high rate of risk identification (97.8%) should not be interpreted solely as resistance to change, but as the manifestation of a crisis of professional jurisdiction. Drawing on Abbott's (1988) theory of professions, the emergence of a technology capable of replicating intellectual tasks once exclusive to expert groups forces a renegotiation of the profession's "jurisdictional space". In this sense, executives' perceptions suggest that the DirCom is shifting authority from content production to the auditing of meaning. If GenAI can write, the professional's perceived value no longer lies in "doing", but in "judging". This transition is reflected in Informant 5's perception of a future where sovereignty belongs to "those who give the orders" to the system. Here, authority stems not from technical mastery, but from strategic capacity to guide technology, implying a form of re-professionalization based on algorithmic supervision and ethical curation.

This reconfiguration of professional identity occurs amid systemic tension. Informant 3's perception of the neoliberal logic of "more is better" reveals a deep conflict between automated efficiency and human authenticity. Executives see GenAI, by democratizing and cheapening content creation, as threatening to saturate the ecosystem with what Baudrillard (1978/1985) calls "simulacra". In this corporate hyperreality, where algorithmically generated copies and original human messages are indistinguishable to audiences, the DirCom self-identifies as the "last defender of reality". This is not merely about managing a brand, but about managing institutional truthfulness. The perception that AI is "condescending" or "invents things", as some testimonies suggest, reinforces the idea that technology lacks the "truth claim" required for mutual understanding, as conceptualized by Habermas (1981/1987) in his theory of communicative action.

Under this premise, the perception of misinformation (47.8%) acquires an existential dimension. Executives fear not only external fake news, but the erosion of synthetic trust. As Informant 1 describes, content saturation without value reduces the visibility of quality, forcing the professional to act as a "curator of trust". In the DirCom's mental framework, GenAI has transformed communication into a minefield of biases and inaccuracies where verification becomes a democratic responsibility rather than a technical task. This perception elevates the DirCom's role to guarantor of informational health in society, aligning with Buckley et al.'s (2025) thesis on transparency as the new gold standard of reputation.

One of the study's most intriguing findings is the low perceived risk of corporate uniformity (1.1%). Despite the literature's warnings that large language models tend toward homogenization due to their statistical nature (Lewis et al., 2025; Manovich, 2001), executives appear confident that their personal judgment will prevent mimetization. This gap between theory and perception suggests a possible blind spot or optimism bias. While DirComs perceive their creativity as unique, they may overlook that the tools used

to “polish” or “edit” texts are designed to smooth singularities. Here, the brand manuals mentioned by Informant 4 gain strategic relevance: governance must be not only legal or technical, but narrative. Algorithmic sovereignty implies training or guiding systems to speak the organization’s own language, avoiding the imposition of a soulless “global corporate style”.

Finally, perceiving GenAI as a new evolutionary stage invites a reconsideration of McLuhan’s (1964) theories. If technology is an extension of humanity, GenAI becomes an extension of institutional thought and language. The perceived risk of technological dependence (51.1%) reflects fear that the prosthesis of AI may atrophy the organ: that communication departments’ strategic reflection capacity may be replaced by passive obedience to algorithmic suggestion. Consequently, humanization is perceived as a strategic asset in a world moving toward an abundance of synthetic thought, where what becomes scarce and most valuable is authenticity, methodological doubt, and the capacity to question even what GenAI delivers with an appearance of truthfulness. This professional vulnerability identified in the study paradoxically drives DirComs to reclaim their role as ethical leaders, returning corporate communication to its essence: creating meaningful human bonds that no machine, however generative, can fully replicate.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This research allows us to draw four sets of conclusions aligned with the study’s SOs. Regarding SO₁, the findings confirm that adopting GenAI generates broad, multi-dimensional professional conflict among DirComs: 97.8% of the sample explicitly identified risks, spanning concerns related to technological dependence, misinformation, bias, dehumanization of communication, loss of narrative control, corporate uniformity, and creative degradation. This near-unanimous consensus demonstrates that GenAI is not perceived as a neutral technical tool but as a disruptive force that demands a fundamental reassessment of professional competencies and responsibilities.

Relating to SO₂, the distribution of conflicts across the three analytical dimensions reveals a clear hierarchy of concern. The “professional identity” dimension concentrates the highest frequency of responses (96.7%), led by technological dependence (51.1%) and the need to humanize communication (44.6%), indicating that the primary conflict is identitarian rather than operational. The “ethics and responsibility” dimension follows closely (94.6%), with misinformation and bias perceived as nearly equivalent threats, reflecting a strong sense of ethical guardianship among DirComs. The “strategic control” dimension, while less frequent statistically (35.9%), carries particular qualitative weight, as loss of narrative sovereignty is perceived as the ultimate reputational consequence of the preceding risks. Notably, the risk of corporate uniformity remains largely underestimated (1.1%), suggesting a possible optimism bias about human judgment’s capacity to prevent algorithmic homogenization.

Regarding SO₃, qualitative analysis of open-ended responses reveals concrete operational tensions. Executives describe a professional environment in which content saturation reduces access to quality information, where the pressure for immediacy collides with the need for verification, and where internal governance frameworks are still largely absent. The recurring figure of the DirCom as a “defender of human talent” and “curator of trust” suggests an emerging professional self-conception centered on ethical supervision and algorithmic auditing rather than content production.

Finally, regarding SO₄, this study contributes to the academic debate on AI and strategic communication leadership by proposing that the emergence of GenAI has triggered a crisis of professional jurisdiction, in the sense described by Abbott (1988): when a technology replicates tasks once exclusive to a professional group, that group must renegotiate the boundaries of its expertise. The findings suggest that DirComs are responding to this challenge by shifting their authority from execution to judgment — from producing communication to guaranteeing its meaning, truthfulness, and human essence. The research points toward an evolution in the profession, reinforcing the strategic role of communication leadership by increasing the weight of ethical oversight within their responsibilities. Next, the academic community can build on these initial perceptions to develop a consolidated body of knowledge. A priority is to advance longitudinal studies that analyze the evolution of professional identity and the real impact of automation on public trust. Future research must determine whether narrative sovereignty is a sustainable asset amid algorithmic standardization, ensuring that technological innovation enhances rather than dilutes the informational authority and human essence of corporate communication.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In compliance with standards of academic integrity and scientific transparency, this research followed the guidelines established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (2023) on using AI tools in the production of academic texts. It is hereby declared that GenAI systems were used exclusively as support for narrative structuring, grammatical correction, and stylistic refinement of the manuscript, ensuring at all times that intellectual authorship, methodological design, data collection, and final conclusions rest entirely with the author. In line with the official position of the Committee on Publication Ethics (2023), these tools were not credited as authors nor did they replace the researcher’s critical judgment or the ethical responsibility at any stage of the process, thus guaranteeing the truthfulness and originality of the contributions presented in this study.

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