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Media Management in Social Communication and Media Studies: Status and Challenges

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the position of media management within the discipline of communication and media studies. Its aim is to provide a preliminary assessment of this field, with a primary focus on academic education. This exploratory text is based on qualitative research results. The findings are based on twenty-one semi-structured interviews with researchers representing four universities offering courses in media management: University of Warsaw, Jagiellonian University, Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. The results indicate that the development of media management in Poland is mainly constrained by the absence of a coherent conceptual framework, limited mobility of knowledge, staff shortages, and a disconnect between research activity and teaching practice. The article argues that these problems may be addressed through the strengthening of the institutional foundations of media management and through developing domestic and international academic cooperation. The conclusions presented here may contribute to the broader discussion on transforming media management into a distinct sub-discipline within social communication and media studies, thereby reinforcing its position in research, teaching, and practical implementation.

KEYWORDS: media management, social communication and media studies, subdiscipline, higher education, education

STRESZCZENIE

Zarządzanie mediami w dyscyplinie nauk o komunikacji społecznej i mediach: status i wyzwania

W artykule analizuję pozycję zarządzania mediami w dyscyplinie nauki o komunikacji społecznej i mediach. Zmierzam do wstępnej diagnozy tego zjawiska, przyjmując kształcenie akademickie za główną perspektywę analizy. Tekst, mający charakter eksploracyjny, opiera się na wynikach badań jakościowych. Złożyły się na nie 21 częściowo ustrukturyzowane wywiady z badaczami czterech uczelni, które oferują edukację w obszarze zarządzania mediami (Uniwersytet Warszawski, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Uniwersytet Papieski im. Jana Pawła II

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w Krakowie i Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie). Wyniki wskazują na to, że rozwój ZM w Polsce ograniczają głównie brak spójnego aparatu pojęciowego, niska mobilność wiedzy, niedostatek kadr i rozbieżność między badaniami a praktyką dydaktyczną. Twierdzę, że problemy te można zniwelować przez wzmocnienie ram instytucjonalnych ZM, a także rozwój rodzimej i międzynarodowej współpracy akademickiej. Zaprezentowane konkluzje można wykorzystać w dyskusji nad przekształceniem zarządzania mediami w subdyscyplinę nauk o komunikacji społecznej i mediach, która byłaby zdolna wzmocnić ją w obszarze badawczym, dydaktycznym i wdrożeniowym.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: zarządzanie mediami, dyscyplina nauk o komunikacji społecznej i mediach, subdyscyplina, kształcenie wyższe, edukacja

1. Introduction

The contemporary media industry is undergoing dynamic transformations. As a result, the media have come to be perceived as complex organizations operating under conditions shaped by market competition—both economic and marketing—as well as by increasing social expectations. These changes motivate the development of media studies, including the integration of theoretical and methodological approaches derived from various academic traditions. This approach is reflected in the institutional evolution of media studies in Poland.

The establishment of the discipline of Media Studies in 2011 formally recognized the body of research that had previously been developed across numerous academic centers. The next stage was the creation of the discipline of Social Communication and Media Studies (SCMS) in 2018, which combined previously separate areas of inquiry related to media, social communication, bibliology, and information science. This enhanced interdisciplinary reflection on media but also revealed the need to define the scope of individual research fields within the discipline more precisely.

One such field is media management (MM), situated at the intersection of, among others, media studies, economics, and—of course—management. Although media management is present within the research conducted under the framework of SCMS, its status remains underdeveloped. Existing research has focused mainly on selected economic or organizational aspects of media enterprises, while less attention has been devoted to positioning MM within the structure of the discipline itself. As a consequence, there remains a lack of studies that present media management within SCMS and analyze how it functions in academic practice.

In this paper, I seek to address the aforementioned gap by examining the position and specificity of MM within the discipline of SCMS from the

perspective of the academic community involved in education in this field. By combining theoretical reflection with a qualitative empirical approach, I aim to capture both the institutional and conceptual conditions that shape the development of MM in Poland.

2. Literature Review

2.1 From the Discipline of Media Studies to the Discipline of Social Communication and Media Studies

The Ministry of Science and Higher Education established the discipline of media studies by virtue of the Regulation of 8 August 2011 on fields of knowledge, areas of science and art, and academic disciplines.¹ Media scholars faced a “breakthrough moment in their own trajectory” (Jabłonowski & Gackowski, 2012, p. 16), as “media studies officially acquired an academic character” (Goban-Klas, 2013, p. 12).

It ought to be emphasized, however, that this date should be considered rather in administrative than ontological terms: after all, media research had already enjoyed a significant academic output beforehand. Goban-Klas (2013), for instance, pointed to Régis Debray’s concept of mediology, Bücher’s early twentieth-century press research centers and broader studies on mass media on mass media developed by such scholars as Bernard Berelson, Wilbur Schramm, Marshal McLuhan, Paul Levinson, and Manuel Castells. Mielczarek and Adamowski (2025) traced the roots of media studies to nineteenth-century literary and bibliological analyzes, studies of periodical literature, such as by Stefan Czarnowski, and early journalism associated with scholars such as Piotr Chmielowski. Subsequent decades brought not only press studies, represented, for instance, by Józef Jarkowski, but also works examining media in other contexts (e.g., sociological—Orsini-Rosenberg, economic—Kafel, political science—Jabłoński, linguistic—Kniaginowa, etc.). The 1970s and 1980s saw an intensive development of media research, resulting in works by Walery Pisarek, Zbigniew Bajka, Tomasz Goban-Klas, Ryszard Filas, Marian Golka, Halina Satkiewicz, and Maciej Mrozowski, among others. Today, numerous additional names and research approaches could be easily cited, demonstrating that the achievements of Polish media studies had already been impressive long before 2011.

The establishment of the discipline formally confirmed the “autonomy of the research subject, the advancement of methods and results of scholarly activity, the degree of meta-scientific self-definition, and the state of organizational and informational development” (Hofman, 2015, p. 113). This fact should not

1 Specifically Article 3 of the amended Act on Academic Degrees and Academic Title.

be underestimated, as it made possible the “critical, scholarly presentation of knowledge about media, also for the benefit of pedagogues, teachers, and educators, who often have an insightful yet still common-sense understanding of the mediatization of life” (Goban-Klas, 2013, p. 23). The creation of the new discipline also required a more precise definition of its research scope. It was obvious that media studies should study media. However, it is worth emphasizing that another, very characteristic feature came to the forefront: interdisciplinarity (Jabłonowski & Gackowski, 2012; Jabłonowski & Jakubowski, 2014; Hofman, 2015; Jabłonowski & Mielczarek, 2018).

The eclectic nature of media studies was reflected in its broad dissemination across different scientific fields, in theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions. On the one hand, this was perceived as an enrichment of the research perspective; on the other hand, questions were raised concerning the boundaries of media studies, their intersections with other disciplines, and, ultimately, the definition of their conceptual apparatus and specifying their research and teaching environment.

Critics of the new discipline also pointed to its narrowed framework compared to what had originally been proposed (Mrozowski, 2012), as well as to generational differences among researchers regarding their approaches to discussions on media studies (Sonczyk, 2012). Moreover, as Adamski, Gawroński, and Lenczowska (2023, p. 124) observed, the coexistence of media studies and the sciences of cognition and social communication generated “inter-community tensions” arising from the overlap of subject matter between these academic fields.

For this reason, the establishment of the discipline of social communication and media studies was so ground-breaking. The creation of the SCMS was announced in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 20 September 2018 concerning fields of science, academic disciplines, and artistic disciplines. SCMS brought together three previously separate disciplines: media studies, cognitive and social communication studies, and bibliography and information science. Adamski et al. (2023, pp. 116, 145) pointed out the difficult tasks associated with this process: integrating “different academic communities” and the “recrystallisation of the discipline’s identity,” aimed at counteracting “fragmentation, disintegration, and eclectic tendencies.” According to Hofman (2019), the integration of the discipline should focus on clarifying and organizing its main research areas, and on avoiding the redundancies arising from overlapping research topics. Woźniak-Kaspepek (2021, p. 10) further specified that the independence of a discipline is primarily evidenced by a “conceptual apparatus and specialized language unique to it,” that is, “conceptual and terminological autonomy.”

However, Woźniak-Kaspepek also pointed to certain difficulties in this regard. In her view, overly diverse definitional nomenclature hindered

integration. For this reason, she postulated the development of a “common terminological base ... to understand at least the basic mutual conceptual systems,” as well as the “restoration of a spirit of co-participation and a horizon of shared meanings” (Woźniak-Kasperek, 2021, pp. 10, 16). It is worth emphasizing, however, that despite these identified challenges, the academic community quickly recognized the potential of the new discipline, including opportunities for joint research, mutual inspiration, and the broadening of research horizons (cf. Jabłonowski & Mielczarek, 2018; Koredczuk & Woźniak-Kasperek, 2019).

2.2. Media Management within the Discipline of Social Communication and Media Studies

In popularizing approaches, media management (MM) is defined as a “bridge between general management theories and the specific characteristics of the media industry,” focusing on how media organizations utilize their resources to meet the needs and expectations of audiences (iResearchNet, n.d.; Oxford Bibliographies, 2016).

From a scientific perspective, however, the concept is less clear for several reasons. The main problem is the lack of a coherent self-definition of MM itself. Theory in this area remains incoherent. On the one hand, it is difficult to forcibly adapt concepts derived from management studies to the conditions of the creative sector—in other words, to mechanically transfer issues from economics and general management into the media context (cf. Doyle & Firth, 2004). On the other hand, there is an overlap between management, economics, sociology, psychology, and even cultural studies. Pałasz (2024, p. 283) regards this as both “a source of potential and a difficulty” when situating this interdisciplinarity within the structure of the discipline itself. One may assume that the fluidity of paradigms makes the classification of MM difficult (Chodyński, 2017).

Another significant barrier is the limited number of publications in MM. Although Kim et al. (2023) argue that it is one of the nine main research areas within “media & communication studies” (encompassing analyses of the structure, ownership, and functioning of media enterprises), there are voices claiming that the literature on MM “remains highly fragmented” (cf. Omidi, dal Zotto, & Picard, 2022, p. 1).

Last but not least, another reason might lie in the nature of the media themselves. Researchers point out that media organizations, unlike most other enterprises, combine economic production with a broader social function, and their products—particularly media content—influence audiences’ awareness and attitudes (e.g., Albarran, 2006). As a result, they are “organizations of a unique character, different from other sectors of the economy due to the impermanence of their products, the creative nature of work, and the social significance

of their operations” (Nierenberg, 2011a, p. 17). Moreover, due to digitalization and media convergence, they have become intertwined with “the functioning of all other institutions, [as a result of which] their logic has largely shaped the operation of these institutions” (Goban-Klas, 2013, p. 22).

Today, media are therefore ubiquitous and play a “dominant role” in contemporary society (Jabłonowski & Gackowski, 2012, p. 15), rapidly permeating numerous social phenomena—the aforementioned authors list more than twenty-five such areas. Considering the above, research on media as organizations can no longer be limited to supply-and-demand analyses. It must also take into account their social mission.

As Nierenberg (2013) observed, an academic focus on a managerial-economic perspective should be complemented by ethical and educational aspects. It seems that MM is now being considered more from a systemic perspective, in which media are treated as organisms functioning in close connection with their environment; thus, their study requires a multifaceted analysis of communication, technological, and managerial processes (Nierenberg, 2011b). This observation aligns with the contemporary postulate by Kim et al. (2023, p. 736) that research should be embedded in the context of “evolving three-dimensional interactions between media, people, and artificial intelligence.”

It may therefore be argued that the key to firmly anchoring MM within the discipline of SCMS lies precisely in the interdisciplinarity of both phenomena. After all, researchers see in it a “great value,” and even “the only path” without which science cannot develop (Adamski et al., 2023, p. 142; Nęcek, 2019, p. 139). From this perspective, following the path of interdisciplinarity might be a natural continuation of tendencies already visible during the earlier period of media studies. For example, Jabłonowski and Gackowski (2012) incorporated economics, marketing of media, MM and logistics into the field of MM, while Jabłonowski and Jakubowski (2014, p. 22) referred to media marketing, media management, and logistics as encompassing a “formal description of decision-making and logistical problems in management based on the methodology of operations research.”

Also, Hofman (2015), in her comprehensive analysis of the interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity of media studies, argued that economics and management should be regarded as “adjacent” fields to media studies. The sense of conceptual commonality seems to be confirmed by the concept of a “subdiscipline of media economics and management, oriented toward ... the media market, human resource management, and logistics” (Hofman, 2015, p. 120, after: Goban-Klas, 2013). Notably, Hofman maintained her approach after the establishment of the SCMS discipline.

In 2019, themes related to management appeared in her reflections on the discipline’s paradigms, including in new contexts such as media production and business (Hofman, 2019). Later, in 2025, she further highlighted the shared areas between SCMS and “economics and finance (media management, media

economics, marketing), as well as management and quality sciences (information management)” (cf. Hofman, 2025a, p. 37). Similarly, Woźniak-Kasperek and Adamowski (2025, p. 208) listed MM among the areas that have “in practice belonged to Social Communication and Media Studies for years.”

Thus, the inclusion of media management into this discipline should not raise any controversy. Rather, the issue is that MM remains a field that is “insufficiently developed,” a situation that should be gradually addressed “in connection with the socio-cultural transformations of the world” (Hofman, 2025b, pp. 197–198).

Two principal observations emerge from the literature review above. First, MM—similarly to SCMS itself—is interdisciplinary. It reflects a systemic approach to media enterprises, analyzed from multiple perspectives, such as managerial, psychological, social, political, pedagogical, linguistic, and historical perspectives. Second, although MM functions within SCMS, it is not frequently addressed in academic research. Both this and the aforementioned multidimensionality lead to self-identity-related problems within the field. The lack of a precise conceptual apparatus makes it difficult to assign research to the field of MM. This, in turn, reduces the pool of potential researchers who, although operating within the MM paradigm, do not explicitly identify with it.

As a consequence, MM remains on the periphery of the discipline and is still not fully recognized. In this article, I therefore seek to discuss the situation of MM within SCMS. I pursue this goal by listening to the voices of researchers who teach courses in this field (I agree with Adamski et al., who argue that “people create science”). With this in mind, I also ask one major research question: if there exists a group of scholars who identify with MM, what is their perspective on MM’s position within SCMS, and what problems do they identify in relation to the development of this field?

3. Methodology

In this paper, I draw on the methodological assumptions of the pilot project *Media Management: An Educational Approach. Mapping and Identifying the Needs of the Academic Community in Poland* (PSP 501-0127-20-7004310). Its main objective is to provide a preliminary assessment of the state of education in MM in Poland across its didactic, organizational, and community dimensions, as well as to formulate recommendations for improving the situation based on the research findings. The project employs a triangulation of research methods, including:

1. A quantitative-qualitative analysis of existing data, specifically the curricula of university programs within SCMS. It was conducted on a sample of public academic institutions based on a ranking of the highest-rated universities offering courses in journalism and media studies, as

organized by the magazine *Perspektywy* (the selection process was described by Jupowicz-Ginalska, Wróblewska, & Dudziak-Kisio, 2024).

2. Qualitative research conducted between March and April 2024 at four public universities offering education in the field of MM (i.e., the University of Warsaw, the Jagiellonian University, the Pontifical University of John Paul II, and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin²). The qualitative approach included:
 - A. Focus group interviews (FGIs) with students attending courses in the area of MM. The FGIs aimed at identifying their level of interest in MM-related topics and determining their educational needs. In total, four focus group sessions were conducted, with twenty-four participants from four universities (seven students from the University of Warsaw, six from the Jagiellonian University, six from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, and five from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin). Participants received compensation for their participation in the study. Each session lasted up to 120 minutes, and the collected material was anonymized and analyzed qualitatively (using an inductive approach to the data analysis).
 - B. Semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) with representatives of two groups: authorities of academic institutions and academic staff specializing in media management issues (who were indicated by the authorities). IDIs aimed at mapping MM's position within SCMS, defining the nature of education in MM, assessing the state of education, and identifying factors influencing its development. In total, 21 IDIs were conducted—four with the authorities and seventeen with academic staff (four at the University of Warsaw, four at the Jagiellonian University, four at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, and five at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin). Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. All interviews were anonymized and transcribed. The analysis of the collected data employed an inductive content analysis approach, focused on thematic categories relevant to this study.

The empirical foundation of this paper consists of the IDIs described in point 2B.

4. Results

Four principal problem areas were identified: interdisciplinarity, marginalization within the discipline, the gap between research and teaching, and staffing issues.

2 All the selected universities were ranked among the top ten institutions listed in point 1 and, in addition, offered at least two courses in a field related to MM.

4.1. Interdisciplinarity

According to researchers, contemporary MM in Poland is developing at the intersection of various disciplines, ranging from economics and management, through sociology, to information science and law. In the opinion of our respondents, the future of this field depends on deepening the actual integration of methods and cognitive perspectives, rather than their mere coexistence. As one academic notes: “Our domain is beginning to connect not only methodologically but also conceptually with other areas—this is becoming a necessity in a rapidly changing media world” (WYK1_2). Such integration, however, requires institutional and structural changes. Only then will media management cease to be an “add-on to communication” and gain the status of an autonomous field of knowledge that combines analytical and managerial competencies (W4).

4.2. Marginalization within the discipline

MM remains underdefined and lacks a strong theoretical foundation. As one respondent notes, “many media researchers still do not understand what it is. They treat it as an add-on to social communication, rather than an autonomous area of research” (W4). Consequently, “neither a unified definition nor a clearly defined, coherent field of study exists” (WYK4_4). MM is an area that “everyone touches upon to some extent, but no one practices it in a fully conscious way” (WYK4_1). Knowledge about it is superficial, “at a rather low level... It is still in its infancy, even though it is almost the core of how media organizations function” (W2).

Consequently, MM tends to be treated as a natural component of broader reflection on media rather than as a distinct field of knowledge requiring specialized competencies. The difficulty in precisely defining MM also stems from the lack of a shared conceptual language and research tradition, resulting from the absence of a clearly delineated symbolic field within which MM could accumulate and legitimize its own academic capital. As one respondent put it: “MM is treated as a margin—something that can be done on the side, rather than independently” (WYK1_4). This absence of a clear and recognizable academic position means that researchers attempting to develop MM operate under conditions of at least insufficient institutional support. This lack of definition is sometimes perceived as an opportunity for creative experimentation in teaching, methodology, or research concepts more broadly (WYK4_5).

As a result, MM can currently function as an open field, initiating the formal shaping of its own boundaries. Nevertheless, respondents are convinced that without developing a clear identity framework, they will not be able to gain academic legitimacy and acceptance (WYK2_1).

4.3. Research and Teaching

The analysis of the interviews reveals that research and teaching in media management remain in a state of institutional and intellectual stagnation, typical of a field still seeking its epistemological identity. As WYK2_1 notes, “in Poland, the academic community is only just beginning to form,” which reflects the condition of both scholarly research and teaching in this area. Respondents also emphasized the outdated nature of the academic literature currently used by MM academics. According to one interviewee “most monographs were created before the digital revolution and therefore do not take into account new business models and technologies” (WYK4_3). Another respondent similarly noted that “many authors write about media from the perspective of twenty years ago. Meanwhile, the world of media management has moved to the internet, to analytics, to data” (WYK4_5).

Consequently, respondents pointed to “a lack of studies on social media, streaming platforms, or online content management” (WYK2_3). The problem is therefore twofold. Polish researchers not only rely on outdated sources, but also produce content that does not quite keep pace with the present day. As one respondent summarized: “What we see in publications is rather a replication of patterns than the generation of new knowledge” (WYK1_1). As a result, there are calls to “shift the focus” from research on media institutions to research on communication management systems, thereby allowing the combination of organizational and communication perspectives. In this sense, media management could become a bridge between media studies, knowledge management, and information science, because “analytics, indicators—this is the language in which the world of media speaks today” (WYK4_4).

Second, the scholarly output in Polish media management does not readily translate into internationalization. Researchers draw on foreign achievements but rarely contribute their own. As one respondent noted, “there is a lack of reverse movement: we use Western models, but we do not export our own experiences” (W4). As a result, Polish MM remains a “recipient” rather than a “creator” of knowledge, primarily adapting research findings. This situation is due in part to the low visibility of Polish publications in international databases. Publications also have a limited reach because they are written in Polish and thus remain confined to the local academic circulation (WYK2_3). As WYK4_5 admitted, “what we do is valuable, but untranslated. There is no bridge between our realities and the language of international science.” It is worth emphasizing, however, that the problem of internationalization is not solely linguistic. It extends beyond proficiency in English and includes “the ability to fit into global methodological and terminological frameworks” (WYK2_3) and “a difference in the way of thinking about media—here more humanistic, there more managerial” (W2).

Our respondents also notice that the internationalization of Polish media management remains insufficient. The problem dwells in limited activity in submitting grants and participating in global academic networks. There is a persistent tendency to “remain within the Polish circle” (WYK2_3), which excludes researchers from the global scientific circulation. Although some institutions attempt to internationalize, their activities are incidental and depend on individual contacts rather than systemic solutions. As WYK1_4 concludes: “it is still a drop in the ocean of needs.” Third, the concept of teaching MM is inconsistent. Alongside introductory MM courses, there are some subjects which include “a management component, but without explicitly naming it as such” (W2).

Another issue is a lack of programmatic continuity and a unified curricular core. Universities fail to keep pace with rapid changes in the media industry, leaving MM education largely theoretical, with limited connection to the real working environment. This “unconscious presence” of MM is paradoxical: it is present, but not recognized; it is taught, but under a different label. As a result, it remains a fragmented issue rather than a coherent field of study.

4.4. Staffing issues

Another problem identified by respondents is that the media management (MM) community is small, dispersed, and dominated by a few centers with significant academic output. Additionally, the hierarchical structure of the MM community is seen as problematic, as it limits the influx of new people and ideas. According to respondents, the community is based more on personal relationships than on shared initiatives, such as research projects or development programs. As W2 notes, “there is a group that holds power in MM and they call the shots ... Everyone else follows in their shadow.”

In practice, this means that a relatively small group of highly positioned individuals monopolizes the academic space. Some respondents emphasized that this contributes to the emergence of an intellectual monoculture, in which the same names, concepts, and perspectives are reproduced. As one researcher summarized: “The same people review, publish, and organize conferences. There is a lack of diversity in perspectives” (W4). As a result, individuals outside this circle often feel excluded from access to publication processes, grants, and conferences. WYK1_1 commented: “Some institutions operate like closed clubs. It’s not about collaboration, but about maintaining the status quo.”

This situation creates limited development opportunities, which in turn leads to a “brain drain” toward other, more established areas within SCMS. A generational dimension is also evident in the insufficient support for young researchers. As WYK2_4 observed: “We do not have a mentoring system. Doctoral students are left on their own.” Consequently, opportunities to establish

mentor–mentee relationships remain limited, despite the fact that they constitute one of the most important mechanisms for transmitting knowledge and research habitus. Respondents also point out that MM appears in isolated research “islands” that rarely collaborate. As they note: “Everyone does their own thing. There are no joint projects, joint grants, or shared discussions” (WYK4_1), and “We do not systematically discuss media management. Everyone operates within their own bubble” (WYK2_4).

Cooperation among universities is described as incidental, and MM topics appear only occasionally at broader media studies conferences. As a result, knowledge does not circulate effectively, leading to the siloing of the academic community. Individual academic centers attempt to develop their own models of thinking about MM without systematically relating them to others. This results in low knowledge mobility: researchers remain unfamiliar with each other’s projects, do not engage with one another’s methodologies, and do not foster a shared discourse.

5. Discussion

The discussion on the position of media management in Poland reveals tensions between the ambition to develop an autonomous subdiscipline and the reality of a fragmented and weakly institutionalized research area. At the center of these considerations lies the postulate of moving toward genuine interdisciplinarity (2015, 2019). This, however, should not mean mechanical accumulation of additional thematic threads, but rather integrating them at the level of problems, methods, and models. However, this will not happen spontaneously. It requires grassroots initiatives undertaken within the academic community and supported by strong institutional backing, including the involvement of teaching units and academic associations.

Before this can occur, however, an attempt should be made to “demarginalize” MM. As the literature review suggests, the peripheral character of media management is not historically determined; rather, it results from its current “state of suspension,” that is, from its “unconscious presence.” The lack of coherent definitions hinders the accumulation of academic capital and consequently reproduces the secondary and fragmented nature of research. In theory, problems with definition are sometimes interpreted as a space for experimentation. In practice, the absence of such definitions makes it difficult to distinguish innovation from ad hoc activity.

Thus, a paradox emerges: the more MM appears to be “everywhere,” the less it is recognized as a distinct field of study. This situation weakens the field’s ability to articulate its own research problems and, consequently, to build a body of work aggregated “under its own banner.” The relationship between research

and teaching also remains asymmetrical. Universities include modules on MM in their curricula, but rarely connect them with current research projects and analytical infrastructure. Moreover, market dynamics outpace academia, as academia remains largely in the pre-digital era.

Finally, the limited scale of partnerships with media organizations results in the development of declarative rather than practical competencies. Furthermore, the unsatisfactory level of internationalization of Polish research does not stem solely from the language barrier, as mentioned earlier. The problem also concerns the ability to align with global standards, including in the design and conduct of cross-cultural research. Our academic output will remain local unless we become co-producers of knowledge as a community, rather than merely its consumers.

At the same time, we can still preserve our distinctiveness by translating the Polish geopolitical perspective into concepts that are universally comprehensible in current global debates. This, however, requires a shift in the research approach, which should be oriented towards comprehensive analytical approaches that enable international replication. The staffing dimension further shows that without generational renewal and the development of mentoring structures, it will remain difficult to build a strong media management field. It would be necessary to move away from intellectual monoculture by initiating processes to strengthen the diversity of research and teaching teams and to foster the circulation of ideas. To stimulate the development of MM, open research consortia, summer schools, and other initiatives involving foreign institutions should be established. At present, however, the field struggles with low knowledge mobility: researchers do not communicate with one another, the methods they implement are not comparable, and the results obtained do not enter teaching or industry practice (or do so with significant delay).

As a consequence, MM loses its capacity to influence media practice, even though—at least declaratively—practice constitutes its natural field of inquiry. Restoring knowledge mobility therefore requires strengthening activities aimed at consolidating the position of MM, such as organizing thematic discussion panels, recurring conferences, and establishing open-access data repositories. Solutions of this kind would contribute to the institutional consolidation of MM and could attract the attention of stakeholders beyond academia. Finally, it is worth noting that MM can simultaneously build its academic identity and provide practical solutions. Such an orientation may foster a closer linkage between teaching and research and increase the chances of establishing external partnerships.

In the long term, it is precisely these feedback loops—between theory and practice, between the local and the global, and between generations of researchers—that will determine whether MM in Poland remains a fragmented collection of initiatives or evolves into a recognizable subdiscipline equipped with its own staffing structures, research agenda, and teaching infrastructure.

6. Conclusions

The present study has certain limitations, particularly the relatively small research sample. Both the number of interviews conducted and the number of universities offering MM education remain limited, while private universities were not included in the study. Furthermore, quantitative methods were not employed, although they could have complemented the qualitative findings presented here. It should be emphasized, however, that the research was a pilot study, and its primary aim was to map the current state of MM rather than to provide a comprehensive diagnosis of the field. For this reason, the results should be treated as a starting point for further analyses. At the same time, the article does not aim to establish a definitive conceptual framework for MM education, but rather to identify areas for further investigation.

To conclude, MM appears to remain in a phase of institutional formation. The field is still searching for a theoretical, methodological, and didactic identity. The findings indicate that although MM is a developing field, it continues to lack a stable paradigm, precise boundaries, and a unified research language.

Despite these challenges, there are strong arguments for maintaining media management within the discipline of Social Communication and Media Studies. Several reasons support this position. First and foremost, MM shares with SCMS a common denominator: the media themselves as the central subject of research. Over a decade ago, Nierenberg (2011b) argued that media should be treated as social systems in which economic and editorial decisions are inseparable from communication processes. As communication institutions, media simultaneously organize, produce, distribute, price, and receive content, thereby influencing relationships and shaping the public sphere. Such a multi-layered approach aligns with the pluralistic orientation that characterizes SCMS, as demonstrated earlier. Within such a complex disciplinary structure, MM could serve as a subdiscipline that examines media as communication organizations, effectively bridging communication research and organizational practice.

Second, media organizations are too specific to be studied using classical management methods alone. At the same time, MM also employs tools typical of the SCMS discipline, such as content analysis, in-depth interviews, case studies, and discourse analysis. Embedding MM within this discipline helps preserve its methodological adequacy with respect to the nature of the phenomena it examines.

Third, emphasizing the affiliation of media management with SCMS carries important didactic significance. It enables the education of specialists who possess managerial and communication competencies and can therefore function effectively in media environments that require an understanding of both organizational processes and the specific nature of media. For this reason, proposals

to separate MM from SCMS do not currently appear to constitute a major source of controversy and are not the subject of broader academic discussion.

On the other hand, MM would require stronger systemic and institutional support for its further development. One possible solution could be to establish it formally as a subdiscipline, since it already possesses its own object of study, a set of interdisciplinary theories and methods, and a clearly defined educational and practical demand. Naturally, such a step should be preceded by public consultation. As a starting point for such reflection, however, it is worth recalling Hofman's (2019, p. 297) observation that SCMS remains highly dynamic, "open to change and reflection upon itself." From this perspective, a discussion concerning the establishment of MM as a subdiscipline could itself become an expression of the intellectual creativity and academic vitality of our SCMS.

With this in mind, I would like to encourage the academic community to engage in an open exchange of ideas, and to work collaboratively toward strengthening the position of MM in Poland and internationally.

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