

Institution: Leeds Beckett University		
Unit of Assessment: 17 Business and Management		
Title of case study: Developing and Influencing Global Communication Management Practice		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006-current		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Ralph Tench Martina Topić	Professor Senior Lecturer	1994-present 2013-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-current		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Leeds Business School research has directly informed and influenced communication management practices around the world. The Global Communication Monitor (GCM), comprising the European, North American, Asia-Pacific and Latin American Communication Monitors and originally devised with Prof Ralph Tench, is the largest longitudinal study of its kind with over 80,000 communication professionals contributing from 80 countries. Analysis of its data has identified new sector-wide challenges, trends in practitioner skills that inform CPD and workforce decisions, and actions to address gender inequality. The competency framework and benchmarking tools developed from the research have benefitted all levels of the industry, from national professional organisations to individual practitioners in Europe, South East Asia, and the Americas. GCM has created a global network of academics and practitioners who share best practice and knowledge, contributing to sustainability of the sector by shaping the higher education curricula around the world to ensure future practitioners are equipped to meet the industry's changing needs.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>In the early 2000s there was a growing recognition that good quality strategic communication was an essential component of business success. But the industry was still relatively young and largely unregulated, with huge variations across Europe and the rest of the world in terms of professionalism, access to education, peer support and training. For researchers and practitioners there was little comparable primary data to draw on. The European Communication Monitor (ECM), launched in 2007, is the largest longitudinal co-produced research programme in public relations and strategic communications globally. It is a collaboration between private sector funders and academic collaborators and led by Prof Ralph Tench of LBS alongside specialists from the universities of Leipzig (Germany), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Rey Juan Carlos Madrid (Spain) (P1).</p> <p>Prior to the ECM, trans-European research was restricted by paradigmatic barriers (different research cultures) and pragmatic limitations (language differences and lack of contact data). The research team created an empirical study to produce a comparative picture of the state and structure of communication management in Europe and later worldwide. Constructed around a core question bank, the project has collected data from over 50,000 European respondents in 15 years, and reached 80,000 in the last 5 years as the global survey was introduced. This enabled the researchers to longitudinally track characteristics and explore variation across regions, undertake country-to-country comparisons and benchmark organisations, enabling the identification of issues and areas for practice improvement. Since 2015, the ECM has been joined by bi-annual surveys in the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and North America (since 2018) regions, which together form the GCM. The APCM, LAM and NACM are conducted in partnership with leading universities in each continent: Georgia State and Oregon State (USA), UTS Sydney</p>		

(Australia), Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), Hong Kong Baptist, Massey (NZ), ULBRA (Brazil), University of Communication (Mexico), and Universidad de Medellín (Colombia).

The GCM has cut through contextual idiosyncrasies to create generalisable findings to identify areas for improvement and to create resources. The GCM results are widely used by academic researchers and practitioners across the globe. Key findings from the research revealed:

Inconsistencies in communications performance, practices and standards in the EU

In 2006 the communications sector was in a state of flux. The unregulated industry faced significant growth, diversification and specialisation at a time of mass EU expansion (2004 & 2007). Whilst some organisation types (and indeed sub-regions) enjoyed concentrations of high quality, high performing communications functions, the majority did not (**R1**).

Capacity and knowledge gaps

As the roles of communications practitioners began transitioning from mainly operational to more strategic and managerial, vast **competency variances** across practice and countries were revealed (**R2&7**). Communication was maturing into a professional discipline, but it had yet to adopt the qualities that marked out other management professions, such as formal qualifications and life-long learning. Practitioners needed to shift away from a learning-on-the-job approach to **align their development with academic learning**. Likewise, higher education providers needed to adapt their teaching to the changing requirements of the sector (**R1&2**).

Need for further training and support

Rapid technological progress and the emergence of new communications channels created knowledge gaps and new policy requirements. Only a minority of practitioners were prepared adequately to respond to the changes. When social media use took off, only one-third of European organisations had implemented social media policies. Similarly, organisations were underprepared for the challenges posed by new communications channels, e.g. to reputation (cybersecurity) or credibility (fake news) (**R3&4**).

Sustainability of the sector limited by inequality of opportunity

Clear gender divides exist within the sector. Whilst women make up nearly 60% of the communications workforce, salaries reported by female practitioners were lower. Women in advertising reported exclusion from business decisions, sexism and sexual harassment, as well as masculine organisational culture and “boys’ clubs” that impede career progression (**R5&6**).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

The selected outputs offer an original theory building contribution and/ or are published in the leading peer-reviewed communications journals, listed as A or A* in the ABCD list (Public Relations Review, IJIM) and have high citation and indexing scores

R1 Tench, R., Verčič, D., Zeffass, A., Moreno, A. & Verhoeven, P. (2017). Communication Excellence - How to Develop, Manage and Lead Exceptional Communications. London: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-48860-8> [included as PDF]

R2 Tench, R., Moreno, A. (2014). Mapping communication management competencies for European practitioners: ECOPSI an EU study. *Journal of Communication Management*, 19(1), 39-61. doi:[10.1108/JCOM-11-2013-0078](https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-11-2013-0078) (**P2**)

R3 Wiesenbergh, M., and Tench, R. (2019). Deep strategic mediatization: Organizational leaders' knowledge and usage of social bots in an era of disinformation. *International Journal of Information Management*, 102042. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2019.102042>

R4 Verhoeven, P., Tench, R., Zeffass, A., Moreno, A., & Verčič, D. (2012). How European PR practitioners handle digital and social media. *Public Relations Review*, 38(1), 162-164. doi:[10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.08.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.08.015)

R5 Topic, M., Tench, R., & Moreno, A. (2017). Male and Female Communication, Leadership Styles and the Position of Women in Public Relations. *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture*. doi:[10.1386/iscc.8.2-3.231_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/iscc.8.2-3.231_1)

R6 Topić, M., Cunha, M. J., Reigstad, A., Jelen-Sanchez, A., & Moreno, Á. (2020). Women in public relations (1982–2019). *Journal of Communication Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-11-2019-0143>

R7 Verhoeven, P., Zeffass, A., Verčič, D., Moreno, A. and Tench, R. (2020) Strategic Communication across Borders: Country and Age Effects in the Practice of Communication Professionals in Europe, *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 14:1, 6072, DOI: [10.1080/1553118X.2019.1691006](https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2019.1691006)

Funded Projects: **P1** ECM 2007-present funded by Cision, ~ €1.4m (private funding); **P2** ECOPSI funded through Erasmus+ ~ €500,000; **P3** Women in Advertising, British Academy ~ £10,000

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

LBS's ongoing analysis of ECM data has contributed to the development of global communication management practice. Research insights have directly supported the sustainability of the global communications industry by helping it to prepare for new sector wide challenges; to identify trends in practitioner skills to inform training and education; and prompting action to address gender equality. The research has benefitted industry associations and professionals in large multinational corporations through to small operators by enabling global sharing of best practice and academic/industry knowledge exchange. The ECM's findings are regularly shared via its website (**viewed by 31,264 people between 2014-2020**, academic conferences, professional presentations, webinars, podcasts and videos on YouTube (that have been viewed a total of **32,681 times between 2014-2020**).

Facilitating global collaboration and sharing best practice

The GCM has created a worldwide network of 80,000 communication professionals, practitioners and academics in over 80 countries. This network is contributing to sector development by identifying and sharing best practice, monitoring and benchmarking strategic priorities and enhancing cross cultural co-operation. Central to the network's success is a close collaboration between researchers and practitioners. The European network has expanded from the original 5 to 28 institutions (December 2020) in Europe and worldwide this has expanded in 5 years with 40 more academic institutions forming their own regional networks (Asia Pacific, 16; Latin America, 19; North America, most recently, 10). *"The success of the ECM demonstrated the value of this kind of data and the feasibility of a project on this scale, and the NACM is a direct result of the value coming out of the European version."* (C1). The Latin American Monitor (LAM) has also developed a Spanish speaking practitioner network (Fundacom), helping to generate new insights, increase discourse and develop theories and practice to improve performance across the sector: *"It is important to have different surveys in different areas. We can learn from the other areas and see what they are doing. For example, Latin American PR departments have good skills in CSR because sustainability is important, so businesses in Spain can learn from this. It is important to know what trends are in Latin America because a lot of big Spanish companies also have companies in Latin America.."* (C2.)

Influencing practice and skills development

The ECM research team established a competency framework to standardise role requirements across the sector and devised a framework of excellence as a blueprint for quality (R1). These tools model the characteristics of high-performing communication departments, enabling organisations and individuals to identify training and development needs to address inconsistencies in communications performance, practices and standards. The tools have been used widely across the sector to inform practice and to decide what training opportunities to offer, as evidenced by two examples from senior UK and EU practitioners:

"[when] I was Chief Engagement Officer at Ketchum, a major international agency. I used the ECM as part of the continuous professional development platform, which is used by all 2,500 practitioners in the agency. It runs a syllabus and every three to six months it provides training

around a contemporary area of public relations practice and would inevitably draw on the ECM for insight.” (C3, Past President, Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)).

“ The ECM’s data on trends shows what is on the mind of other colleagues, which in turn reflects on priorities for training. It influenced decisions about budget, in terms of which types of courses to get them on, or which type of coaching to give them. It did inform different aspects because [...] you could see how some concepts in the profession are different by geographic region.” (C5, Former Corporate and Online Communications Manager IBM Europe)

The North American Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) has used the ECM’s resources on competency and frameworks to inform the development of public relations curricula within the US education system. As a member of its [Advisory Board](#) (2015-2021), Prof Tench has drawn on the research to contribute to influential CPRE global education papers and reports. Tench has been invited to stay on beyond 2021, increasing opportunities for the research to influence practice in the US (C4&10).

Benchmarking global trends to improve capabilities

The research team developed benchmarking tools, based on the capabilities of over 50,000 (European) communication professionals from 48 countries. This enables individuals and organisations to benchmark their own capabilities around key topics such as AI, cybersecurity and fake news and to review and adapt their processes to ensure they are competitive and ethically astute. Since 2019 the benchmarking tools had been accessed by over 746 practitioner organisations in 25 countries. A past president of the professional body that oversees PR in the UK, explains its value to the sector: “Year on year it is a useful tool to understand practice and benchmark and then as an ongoing diagnostic for organisations to measure excellence and performance against this. The trend data is useful to understand the evolution of practice – because much of our profession is changing - it is interesting to understand that from an executional point of view helping inform education providers, professional bodies like the CIPR and individual organisations.” (C3 Past President (CIPR)). It has also been used to contribute to workforce planning, recruitment and selection processes as evidenced below by a German member of the GCM network: “[The ECM] can give me an indication regarding the future topics of PR; it gives me also a good indication in which areas I have to further develop the skills of my team. I can see whether data-driven PR or algorithm-based analysis, stakeholder orientation or NGO focus is in the forefront of thinking and if I don’t have the right people in my team, I get an indication for the need to train or hire them.” (C6. Executive Vice President Corporate Communications & Governmental Affairs, Bosch GmbH).

Prompting action to reduce gender inequalities

ECM findings also raise awareness of workplace conditions and one of the issues highlighted is persistent gender inequalities within the sector and in every region. This has promoted UK industry members to **initiate change** within their organisations to increase transparency to reduce gender gaps: “The ECM has been helpful in raising awareness of issues like the gender pay gap, as PR is a feminised profession; the ECM’s reporting on this has led trade organisations to start to measure and characterise that issue particularly as it relates to their own market. The CIPR (10,000 members) and PRCA (30,000 members) both now conduct census surveys and publish data on their membership annually. It would be unthinkable now if they didn’t.” (C3.)

Prompted by the ECM findings, Dr Martina Topić led a stand-alone project, Women in Advertising (2018) to explore inequalities in this sector. Women reported exclusion from business decisions, sexism and sexual harassment, as well as masculine organisational cultures that impede career progression. This research has reached communicators across Europe via practice social media networks and led to change at a media agency in Croatia which commented that it was “...profoundly changing the nature of work in Croatian journalism by empowering the position of women and by opening the themes that were previously considered as unappropriated in Croatian media spaces.” (C7) The European Public Relations Research and Education Association (EUPRERA) responded by setting up a network (Women in PR 2018-21) dedicated to influencing

change for women around the world. This started with 8 members including founders Topić and Tench and now has 21 members across 9 countries and 14 institutions. An example of an output of this network is a partnership between Women in PR and ULBRA University in Brazil, resulting in greater insights into women's experiences of working in practice in America and Brazil.

Supporting higher education to produce skilled graduates

The findings from the GCM family have influenced communications sector teaching within higher education. Evidence from an evaluative survey of the ECM indicated that 66% of academics who took part agreed or strongly agreed that the ECM findings improved understanding of key issues affecting communications practitioners (C8), helping to equip students for work in the sector. A textbook based on the research findings and initiated and co-authored by Prof. Tench, *Exploring Public Relations and Management Communication* (Pearson), is now in its 5th edition and is the primary textbook for communication students, demonstrated by global sales in excess of 45,000 copies since 2007. GCM findings have also been used to design curricula in university programmes, ensuring that future communications professionals have key competences necessary to succeed in their roles. For example, the University of Technology Sydney has drawn on the Asia-Pacific Communication Monitor "in updating academic subjects that address culture and cross-cultural communication and expanded our media subjects to reflect models of media in China and other countries in addition to Western models." (C9.) Moreover, the GCM network itself has created opportunities for knowledge exchange programmes between academics and practitioners that has helped to shape curricula in HE, provide internships and enhance the skills of practitioners through university-led training opportunities.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- C1. Testimonial letter from Associate Professor of Public Relations, University of Georgia (USA) [included as PDF]
- C2. Testimonial letter from CEO Villafañe & Associates, Spain [included as PDF]
- C3. Testimonial letter from Head of Wadds Inc., Visiting Professor in Practice, Newcastle University, Chairman of Future Proof policy unit; former President, Chartered Institute of Public Relations [included as PDF]
- C4. North American Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) *FAST FORWARD Foundations + Future State. Educators + Practitioners* report 2017 [included as PDF]
- C5. Testimonial letter from President of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) and former Corporate and Online Communications Manager IBM Europe [included as PDF]
- C6. Testimonial letter from Executive Vice President Corporate Communications & Governmental Affairs, Robert Bosch GmbH; Former Head of Corporate Communications and Corporate Responsibility, Deutsche Post DHL Group [included as PDF]
- C7. Testimonial letter from the Director, Croatian media agency [included as PDF]
- C8. Summary of results from the ECM university usage and impact survey, 2020 [included as PDF]
- C9. Comment from Distinguished Professor, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Science, University of Technology Sydney, coordinator for the Asia Pacific Communication Monitor [personal correspondence]
- C10. The top 15 public relations insights of 2020 (January 2021), from the Institute for Public Relations Board of Trustees (USA) [included as PDF]