

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE: INSIGHTS FROM THE 12TH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION DAYS SYMPOSIUM

DİJİTAL ÇAĞDA MEDYA VE İLETİŞİM ÇALIŞMALARI: 12. ULUSLARARASI İLETİŞİM GÜNLERİ SEMPOZYUMUNDAN DEĞERLENDİRMELER

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Uğurlu Akbaş, Ö. (2025). Media and communication studies in the digital age: Insights from the 12th International Communication Days Symposium. *Etkileşim*, 16, 415-420.
<https://doi.org/10.32739/etkilesim.2025.8.16.319>

This study complies with research and publication ethics

Bu çalışma araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.

The *International Communication Days (İFİG)*, which have been held regularly for twelve years and have become a well-established tradition, stand out as one of the most significant academic contributions of the Üsküdar University Faculty of Communication to the field. Shaped around diverse, contemporary, and critical themes in communication studies, the symposium embodies all the characteristics of an institutionalised scientific event, drawing attention with its consistent contributions to the discipline. At this point, the symposium has evolved beyond being solely an initiative of the Üsküdar University Faculty of Communication, becoming a well-established platform that enriches the international agenda of communication studies. Through its annually determined main themes, İFİG not only addresses the communication discipline but also provides a multidimensional forum that touches upon various fields of the social sciences, including sociology, psychology, political science, and cultural studies, thereby fostering interdisciplinary academic dialogue. Regularly organising academic events holds critical importance for the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the institutionalisation of academic communities. In this respect, İFİG, with its continuity, should be regarded as a platform that ensures the circulation of knowledge in the field of communication, strengthens the identity of the academic community, and guides the future of the discipline.

İFİG 2025 was held in Baku between 14 and 16 May in collaboration with Baku State University under the main theme 'Media and Communication Studies in the Digital Age'. The symposium featured a total of 51 sessions, includ-

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ing 19 in-person and 32 online panels, during which 285 papers were presented in Turkish, Azerbaijani, and English. In this regard, the event provided a platform for academic production across various languages and also served as a meeting point for international participants from different backgrounds.

The sessions hosted by Baku State University addressed a wide range of topics at the core of contemporary communication studies. These included discussions on media–society relations in the digital age, changing advertising and marketing strategies, artificial intelligence and visual culture, social media and emerging paradoxes in education, as well as journalism history and digital archiving. In this way, the symposium provided a rich forum that contributed to the field at both theoretical and practical levels.

The online sessions, conducted via the *Zoom* platform, also covered a broad spectrum of contemporary communication research. Topics ranged from digital media, social movements, and identity debates to marketing communication, consumer behaviour, and the creative industries; from art, culture, and game studies; and from artificial intelligence, media strategies, and issues of ethics and security to digital transformation and emerging trends (IFiG 2025 Symposium Program). In this manner, the online sessions facilitated conversations about both theoretical and practical research, while also strengthening the symposium’s overall integrative character.

On the morning of the second day of the *12th International Communication Days / Media and Communication Studies in the Digital Age Symposium*, visits were made to the graves of National Leader Heydar Aliyev, Hasan Bey Zardabi, and Uzeyir Hajibeyov. The Alley of Honour (Fəxri Xiyaban) is a public cemetery and memorial where politicians and pioneering figures are laid to rest. This site is significant and is traditionally visited before major events. Not only was this visit a matter of protocol, but it also reflected the value Azerbaijani culture places on history and leading figures. The annual tradition, where students and faculty members from the Communication Faculty visit the grave of Hasan Bey Zardabi, who is recognised as the founder of modern Azerbaijani journalism and theatre, illustrates how historical continuity and cultural memory in the field of communication are actively preserved. This practice exemplifies the significance of honouring and remembering influential figures in the discipline.

The opening ceremony, held in the Main Assembly Hall of Baku State University, began with a moment of silence followed by the national anthems of both countries and continued with opening speeches. These were delivered by Prof. Dr. Elçin Babayev, Rector of Baku State University; Prof. Dr. Nazife Güngör, Rector of Üsküdar University; Əhməd İsmayilov, Director of the Media Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan; and Rəşad Məcid, President of the Press Council of Azerbaijan. In addition, prominent figures such as Prof. Dr. Rövşan Məmmədov, Prof. Dr. Cahangir Məmmədli, Prof. Dr. Qulu Məhərrəmli, and Prof. Dr. Vüqar Rəhimzadə from Baku State University; Mir

Şahin Aghayev from *Real TV*; and Naziq Məmmədli from the Media Development Agency of Azerbaijan also addressed the audience (Ayhan, 2025). The speeches emphasised the strengthening of academic cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and the importance attached to current debates in the field of communication, thereby highlighting the international character of the symposium and its potential for significant scientific contributions. This focus demonstrated that the symposium plays a dual role, functioning both as a scientific event and as a platform that deepens the academic and cultural relationships between the two countries.

The Main Assembly Hall of Baku State University, with its historical character and impressive atmosphere, was framed as a meeting point of history, art, and academia. Following the opening speeches, the melodies of Azerbaijani music resonating in the hall reminded the audience of the universality of music. They evoked a deep sense of the cultural commonality shared by Turkish and Azerbaijani societies. The resonance of this shared memory between the two brother nations was frequently highlighted in the opening remarks. Moreover, the speeches drew attention to the coincidence of Azerbaijan's Year of the Constitution and Sovereignty with the 150th anniversary of the national press, emphasising the long-standing history of Azerbaijani journalism, the importance of press freedom, and the necessity of upholding ethical, truthful, and responsible journalism despite the transformative power of the digital age.

Following the opening speeches, the keynote session featured Prof. Dr. Aysel Aziz and Prof. Dr. Nilüfer Timisi, who engaged participants in an interactive discussion on current issues in the field of communication. In her talk titled 'Communication Education and Accreditation', Prof. Dr. Aziz from İstanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University addressed the quality of communication education and the importance of accreditation processes. Prof. Dr. Timisi, from İstanbul University, examined the social impacts of the digital age and transformations related to artificial intelligence and journalism in her presentation titled 'New Social Dynamics in the Digital Age: Knowledge, Information, and the Subject'. This session was noteworthy for shedding light on both the institutional dimension of communication education and the new social dynamics brought about by digitalisation.

Prof. Dr. Aysel Aziz began her speech by underlining the importance of cooperation between Üsküdar University and Baku State University and emphasising the symposium's value in fostering knowledge exchange and face-to-face academic interaction. She then focused on generative artificial intelligence, noting that AI has evolved beyond merely collecting data to become a system capable of producing information based on user commands. Highlighting its role in accreditation processes, Aziz argued that universities should integrate AI technologies into mechanisms such as data analysis, student satisfaction surveys, and alumni tracking systems. However, she stressed that

simply offering AI-related courses would not be sufficient; the academic staff delivering them must also receive specialised AI training. Furthermore, Aziz pointed out that personalised AI-supported learning systems could present significant opportunities, particularly for students with disabilities and emphasised the need to support such initiatives. This comprehensive assessment provided an important framework that drew attention to the transformative potential of AI in higher education.

Prof. Dr. Nilüfer Timisi delivered a comprehensive assessment of how knowledge, subjectivity, and power structures are being transformed under the influence of digitalisation and artificial intelligence. Beginning her talk by distinguishing between the technical and the technological, Timisi emphasised that communication technologies should be understood not only as instrumental tools but also as phenomena with socioscientific dimensions. She argued that the social sciences must remain faithful to their own unique methodologies, a stance she considered crucial for addressing potential societal and ethical risks in the future. Drawing attention to the processes of digital identity formation emerging through social media, Timisi recalled the paradigm shifts that have taken place in the field of communication since the 1990s, noting that individuals increasingly maintain their social relations through digital platforms. In this context, she highlighted how 'visibility' has become a dominant practice in everyday life. She argued that the transformation of the subject into a digital entity has produced new forms of exploitation within the framework of global inequalities. Referring to this new order as 'cloud slave colonialism', Timisi underlined that such forms of exploitation are perpetuated by users' own consent and voluntary participation. This critical perspective makes a significant theoretical contribution to scrutinising the practices of visibility, power, and subjectivity in the digital age.

The reflections of Prof. Dr. Aysel Aziz on the transformative role of artificial intelligence in communication education and accreditation processes, together with Prof. Dr. Nilüfer Timisi's critical perspective on subjectivity, identity, and power structures in the digital age, provided the opening session with a strong theoretical framework. Both contributions addressed the opportunities and risks currently confronting the discipline of communication from different angles, thereby establishing a rich theoretical background for the papers to be presented in the following scientific sessions.

On the third day of the *12th International Communication Days / Media and Communication Studies in the Digital Age Symposium*, the closing session was held in Room 511 of the 2nd Educational Building at Baku State University. Attended by academics from various Turkish and Azerbaijani universities, the session summarised the themes discussed throughout the symposium and offered a multidimensional evaluation of the digitalising communication landscape. At the end of the session, Prof. Dr. Nazife Güngör, Rector of Üsküdar University; Prof. Dr. Aysel Aziz, from İstanbul Yeni Yüzyıl University; and Prof.

Dr. Vugar Aliyev, Dean of the Faculty of Journalism at Baku State University, presented certificates of participation to the speakers.

The hospitality of the academic staff at the host institution, the Faculty of Journalism at Baku State University, and the warm and attentive attitude of the student volunteers throughout the event stood out as a valuable hands-on learning experience in which theoretical knowledge was successfully put into practice.

In addition to these aspects, the symposium received broad coverage in the Azerbaijani press. Leading newspapers such as *525th Newspaper*, *Baku News*, *People's Newspaper*, and *İki Sahil* published extensive reports on the event. At the same time, the online news platform *report.az* also shared detailed content about the symposium (*Haber Üsküdar*). This visibility demonstrates that the symposium extended beyond the academic community, generating a notable impact on the broader public sphere.

General Assessment and Future Directions

With its twelve-year history, the *International Communication Days* has become an institutionalised academic event, and the 2025 programme held in Baku provided significant contributions to the discipline of communication at both scientific and cultural levels. The sessions, which discussed the various dimensions of digital transformation in communication, enabled the development of new perspectives on current issues in the field. The strong academic collaboration established between universities in Türkiye and Azerbaijan reinforced the international character of the symposium, while the active contributions of students highlighted its educational dimension. In addition, its broad coverage in the Azerbaijani press ensured that the symposium gained visibility not only within academic circles but also in the broader public sphere.

Overall, the *12th International Communication Days* once again demonstrated its value as a platform that continues to contribute to communication research in the digital age, sheds light on the future of the field and encourages academic production. As a sign of this continuity, the *13th International Communication Days* will be held on 13–15 May 2026 in Nicosia, in collaboration with the Faculty of Communication at Near East University, under the theme 'Artificial Intelligence in Communication: Theory and Practice'. In this way, the event will maintain its institutionalised character and continue to serve as a focal point for contemporary debates in the communication discipline.

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Conflict of interest: There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

Financial support: No funding was received for this study.

Çıkar çatışması: Çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

Finansal destek: Finansal destek bulunmamaktadır.