

Bots, Trust, and Generative AI: Framing Communicative Agency in a Small-Language Media Context

Mariam Keadze

Correspondence: Mariam Keadze, Doctoral Program in Mass Communication, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia.

Received: June 25, 2026

Accepted: September 20, 2026

Online Published: October 12, 2026

doi:10.11114/smc.v14i4.9397

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v14i4.9397>

Abstract

This article examines how bots, chatbots, and generative AI are represented as forms of communicative agency in a small-language media environment. It draws on a mixed content analysis of 195 digital news items published by 1TV.ge, Euronews Georgia, Imedi News, and Rustavi 2 between September 15, 2024, and December 31, 2025, a fifteen-and-a-half-month period spanning parts of two calendar years. Rather than evaluating AI systems technically or measuring audience responses, the article analyzes how news coverage assigns roles to automated and AI-based systems through publication patterns, outlet profiles, dominant frames, functional emphases, trust narratives, risk discourse, media literacy elements, and named AI systems. The corpus was most often organized through a technological or business news frame (93 items; 47.7%). Other frames included myth-nightmare (36; 18.5%), media literacy/fact-checking (26; 13.3%), global political competition/information war (24; 12.3%), and myth-idyll (16; 8.2%). The comparison shows that Euronews Georgia emphasized international and security-related coverage, Imedi News foregrounded education and textual interaction, Rustavi 2 emphasized consumer-facing products and visual applications, and 1TV.ge displayed a comparatively balanced explanatory profile. The article argues that bot transformation is better understood as a change in communicative roles than as a simple replacement of older automation by AI chatbots. In this process, agency, usefulness, trust, risk, and responsibility intersect. The Georgian-language case contributes to Human-Machine Communication, AI-mediated communication, and media-framing research by showing how global AI debates are localized outside dominant English-language media environments. Coding was conducted by a single researcher; an intracoder stability check on 20 items (approximately 10% of the corpus) produced no changes to dominant-frame assignments.

Keywords: bots, generative AI, communicative agency, trust, media framing, small-language media, digital communication, content analysis

1. Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence has changed both what automated systems can do and how they are publicly imagined, interpreted, and trusted. Bots, chatbots, and AI-based conversational systems are no longer discussed only as tools for repetitive automation. In contemporary digital communication, they generate text, mediate access to information, support user interaction, assist organizational communication, and participate in the circulation and interpretation of public knowledge. These changes make the public representation of bots and generative AI an important object of communication research.

The transformation of bots is often described as a technological shift from simple automated scripts and social media accounts to conversational agents and large language model-based systems. However, this narrative does not fully explain the communicative significance of the phenomenon. A bot becomes socially meaningful not only through its technical architecture but also through the roles assigned to it in public discourse. News coverage does more than report new tools; it frames them as innovations, risks, service instruments, creative resources, security challenges, or objects of regulation and public concern (Entman, 1993).

This article examines how bots and generative AI are framed as forms of communicative agency in a small-language media context. Communicative agency is used here as an analytical, not anthropomorphic, concept. It does not imply that automated systems have human intention, consciousness, or moral responsibility. It refers to how such systems are represented as participants, intermediaries, or functional actors in communication processes. When a chatbot answers a

user, a generative AI system produces text, or an automated account amplifies a message, the system becomes part of the communicative environment (Guzman & Lewis, 2020; Hancock et al., 2020).

Small-language media contexts are especially useful for examining how global AI debates are selected, translated, and localized under different linguistic, institutional, and media conditions. They encounter the same technological changes as larger English-language environments, but through different routines, capacities, and public concerns.

Research on social bots and generative AI has grown rapidly, but it remains divided into largely separate strands. Social bots are most often examined through political communication, computational propaganda, disinformation, network behavior, and automated detection. AI chatbots and generative systems, by contrast, are commonly studied through Human-Machine Communication, service automation, education, journalism, and user interaction. This separation makes it difficult to explain how older forms of platform automation and newer generative systems are brought together in public media discourse.

A second gap concerns the level of analysis. Existing research explains what bots do, how they can be detected, and how users interact with conversational systems. Less is known about how news media assign communicative roles to these systems and link those roles to trust, risk, responsibility, and regulation. This matters because emerging technologies gain public meaning not only through direct use but also through the categories that make them visible in news discourse.

A third gap is contextual as well as theoretical. Most research on AI-related media discourse still centers on large, mainly English-language environments, where visibility is shaped by global platforms, extensive data infrastructures, and well-resourced media markets. Small-language media systems are often treated as peripheral, yet they allow researchers to observe how global AI narratives are selected, translated, compressed, and assigned communicative meaning under different linguistic and institutional conditions. This article addresses these gaps by integrating social-bot and generative-AI debates within a single framing analysis of a Georgian-language news corpus.

The study examines digital news coverage by selected traditional media outlets in the Georgian-language media environment. It asks how bots, chatbots, and generative AI are framed in relation to communicative agency, trust, risk, and responsibility. The analysis covers 195 news items published on the digital platforms of 1TV.ge, Euronews Georgia, Imedi News, and Rustavi 2 from September 15, 2024, to December 31, 2025, a fifteen-and-a-half-month window spanning parts of two calendar years.

The article is guided by one main research question: How do digital news media in a small-language context frame bots and generative AI as forms of communicative agency, trust, risk, and responsibility? Two sub-questions structure the empirical analysis: RQ1: What dominant frames are used to represent bots, chatbots, generative AI, and related technologies in the selected digital news corpus? RQ2: How are issues of trust, risk, responsibility, and communicative agency connected in these media representations?

The study deliberately avoids treating media coverage as a direct measure of public opinion. It does not assess audience attitudes toward AI or the actual technical performance of AI systems. Its focus is media representation: the ways in which automated and AI-based systems become publicly visible and interpretable through news frames. The contribution is therefore not only descriptive but conceptual: it shows how media frames assign communicative roles to automated systems and link those roles to trust, risk, usefulness, and responsibility in a small-language news environment.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Bots Beyond Automation

The concept of the bot is increasingly difficult to define through automation alone. In a broad sense, a bot is a software system that performs actions fully or partially automatically. Yet its communicative significance depends on the context in which automation occurs. A web crawler, customer service chatbot, social media bot, and large language model-based conversational system may all be automated, but their functions and social consequences differ substantially (Adamopoulou & Moussiades, 2020; Ferrara et al., 2016).

For communication research, bots become especially relevant when they participate in the creation, distribution, selection, interpretation, or mediation of information. Social bots may publish or amplify content and increase the visibility of messages. AI chatbots may generate text, summarize information, respond to users, or support organizational communication. These functions indicate that the transformation of bots is not only technological, but also communicative.

Social bots and AI chatbots are related but not identical phenomena. A social bot usually refers to an automated or semi-automated account operating on a social media platform. An AI chatbot is a conversational system designed to

process user input and generate or select a response. Their functions may overlap when generative AI is used to produce content for automated accounts, but technological overlap does not erase the conceptual difference (Ferrara et al., 2016; Yang & Menczer, 2024).

2.2. Human–Machine Communication And Communicative Agency

Human-Machine Communication provides a framework for analyzing the changing status of bots and AI-based systems. Earlier communication models often treated technology as a channel through which human actors exchanged messages. AI-based conversational systems complicate this view because users increasingly interact with technologies that produce responses, process information, and simulate dialogue (Guzman & Lewis, 2020).

Communicative agency, as used in this article, is analytical rather than anthropomorphic. It does not suggest that bots possess human intention or consciousness. Instead, it refers to how automated systems are positioned as participants, intermediaries, or functional actors in communication. A system may be described as answering, recommending, generating, assisting, warning, or misleading. Such descriptions indicate that its role is no longer limited to passive technical mediation.

AI-mediated communication extends this perspective. Generative AI systems may support communication between humans by drafting, editing, translating, summarizing, or personalizing messages. AI can therefore intervene in the form, tone, structure, and content of communication even when the final message is sent by a person or organization. Questions of authorship, transparency, oversight, and responsibility consequently become central (Hancock et al., 2020).

Recent Human-Machine Communication scholarship further explains how agency is attributed to intelligent systems. Endacott (2024) shows how users enact machine agency when AI communication technologies allocate communicative work and reshape interactional expectations. Wu and Shen (2026) distinguish perceptual, inferential, and evaluative phases of machine agency attribution. These studies support this article's use of agency as an attributed communicative role rather than as evidence of human-like intention.

2.3 Media Framing of Bots and Generative AI

Media framing is central to understanding how technological change becomes publicly meaningful. News coverage selects and emphasizes certain aspects of technological developments. Bots and generative AI may therefore be presented as innovation, economic opportunity, creative assistance, educational support, security threat, misinformation risk, ethical challenge, or regulatory problem (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999).

The present study focuses on media frames rather than audience effects. It does not claim that media coverage directly changes public opinion. Instead, it analyzes how selected digital news outlets construct the visibility and meaning of bots, chatbots, generative AI, and related phenomena such as deepfakes. In small-language media contexts, framing also has a translational function: global debates are recontextualized through local news routines, available sources, institutional priorities, and linguistic conditions.

Recent studies of AI and generative-AI news discourse show similar tensions between tool, threat, innovation, disruption, and regulation frames. Roe and Perkins (2023) analyze early UK news headlines about ChatGPT as competing narratives of promise and concern. Hendrickx and Van Coppenolle (2026) identify tool-oriented and threat-oriented generative-AI frames in a non-English European news setting. Mohammed et al. (2024) report a comparable balance between optimism and caution in Africa-focused journalism. These studies show growing attention to generative-AI framing, while also underlining the need for evidence from smaller and less-studied language environments.

2.4 Trust, Risk, and Responsibility

Trust is central to the public interpretation of generative AI. AI-based systems may provide information, generate text, support users, or assist organizations, but their outputs raise questions about reliability, source transparency, data protection, and human oversight. The more natural and fluent the interaction appears, the more important it becomes to distinguish communicative performance from factual reliability (Sundar, 2020; National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2024).

Trust should not be understood as unconditional confidence. Responsible AI communication requires calibrated trust: users and institutions need to understand what a system can do, where its limitations lie, and when human verification is necessary. Risk frames are equally important. Bots and generative AI may be associated with misinformation, deepfakes, manipulation, privacy concerns, cyber threats, or weakened accountability. The tension between usefulness and risk is a defining feature of contemporary AI discourse.

Recent journalism research also treats generative AI as both operational and ethical. Cools and Diakopoulos (2026)

identify newsroom perceptions of generative AI as a field of both possibilities and perils. Shi and Sun (2024) connect generative-AI applications in journalism to professional responsibility, verification, and ethics. This literature reinforces the need to analyze usefulness and risk together rather than as separate dimensions of AI discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The empirical design combines descriptive quantification with interpretive content analysis. The quantitative component establishes the scale and distribution of the corpus by outlet and frame. The qualitative component examines how AI-related systems are assigned communicative roles and connected to usefulness, trust, risk, responsibility, creativity, service, and regulation (Krippendorff, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017; Schreier, 2012).

The analysis is limited to news representation. It does not test AI tools, classify social media accounts as bots, or measure audience responses. This boundary matters because the study asks how journalistic texts make automated and AI-based systems visible, not whether those systems work as described or how audiences interpret them.

3.2 Case And Media Selection

The empirical analysis focuses on the digital platforms of four selected traditional media outlets in the Georgian-language media environment: 1TV.ge, Euronews Georgia, Imedi News, and Rustavi 2. These organizations combine established traditional-media identities with active digital news platforms.

The article does not claim to represent the whole Georgian media system. Instead, it examines how selected traditional media organizations participate in the public interpretation of global technological change. The Georgian case is approached as a small-language media context rather than as an isolated national exception.

3.3 Corpus Construction

The analytical corpus was built from digital news items in which artificial intelligence, bots, chatbots, generative AI, deepfakes, or related automated communication technologies formed the central subject of coverage. Items were identified through keyword searches and then screened thematically. Materials were retained only when the AI-related issue structured the news item itself rather than appearing as a passing reference.

Each individual website item served as the unit of analysis. Duplicate entries, brief incidental mentions, and video items lacking sufficient textual information were excluded from coding. The research period runs from September 15, 2024, to December 31, 2025. This fifteen-and-a-half-month window spans parts of two calendar years and was determined by the start of systematic corpus collection and archive screening. It supports analysis of temporal distribution without implying coverage of two complete or equal calendar years, and it is not characterized as a two-year study elsewhere in the article.

3.3.1 Search and Screening Procedure

Corpus construction relied on outlet-specific archive searches followed by manual screening. The search vocabulary included Georgian and English variants of artificial intelligence, AI, bot, chatbot, generative AI, and deepfake. Because the outlets differed in search functionality, tagging practices, and archive organization, keyword retrieval alone was not treated as sufficient. Titles, leads, and full texts were reviewed to confirm whether the technological issue was central to the item.

The screening process had two steps. Potentially relevant items were first entered into outlet-specific coding cards with date, title, URL, and preliminary topic. They were then checked against the inclusion criteria and coded only if the article's main focus matched the study's thematic scope. Of 230 initially identified items, 35 were excluded because of duplication, incidental mention, insufficient textual content, or lack of direct relevance. This audit trail links the initial search set to the final analytical sample. URLs were retained in the outlet-specific coding cards to support traceability if online archive content later changed.

Table 1. Corpus distribution by media outlet

Media outlet	Initially identified	Included	Excluded	Inclusion rate (%)
1TV.ge	41	36	5	87.8
Euronews Georgia	62	57	5	91.9
Imedi News	75	60	15	80.0
Rustavi 2	52	42	10	80.8
Total	230	195	35	84.8

Note. Based on the researcher's coding cards and corpus audit.

3.4 Coding Strategy and Analytical Procedure

Coding combined one dominant-frame variable with supplementary descriptive fields. The dominant frame was assigned after reviewing the title, lead, central topic, and overall emphasis of each item. Additional fields recorded the technological object, functional emphasis, evaluative tone, risk type, source type, media literacy element, and references to regulation or responsibility. This structure enabled comparison across outlets while preserving information about secondary themes within individual items.

The analysis moved from mapping to interpretation. First, items were counted by outlet and dominant frame in order to establish the visibility and distribution of the topic. Second, coded items were interpreted in relation to communicative agency, usefulness, trust, risk, verification, and responsibility. In this way, the study connects measurable patterns of attention with the meanings attached to bots and generative AI in news discourse.

3.4.1 Coding Consistency and Audit

The coding framework was adjusted during the corpus audit to clarify category boundaries. Ambiguous items were reviewed against the operational definitions. The dominant frame was assigned only after the title, lead, and full text had been considered together. When several themes appeared in the same item, supplementary variables retained the additional information, while the dominant-frame field recorded the principal interpretive direction needed for quantitative comparison.

The coding framework was developed and applied by a single researcher. Because no independent coder was available, the study does not report a Cohen's Kappa or Krippendorff's Alpha coefficient. This limitation is addressed through four procedural safeguards that strengthen the transparency and auditability of category application. First, the same operational definitions (see Table 2) were applied consistently across all four outlets. Second, borderline cases were revisited after the initial coding pass, and numerical totals were cross-checked against the outlet-specific coding cards. Third, as an intracoder stability check, a purposively selected subsample of 20 items (approximately 10% of the corpus), including items from each outlet and each frame category, was re-coded after a two-week interval without reference to the original assignments; the re-coding produced no changes to dominant-frame assignments. Fourth, each assignment was based on the full text rather than headlines alone, reducing the risk of surface-level misclassification. The five mutually exclusive frame categories and explicit operational definitions were designed to minimize ambiguity and support replication. The absence of an independent second coder remains a recognized limitation, and future replications should include at least a second coder on a 20-30% subsample to enable standard inter-rater reliability reporting. For an exploratory, article-length framing study based on a documented and bounded corpus, these safeguards provide a transparent basis for category application.

Table 2. Dominant frames and analytical meaning

Dominant frame	Analytical meaning
Technological / business news	AI as innovation, product development, market competition, or digital transformation.
Global political competition / information war	AI linked to geopolitical rivalry, information influence, cyber threats, or international security.
Myth-idyll	Optimistic expectations, convenience, creativity, efficiency, or future-oriented promise.
Myth-nightmare	Fear, uncertainty, misinformation, deepfakes, manipulation, job anxiety, or loss of control.
Media literacy / fact-checking	Verification, audience awareness, critical interpretation, or recognition of synthetic content.

Note. “Myth-idyll” and “myth-nightmare” are used as interpretive shorthand for optimistic and fear-oriented framing logics.

3.5 Methodological Limitations

The findings describe patterns within a selected corpus and should not be generalized to the entire Georgian media system or all small-language media environments. The study examines media representation rather than audience perception and therefore cannot determine how audiences understood or acted upon the frames.

The study does not conduct technical bot detection or investigate coordinated inauthentic behavior through platform data. Online archives may change, and the rapid development of generative AI makes the findings time-bound. The corpus covers a fifteen-and-a-half-month period and does not represent two complete calendar years; findings should not be interpreted as reflecting equal annual coverage. These limits are addressed by presenting the study as a bounded framing analysis rather than as a representative account of all Georgian or small-language media coverage.

4. Findings

4.1 General Distribution of the Corpus

The final analytical corpus included 195 news items. Imedi News accounted for the largest number of relevant items, with 60 materials, followed by Euronews Georgia with 57, Rustavi 2 with 42, and 1TV.ge with 36. This distribution shows different levels of attention across outlets. It does not, by itself, establish different editorial attitudes because the study does not examine internal editorial decision-making.

The corpus confirms that AI-related coverage was not limited to isolated technological news. The topic appeared across contexts including innovation, business development, international competition, security, misinformation, regulation, media literacy, and public trust.

4.2 Distribution of Dominant Frames

Table 3. Distribution of dominant frames in the analytical corpus

No.	Dominant frame	Items	Percentage (%)
1	Technological / business news	93	47.7
2	Global political competition / information war	24	12.3
3	Myth-idyll	16	8.2
4	Myth-nightmare	36	18.5
5	Media literacy / fact-checking	26	13.3
Total		195	100.0

Note. Percentages are calculated from the final analytical corpus of 195 news items. Dominant-frame categories are mutually exclusive, with one dominant frame assigned to each item.

The technological or business news frame was dominant, accounting for 93 items (47.7%). AI was therefore most frequently presented as innovation, product development, technological competition, or digital transformation. This opportunity-oriented profile was substantial but not uniformly optimistic.

The myth-nightmare frame accounted for 36 items (18.5%), showing that fear, manipulation, uncertainty, and risk formed a significant part of AI-related representation. Media literacy and fact-checking comprised 26 items (13.3%), global political competition and information war 24 items (12.3%), and myth-idyll 16 items (8.2%). Overall, the distribution shows a hybrid framing pattern in which innovation coexists with risk, verification, and geopolitical concern.

4.3 Comparative Outlet Profiles

The four outlets differed not only in publication volume but also in the functional emphases through which AI became visible. These differences should not be read as direct evidence of editorial policy, because the study did not include newsroom interviews or internal documents. They nevertheless reveal distinct profiles within the selected corpus and show how a common technological topic was filtered through different news agendas.

Euronews Georgia displayed the strongest international and security-oriented profile. Among the coded functional emphases, it contained 16 items related to security control, detection, and verification, compared with 12 on Imedi News, four on 1TV.ge, and two on Rustavi 2. It also gave comparatively greater visibility to data analysis, prediction, and diagnostics. DeepSeek, Grok, and Sora entered the Georgian-language corpus mainly through this outlet. Within the selected corpus, this pattern is consistent with greater emphasis on international technology, geopolitical competition, and cross-border regulatory debates; it is not evidence of newsroom intent or editorial policy.

Imedi News combined the largest overall corpus with a strong educational and dialogic orientation. Fourteen coded items concerned education and learning, and nine concerned textual communication and dialogue, the highest counts for both functional directions among the four outlets. At the same time, the outlet carried 12 items related to security, detection, and verification. Its profile therefore combined practical and socially embedded uses of AI with risk and control narratives rather than concentrating only on technological products.

Rustavi 2 showed a more product- and application-oriented profile. Its coverage included visible references to Gemini and Apple Intelligence, while six coded items concerned visual generation and synthetic media and seven concerned education and learning. The outlet's corpus thus connected generative AI to consumer-facing technologies, visual production, and practical applications, while its comparatively low count for security and verification (n=2) describes a less risk-centered pattern within the selected corpus. This description does not establish the outlet's editorial priorities.

1TV.ge had the smallest analytical corpus but displayed a comparatively balanced public-service profile. Its materials included education, verification, visual generation, data analysis, and the Georgian AI system Kai (a Georgian-language

conversational AI assistant developed for Georgian-language users, publicly announced in 2024, and covered on 1TV.ge and Rustavi 2 in the context of local AI development). Unlike the other outlets, it contained no coded item in the robotic action and autonomy category. Within the selected corpus, this pattern indicates greater emphasis on explanatory and socially relevant uses of AI than on highly autonomous or product-centered technological narratives; it should not be read as evidence of a broader editorial strategy.

Table 4. Selected functional emphases by media outlet

Functional emphasis	1TV.ge	Euronews Georgia	Imedi News	Rustavi 2	Total
Security control, detection, and verification	4	16	12	2	34
Education and learning	6	1	14	7	28
Visual generation and synthetic media	4	7	3	6	20
Textual communication and dialogue	1	6	9	3	19
Data analysis, prediction, and diagnostics	3	8	2	2	15
Search and web use	2	3	1	1	7
Robotic action and autonomy	0	2	4	1	7

Note. Functional-emphasis counts are supplementary and not mutually exclusive; an item could contain more than one functional emphasis. Source: the researcher's coding cards.

4.4 Bots and Generative AI as Communicative Actors

A central finding is that bots and AI systems were not represented only as passive tools. Across the corpus, AI-related systems appeared as entities that answer, generate, assist, translate, summarize, create, mislead, threaten, or support communication. This does not mean that media attributed human consciousness to AI. It shows that automated systems were described through communicative functions.

This pattern supports the article's central argument: the public meaning of bots is shifting from automation as a technical operation toward automation as a communicative condition. AI systems are made visible through what they do in communication, including generating text, interacting with users, supporting services, producing creative outputs, circulating information, or creating risks for informational credibility.

4.5 Trust, Reliability, and Verification

Trust emerged as a cross-cutting issue rather than a separate isolated theme. Coverage repeatedly raised questions about factual accuracy, source transparency, deepfakes, manipulation, user confidence, and human oversight. Even when trust was not explicit, it appeared indirectly through discussions of risk, regulation, misinformation, security, or responsible use.

Table 5. Dominant frames by media outlet, n (within-outlet %)

Dominant frame	1TV.ge	Euronews Georgia	Imedi News	Rustavi 2	Total
Technological / business news	19 (52.8%)	24 (42.1%)	27 (45.0%)	23 (54.8%)	93 (47.7%)
Global political competition / information war	5 (13.9%)	7 (12.3%)	7 (11.7%)	5 (11.9%)	24 (12.3%)
Myth-idyll	4 (11.1%)	4 (7.0%)	5 (8.3%)	3 (7.1%)	16 (8.2%)
Myth-nightmare	7 (19.4%)	16 (28.1%)	10 (16.7%)	3 (7.1%)	36 (18.5%)
Media literacy / fact-checking	1 (2.8%)	6 (10.5%)	11 (18.3%)	8 (19.0%)	26 (13.3%)
Total	36 (100.0%)	57 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	195 (100.0%)

Note. Cells report n (within-outlet %); the Total column reports n (corpus %). Dominant-frame categories are mutually exclusive. Source: the researcher's coding cards.

The corpus suggests that trust in AI is framed as conditional. AI may be useful for service, creativity, productivity, and information processing, but its outputs still require verification, contextual interpretation, and institutional responsibility. Digital news coverage therefore neither simply promotes nor rejects AI; it presents AI as a technology whose value depends on control, transparency, accuracy, and responsible use. Table 5 makes the distribution of dominant frames across outlets directly visible. Myth-nightmare framing was proportionally highest in Euronews Georgia (28.1%), while media literacy / fact-checking was most visible in Rustavi 2 (19.0%) and Imedi News (18.3%). These outlet-level patterns do not establish article-level co-occurrence between dominant frames and supplementary functional emphases; rather, they show how risk- and verification-oriented framing varied within the selected corpus.

4.6 Risk, Security, and Deepfakes

Risk-related coverage was especially visible in materials dealing with deepfakes, misinformation, cyber threats, manipulation, and information security. In these cases, AI was framed not as a neutral tool but as a technology that can undermine trust in digital information.

Deepfakes connected technological development with the credibility of visual and audiovisual evidence. The same generative capabilities that support creativity and accessibility can produce misleading content. This duality is one of the defining features of AI-related media discourse.

4.7 Service, Creativity, and Productivity

Alongside risk-oriented coverage, the corpus represented AI as a service tool, creative resource, and productivity-supporting technology. AI was associated with practical assistance, business innovation, content creation, education, translation, summarization, and user support.

Positive or service-oriented frames nevertheless remained linked to reliability and responsibility. AI could be useful, but its use required human judgment; it could support creativity, but not remove questions of authorship; and it could improve service, but not eliminate accountability.

4.8 Named AI Systems and Public Visibility

Named systems made AI more concrete in the corpus. ChatGPT was the most visible named system, appearing in 21 items across Euronews Georgia, Imedi News, and Rustavi 2. DeepSeek appeared in eight materials and was especially visible in Euronews Georgia's international coverage. The Georgian AI system Kai (see Section 4.3) appeared on 1TV.ge and Rustavi 2. Grok and Sora were mainly present in Euronews Georgia's international technology coverage, while Gemini and Apple Intelligence appeared in Rustavi 2's technology-product materials.

Table 6. Named AI systems/models by media outlet

System / model	1TV.ge	Euronews Georgia	Imedi News	Rustavi 2	Total
ChatGPT	0	7	7	7	21
DeepSeek	1	6	1	0	8
Kai	1	0	0	1	2
Grok	0	2	0	0	2
Sora	0	2	0	0	2
Gemini	0	0	0	2	2
Meta AI	0	0	1	0	1
Ai-Da	0	0	1	0	1
ChatGPT Atlas	0	0	1	0	1
Apple Intelligence	0	0	0	1	1
Agentic AI	0	0	0	1	1

Note. Counts are system/model mentions by outlet and should not be summed as mutually exclusive article categories. Source: the researcher's coding cards.

This distribution shows that public representation is shaped not only by abstract discussions of AI, but also by products, platforms, companies, and international competition. Georgian-language coverage imports and recontextualizes global AI developments while occasionally highlighting locally relevant systems and Georgian-language applications.

4.9 Small-language Media Context

The Georgian-language media environment functions as a space where global AI debates are localized. Coverage reflects international technological developments, but these topics are filtered through local media routines, language, institutional sources, and public concerns.

The Georgian case is treated here as a focused analytical case rather than as evidence for all small-language media environments. It illustrates how communicative agency, trust, and risk can be framed where global technologies are highly visible but local language and discourse shape their interpretation.

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that the media representation of bots and generative AI cannot be explained adequately through the narrow concept of automation. In the analyzed corpus, AI-related systems are represented through communicative functions: answering, generating, assisting, translating, summarizing, warning, misleading, and supporting organizational communication. Bot transformation should therefore be understood not only as technological but also as communicative.

For Human–Machine Communication, the significance of this finding lies in the roles assigned to automated systems as

intermediaries, assistants, producers, amplifiers, or sources of risk. These roles affect interaction, message production, and the credibility of information, while communicative agency remains an analytical rather than anthropomorphic concept.

This result extends Ferrara et al.'s (2016) account of social bots as systems capable of interaction and amplification. In the present corpus, the communicative role associated with bots is no longer limited to platform activity or message circulation. Generative systems are also framed as producers, summarizers, translators, assistants, and knowledge intermediaries. The finding links the platform-centered social-bot literature with the Human-Machine Communication agenda developed by Guzman and Lewis (2020), while preserving the conceptual difference between social bots and conversational AI.

The findings also support Hancock et al.'s (2020) distinction between direct human-AI interaction and AI-mediated communication. Coverage of text production, translation, service assistance, and organizational support shows that AI may intervene in communication even when it is not presented as the final speaker. The public issue is therefore not only whether a user communicates with a machine, but also how machine-generated or machine-modified messages enter communication between people and institutions.

The prominence of technological and business news is consistent with the tendency of emerging technologies to gain visibility through innovation and product narratives. Yet the size of the myth-nightmare and media-literacy categories complicates a purely promotional interpretation. The coexistence of innovation, fear, and verification frames suggests that the selected outlets were simultaneously normalizing AI as an everyday technology and questioning the conditions under which its outputs should be trusted.

This ambivalence is consistent with recent generative-AI journalism research, which shows that news and professional discourse often frame AI as both an enabling tool and a source of disruption, uncertainty, and ethical risk (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2026; Hendrickx & Van Coppenolle, 2026; Mohammed et al., 2024; Shi & Sun, 2024). The Georgian-language corpus therefore does not present an entirely exceptional pattern. Instead, it localizes a broader international tension between adoption and caution within a smaller media environment.

This tension is consistent with Sundar's (2020) argument that machine agency changes the cues through which users evaluate media and technological sources. In the present study, trust is rarely isolated as a single topic; it is distributed across accuracy, transparency, deepfakes, security, and human control. The findings therefore show how trust becomes embedded in role-based media framing: the more AI is portrayed as generating, advising, or mediating, the more strongly verification and accountability enter the same discourse.

Risk-oriented findings also connect with research on automated amplification and low-credibility content. Shao et al. (2018) show how social bots can contribute to the early circulation of unreliable material. The analyzed news corpus does not test such network effects. However, its deepfake, misinformation, and security frames show how these concerns are translated into public-facing news discourse. The article therefore separates two levels that are often conflated: empirical evidence about bot behavior and media representation of the risks associated with that behavior.

The findings also contribute to AI-mediated communication by showing that generative AI is not framed only as a direct interlocutor. It can also enter the background of human communication by preparing texts, organizing information, supporting service delivery, translating content, and mediating access to knowledge. This creates questions about authorship and responsibility because the final communicative act may appear human, institutional, or automated depending on how it is presented.

Trust is one of the most important interpretive conditions in the corpus. It cuts across discussions of deepfakes, misinformation, factual accuracy, user confidence, regulation, transparency, and human control. The more AI systems are represented as capable of producing or mediating information, the more important it becomes to evaluate whether their outputs can be trusted.

At the same time, trust is not framed as unconditional acceptance. The analyzed coverage often places usefulness and risk in tension. AI may improve service, support creativity, or make information processing more efficient, but these benefits remain connected to verification, transparency, regulation, and responsible use. The corpus therefore points toward conditional or calibrated trust.

Risk frames show how generative AI challenges the credibility of digital communication. Deepfakes and synthetic content are not merely technical problems; they affect the audience's ability to distinguish authentic from manipulated information. The risk is therefore not only that false content may be produced, but also that the general conditions of trust in digital information may become more fragile.

The coexistence of positive and risk-oriented frames is a major finding. The selected media do not reduce AI either to threat or progress. AI is framed as a hybrid phenomenon: useful and risky, creative and uncertain, efficient and in need

of control. This hybridity reflects the social status of generative AI, which is already integrated into communication while its norms of use and responsibility remain contested.

The small-language context adds a further contribution. Georgian-language coverage selects, translates, and recontextualizes global AI debates rather than merely reproducing them. This matters theoretically because communicative agency is not framed in a single global register. The same technologies become visible through different combinations of innovation, education, security, service, product use, and verification depending on outlet routines and local media conditions. Within the limits of this case, the findings suggest that smaller media environments can provide analytically useful evidence on how global technological transformations acquire public meaning outside dominant English-language settings.

The visibility of named AI systems reinforces this dynamic. Product names make AI more concrete, but they may also narrow public debate by directing attention to well-known systems rather than broader questions of governance, accountability, and communicative change. This pattern is visible in Rustavi 2's coverage: Gemini and Apple Intelligence appeared in product-centered technological frames, while security and verification received comparatively little attention ($n=2$). Within the selected corpus, this is a descriptive consumer-facing pattern rather than evidence of editorial intent. By contrast, Euronews Georgia had a stronger security and verification profile ($n=16$). Whether such outlet-level differences reflect editorial agendas is a hypothesis for future newsroom-level research and would require interviews or other organizational evidence.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of combining quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Frequency reveals visibility, while qualitative frame analysis explains the roles and meanings attached to the technology. This mixed approach is useful for studying emerging AI discourse because it connects measurable patterns of coverage with the interpretive work through which news media assign agency, trust, and responsibility to automated systems. The conclusions remain limited to media representation: the study cannot establish audience effects, technical performance, or the automation status of particular social media accounts.

6. Conclusion

The article has shown how selected Georgian-language digital news outlets assign communicative roles to bots, chatbots, and generative AI. The analysis of 195 items indicates that these systems are not made visible only as technical products or instruments of automation. They are also positioned as actors, assistants, service tools, creative resources, security challenges, and objects of regulation and public responsibility.

The central conclusion is that bot transformation should be read as a change in communicative role, not merely as a technological sequence in which older automation is replaced by newer AI chatbots. In the corpus, automation becomes meaningful when it is linked to agency, usefulness, trust, risk, verification, and responsibility. Media discourse therefore helps define the roles that AI systems are imagined to occupy in public communication.

Trust was the strongest cross-cutting issue in this process. Coverage did not present AI as simply reliable or unreliable, beneficial or dangerous. Instead, it framed AI as a mixed and conditional technology: useful in service, education, creativity, and information processing, but dependent on verification, transparency, human oversight, and accountable use. This was especially visible in relation to deepfakes, misinformation, and synthetic content.

The study also confirms the analytical value of small-language media contexts. Georgian-language coverage did not merely reproduce global AI narratives. It selected and reworked them through local news routines, institutional sources, linguistic conditions, and outlet-specific emphases. The result is a differentiated picture in which international security, education, consumer products, verification, and local applications become visible in different proportions across the four outlets.

The contribution is both conceptual and empirical. Conceptually, the article treats communicative agency as a role attributed through media framing rather than as an inherent or human-like property of technology. Empirically, it demonstrates that a small-language news environment does not simply reproduce a single global AI narrative: different outlets organize AI visibility through distinct combinations of innovation, education, security, product use, verification, and responsibility. In this sense, small-language media contexts are not marginal to AI communication research; they are useful sites for understanding how global technological change becomes publicly interpretable.

The findings remain bounded by the selected outlets, the defined period, and the focus on media representation. They do not describe the entire Georgian media system, measure audience interpretation, or test the technical performance of AI systems. Future research could extend this approach by expanding the outlet sample and observation period, involving independent coders, comparing small-language media environments, and combining content analysis with journalist interviews or audience research to examine how AI-related frames are produced and interpreted.

Acknowledgments

This article draws on research conducted as part of the author's ongoing doctoral dissertation at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, under the supervision of Khatuna Maisashvili, Academic Doctor in Mass Communications and Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences.

Author contributions

Mariam Keadze was solely responsible for the study design, data collection, coding, analysis, and the drafting and revision of the manuscript, and read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

No external funding was received for this study.

Competing interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Informed consent

Not applicable.

Ethics approval

Not applicable.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Data sharing statement

No additional datasets are publicly available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

- Adamopoulou, E., & Moussiades, L. (2020). Chatbots: History, technology, and applications. *Machine Learning with Applications*, 2, Article 100006. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mlwa.2020.100006>
- Cools, H., & Diakopoulos, N. (2026). Uses of generative AI in the newsroom: Mapping journalists' perceptions of perils and possibilities. *Journalism Practice*, 20(3), 878-896. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2394558>
- Endacott, C. G. (2024). Enacting machine agency when AI makes one's day: Understanding how users relate to AI communication technologies for scheduling. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(4), zmae011. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmae011>
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Ferrara, E., Varol, O., Davis, C., Menczer, F., & Flammini, A. (2016). The rise of social bots. *Communications of the ACM*, 59(7), 96-104. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2818717>
- Guzman, A. L., & Lewis, S. C. (2020). Artificial intelligence and communication: A human-machine communication research agenda. *New Media & Society*, 22(1), 70-86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819858691>
- Hancock, J. T., Naaman, M., & Levy, K. (2020). AI-mediated communication: Definition, research agenda, and ethical considerations. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 25(1), 89-100. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmz022>
- Hendrickx, J., & Van Coppenolle, I. (2026). A tool, a threat, or both? How quality news media frame generative AI. *Emerging Media*, 4(2), 292-307. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27523543261422926>

- Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Mohammed, A., Elegba, A. A., Ahmad, M. B., & Oloyede, F. (2024). Friends or foes? Exploring the framing of artificial intelligence innovations in Africa-focused journalism. *Journalism and Media*, 5(4), 1749-1770. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5040106>
- National Institute of Standards and Technology. (2024). *Artificial intelligence risk management framework: Generative artificial intelligence profile* (NIST AI 600-1). U.S. Department of Commerce. <https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.AI.600-1>
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Roe, J., & Perkins, M. (2023). "What they're not telling you about ChatGPT": Exploring the discourse of AI in UK news media headlines. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10, Article 753. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02282-w>
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103-122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02784.x>
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. SAGE Publications.
- Shao, C., Ciampaglia, G. L., Varol, O., Yang, K.-C., Flammini, A., & Menczer, F. (2018). The spread of low-credibility content by social bots. *Nature Communications*, 9, Article 4787. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-06930-7>
- Shi, Y., & Sun, L. (2024). How generative AI is transforming journalism: Development, application and ethics. *Journalism and Media*, 5(2), 582-594. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5020039>
- Sundar, S. S. (2020). Rise of machine agency: A framework for studying the psychology of human-AI interaction (HAI). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 25(1), 74-88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmz026>
- Wu, Y., & Shen, F. (2026). Machine agency attribution in human-AI interaction: Developing and validating an analytical framework. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 31(3), zmag009. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmag009>
- Yang, K.-C., & Menczer, F. (2024). Anatomy of an AI-powered malicious social botnet. *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.51685/jqd.2024.icwsm.7>