

Essential Skills for Graduate Success

*An Examination of the Current In-Demand Skills for Marketing and
Public Relations Positions in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia*

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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis examines the most frequently demanded skills in marketing and public relations. Concrete problem formulation refers specifically to the most in-demand skills through relevant job advertisements in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. Furthermore, possible differences and similarities in the demand for skills across countries and in the two fields are identified, and potential practical and theoretical implications are elaborated.

The answer to this problem formulation is relevant because economic and political developments, as well as ongoing globalisation and digitalisation, are constantly influencing the demand for skills in the labour market, which poses challenges for the creation of updated curricula for the teaching of crucial competencies (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Di Gregorio et al., 2019).

Theoretically, this work is guided by the relationship models of marketing and public relations proposed by Kotler and Mindak (1978). Accordingly, marketing and public relations can be seen as separate fields, overlapping goals and methods to a certain degree, superior one to the other, or even entirely congruent (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). The research units of this study are job advertisements, which fit into the so-called recruiting theory that examines the principles and frameworks that guide companies to reach and ultimately select potential applicants (cf. Collins & Han, 2004).

Methodologically, these job advertisements are examined for their content in a quantitative-qualitative mixed approach. The explorative study uses a category system as a research tool, the categories of which are based on the skills deductively derived during a literature review.

All evidently relevant articles and contents for addressing the problem formulation were collected. In this way, it was possible to deductively derive which skills in the areas of marketing and public relations had already been scientifically confirmed. Furthermore, the results of the literature research served to create a theoretical framework by gathering relevant concepts, models, and hypotheses.

Finally, for the content analysis, 95 job advertisements were collected using the search terms 'marketing' and 'public relations' via the platform LinkedIn. The sample consisted of 29 Danish, 37 German and 29 Slovak job advertisements. These were analysed for deductive categories using the intercoder method. During the investigation, inductive categories were also formed, revealing new skills that are in demand.

The study results reveal the most frequently demanded soft and hard skills and show fewer differences than similarities between the countries and between the fields of marketing and public relations. Regarding these results, the influences of digitalisation, globalisation, and a potential standardisation of the labour markets in the communications industry are discussed. The study offers interesting insights regarding the current most in-demand skills in marketing and public relations, practical implications for study programmes and graduates, as well as theoretical implications for academia. Still, it has limitations due to the sample size and the focus on a short study period. Thus, it provides a good starting point by addressing issues and methods for future research in this area.

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Sincerely,

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1 Introduction

This master's thesis explores the skills the job market requires from university graduates with job aspirations in the fields of marketing and public relations. Even though more and more people pursue higher education nowadays, not all university graduates can secure jobs in which they can fully utilise acquired skills and qualifications (Finch et al., 2013, p. 682). According to Finch et al. (2013), there are some graduates who are overqualified for their jobs, employed in roles that do not require a university education and others that lack the skills needed for entry-level positions in the 21st-century job market. An effective approach for improving the career prospects of recent university graduates might involve the provision of skills which increase the chances of graduates' employability (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Finch et al., 2013; Hopkins et al., 2011). On the one hand, acquiring the right skills plays a crucial role in driving economic and social development; on the other hand, qualified workers provide a competitive advantage for individual businesses (Finch et al., 2013, p. 682; Hopkins et al., 2011).

One way of ensuring that graduates are well-suited for the jobs they pursue and that employers can find competent candidates might be teaching the right employability skills through higher education. Nevertheless, following the academic work of, for example, Saeed (2015), Finch et al. (2013), Finch et al. (2012), Harrigan and Hulbert (2011), Hopkins et al. (2011), Walker et al. (2009), and Middleton and Long (1990), it has been a recurring challenge to develop learning curricula which would teach students competencies required by prospective employers. One of the main reasons behind the inability to teach students skills which are needed in practice might be the frequent changes in their demand due to the rapid advancement of new trends in the business environment and modern workplace (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Di Gregorio et al., 2019).

In order to understand the rapid advancement of new trends, developments and challenges that are, among other things, reshaping the demand for skills, the concept of VUCA World can be useful. VUCA stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of our modern world (VUCA World, n.d.). Volatility is connected to the high degree of instability and rapid developments that affect our everyday life and its different aspects. Uncertainty relates to the unpredictability of events and the inability to plan, as there are always some unknown factors that influence reality in unexpected ways (VUCA World, n.d.). Complexity

denotes the interconnected and multi-layered nature of everyday issues and challenges, making it impossible to choose ‘the single correct path’ (VUCA World, n.d.). Ambiguity concerns the absence of universal answers, interpretations, or solutions; “not everything [nowadays] is black and white - grey is also an option (VUCA World, n.d.).” That is why our world and everyday reality are constantly changing, unpredictable, hard to understand and sometimes vague.

When it comes to the specific developments, challenges, and trends by which societies are being influenced nowadays, two prominent examples might be the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and rapid technological development (Marr, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic has caused supply chain disruptions, inflation, and economic uncertainty but also a rise in hybrid and remote work, which has changed the shape of the modern workplace (Marr, 2022). According to Farndale et al. (2023) and Ferreira et al. (2022), this sudden shift to online operations might have also led to a change in the skills needed for new and current employees to excel in their jobs. Besides, innovations in artificial intelligence (such as chatbots ChatGPT and Bard), the Internet of Things, 5G network, metaverse, cloud computing, blockchain and big data might be changing the business landscape (Farndale et al., 2023; Marr, 2022). Although obstacles to accessing new technologies are constantly diminishing, the demand for technical skills needed to understand and work with these technologies might continuously grow (Farndale et al., 2023; Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Marr, 2022).

Besides, the acquisition of proper skills can also be affected by the well-known but ambiguous concept called *globalisation*. According to Bourn (2018), “globalisation has become a buzzword for many discussions around the world related to the changing nature of societies, the nature of employment and access to knowledge and use of technology (p. 18).” In this sense, globalisation can be considered closely connected to the concept of *VUCA World* and is actually one of the factors accelerating the trends described above.

And although globalisation is a complex concept that can be defined in a variety of ways concerning the debate about the acquisition of relevant skills, globalisation in terms of internationalisation and universalisation can be considered essential.

When globalisation is seen as internationalisation, it relates to economic development and, more specifically, to the increased interdependence and cross-border cooperation between countries, rise in international trade, outsourcing and the accelerated diffusion of commodity and mass culture globally, which have been possible also due to many technological innovations as, for instance, the Internet and social media (Bourn, 2018; Scholte, 2008). Globalisation is often discussed also in relation to universalisation, which is another word for

standardisation, conformity, homogenisation, or homogeneity (Bourn, 2018; Scholte, 2008). Scholte (2008) explained this notion accordingly:

... globalisation is taken to describe a process of dispersing various objects and experiences to people at all inhabited parts of the earth. On these lines, 'global' means 'worldwide' and 'everywhere'... globalisation-as-universalisation is assumed to entail homogenisation with worldwide cultural, economic, legal and political convergence. (Scholte, 2008, p. 1476)

As globalisation has affected different facets of our world, it can be argued that globalisation might have also affected the job markets and the variability of the required skills (Bourn, 2018). It is assumed that globalisation might have led to both internationalisation and universalisation of national job markets, i.e., internationalisation in the form of increased interdependence between different job markets and possibilities of sourcing talent from distant parts of the world, which ultimately might lead to certain standardisation of the skillset needed to succeed in the globalised job market. Besides, special skills might be required to navigate in a globalised job market and business environment (such as 'intercultural competencies') (Bourn, 2008).

The above-mentioned problematisation demonstrates that we live in a fast-paced and constantly changing world. The newest trends connected to new technologies and hybrid and remote work, as well as globalisation, might pressure societies and individuals to adapt according to changing conditions. These factors might also change how business organisations function and ultimately change what skills are needed for specific positions (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022). Besides, the demand for skills might also be affected by globalisation which could potentially lead to the certain standardisation of the skillset across countries.

Therefore, in order to keep up with this rapidly changing demand, it might be necessary to constantly update the academic field concerning the acquisition of proper skills with the latest and most relevant findings (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Di Gregorio et al., 2019) and that is what this project aims to do as well. Our research aspires to identify the most in-demand skills in 2023 or the post-covid era. This study focuses on three countries – Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia, which can be considered representatives of the globalised world and the globalised job markets. Although all three countries might have different histories, workplace and recruiting cultures, and job markets, they might be also influenced to some extent by globalisation, which might make them more interconnected and perhaps similar. Another reason for choosing these particular countries is that we can use our language competencies in Danish, German and Slovak, and thus, include a broader range of textual data, i.e., not only English but also Danish, German and Slovak job postings. In addition, few to no

studies have been conducted regarding the most in-demand marketing and public relations skills in these countries compared to countries like the USA, Canada, the UK or some European countries like France, Italy, and Spain (see the section [2 Literature Review](#)).

Besides, we have decided to examine the skills, competencies and knowledge required for marketing and public relations positions. There are multiple reasons for the choice of these two fields. First, we are particularly interested in marketing and public relations and would like to seek future employment within these two areas. Second, there is an ongoing and compelling academic debate about the difference between the two fields and where they potentially overlap (e.g., Gesualdi, 2019; Estanyol, 2012; McKie & Willis, 2012; Kelleher, 2009; Anantachart, 2006; Cornelissen & Lock, 2000; Kotler & Mindak, 1978). According to Gesualdi (2019), their increasing overlap might be intensified by globalisation and the diffusion of digital communication and social media in both fields. Thus, this research will also consider the existing academic knowledge about the possible relationship between marketing and public relations and examine the differences and similarities concerning the required skills within these fields.

Our intention is that the results of this research can be of interest to CCG students and educators for the development of marketing- and public-relations-focused curricula, as well as students, new graduates, and educators from other universities and marketing and public relations professionals, especially in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. This research aims to contribute with empirical insights into how new university graduates may acquire relevant skills and improve their employability prospects in their professional life.

1.1 Problem Formulation

All of the above-mentioned issues lead us to the following problem formulation, which will be attempted to be answered in the course of this project:

- What are currently the most in-demand skills for marketing and public relations professionals based on the job advertisements in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia?
- What differences or similarities do the job ads display across countries and fields?
- Which practical implications do the findings have for study programmes and graduates within marketing and public relations, and what theoretical implications do they constitute for the academic field?

2 Literature Review

This section of the project examines the available academic literature related to the themes which are essential for this project, i.e., the identification of the most vital or in-demand skills for marketers and public relations professionals and the relationship between the fields of marketing and public relations.

2.1 Identifying Relevant Skills

Defining the most relevant, in-demand or important skills has been a popular and frequently researched topic in academia. As demonstrated in this literature review, studies within this area are diverse. Past research includes a broad spectrum of identified skills across various disciplines, tries to find solutions to a range of issues (such as employability and skills gap), and raises new questions and suggestions for future research.

Multiple academic studies focus on identifying the most critical skills across industries (Rios et al., 2020; Finch et al., 2013; Bennett, 2002). One of the most comprehensive studies on the identification of the most crucial skills overall was executed by Rios et al. (2020). The content analysis of 142,000 job advertisements was conducted identifying ‘Critical 21st-Century Skills for Workplace Success’. The findings revealed that *oral and written communication*, *collaboration*, and *problem-solving skills* are the most demanded skills by employers overall (p. 85). Besides, research also showed that some skills deemed necessary by authors in academia are considered unnecessary by employers in practice. An example of such a skill is social responsibility. In addition, Rios et al. (2020) also pointed out that the demand for skills depends upon the type of job, education level, and subject area (p. 80).

2.1.1 Identifying Relevant Skills for Marketing

As this research revolves around essential skills for marketing and public relations professionals, it is vital to concentrate on these two fields in this literature review. Starting with marketing, multiple academic authors devoted their research to examining the most relevant skills for marketing professionals. One of the early studies that examined marketing skills was ‘Marketing Skills: Critical Issues in Marketing Education and Training’ by Middleton and Long (1990). The main objective of this research concerned the “...appropriateness of ... [marketing educators’] courses and whether they develop the skills that prospective employers value (Middleton & Long, 1990, p. 325).”

Later, multiple other studies focused on the evaluation of such skills. For example, Bennett (2002) conducted extensive research of 1000 job advertisements from over two years in four different fields, i.e., marketing, general management, finance, and human resource management. They found out that, in general, job advertisements which offer higher positions and salaries demand a specific skillset. In connection to marketing positions, the skills occurring most frequently are *communication skills*, *IT skills*, *initiative*, *motivation*, and *presentation skills* (Bennett, 2002, p. 466).

Another similar research was conducted by Wellman (2010), who, through the content analysis of job adverts targeted at students, discovered that the most demanded skills for entry-level positions in marketing are *planning and prioritisation*, *general and written communications*, and the *knowledge of information and communications technology*, as well as some personality traits such as *creativity and innovation*, *responsibility*, *initiative*, *credibility*, and *attention to detail* (Wellman, 2010, p. 917).

Some studies focused specifically on the examination of soft skills (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Finch et al., 2013; Hopkins et al., 2011). Research by Hopkins et al. (2011) showed that skills like *taking initiative*, *teamwork*, *interpersonal skills*, *oral communication*, *motivation*, and *personal selling skills* are imperative for workplace success (p. 341).

Based on these early above-mentioned studies, it can be argued that soft skills, such as communication, initiative, and motivation, are recurrent and thus might be considered an important factor influencing the chances of marketing graduates and other job seekers to find their job, which agrees with the position of Finch et al. (2013), who argued that soft skills are an essential factor that affects employability.

2.1.1.1 Skills Gap in Connection to Marketing Education

As it is a recurring challenge that marketing education does not always match the essence of marketing practice, many of the past studies focus on the gap between what marketing skills are required by prospective employers and what skills are university students and graduates taught during their studies (Saeed, 2015; Finch et al., 2012; Harrigan & Hulbert, 2011; Hopkins et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2009; Middleton & Long, 1990). For example, Harrigan and Hulbert (2011) argued that despite the technology having a significant impact on marketing in actual practice, it receives relatively less consideration in both academic theory and educational institutions' curricula.

In connection to the educational skills gap, Saeed (2015) found out that there is a deficiency regarding desired and existing marketing skills such as *designing and implementing marketing plans*, *conducting market research*, and *forecasting and budgeting* (p. 125). Research by Walker et al. (2009) also showed that new marketing graduates frequently lack the abilities and knowledge required for performing their first marketing jobs. Nevertheless, detailed interviews with 14 graduates and 14 employers revealed that *communication skills*, *sales knowledge* and *marketing analytical skills* are commonly recognised as vital to both graduates and employers (Walker et al., 2009, pp. 260 – 261).

Furthermore, Hopkins et al. (2011) conducted a study with students, marketing educators and recruiters to investigate what knowledge and skills are of the highest importance for each group and where the possible similarities and differences in their perception lie. One of the most relevant findings in their study is that recruiters ranked skills related to critical thinking, such as *problem-solving*, and *quantitative skills*, such as application of marketing metrics, a lot higher than students or educators (Hopkins et al., 2011, pp. 343-344).

In addition, Finch et al. (2012) conducted research with marketing educators and marketing professionals in Canada to examine the areas that need the most improvement when it comes to marketing education. The study showed that practitioners value most the expertise connected to *measuring return on investment* and *strategic marketing* (Finch et al., 2012, p. 54). The skills that are vital but need improvement while teaching marketing are *problem-solving*, *creativity*, *business writing* and *prioritisation skills* (Finch et al., 2012, p. 54). Although the mentioned studies offer varied results, they can be considered an essential contribution to this field of research, providing valuable insights for the potential enhancement of marketing education.

2.1.1.2 Marketing Skills Influenced by Digitalisation and Technology

Technological developments, the constantly changing job markets and the fast-paced development of the modern workplace make it sometimes challenging for new marketing graduates to acquire the competencies required for starting and subsequently progressing in their careers (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Di Gregorio et al., 2019). The digital age has transformed the marketing field, changing not just how marketing approaches are created and put into action but also the function of marketing within an organisation (Harrigan and Hulbert, 2011). In order to develop a successful career path, it is important to update and improve one's skillset according to emerging market trends (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Di Gregorio

et al., 2019). Therefore, Di Gregorio et al. (2019), Royle and Laing (2014), and Harrigan and Hulbert (2011) believe that traditional marketing skills related to, for example, *marketing research*, *marketing communication*, *customer relationship management*, or *channel management* should be expanded and include a more technical angle, which would consist of for example *digital communication*, *marketing analytics* or *online channels*. In any case, according to Di Gregorio et al. (2019), traditional marketing competencies are still required by employers alongside new technology-related expertise (p. 257).

In connection to the above-outlined challenge, some studies, such as Veer and Dobeles (2019) and Royle and Laing (2014), focus specifically on the skills gap caused by fast-paced technological development and digitalisation. Veer and Dobeles (2019) highlighted the crucial significance of the digital marketing skillset for contemporary marketers and recent marketing graduates. Through incorporating multiple methods, they identified that digital skills are considered imperative by marketing professionals, their employers, and clients in Australasia. Based on the findings, Veer and Dobeles (2019) argued that there is already a shortage of skills related to digital marketing. However, marketing professionals should seek ways to improve these skills in a practical way, as they will most likely be highly demanded in the future (Veer & Dobeles, 2019).

Furthermore, Royle and Laing (2014) examined 'digital marketing skills gaps' through interviews and focus groups with communication experts and subsequently proposed the so-called 'Digital Marketer Model', which includes the skills needed by an 'excellent digital marketer'. Digital Marketer Model emphasises the importance of *business management skills*, such as *corporate communication* or *client engagement skills*, and *technical skills*, such as *technological knowledge* or *measurement monitoring and evaluation skills* (Royle & Laing, 2014, p. 69). One of the most critical findings of Royle and Laing (2014) is that the biggest challenge in connection to the marketing skills gap is incorporating principles of digital marketing into the traditional marketing approach. The difficulty of a unified approach to marketing is a long-standing problem, and the quickly evolving technology only intensifies this problem further (Royle & Laing, 2014). Digital Marketer Model can be seen in the following figure:

developing a framework identifying the skills most relevant and valuable for new marketing graduates for acquiring their first jobs and subsequent career advancement. Their ‘employability skillset of marketing graduates’ is divided into five distinct groups – *basic soft skills*, *digital and technical skills*, *core marketing skills*, *analytical skills*, and *customer insights skills* (Di Gregorio et al., 2019, p. 255). The concrete skills can be seen in the following figure:

Category
Basic soft skills
Initiative
Teamwork
Interpersonal skills
Motivation
Flexibility
Oral communication and presentation skills
Stress resilience
Digital and technical skills
Knowledge of social media
Knowledge of Mobile
Knowledge of E-commerce
Knowledge of Analytics and real time practices
Knowledge of Internet & software knowledge
SEO & SEM
Core marketing skills
Planning, organisation and time management
Contents creation across channel
Creative thinking
Precision and attention to detail
Sales knowledge and management skills
Ability to manage multiple marketing tasks
Analytical skills
Data-driven/data-oriented
Good conceptual and analytical skills
Statistical knowledge
Problem-solving
Critical thinking
Ability to synthesise information into meaningful and actionable reports
Customer insights skills
Knowledge of company and of its customers
Knowledge of research methods
Knowledge of customer touchpoints and journey
CRM and relational skills

Figure 2: ‘Employability Skillset of Marketing Graduates’ by Di Gregorio et al. (2019, p. 255)

As research by Di Gregorio et al. (2019) has been conducted on the sample coming from five European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom), it is beneficial to examine the similar issue in additional countries (i.e., Denmark and Slovakia in case of this project). As discovered throughout this literature review, the traditional role of marketers has transformed in the digital age, and new digital and technological skills are being integrated alongside traditional marketing competencies (Royle & Laing, 2014). This gives rise to entirely new positions or necessitates a rethinking of conventional roles in the field of marketing (Royle & Laing, 2014).

In addition, Echegaray and Martín (2020) examined the competencies required for entry-level marketing positions in Spain concerning national and international B2B companies. The main findings of the study imply that *social media*, *MS Office*, and *Search Engine Optimisation/Search Engine Marketing (SEO/SEM)* are the most crucial technical skills, *high English proficiency*, *written and oral communication*, and *teamwork* are the most vital meta-skills and *the knowledge of digital marketing concepts*, *ad campaigns* and *developing marketing plans* are the most important types of conceptual marketing knowledge (Echegaray & Martín, 2020, pp. 525 - 528).

A substantial part of digitalisation and the advancement of technologies is the rise of social media, which have become increasingly utilised in the field of marketing. Research by Verma et al. (2021) focused on the examination of skills needed for social media positions, which are a subcategory of digital marketing positions. The study reviewed entry-level job advertisements for the role of ‘social media manager’ and ‘social media marketer’ in the United States. The study results suggest that the most critical competencies for social media professionals are *digital marketing skills*, *problem-solving*, and *IT skills* (Verma et al., 2021). Research by Verma et al. (2021) has also generated insights in connection to proficiency in some software tools, i.e., *Search Engine Optimisation/Search Engine Marketing (SEO/SEM)* and *Hootsuite*.

2.1.1.3 Changing Marketing Skills During the Covid-19 Pandemic

There are a few studies that prove that demand for marketing skills changed during the Covid-19 pandemic (Ferreira et al., 2022; Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022). One of the most recent studies conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic concerns the identification of the essential skills for entry-level jobs in digital marketing (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022). The quantitative study was conducted on 5548 job advertisements posted on Hungarian job portals in February 2021 for the roles of ‘junior digital marketing manager’, ‘social media manager’ and ‘digital marketing manager assistant’. The data reveals that, even though hard skills remain predominant in job postings, there is also a notable emphasis on soft skills within the digital marketing industry. The top five most frequent skills in marketing job advertisements are *oral communication and presentation skills*, *knowledge of the Internet and software*, *teamwork*, *precision and attention to detail*, and *planning* (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022, p. 187). For junior digital marketers, proficiency in the English language was also a frequent skill requirement (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022, p. 189).

Although this study is quite extensive and recent, it focuses on the Hungarian job market. That is why our research can extend this area of research and offer additional insights into the most important marketing skills within the job markets of Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. Another limitation of Kovacs and Vamosi Zarandne (2022) is that although data were not collected during the Covid-19 lockdown, authors acknowledge that “...labor market effects of the Covid pandemic may [have] distort[ed] sampling and sample representativeness (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022, p. 185).” The strength of our project is that job markets are not affected anymore by such a severe disruption as the pandemic was; however, there might be other influences present, such as the slowed economic growth due to the still persisting Covid-19 impacts or the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that should be taken into account (see the section [4.7 Methodological Limitations](#)).

Another research during the Covid-19 period was performed by Ferreira et al. (2022). The study incorporated the survey design for data collection in the South African market in 2019 and 2020, i.e., before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, which allowed the comparison of the answers from the two time periods. All in all, the study results demonstrate Covid-19 has transformed the way HR management functions globally, and due to the sudden move to online operations, the pandemic has also adjusted the demand for skills required to succeed in the digital marketing and advertising career (Ferreira et al., 2022, p. 39). More specifically, Covid-19 and the sudden increase in remote work have accelerated the rise in demand for soft skills as well as an increase in the number of companies integrating training for new employees focused on soft skills, such as *basic interpersonal skills, internal and external communication* as well as *emotional intelligence and empathy* (Ferreira et al., 2022, p. 43). The hard skills that are needed for the industry to grow in the future and are in short supply are *marketing analytics, marketing automation, user experience, digital video marketing* and *digital content marketing* (Ferreira et al., 2022, p. 44). According to Ferreira et al. (2022), future research should be conducted in other countries as it “... could provide insights on the mobility of skills across markets (Ferreira et al., 2022, p. 45)”, as well as it should “... incorporate different industries to determine the extent of comparability of skill gaps across industries (Ferreira et al., 2022, p. 45).” In this sense, our research focusing on required skills in Denmark, Germany and Slovakia for both marketing and public relations can supplement the mentioned research gaps to some extent. In addition, Ferreira et al. (2022) also argued that additional research is needed into the required skills in the post-Covid-19 era, and that is what our research complies with as well.

In order to summarise the section about research concerning skills for the field of marketing, most of the early studies on defining essential marketing skills focus on the skills

gap concerning what students are taught during their education and what skills they need in practice. The rise in digitalisation led to the emergence of digital and social media marketing, which drove the need for new types of skills; however, traditional marketing and soft skills remain in high demand. It is believed that the Covid-19 pandemic, the rise in hybrid and remote work, and further technological development could have possibly changed the demand for skills again, and that is why it is vital to continuously strengthen this field of research with new academic knowledge. Our study will enrich this research area as there are not many studies focusing on the skills required after the Covid-19 pandemic and the most recent trends that emerged and changed the business landscape, as well as no study focusing on the practical distinction between marketing and public relations concerning skills needed for these two fields. Our research also includes countries where essential marketing skills have not been researched at all or only marginally.

2.1.2 Identifying Relevant Skills for Public Relations

In this part, we will now look at the state of research on the skills required by professionals in the field of public relations. In this regard, too, there have been studies with different focuses. Like marketing, developments in public relations depend on external influences such as digitalisation (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023), which is why there is also great relevance here in reviewing necessary skills regularly.

One older study that should be mentioned in connection to the developments is by Todd (2009). Todd (2009) used an email survey to analyse educators' and practitioners' perceptions of public relations education. He contacted educators and professionals from the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). The results showed that professionals and educators considered the same areas important, such as *public relations ethics*, *public relations management*, and *new media technologies*. Also, they found the benefits of a graduate degree in public relations, the importance of keeping up with industry trends, and the value of communication theories as less important (Todd, 2009). Besides, professionals were more likely to value *new media technologies*, *technical skills*, and *internships*. In contrast, educators were more likely to report valuing *critical thinking*, *ethics*, *management skills*, and *theoretical foundations* (Todd, 2009).

Later, in 2013, Paskin published a survey among professionals in the USA, which showed that traditional skills such as *writing*, *communication*, *strategic thinking* and *planning* are still wished for. Another essential skill that the practitioners mentioned are *social media*.

Over 50% of the participants noted that *traditional* and *new technical skills* are equally important (Paskin, 2013, p. 252).

In 2014, an article was published by Flynn (2014), which focused on the necessary competencies and skills for public relations practitioners within Canada. Through a literature review, Flynn (2014) found that required skills typically depend on the situation's circumstances, the job title, and the employer (p. 380). Nevertheless, it could be stated that besides the *traditional communication skills* (written, oral, and non-verbal),

...practising within a *personal and organisational ethical framework*, and having *mastery of the growing technologies* that enable organisations and its diverse publics to engage in two-way symmetrical communications, today's practitioners must also have the ability to demonstrate competency in *strategic planning, measurement/evaluation, and cultural awareness and understanding*, as well as the *ability to be flexible and collaborative*—depending on the context and situational factors. (Flynn, 2014, p. 381)

Other relevant studies are those by Meganck et al. (2020), Brunner et al. (2018), and Auger and Cho (2016). Auger and Cho (2016) published a content analysis comparing the public relations curriculum with job descriptions for public relations practitioners. The content analysis included job descriptions of entry-level jobs and jobs for practitioners with higher experience levels.

The analysis showed that employers are still looking for entry-level professionals who can *create and write content, speak freely in front of people, work with journalists, operate new media channels*, and ultimately *develop tactics and strategies* (Auger & Cho, 2016). In addition, another focus in the search for career entrants is their *exposure to visual communication* (Auger & Cho, 2016). Auger and Cho (2016) agree that curricula generally offer good preparation for entry-level trainees but have shortcomings in the area of training in *social and new media skills*.

Like Auger and Cho (2016), Brunner et al. (2018) used the method of content analysis. They examined 199 entry-level job advertisements published by the Public Relations Society of America Job Center. The most important finding of the analysis is that university graduates are not only sought after for their hard skills but also for soft skills abilities such as *time management, deadline orientation, and collaboration* (Brunner et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that public relations practitioners should always be aware of the latest trends and most relevant platforms (Brunner et al., 2018). This also requires *social media affinity*. A trend towards the demand for *project and higher-level management*

skills could also be identified. In this respect, the content analysis by Brunner et al. (2018) confirms the findings of Auger and Cho (2016).

A similar methodological approach to Brunner et al. (2018) was followed by Meganck et al. (2020). They analysed 1,000 job advertisements for public relations entrants and distinguished between traditional public relations skills and advanced digital and social media skills. They also looked at the demand for soft skills. The most frequently requested skills include *written communication skills, organisational skills, administrative software skills, social/digital media skills, leadership abilities, the ability to work in teams*, and *graphic design* (Meganck et al., 2020).

In addition, young professionals should have *knowledge of social media and skills in operating channels, strategy development and analytics* (Meganck et al., 2020). Furthermore, the researchers discuss that *knowledge in the areas of graphic and web design* can be advantageous, as cooperation with these areas is common in agencies and larger companies, and in smaller companies, it is sometimes even taken over by the public relations managers (Meganck et al., 2020, p. 18).

2.1.2.1 Public Relations Skills Influenced by Digitalisation and Technology

Within the area of public relations, some studies focused on the specific impact of digitalisation on public relations (Verčič et al., 2015) or the impact of specific kinds of digital media (Valentini, 2015; Verhoeven et al., 2012). Even though these studies date back, they show that the influence of digitalisation on PR was already scientifically relevant in the last decade. In addition, these studies serve as a basis for comparison of the changes that the influence of digitalisation has already brought about in the public relations field.

As early as 2012, the exploratory study by Verhoeven et al. (2012) noted the significant influence the increase in digital communication and social media had on the public relations sector and its associated increase in the importance in the organisational environment. When collecting data for the study, social networks and online videos were considered the most important social media tools (Verhoeven et al., 2012). Both communication consultants and public relations practitioners predicted an increase in the importance of social media within the industry. Some also feared that the uncontrollability of dialogue and the rapid dissemination of information could have led to potential problems (Verhoeven et al., 2012).

Valentini (2015) took a critical look at the influence of social media on the public relations industry and questioned the widespread positive opinion of the new media in this

industry. Valentini (2015) concluded that the existing studies could only make case-related statements about the influence of social media and that the benefits of social media are difficult to measure. Valentini (2015) also called for future research to critically examine the benefits and impact on the public relations industry.

Verčič et al. (2015) addressed the topic differently in the same year. They conducted a meta-analysis of 155 articles on public relations and "...ICTs, and digital, social and mobile (DSM) media (Verčič et al., 2015, p. 142)." They concluded that social media as a sub-area of public relations is an important topic, although mobile media are not discussed as often. Verčič et al. (2015) also stated that future research should not only focus on using social media to expand media relations but also address topics such as mobile technologies, privacy, target groups, and the digital divide in public relations.

A more recent study that looks at digitalisation's influence on entry-level public relations professionals' desired skills is the longitudinal automated semantic analysis of 62,391 public relations job postings published in Austria and Germany between 2015 and 2020 by Bernhard and Russmann (2023). The researchers examined the job advertisements for hard and soft skills most frequently mentioned. They found that the demand for *specialisation* and *digital skills increased* (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023). At the same time, this observation can only be made for the development of the hard skills in demand (e.g., *digital marketing, sales, digital journalism, digital media, content generation*, etc.). Particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, an increase in the demand for digital skills among young professionals could be observed.

In the area of soft skills, Bernhard and Russmann (2023) found no significant influence of digital developments. However, they established that these are generally less relevant for employers. The soft skills most in demand are *general communication skills, work ethics* and *teamwork* (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023).

2.2 Relationship Between Marketing and Public Relations

As the previous sections of the literature review show, the necessary skills for marketing and public relations often overlap. The blurring of the two areas is discussed repeatedly in research, so the following section should now clarify how the discussion about the relationship between the two areas has developed.

The fact that the discussion about the boundaries and the blending of the two areas has been going on for a long time can be illustrated very well by the article 'Marketing and Public

Relations: Should They be Partners or Rivals?’ by Kotler and Mindak, which was published as early as 1978.

For the marketing sector, publicity seems an interesting tool to add to the marketing mix. However, this leads to the concern within public relations that the task area will be restricted or even integrated into marketing (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). The authors thus posed the question already at the end of the seventies: “Where does marketing end and public relations begin? (Kotler & Mindak, 1978, p. 13).” In order to answer this question, we present five different models discussed later in the section [3.3](#) of theoretical framework. Even then, Kotler and Mindak (1978) saw various possibilities of how the relationship between marketing and public relations could be described. One could either assume a clear separation of the two areas, a certain overlap, dominance of one of the two areas or complete equality (Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

In the 1980s, the so-called *Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)* was brought into the discussion about marketing and public relations fields definitions (Estanyol, 2012). IMC can be defined as a process of strategic corporate communication in which all aspects of marketing are united in one concept, thus including advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing and public relations (Anantachart, 2006). The IMC was criticised by public relations scholars in particular (e.g., Hutton, 2001; Ehling et al., 1992) and would disregard the unique functions of public relations. However, later academic work showed that IMC could have positive and negative consequences for marketing and public relations (Gesualdi, 2019). For example, McKie and Willis (2012) suggest that integration creates opportunities for both fields to align and, thus, be most effective for the organisation. The IMC will be used in the analysis as the basis for excluding job adverts from the sample (see the section [4.4.3.1 Categorisation of Data](#)) in order to avoid irrelevant ads.

The 1980s and 1990s marked the peak of research in the encroachment¹ of marketing versus public relations (Gesualdi, 2019). Nevertheless, articles and studies that revisit the topic can still be found later (e.g., Gesualdi, 2019; Kelleher, 2009; Cornelissen & Lock, 2000).

Later on, digitalisation has particularly strongly influenced the blurring of the communication professions in marketing, journalism, and public relations (Gonser &

¹ Encroachment can be defined as the phenomenon, where non-public-relations practitioners are routinely put in charge of public relations functions or assume some public relations duties (Dozier, 1988; Lauzen, 1991). According to Lauzen (1991), power issues and overlapping goals between marketing and public relations functions can lead to encroachment.

Rußmann, 2017). This can also include the introduction of social media. Before social media existed, both the marketing department (paid promotional materials) and the public relations department (communication through third parties via press releases and conferences) had their communication channels (Gesualdi, 2019). New concepts such as content marketing and brand journalism, which also use social media and other online channels as a medium, have continued to blur the traditional boundaries of marketing and public relations (Gesualdi, 2019). Another example of the overlap between the two can be seen in influencer marketing, which is based on the relationship with the influencer but mostly has profit-oriented goals (Gesualdi, 2019).

Finally, in the article ‘Revisiting the relationship between public relations and marketing: Encroachment and social media’, Gesualdi (2019) calls for future research to focus on the changes in tasks and roles in marketing and public relations to clarify responsibilities (p. 380). This again justifies the relevance of the present work. We want to focus on the skills in demand in the respective areas.

3 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework that emerged from the literature review. Since our problem formulation asks for the identification of the most in-demand skills in marketing and public relations, we chose to analyse job advertisements because these offer a good opportunity to identify the skills most in-demand within those fields (compare here the previous studies listed in the literature search). That is why, within the theoretical section, we want to deal specifically with recruitment theory encompassing concepts such as talent, recruitment process, as well as the specific steps of hiring employees for specific positions, benefits of job ads and how they fit into the recruitment process. We will also clarify basic terms, such as skills, competencies, and knowledge, and explain the distinction between soft and hard skills.

Besides, our problem formulation refers to identifying possible differences and similarities connected to the required skills for marketing and public relations. For this reason, this chapter also examines potential relationships between the two fields based on Kotler and Mindak’s (1978) models. Finally, a comparison of the skills deductively derived from the literature research for these two fields is presented and serves as a basis for creating a category system for our content analysis.

3.1 Recruitment Theory

Recruitment theory encompasses the principles and frameworks that guide organisations in attracting and selecting suitable candidates for employment (cf. Collins & Han, 2004). In response to changes in the labour market and advancements in technology, the recruitment process changed (Ulrich, 2008). While traditionally, organisations used advertising, referrals, and job fairs to attract applicants, they nowadays make use of online platforms and social media. This section shall explain the recruitment process, developments in this area, and the term war of talent a bit further. Thus, a framework can be given for the subsequent definition of job advertisements, skills, and knowledge, which will be explained in the following sections.

The traditional definition of talent is referred to as human capital, which refers to the knowledge, skills and competencies that can add economic value to the organisation (cf. Jang and Kwon, 2021). In contrast, a holistic view is taken by Ulrich (2008), who assumes that talent encompasses an individual's competencies, commitment, and contribution.

The term *war for talent* was first used officially in 1998 by the management consulting firm McKinsey & Company in one of their reports (Chambers et al., 1998). Within the report, talent was described as all the abilities of a person, including their character strengths, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, and motivation (Chambers et al., 1998). According to Ulrich (2008), the war for talent is the competition between organisations to find, develop and retain employees with the required competencies and commitment who see meaning and purpose in their work. The authors Beechler and Woodward (2009) describe four factors that affect the recruitment process:

1. Global demographic and economic trends
2. Increasing mobility of people and organisations
3. Transformational changes to businesses environments, skills, and cultures
4. Growing levels of workforce diversity

To a certain extent, these factors can also be related to the present study. External influences not only condition the recruitment process but also the demand for certain skills and competencies. Economic trends influence in which areas and what quantity workers are sought (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The third factor influences the demand for specific skills, should the emergence of new technologies influence business processes and communication (Farndale et al., 2023; Ferreira et al., 2022). Thus, when analysing the most demanded skills in marketing and public relations, it is important to maintain sensitivity regarding international

and national developments and to question the influences of globalisation and digitalisation on corporate structures and processes.

Furthermore, competition in the search for professional employees has undergone various phases, in which it was sometimes higher and sometimes lower. However, a competitive situation can still be observed today (cf. Fernandes et al., 2023). Although the term war for talent is increasingly used to refer to the medical, biological, industrial and development sectors, the influencing factors described by Beechler and Woodward (2009) can also be found in the creative sectors.

From a demographic perspective, for example, it can be stated that within Europe, including Denmark, Germany and Slovakia, the average age is increasing significantly, and the proportion of the working population is decreasing compared to the non-working population (European Commission, 2023). In addition, globalisation, technological development and increasing diversification also lead to the need for special training and skills (cf. Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Talent management has been also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Fernandes and colleagues (2023), this has made it more difficult for employers to attract, motivate and retain talent.

So that companies can endure the war for talent, it is essential to note that all potential candidates for open positions must be approached (Koch et al., 2018). There are different types of applicants, and each of these should be addressed by recruiters in different ways. Potential candidates can be divided into active, semi-passive and passive candidates (Joos, 2008). While active candidates are independently looking for a new job, semi-passive candidates are interested in a new job but do not actively search (Joos, 2008). The passive candidates' category refers to people not looking for a new job (Joos, 2008). However, in times of the war for talent, a company must also target people in the last two categories (Koch et al., 2018). To do so, it can resort to various methods in the recruitment process.

According to Listwan (2010), hiring a selected person comprises three crucial steps: recruitment, selection, and implementation for work (p. 80). Figure 3 illustrates the entire recruiting process, whereby the three basic steps are supplemented by the subordinate individual steps, according to Newell (2005).

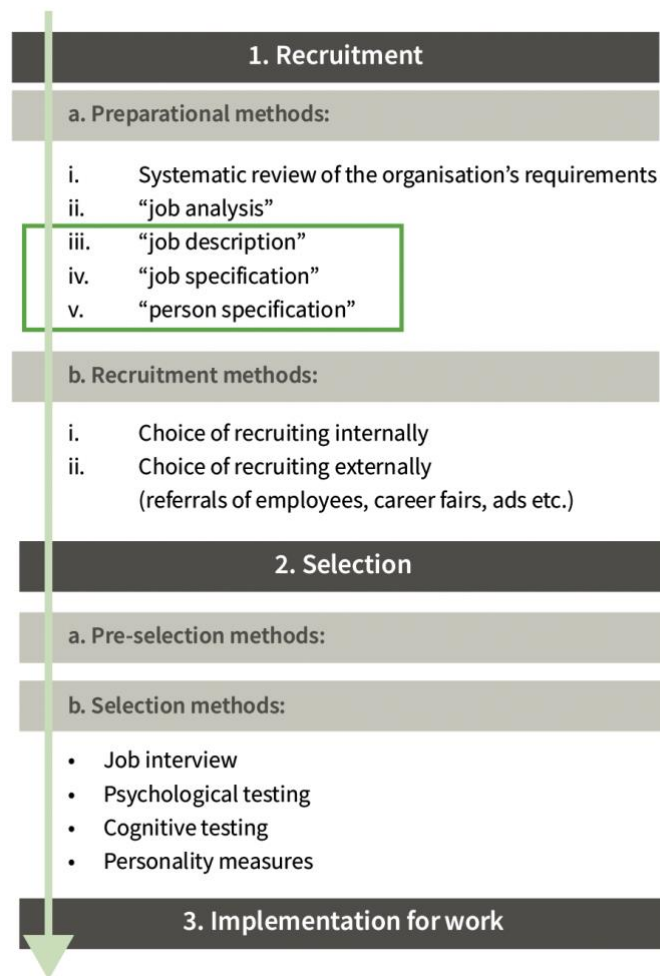


Figure 3: *The Recruitment Process (Listwan, 2010; Newell, 2005)*

We will further focus on the definition and methods of the first two steps as they are relevant to our problem formulation. Recruitment can be defined as “...the process of attracting people who might make an organisational contribution to fill a particular role or job (Newell, 2005, p. 117).” Selection then involves measuring the differences between various candidates to find the person who best fits the profile of the particular role or job (Newell, 2005). The person with the “...greatest number of essential and/or desirable competencies” gets the job (Newell, 2005, p. 117).

There are further sub-steps to both steps of the overall recruitment process. The company usually starts with a systematic needs analysis in the recruitment process. Based on this, the ‘job analysis’ (Newell, 2005, p. 118) and the ‘job description’ (Newell, 2005, p. 119) can be created.

According to Rios et al. (2020) and Newell (2005), the job analysis comprises an in-depth analysis of the requirements for the job, for which systematic data on the position to be

filled are collected. This data usually comes from interviews with employees who have already been hired (Newell, 2005). A job description then specifies the position's purpose, duties, performance standards, obligations and responsibilities, title, and the salary the employee can expect (Newell, 2005).

In some companies, a distinction is also made between the job-oriented job analysis and the worker-oriented job specification, which additionally focuses on the psychological and behavioural requirements of the job (Newell, 2005, p. 119). Based on this, a person specification can be made, which finally translates the job specification into character traits and thus specifies what kind of person is sought for performing the job (Newell, 2005, p. 119).

As marked in Figure 3, with this research work, we are focusing on the last three sub-steps (job analysis, job description and job specification) in the preparatory measures of the recruiting process. We want to examine job advertisements for named skills to answer the problem formulation posed in the introduction.

Job advertisements are created based on the job analysis, the job description, and the job specification and, according to Engstrom et al. (2017), have a dual function: "advertising and recruiting talent (p. 337)." Through their information, job postings can signal what skills, knowledge and competencies managers value and indicate what practices they consider essential (Engstrom et al., 2017, p. 337). Job seekers reading this advertisement could then decide whether the organisation reflects their values and provides the kind of work environment in which they can see themselves (Engstrom et al., 2017, p. 337).

After the organisation completes preparatory measures, i.e., conducting a job analysis, writing a job description and specification, and formulating the job advertisement, the actual recruitment process can begin. A distinction can be made between two substantial recruiting methods: internal and external recruiting (Newell, 2005). While internal recruiting refers to hiring people who are already employed by the company, external recruiting refers to people who must first be recruited (Newell, 2005). For external recruiting, there are different methods for attracting potential candidates for the job. Traditional methods include employee referrals, career fairs, advertisements in local newspapers or journals, and less frequently on local radio or television (Koch et al., 2018; Newell, 2005). However, increasingly crucial to the search for new staff is the Internet, which offers various recruitment options. Typically, the company's own website is used to publish vacancies. In addition, online job boards can be used, i.e., sites such as Indeed, where organisations can upload job descriptions, and users can upload their CVs (Koch et al., 2018). Besides, an increasingly important method is social networking, where platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn can be used (Koch et al., 2018). For example,

LinkedIn also enables the publication of job advertisements and offers recruiters the opportunity to reach a wide range of potential candidates, including those who are not actively looking for a job (Koch et al., 2018).

The selection of a suitable person follows the recruitment process. If several applications have been received, there are various methods of pre-selection. Typically, these are based on the CV and other documents provided by the applicant (Newell, 2005). The applicants who pass the pre-selection are then included in the actual selection process. The most commonly used variant is the traditional interview, in which the applicant is interviewed (Newell, 2005). The interview can be unstructured or standardised (Newell, 2005). In some companies, in addition to the interview, other methods are used to select the applicant from the pool. These include, for example, psychological, cognitive tests or personality measures.

The described recruitment process can be seen in the summary Figure 3. Within this chart, the steps of the job description, job specification and person specification are marked, as these can be seen as fundamental for preparing the final vacancy descriptions of job ads, which serve as our data. These individual steps in the overall process define the competencies, skills and knowledge required for the advertised position. These are terms that will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Definitions of Skills, Competencies and Knowledge

When creating a job description, job specification and person specification, it is essential to record the required skills, competencies and knowledge that the person to be hired should bring to the job (cf. Rios et al., 2020; Newell, 2005). However, the literature shows that the various terms are defined differently (Liebenow et al., 2014). The most significant definition discrepancy is between skill and competence (Flynn, 2014, p. 363).

While some authors argue that in the modern economy and with the increased flexibility that management demands from employees, the difference between skill and competency is hardly noticeable (Chappell et al., 2003), some are even convinced that the concepts behind the terms do not differ at all (Finegold & Notabartolo, 2010). Chappell et al. (2003) see the minimal difference in that skills are often perceived as more dynamic and refer to a wide range of general and personal skills and attitudes.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) describes the relationship between the three terms skills, competency, and knowledge as follows: Competencies, in contrast to skills and knowledge, also include things like:

the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual's knowledge of language, practical IT skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating. (OECD, 2005, p. 4)

Liebenow et al. (2014) added that the concept of competence, and consequently the concepts of knowledge and skills, have positive connotations but do not initially describe a person's strengths or weaknesses. "Only when a competence (e.g., communication skills) is defined in terms of its strength about the job requirements it unfolds its usefulness (freely translated; Liebenow et al., 2014, p. 26)²."

Despite the different definitions, it is more critical for the recruitment and subsequent selection process to analyse the required competencies, skills, and knowledge uniformly (Liebenow et al., 2014). "If a competence is contradictory or unclearly defined, the quality of the assessment of employees and applicants based on this competence suffers (freely translated; Liebenow et al., 2014, p. 27)³."

Regarding our problem formulation, our focus was initially on identifying skills. However, due to the difficult distinction between skills, competencies, and knowledge, we also include competencies and knowledge areas relevant to marketing and public relations in our investigation. Although skills, competencies, knowledge and even tools are searched for within the job ads during analysis, we most often refer to them uniformly as 'skills' throughout the project.

3.2.1 Distinction Between Soft and Hard Skills

The categorisation can be done not only with skills, competencies, and knowledge but also within the category of skills. Here, the distinction is clearer. A classic approach is the division into soft and hard skills, which we briefly outline in this paragraph. We also use this division for the development of our deductive model (see the section [3.4](#)) and for the categorisation of our data (see the section [4.4.3.1 Categorisation of Data](#)).

Devedzic and colleagues (2018) define soft skills as skills that characterise one's relationship with other people and "encompass personality traits, social graces,

² Translated from German: "Erst wenn eine Kompetenz (z.B. Kommunikationsfähigkeit) in der Stärke ihrer Ausprägung bzgl. Der Stellenerfordernisse definiert wird, entfaltet sie ihren Nutzen (Liebenow et al., 2014, p. 26)."

³ Translated from German: "Ist eine Kompetenz widersprüchlich oder unklar formuliert, leidet die Qualität der Beurteilung von Mitarbeitern und Bewerbern auf Basis dieser Kompetenz (Liebenow et al., 2014, p. 27)."

communication, language, personal habits, and interpersonal skills (p. 283).” Robles (2012) suggested that “soft skills are the intangible, nontechnical, personality-specific skills that determine one’s strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator (p. 457).” According to Imdorf (2007), soft skills include both interactive (social skills) and motivational components (personal skills).

Hard skills are in comparison to soft skills typically associated with technical skills and specialised knowledge (Finch et al., 2013; Robles, 2012). These skills relate to domain-specific tasks, and compared to soft skills, they are usually easier to learn and can be described as cognitive (Devedzic et al., 2018). Finch et al. (2013) refer to this type of skills as job-specific functional skills and describe them as skills that are needed for doing a specific job. The functional skills of a marketer might consist of marketing-related knowledge and familiarity with the software required to do the marketing job. These competencies vastly differ from those a software engineer needs to execute their job (Finch et al., 2013, p. 684). Job-specific functional skills are often an essential requirement for most positions (Finch et al., 2013).

There are several reasons why the distinction between soft and hard skills is useful and why we want to adopt this division for categories in our work. Firstly, the two types of skills differ in their transferability to different sectors and professions. Soft skills are a type of skills which are transferable and thus valuable across industries and job types. Examples of these skills are verbal and written communication skills, listening skills or interpersonal skills (Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Finch et al., 2013, pp. 683-684). Furthermore, the two categories are developing differently. Even though different skills are added or become less important in both categories, in general, soft skills have become increasingly important compared to hard skills (Imdorf, 2007).

Another reason for the distinction is that the skills in the two categories are measured differently. While hard skills are easier to assess objectively and are methodologically easier to measure, soft skills of a person are difficult to evaluate objectively (Imdorf, 2007).

A final reason why a distinction between hard and soft skills seems useful is that the different types of skills can be taught and learned in different ways (Laker & Powell, 2011). The training methods for both kinds of skills differ from each other (Laker & Powell, 2011), which is why the distinction should be taken into account within the development of curricula.

3.3 Models of Possible Relationship Between Marketing and Public Relations

In the section [2.2](#) of literature review, we described the development of the discussion about the relationship between marketing and public relations since the 1970s. In this section, we clarify the five different models of the possible relationships between marketing and public relations based on Kotler and Mindak (1978). These models also make statements about the skills required for the respective areas, thus serving as a suitable basis for the present work.

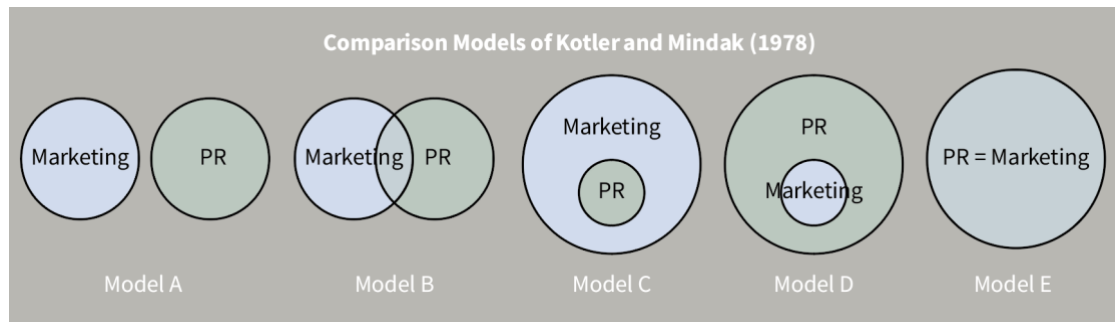


Figure 4: Comparison Models (Kotler & Mindak, 1978, p. 17)

Model A is the traditional view and sees marketing and public relations as two separate areas: “Marketing exists to sense, serve, and satisfy customer needs at a profit. Public relations exist to produce goodwill in the company’s various publics so that these publics do not interfere with the firm’s profit-making ability (Kotler & Mindak, 1978, p. 17).”

While marketers tend to have skills in economic, quantitative, and behavioural analysis and are profit-oriented in all their activities, public relations practitioners are equipped with journalistic skills. They are thus good at content generation (Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

Model B assumes that although the two fields have different functions, they have the same goal of increasing product publicity (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). Kotler and Mindak (1978) assume that “the more important product publicity is to product success, the better it is to locate it within the marketing department (p. 17).” However, there is also an overlap in customer relations, with public relations taking the foreground role (Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

In *Model C*, marketing is dominant and takes control of marketing activities. While the marketing department is responsible for the overall marketing of the product, the few public relations activities are only used in reputation management to facilitate marketing (Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

The opposite logic is followed by *Model D*, where marketing activities are subordinate to the public relations department. This is particularly the case where the company’s success depends on its reputation within the various stakeholder groups (Kotler & Mindak, 1978).

The last *Model E* sees marketing and public relations as completely intertwined methodologies: “They both talk in terms of publics and markets; they both recognise the need for market segmentation; they both acknowledge the importance of market attitudes, perceptions, and images in formulating programmes; and the primacy of a management process consisting of analysis, planning, implementation, and control (Kotler & Mindak, 1978, p. 18).”

These five variants are still relevant today, even though external influences such as digitalisation and globalisation have changed working methods, objectives and required skills within the two fields (e.g., Gesualdi, 2019). Within this research, we want to consider the five models as possibilities for the relationship between marketing and public relations. Our literature review shows that there are different views regarding this relationship. As researchers, we do not want to subscribe to these views at first; that is, we do not want to assume a clear separation of the fields or possible overlaps. After our analysis, however, we want to return to the potential relationship models to check whether one can describe our findings in relation to the differences or similarities in skills needed for the two fields.

3.4 Deductive Model for Analysis

Based on the literature research and the clarification of the theoretical framework, we can now present the model summarising all deductively derived skills. It will be used as the basis for categorising the data (see [4.4.3.1 Categorisation of Data](#)).

Figure 5 shows this model listing the soft and hard skills assigned to the different sectors. We have decided not to rely initially on any relationship models between marketing and public relations proposed by Kotler and Mindak (1978). Although the lists of skills are juxtaposed for clarity, neither separation nor an overlap of the two sectors is supposed to be made. These models will be looked at again in retrospect in the discussion part of this thesis.

As is further evident from Figure 5, we adopt the division of skills into soft and hard skills. For the reasons described in part [3.2.1](#), the division of skills is useful from a practical point of view and for the subsequent categorisation of the data.

We do not want to go into detail about the list of skills themselves but merely state that these emerged deductively from the previous literature research. The primary sources were Bernhard and Russmann (2023), Meganck et al. (2020), Rios et al. (2020), Brunner et al. (2018), Saeed, 2015, and Hopkins et al., 2011. Which sources can be traced back to which capabilities can be seen in Appendix B (Data Categorisation Table) in [Appendices](#) of this paper.

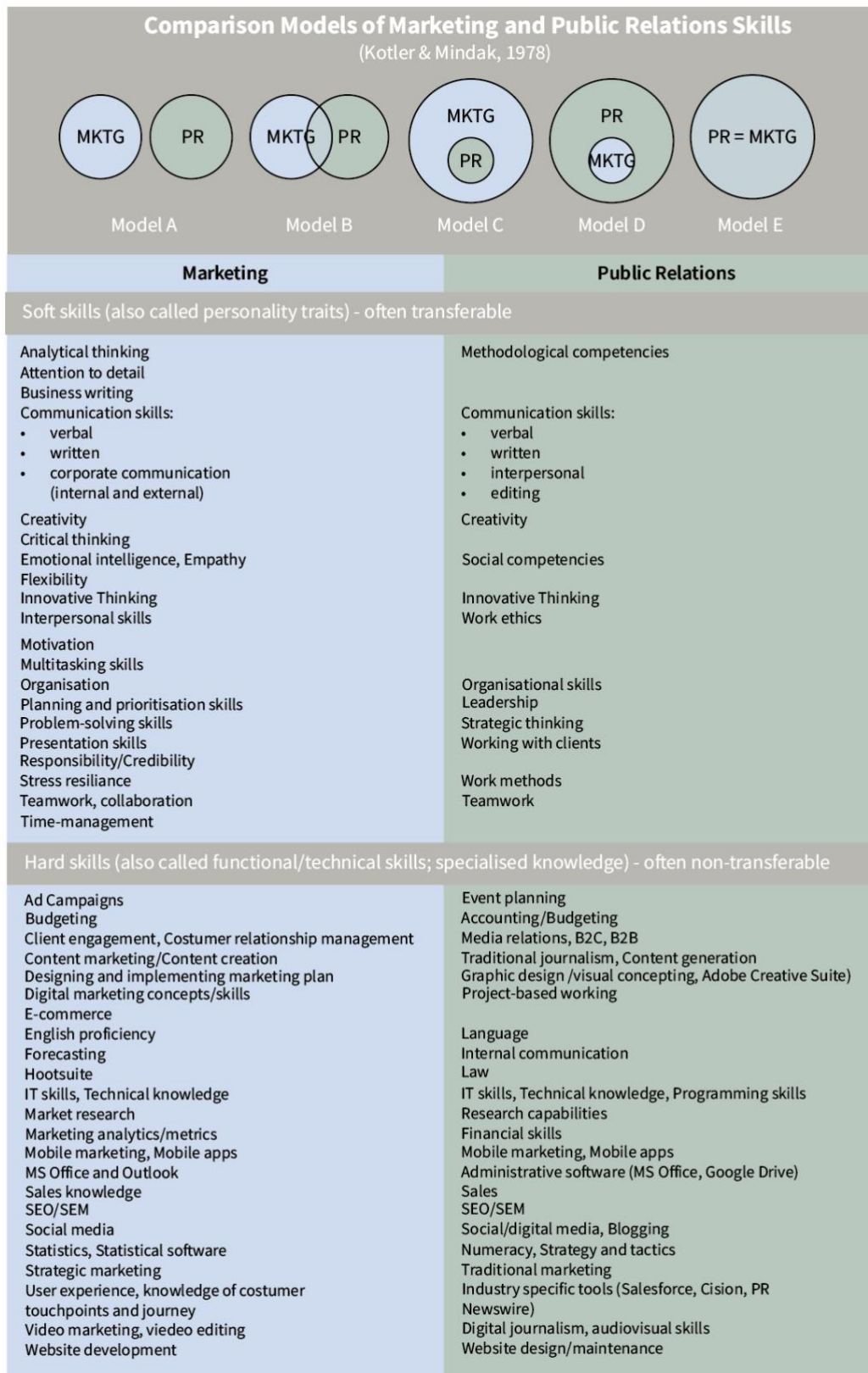


Figure 5: Deductive Model based primarily on Kotler and Mindak (1978)

4 Methodology

The methodology is a chapter that explains methods, approaches, and techniques used throughout this research. This section is a guiding framework which describes how this research is conducted with regard to *the philosophy of science, research approach, research purpose, research process, research criteria, ethical considerations, and methodological limitations*.

4.1 Philosophy of Science

Philosophy of science is a subfield of philosophy which focuses on the significance and foundation of various research methods. It poses and attempts to answer two vital questions, i.e., what is true science, and how reliable are different methods (Egholm, 2014, pp. 24 – 25)? Bryman (2012) argued that two vital components of the philosophy of science are ontology and epistemology. Ontology centres on studying the nature of being and seeks to interpret social reality. Epistemology explores the nature of knowledge and deals with the cultivation of knowledge (Bryman, 2012). The research paradigm that this project is inspired by the most is hermeneutics, which focuses on the theory and practice of understanding and interpretation of human conduct (Bryman, 2012, p. 28). Therefore, hermeneutics with respect to ontology and epistemology and concerning this specific research is examined in the following paragraphs.

4.1.1 Ontology from the Hermeneutic Perspective

Ontology's primary focus is the study of 'being'. Ontology examines the social reality, social entities and social actors that are present and acting within the social reality (Bryman, 2012, p. 32). According to the hermeneutic perspective social actors take advantage of language and communication to interpret and understand their surroundings, i.e., social reality (Bergman, 2010; Phillips & Brown, 1993). However, as meanings are ambiguous and different actors can understand reality in different ways, there is a need to interpret this reality "... from the perspective of the social actor (Bryman, 2012, p. 712)." Thus, in connection to this research, it is crucial that we, researchers, interpret and understand the social reality regarding the most in-demand skills within marketing and public relations through insights from job advertisements and extract meanings in a way that is as close as possible to meanings created by the authors of these job advertisements. As our project comprises a specific type of textual analysis (content analysis), hermeneutics is considered a suitable approach since it could allow us to generate meanings which are accurate and reliable.

The hermeneutic perspective also states that social reality and our understanding of this reality are continuously developing; social reality is not fixed but constantly changes based on our interpretation and experience (Gellweiler et al., 2018). Therefore, as “...the discovery of meaning is an infinitive process... (Gellweiler et al., 2018, p. 634)”, our research also presents implications and ideas for future research, allowing other researchers to build on our research and generate additional meanings to this examined social reality.

4.1.2 Epistemology from the Hermeneutic Perspective

Epistemology’s primary goal is to scrutinise ‘knowledge’ and philosophise what can be classified as ‘acceptable knowledge’ in scientific research (Bryman, 2012, p. 27). According to the hermeneutic perspective on epistemology, it is essential to consider that the understanding and interpretation, which leads to knowledge creation, is affected by certain ‘presuppositions’, ‘anticipations’, ‘prejudices’ or ‘subjective experience’ (Grondin, 2016; Bergman, 2010). In order to get to the real meanings and understanding, a concept called ‘hermeneutic circle’ is essential. Getting to the root of knowledge and understanding is an incremental ‘back and forth process’ and involves the interpretation of different components of the social reality as well as the social reality as a whole (Gellweiler et al., 2018, p. 633; Bergman, 2010). Following the hermeneutic circle, it is crucial first to acknowledge that certain expectations, prejudices, or other factors might affect our understanding. Subsequently, it is essential to organise these anticipations based on ‘self-understanding’, and lastly, the false expectations should be given up and replaced by the real meanings (Grondin, 2016, p. 299). This can be done through “... reexamining, testing, and shaping existing viewpoints through new insights (Gellweiler et al., 2018, p. 633),” as well as by looking for hidden motives and patterns when examining the social reality (Gellweiler et al., 2018, p. 634).

The approach taken in this project is inspired by hermeneutics as the gradual process of literature review, pretest, and content analysis of job advertisements allows us to move back and forth and, in each new part, review the findings of the previous part. The interpretation of data is unique as it is influenced by prior experience, expectations, or prejudices, but the fact that we are aware of their presence is what makes our research more reliable. The data are examined to find hidden meanings, and the use of multiple methods and researchers (method and researcher triangulation – see the section [4.5.3.1](#)) and the possibility of getting back to the previous phases of research and re-evaluating the findings makes the understanding of the phenomenon clearer and more trustworthy. Besides, to test the chosen method prior to the

analysis, a pretest on a small sample of data is conducted (see the section [4.4.3.1.](#)), which should strengthen the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

In addition, Bryman (2012) and Bergman (2010) argued that hermeneutics is a proper perspective for content analysis as long as “... it is sensitive to the [social, cultural and historical] context within which texts were produced (Bryman, 2012, p. 560).” This complies with our research as content analysis is used in this project, and the social, cultural, and historical context that might affect the text’s production and interpretation is taken into account. For example, the specific factors that might influence the demand for particular skills in Denmark, Germany and Slovakia, as well as factors that might affect the data collection, are reflected upon and described in [4.7 Methodological Limitations](#). Besides, Phillips and Brown (1993) argued that hermeneutics is suitable for interpreting ‘company documents’. Job advertisements, which are data used for content analysis, can be considered such types of documents.

Likewise, the choice of both mixed methods design and content analysis (see the section [4.4.3](#)) complies with the hermeneutic perspective, according to Bergman (2010). Bergman (2010) and Doyle et al. (2016) argued that many authors in academia disagree with the appropriateness of mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches due to their divergent natures (i.e., the former tied to positivism and the latter to interpretivism or constructivism). However, the hermeneutic approach for content analysis allows their combining and in doing so makes it possible to achieve the higher validity of the results. Bergman (2010) stated that while hermeneutic content analysis traditionally involves subjective interpretation and understanding,

...there is nothing wrong with adapting the design to pursue more objectivistic and (post)positivistic research in this vein. It is indeed the researchers who decide on the truth value of the research data and results. (Bergman, 2010, p. 17)

Our approach to content analysis might be considered quantitative as, in order to answer the first part of the problem formulation connected to the identification of the most in-demand skills within marketing and public relations, it is essential to count the occurrence of specific skills within the dataset. However, quantitative analysis is supplemented by a qualitative approach, as the latter might generate more solid findings for answering the rest of the problem formulation – related to the differences and similarities across countries and fields, practical implications of the results for marketing and public relations study programmes and graduates and theoretical implications for academia.

4.2 Research Approach

Two main research approaches within social sciences are deductivism and inductivism. The deductive approach relies on pre-existing theories that guide research, whereas the inductive approach creates new theories based on specific observations from data (Bryman, 2012). This project uses inductive reasoning when it comes to problem formulation, as the problem formulation was first inspired by the authors' interest in the topic. Nevertheless, during the process of literature review, it was discovered that further research is needed concerning the in-demand skills within marketing and public relations in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia (see [2 Literature Review](#)).

The approach to analysis follows deductive reasoning, as first, the literature review is conducted, which leads to the formation of the theoretical framework and deductive categories for the content analysis. The theoretical framework is built using the models of the possible relationships between marketing and public relations by Kotler and Mindak (1978). This model is supplemented by additional findings from the literature review regarding the required skills for the fields of marketing and public relations. Although most of the categories for the analysis are deductive, inductive categories are created during the process of analysis in case there are certain observations made that do not fit within predefined categories.

4.3 Research Purpose

The research purpose is connected to the primary goal of the research. The main objective of this research is to provide new insights in connection to the required skills for marketing and public relations job positions in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia, discover differences and similarities of the job ads across countries and across fields as well as provide practical and theoretical implications. As the objective is to contribute 'new insights', the purpose of this research can be characterised as exploratory (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 139 – 140). According to Saunders et al. (2009), exploratory research purpose is also adequate for projects whose goal is to 'clarify the understanding of a problem' (pp. 139 – 140). This complies with our research, which aims to clarify the understanding of the problem formulation posed in section [1.1 Problem Formulation](#).

4.4 Research Process

The research process is the chapter of this project which explains the different stages of the research. This project includes the following steps: *problem formulation*, *literature review*,

formation of theoretical framework, data collection, analysis, and the finalisation of the written report. The problem formulation has already been presented in the introductory section of this project (see section [1.1](#)). The process of literature review, formation of theoretical framework, data collection and analysis are presented in the following subsections.

4.4.1 Process of Literature Review and Theoretical Framework Formation

The literature review and formation of the theoretical framework are important parts of this project. This study can be considered more theory-driven than data-driven as the analysis is conducted using deductive categories formed based on the findings from the literature review. As the theoretical framework guides the analysis, conducting a comprehensive and critical review of academic literature was crucial.

This research aims to identify the most in-demand marketing and public relations skills and the possible differences and similarities in these skills across fields and countries. Therefore, it was equally important to examine articles which, similarly to our study, identify relevant skills for marketing and public relations as well as articles for the theory formation, i.e., containing definitions of relevant concepts (such as skill, competence, knowledge), recruitment theories, skills classifications and theories examining the relationship between marketing and public relations. The combination of the extensive literature review, subsequent theory formation, and content analysis should be suitable for answering the problem formulation in an adequate manner.

The articles were collected using specific keywords, such as ‘skills for marketing’, ‘skills for public relations’, ‘difference between marketing and public relations’, and ‘recruitment theory’, among others. Academic articles were collected through Aalborg University Library’s Primo search engine and Google Scholar, which redirected us to several library databases with relevant academic articles, such as *JSTOR*, *SAGE Journals*, *SpringerLink*, or *Research Gate*. Besides, academic papers from different journals were collected, including, for instance, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, *International Business Review*, and *Public Relations Review*.

Many different academic papers were examined, and although they were selected based on our subjective judgement, great efforts were made to stay objective while reviewing them. The first set of articles focused on marketing and public relations skills was scrutinised thoroughly and attentively, and the ones that were considered relevant for this study are

described in the literature review. Due to the large number of these articles, which also offer diverse and complex results, a table containing a chronological overview of all the articles focused on skills has been created and includes categories such as *field of interest*, *the focus of research* and the *most important skills and findings* (see Appendix A in [Appendices](#)).

Another set of articles containing definitions of relevant concepts (such as skill, competence, and knowledge), recruitment theory, skills classifications and theories examining the relationship between marketing and public relations were used to form the theoretical framework. The final theoretical model used for creating deductive categories includes the models of the possible relationship between marketing and public relations (Kotler & Mindak, 1978) and is enhanced with additional findings from the literature review regarding required skills for the fields of marketing and public relations.

4.4.2 Data Collection

In today's world, a significant part of personal and professional life takes place online. With the emergence of the Internet, social media, and other modern technologies, examining digital space has become an efficient way of researching social realities. The same principle applies to labour markets and job search. Most job advertisements exist online on different job portals or social media. That is why it has been decided that the data used for this project would be job advertisements saved from one of the most popular professional and employment-related social media, LinkedIn. LinkedIn includes the 'Jobs' section, allowing any company or hiring team to post and advertise their available positions. LinkedIn is a suitable source for job postings as it is widely used in all three countries which are objects of this research, i.e., Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia.

The job ads were selected and saved on 10th March 2023. There were 20 ads collected for each field (marketing and public relations) in each country (Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia); thus, 40 ads for each country and 120 ads in total. The advertisements were searched for based on the relevant keywords, i.e., 'marketing' and 'public relations'. The filter 'most recent' was selected instead of the default setting called 'most relevant'. In order to get more objective search results, it was essential to choose the most recent ads instead of the most relevant since LinkedIn generates the most relevant ads based on user profiles (in this case, authors' profiles). Thus, these ads might vary from user to user.

Besides, LinkedIn job ads also mention the size of the company which has posted the job posting. LinkedIn's categories for company headcount look followingly: *from 1 to 10*

employees, from 11 to 50 employees, from 51 to 200 employees, from 201 to 500 employees, from 501 to 1000 employees, from 1001 to 5000 employees, from 5001 to 10 000 employees, and over 10 000 employees.

As resources between these types of companies can vary markedly, and this might influence the demand for skills in these companies, it was essential to make a delimitation here. It has been decided that companies with up to 1000 employees would be taken into account. This delimitation covers the so-called small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are, according to, Karmowska and Marciniak (2015) and Palmieri (2007), the most vital part of the European economy creating a myriad of employment opportunities, boosting economic growth and competitiveness and fostering innovation, and at the same time, it ensures that there are enough ads included for providing new insights and answering the problem formulation.

It is crucial to point out that there is a specific limitation connected to the selection of ads posted by companies of a certain size. As discovered during the coding process, some of the ads on LinkedIn are not posted by the companies offering the positions but by the recruitment agencies. Such companies usually belong to the industries called ‘Staffing & Recruiting’ or ‘Human Resources Services’ (based on LinkedIn’s categorisation). In case a recruitment agency published the name of their client offering the position, the size of the company offering the position was found through LinkedIn, and if this company has up to 1000 employees, the ad was included in the sample and further coded. Nevertheless, some recruitment agencies do not mention their clients’ names, and in such a case, it is impossible to find out the actual size of the company offering the position. Despite that, these ads were included in the sample as we believe that small and medium-sized companies might be more likely to use external companies for hiring future employees as they might lack formal human resource departments. Besides, the ads within our sample posted by recruitment agencies are highly relevant, and their exclusion would decrease the sample considerably. There are altogether eight ads posted by recruiting companies in which the size of the actual company offering the position could not be assessed.

In addition, it has been decided that upper and senior-level positions should be excluded from the sample as one of the objectives of this research is to provide insights that can be potentially utilisable by the students and educators of CCG, Aalborg University, and other universities. It is believed that skills for upper and senior-level positions vastly differ from those needed by fresh graduates in their first jobs. In this respect, job ads for entry-level, junior, or middle-level positions, including, for example, internships and part-time and full-time roles, can be considered the most enriching for our research. Therefore, based on LinkedIn’s filter,

‘mid-senior’, ‘director’, and ‘executive’ roles were excluded, which leaves ‘internship’, ‘entry-level’ and ‘associate’ positions for consideration.

4.4.3 Analysis of Job Advertisements

As already mentioned, the analytical approach for this research follows deductive reasoning. This means that the results of the literature review and the theoretical framework serve as a foundation for the formation of deductive categories for analysis and data sampling. The approach for analysis is inspired by Segal et al. (2009) and Waldeck et al. (2012). Segal et al. (2009) found that content analysis of job advertisements is an effective method for assessing the ‘skills’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘abilities’ needed for performing marketing-related jobs. According to Segal et al. (2009), content analysis of job advertisements offers particular advantages in contrast to other methods used to identify relevant marketing skills, such as interviews or surveys. When using content analysis, data is quantifiable and can be coded in a truly systematic manner (Waldeck et al., 2012, p. 231; Segal et al., 2009, p. 74). That is why content analysis is “...a more objective, rigorous, and systematic method of assessment (Segal et al., 2009, p. 78)” than interviews or surveys about respondents’ perceptions. Besides, the data sample is often larger as job advertisements are nowadays easily accessible online and can be collected as the situation demands (Segal et al., 2009, p. 74). One limitation of this approach is the language ambiguity within the dataset, which might lead to ‘inconsistent coding’. In order to minimise this limitation and generate more consistent, valid and reliable results, a pretest on a small data sample was conducted (see the section [4.4.3.1](#)), and intercoder reliability was ensured (see the section [4.5.1.1](#)).

The process of content analysis of job postings in this project follows the eight steps inspired by Segal et al. (2009):

- 1) identifying sources of job advertisements suitable for data collection,
- 2) saving job advertisements,
- 3) development of deductive categories,
- 4) ensuring intercoder reliability,
- 5) pretesting and reviewing the deductive categories and coding sheet,
- 6) coding,
- 7) post-testing and scanning the coding sheet for reliability,
- 8) interpreting data and producing the written report (Segal et al., 2009, p. 75).

Nevertheless, this process is influenced by the hermeneutical philosophical perspective (see the section [4.1.2](#)), and that is why we are allowed to move back and forth between the above-mentioned stages when required to ensure that extracted meanings are accurate, valid and reliable.

Furthermore, the content analysis relies on pre-defined theoretical categories, which guide us in searching for recurring skills and other relevant themes, patterns, or motifs and determining the frequency of occurrence of individual skills and other elements within the dataset. As data is expected to include skills, patterns, or motifs that do not fit in the deductive categories, our approach allows the formation of inductive categories, which would comprise findings that emerged solely from data. The specific deductive categories formed based on the literature review can be seen in Appendix B in [Appendices](#).

In addition, the content analysis in this project applies a mixed methods approach, which is appropriate for content analysis according to the hermeneutic perspective (see the section [4.1.2](#)). The quantitative approach is employed because the textual data are categorised systematically using Excel tables, and a counting technique is employed for summarising data results. Although the data sample is quite extensive and varied, it is not broad enough to be adequate for quantitative research alone, which would produce generalisable findings. Therefore, this research is supplemented by a qualitative approach suitable for generating concrete results and new insights for answering the problem formulation.

According to Doyle et al. (2016), several types of mixed methods design exist. This project is inspired by ‘the convergent design’ presented by Doyle et al. (2016), which is suitable for “a more complete understanding of phenomena (Doyle et al., 2016, p. 626).” The model depicting convergent design can be seen in the following figure:

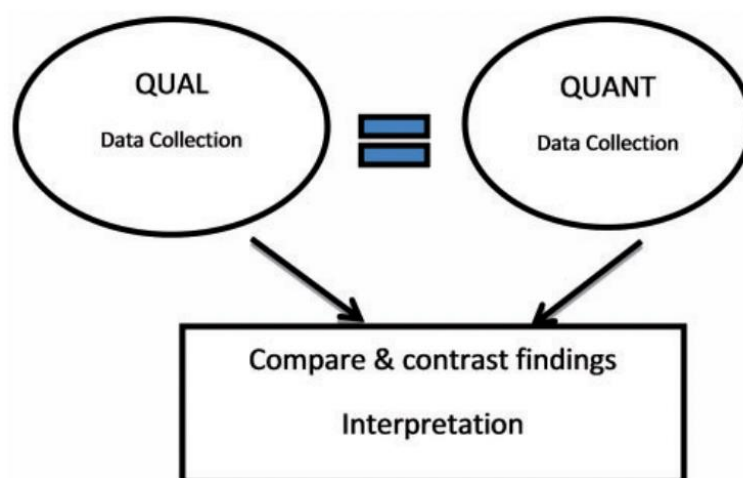


Figure 6: *Convergent Design (Doyle et al., 2016, p. 626)*

In this mixed methods design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously (Doyle et al., 2016, p. 626). This applies to our content analysis, as our categories allow marking of both quantitative and qualitative findings (e.g., within the category ‘detail-orientation skills’, it is important to note the frequency of this skill within the dataset alongside a specific quote from a job ad). Besides, equal priority is given to both quantitative and qualitative data and results from both are merged, compared, and contrasted in the interpretation stage of the analysis, as argued by Doyle et al. (2016, p. 626). According to Doyle et al. (2016), this approach strengthens the validity of the results through method triangulation (see the section [4.5.3.1](#)).

4.4.3.1 Categorisation of Data

As mentioned, content analysis helps to make data quantifiable and systematically codable (Waldeck et al., 2012, p. 231; Segal et al., 2009, p. 74). It also helps to make the individual analysis steps transparent and comprehensible. Furthermore, the consistent criteria with which the individual units are examined help to make the analysis reliable (Stemler, 2015).

In order to follow this approach for the analysis of the job ads, a categorisation of the data is necessary. For this purpose, we listed all the formal and content-specific categories needed to answer the problem formulation within an Excel sheet, identified their deductive derivation, explained their purpose, and presented coding examples (see Appendix D in [Appendices](#)).

For the formal categories, we have decided that for each unit of enquiry, its *identification number*, *coding date*, *publication date*, *the country where the job ad was published*, and *basic information about the publishing company (name, size, and industry)* must be recorded. In addition, there are formal categories to record basic information about the advertised job: *job title*, *job location*, *the place of execution*, and *the level of experience*.

In order to be able to refer to individual research units throughout the analysis section, the corresponding identification numbers are used. The number consists of the first letter of the country where the job advertisement is published (D, G, S), the abbreviation of the search term entered on LinkedIn (M for marketing, PR for public relations) and finally, a one-to-two-digit number (Appendix D in [Appendices](#) contains a summary of all the job advertisements examined). The purpose of the formal categories is not only to record basic information about the job but also to make it easier for researchers to keep track of the amount of data and identify individual units of inquiry.

A particular case of the formal categories is the exclusion category, the coding of which ultimately determines whether a study unit should be included in the analysis or excluded from the purged sample. The use of the exclusion criterion is vital as the LinkedIn algorithm for searching the most relevant ads also displays ads that are not generally included within the fields of marketing and public relations (e.g., corporate accountant, research analyst, etc.). That is why Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) (see the section [2.2](#)) becomes important here. According to this theory, a company's external communication is combined within one concept, which includes different areas, including *advertising*, *sales promotion*, *direct marketing*, and *public relations* (Anantachart, 2006). Using this theory as the basis for the exclusion criterion is also relevant because it complies with deductive categories for analysis that were formed based on the literature review of academic articles examining the most critical skills for marketing and public relations. In fact, these categories include skills connected to all aspects of the IMC, i.e., advertising, direct marketing, sales, and public relations. This way, it is expected that data might include job ads for a diverse set of positions, such as Marketing Manager, Brand Manager, Corporate Communications Officer as well as Business Development Manager.

Thus, this category is coded as follows: Job advertisements are first examined based on their job title and skills. If the job advertisement does not include a job title that can be assigned to the various occupational fields of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and, at the same time, does not include at least one of the hard skills defined deductively earlier, the advertisement should not be coded further as it most likely is not related to the fields of marketing and public relations. Soft skills must be excluded from this assessment because they are transferrable and not strictly related to the areas of marketing and public relations, as explained in the section [3.2.1](#) in Theoretical Framework.

The content-specific categories were deductively derived, and their creation serves primarily to answer the problem formulation. Appendix B in [Appendices](#) clearly shows which categories can be traced back to which literature. In addition, the division of the deductive categories into the class of soft and hard skills becomes clear. Both classifications have two additionally added inductive categories. One of these categories asks the coder to note whether the job ad emphasises or prioritises one of the skills in a particular way. The other category creates a possibility to record named skills that are not covered by the existing categories.

Appendix B in [Appendices](#) shows the final categories against which all the research units are analysed. A previous version of the category system was pretested against the process proposed by Segal et al. (2009) for the content analysis of job ads. For this pretest, we took

three study units from each of the six data groups (Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia) and checked them for the 76 categories of the initial version. During the coding process, it became clear that a simplification and shortening of the categories would be necessary for an accurate data analysis afterwards. In some cases, the boundaries between the categories were blurred, or the categories did not offer enough coding variants to be able to include all the skills mentioned in the list. Revising the categories following the pretest resulted in the entire category system having 62 categories and 15 subcategories. The previously solely quantitative categories (such as *attention to detail*) were also opened, and now ask the coders to quote the wording of the corresponding job advertisements (apart from asking for frequency) to be able to record the skills mentioned more concretely.

4.5 Research Criteria

The most prominent criteria for evaluating social research are reliability, replicability, and validity (Bryman, 2012). These criteria are discussed in the following subchapters.

4.5.1 Reliability

Whether a study is reliable is reflected in whether the research results are repeatable by applying the same methods. According to Bryman (2012), it refers to “whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences are consistent (p. 46).” The reliability criterion is significant for quantitative studies (Bryman, 2012). It is essential to draw a sample that is as representative as possible.

Since we have chosen a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative content analysis, we have decided to keep our sample smaller so that its size does not correspond to that of a usual quantitative analysis. Furthermore, we are aware of the limitation of being unable to make generalising statements based on our sample. Nevertheless, we had chosen a sample size that can be used to make reliable statements for follow-up research.

4.5.1.1 Intercoder Reliability

Another way in which we ensure the reliability of this study is by applying what is known as intercoder reliability. This refers to the degree of agreement between the coding results of multiple researchers when applying one coding schema to the same dataset (Richards, 2009). Not only was the coding system created in cooperation between the two authors, but it was also

jointly evaluated and revised before the final content analysis employing a pretest and discussed repeatedly during the entire course of the study.

Accordingly, intercoder reliability has the advantage of minimising subjective observations and achieving a higher degree of objectivity (cf. Neuendorf, 2017). Regular training (cf. Neuendorf, 2017), which takes place in the context of this study in the form of regular agreements between the coders and cross-checks of the codes, can help to avoid errors and inconsistencies.

4.5.2 Replicability

Similar to the criterion of reliability is the criterion of replicability. The replicability of a study refers to the fact that the repeatability of the methods and application of the instruments by third parties is guaranteed (Bryman, 2012). Although replications are a rarity within the social sciences (Bryman, 2012), we have documented the methods and measurements as precisely as possible so that third parties can take them as a base for future research. Thus, in documenting our methods, we have not only attached importance to justifying why we have carried out which steps but have also sufficiently documented evaluation processes (for example, the pretest of the content analysis – section [4.4.3.1](#)), explanations and coding examples of the content analysis (see Appendix D in [Appendices](#)) and also the limitations underlying this work ([4.7 Methodological Limitations](#)).

4.5.3 Validity

The third overarching criterion for scientific work is validity. “Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research (Bryman, 2012, p. 47).” This overarching criterion can be divided into measurement, internal and external validity. All three are addressed individually in the following sections.

4.5.3.1 Measurement Validity and Triangulation

Within quantitative studies, measurement validity refers to “whether a measure that is devised of a concept really does reflect the concept that it is supposed to be denoting (Bryman, 2012, p. 47).”

Guided by our problem formulation, which asks for the most frequently demanded skills in job advertisements for marketing and public relations in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia, we have deductively derived the category system for our content analysis. The

research results should allow for objective coding through precise coding instructions, and the research instrument should produce results appropriate to its purpose.

Furthermore, the criterion of measurement validity can be increased by applying research triangulation. Triangulation can help confirm the validity of the data or confirm that the data reflect what was intended to be studied but in multiple ways (Saunders et al., 2009). There are different types of triangulations: method triangulation, data triangulation, theory triangulation and researcher triangulation (Carter et al., 2014; Bryman, 2012). Three of the four types of triangulations are also applied in varying degrees in this study.

Method triangulation involves contributing to cross-checking results using different methods (Bryman, 2012). Following the literature review, we rely on the content analysis method to answer our problem formulation, and we use a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative tactics here. On the one hand, this allows us to cover all fields of investigation and provide a qualitative basis for forming hypotheses. However, at the same time, we can depict certain tendencies through frequencies.

We continue to rely more heavily on theory triangulation, whereby multiple theories strengthen the study by incorporating different perspectives (Carter et al., 2014). The underlying category system of this study is mainly formed deductively based on the literature review. The individual categories refer to various sources (cf. Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Meganck et al., 2020; Veer & Dobeles, 2019; Finch et al., 2013).

Finally, researcher triangulation refers to the execution of methods and the application of research instruments by different researchers (Bryman, 2012). This type of triangulation is also used in that the category system is set up in cooperation by the two authors of this work. Finally, the coding process is also carried out by both authors and certain parts double-checked with each other. In the process, there is regular consultation between the authors and repeated safeguarding discussions with the joint supervisor.

4.5.3.2 Internal and External Validity

“Internal validity relates mainly to the issue of causality (Bryman, 2012, p. 47)” and asks whether causal relationships established by research correspond to reality. To answer this question, the relationships between independent, influencing, and dependent variables are usually shown, which are investigated by the study (Bryman, 2012).

Within this study, the following division between the different factors can be assumed:

- 1) independent variable: jobs in the marketing and public relations sectors

- 2) dependent variable: most in-demand skills for those jobs
- 3) moderating factors: trends like digitalisation and globalisation, external events (e.g., pandemics)

Nevertheless, care must be taken when evaluating the results to avoid possible fallacies regarding causal relationships. Indeed, the data can show tendencies, but the sample does not allow generalising statements. Moreover, there may be moderating factors that the researchers do not include because their influence is not apparent. However, these possible instances are treated transparently by indicating the limitations (see the section [4.7](#)).

External validity raises the question of whether “the results of a study can be generalised beyond the specific research context (Bryman, 2012, p. 47).” Once again, it must be pointed out that generalisations are impossible based on our sample as it is not broad enough and includes ads only from three representative European countries. Furthermore, our problem formulation refers only to the marketing and public relations sectors. However, by researching the hard and soft skills in demand, which are partly influenced by trends and external events, the basis is undoubtedly created for making hypotheses for the entire communications sector.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

In qualitative studies, it is primarily the direct interaction between researchers and study participants that is a source of so-called ethically important moments, which are unpredictable and complex during this very interaction (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). However, such direct interactions are avoided by using data published online on social media within the qualitative-quantitative method mix. Nevertheless, the study should be viewed from an ethical perspective.

The data collected and analysed include the text of the job advertisements published on LinkedIn, which should not constitute personal information about the individuals involved per se. Instead, it is information about companies that publicly share job vacancies to potentially attract new employees. Nevertheless, during this process, names, or other personal information, such as those of the contact persons in the respective companies, may be included in the data collection. Because LinkedIn can be considered a social media platform for professionals, in the ethical evaluation, we follow the elaboration of Townsend and Wallace (2016), who summarised the primary ethical considerations for social science research on social media.

Accordingly, assessing whether the data under investigation can be considered public or private is important (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Concerning the job advertisements, this

assessment can be made unambiguously, as the job advertisements were published with the specific aim of making potential applicants publicly aware of the vacancies. Included contact information can also be considered public, especially since the respective persons have not only agreed to the terms and conditions of the LinkedIn platform but sharing their contact as company representatives can be considered part of their job. Furthermore, the contact information is irrelevant to the study and the underlying problem formulation.

Townsend and Wallace (2016) further argue that the possibility of tracing back to specific individuals and their statements retrospectively could be ethically questionable. However, although some names and corresponding company affiliations are included, factual statements are not included, so such inferences cannot be made either.

4.7 Methodological Limitations

In the previous sections, methodological limitations have been repeatedly mentioned and are now discussed in more detail and coherently in this chapter. This part discloses where optimisations should be made, or which methodological decisions should be critically questioned. In this way, we provide guidance and inspiration for follow-up research.

The limitations result from various aspects of this study, beginning with the choice of the topic, the corresponding formulation of the problem and finally, the determination of the countries to be investigated: Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. On the one hand, the choice of topic was made based on the literature review, which revealed research gaps. It was found that, as far as can be seen, no existing research compares the skills required in the fields of marketing and public relations within the three nations mentioned. Nevertheless, choosing this topic was also based on our personal interests as we are planning a possible career entry within these professional fields.

The decision to use the comparative models of Kotler and Mindak (1978) is also a limitation in that it can be described as relatively old regarding the study period of the present work. However, later theoretical work was also included. Besides, there has been no similar and newer model proposed that would fit within our problem formulation.

In terms of numbers, however, the most limitations exist regarding the chosen content analysis method in the quantitative-qualitative mixed approach as well as data collection. Starting with the collection of data, some issues must be mentioned. On the one hand, LinkedIn was chosen as it is used as a platform for publishing vacancies in all three countries. LinkedIn is quite popular for recruiting potential employees in Germany and Denmark. Nevertheless, it

might be used less frequently in Slovakia as the search generated fewer results compared to Denmark, which has a comparable number of inhabitants. This could have led to the fact that during the data collection within Denmark and Germany, thematically more suitable job advertisements could be found in the field of marketing and public relations than in Slovakia, where only a few job advertisements were available for selection at the time of the data collection.

While searching for job ads, the display of non-relevant job ads and their resulting inclusion in the dataset must also be mentioned as a limitation. This meant that some research units had to be excluded from the purged sample after data collection (see [Figure 7: Overview of Total and Purged Samples in the section 5.1](#)). Furthermore, the same job advertisements were sometimes displayed when entering the different search terms ‘marketing’ and ‘public relations’. On the one hand, this contributes to answering the problem formulation, but on the other hand, it minimises the total sample size. Finally, concerning the data collection, it must be pointed out that the LinkedIn algorithm might prioritise the ads according to the user’s interests indicated, even in case the filter ‘most recent’ was chosen. Consequently, when the same search terms are entered for different user profiles, the job ads might be displayed in a different order. Besides, the ads that are shown can be influenced by the current state of the job market, which can be influenced by the economic cycle or other external events (e.g., the Russian invasion of Ukraine or COVID-19). Accordingly, during a recession or war, there might be fewer ads. This would limit the replicability of this study.

Specifically related to the method of content analysis, a further limitation must be introduced. The language ambiguity within the dataset might lead to ‘inconsistent coding’. In order to minimise this limitation and generate more consistent, valid and reliable results, a pretest on a small data sample was conducted (see the section [4.4.3.1](#)), and intercoder reliability was ensured (see the section [4.5.1.1](#)).

5 Analysis

In this part of our research, we present the results of our content analysis. On the one hand, we deal with the quantitative data and reflect on which skills are most frequently demanded through the job ads, and on the other hand, we reflect on the results of our qualitative research and quote examples from the job ads. The presentation of the results in the analysis serves to answer the first part of the problem formulation, which entails identifying the most in-demand

skills for marketing and public relations professionals based on job advertisements in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia.

5.1 Analysis of Formal Categories

Before we go into the concrete results of the content-specific categories, we provide an overview of the analysis results of the formal categories. The formal categories serve both the identification purpose of the individual research units (*identification number, coding date, publication date, the country in which the job ad was published*) and the collection of basic data about the publishing company (*company name, company size and industry*) and the advertised job itself (*job title, job location, place of execution, and the level of experience*).

While the categories for the identification of the units do not require evaluation, the results of the categories on company and job information will be discussed.

Using the LinkedIn job search tool, 20 job ads for the keyword ‘marketing’ and 20 for the keyword ‘public relations’ are collected for each country. Across all countries, 120 job advertisements are collected, from which an adjusted sample of 95 job advertisements can be used. Figure 7 gives an overview of the numbers of the total and purged sample and their proportions in the countries.

Country	Total Sample	Purged Sample
Denmark	40	29
Germany	40	37
Slovakia	40	29

Figure 7: Overview of Total and Purged Samples

Following the sample overview, we would now like to give an insight into the evaluation of the formal categories.

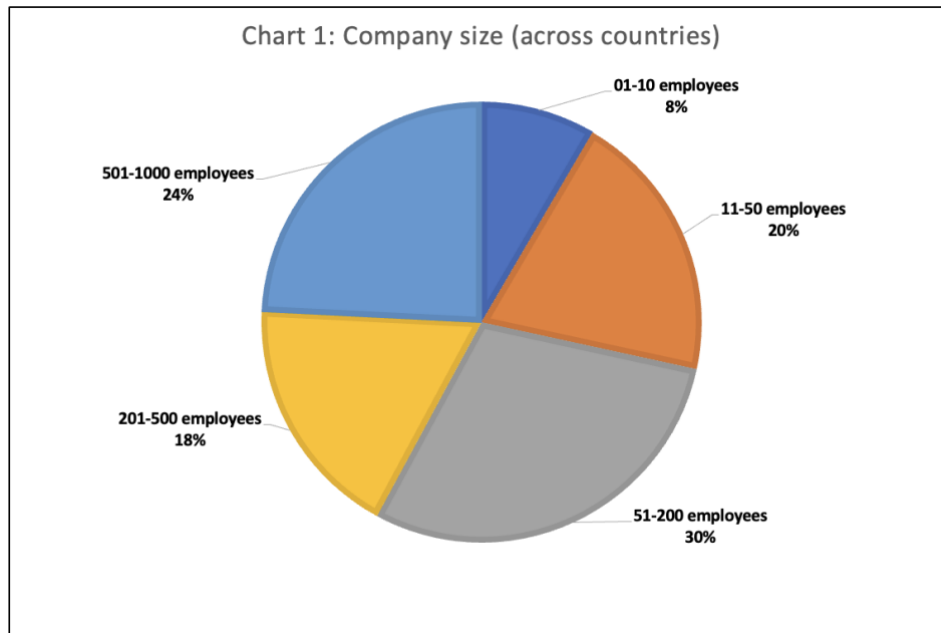


Figure 8: *Company Size Across Countries*

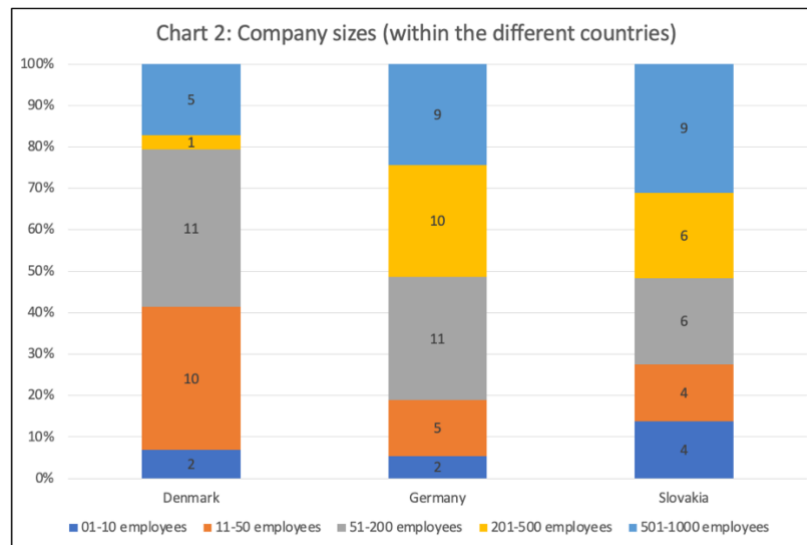


Figure 9: *Company Sizes Within the Different Countries*

While the company name is irrelevant to the analysis, the *company size* should be considered. As mentioned in the methodology section of this paper, we decided to focus on job advertisements from companies with up to 1000 employees, ensuring enough ads are available to provide new insights and answer the problem formulation. Most job ads analysed come from companies with 201 to 500 employees (28 out of 95 job ads, see Figure 8).

In Denmark, companies of size 201 to 500 employees also comprise most of the sample (11 out of 29 job ads), and also in Germany, with 11 out of 37 job ads. In Slovakia, companies in the 501-1000 employee size range made up the majority (9 out of 29 job ads, see Figure 9).

In addition to the information regarding sizes of the companies advertising the job ads, it is also coded how many job ads advertise remote, hybrid or on-site positions (see Figure 10). Across all countries, the most common search is still for new employees who can work on-site (40 out of 95 job ads). Hybrid working is desired in 33 job ads (out of 95 job ads), while 16 described purely remote positions (out of 95 job ads). On-site and hybrid positions prevail in Denmark and Germany, while a little different finding can be examined in the Slovak job ads. Here, remote jobs are the majority (12 out of 29 job ads), hybrid jobs are the second most wanted (9 out of 29 job ads) and on-site positions are advertised the least (6 out of 29 job ads).

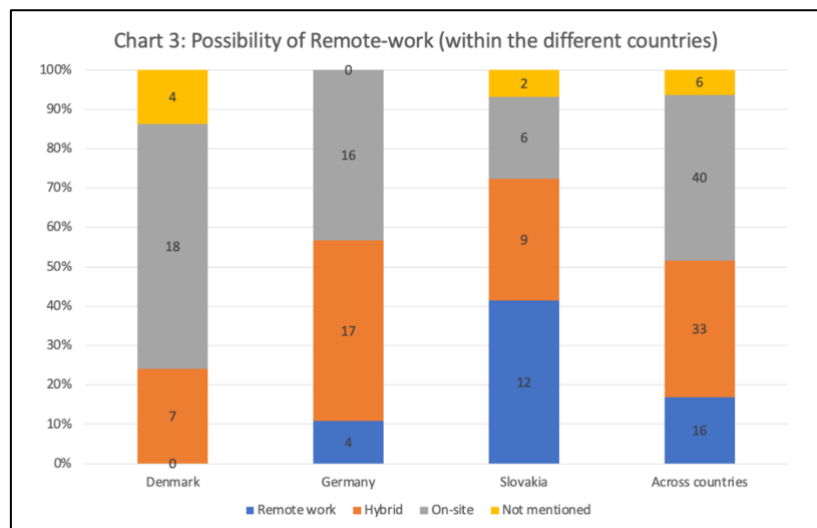


Figure 10: Job Positions Based on the Place of Execution

Furthermore, the desired experience level of the applicants is also coded in the job ads (see Figure 11). Since we focus on identifying the most important skills for students and recent graduates in this research, only junior positions were meant to be included in the sample. Based on this and LinkedIn search criteria, categories such as ‘internship’, ‘entry-level’ and ‘associate’ can be distinguished as junior positions. Thus, as already mentioned in the methodology, ‘mid-senior’, ‘director’, and ‘executive’ positions are excluded as these are positions not suitable for students or recent graduates.

The most frequently requested jobs are in the associate category, for which the highest level of experience might be required (35 out of 95 job advertisements). 28 out of 95 job ads are entry-level positions, and 14 out of 95 job ads are internships.

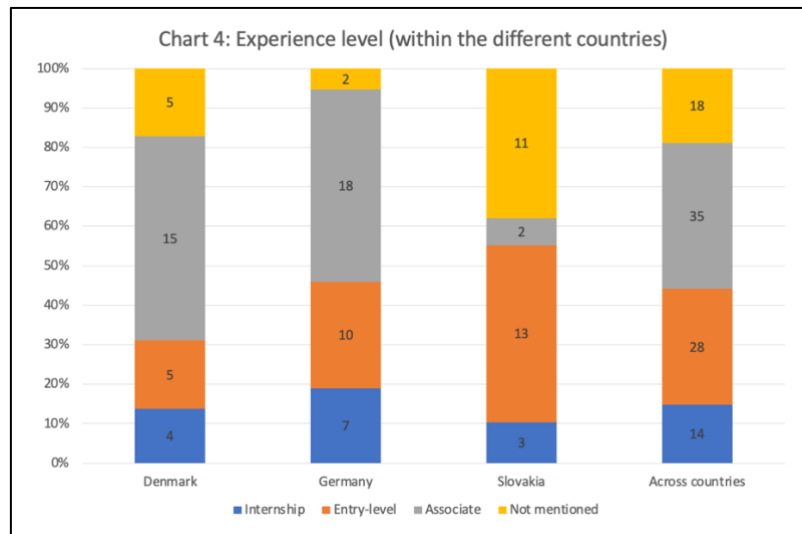


Figure 11: Job Positions Based on the Experience Level

The last category to be analysed in this part is the category *job title*. The job titles vary a lot, but they allow us to predict the approximate content of the job advertisements. All job advertisements examined are published under job titles that can be assigned to the various occupational fields of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which includes the areas of *advertising*, *sales promotion*, *direct marketing*, and *public relations* (Anantachart, 2006). If the job title does not directly refer to the fields of advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing or public relations (Anantachart, 2006), it usually includes marketing sub-fields such as campaign management (e.g., G_M_10⁴), content creation (e.g., S_PR_19), brand management (e.g., D_M_10) or even customer service (e.g., D_M_1).

5.2 The Most In-Demand Skills for Marketing and Public Relations Overall

This chapter examines the results concerning the most in-demand skills for marketing and public relations positions overall based on the dataset from three countries – Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. The content analysis was conducted on 95 ads total, the results of which show that the most important soft skills for marketing and public relations professionals across Denmark, Germany and Slovakia are *communication skills* (60)⁵, *planning and organisational skills* (42), *teamwork* (41), *motivation* (40), *creativity* (29), *initiative* (28). These

⁴ The identification number of a research unit consists of the first letter of the country where the job advertisement was published (D, G, S), the abbreviation of the search term entered on LinkedIn (M for marketing, PR for public relations) and a one- to two-digit number.

⁵ The number in brackets after a specific skill indicates in how many ads this skill occurs.

six skills have the highest frequency within the overall sample. Our findings comply, for instance, with Bennett (2002), whose research showed communication, initiative, and motivation as the most important soft skills within marketing or Wellman (2010), who found out that planning and prioritisation, communication, creativity and innovation, and initiative are the most important soft skills for new marketing graduates. Similarly, Kovacs and Zarandne (2022) and Hopkins et al. (2011) both mention the skills that comply with our findings, i.e., initiative, teamwork, communication, motivation (Hopkins et al., 2011) and communication, teamwork, planning (Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022). See Summary of Key Findings from Literature Review (Appendix A in [Appendices](#)) for more information regarding additional authors and their research on soft skills.

The most important hard skills for marketing and public relations professionals in Denmark, Germany and Slovakia are *language* (69), *general marketing* (61), *social and digital media* (45), *customer relations* (38), *digital marketing* (34) and *writing skills* (34). In connection to specific articles from the literature review, only a few highlighted the strong importance of language competencies, especially English (Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Echegaray & Martín, 2020). Di Gregorio et al. (2019) and Echegaray and Martín (2020) mentioned the importance of core marketing skills and conceptual marketing knowledge, respectively, which complies with our category general marketing. Besides, many studies, such as those by Ferreira et al. (2022), Verma et al. (2021), Meganck et al. (2020), Veer & Dobelev (2019), Royle and Laing (2014) and Verhoeven et al. (2012) highlight the significance of digital marketing and social media skills. Customer-oriented skills (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Di Gregorio et al., 2019) and writing skills (Brunner et al., 2018; Paskin, 2013) are also mentioned within the reviewed literature. See Summary of Key Findings from Literature Review (Appendix A in [Appendices](#)) for more information regarding additional authors and their research about hard skills.

The following table includes the overview of the most in-demand soft and hard skills across Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia and in each of the mentioned countries separately:

Denmark (29 job ads)	Germany (37 job ads)	Slovakia (29 job ads)	Across Countries (95 job ads)
Soft skills			
Planning and organisational skills (14; 48,28%)	Communication skills (28; 75,68%)	Communication skills (19; 65,52%)	Communication skills (60; 63,16%)
Motivation and positive attitude (14; 48,28%)	Planning and organisational skills (21; 56,76%)	Teamwork (17; 58,62%)	Planning and organisational skills (42; 44,21%)
Communication skills (13; 44,83%)	Motivation and positive attitude (16; 43,24%)	Goal orientation and strategic thinking (11; 37,93%)	Teamwork (41; 43,16%)
Teamwork (13; 44,83%)	Creativity and innovation (14; 37,84%)	Motivation and positive attitude (10; 34,48%)	Motivation and positive attitude (40; 42,11%)
Initiative (11; 37,93%)	Teamwork (11; 29,73%)	Independency (9; 31,03%)	Creativity and innovation (29; 30,53%)
			Initiative (28; 29,47%)
Hard skills			
Language (17; 58,62%)	General marketing (29; 78,38%)	Language (25; 86,21%)	Language (69; 72,63%)
Customer relations (16; 55,17%)	Language (27; 72,97%)	General marketing (18; 62,07%)	General marketing (61; 64,21%)
General marketing (14; 48,28%)	Social and digital media (20; 54,05%)	Social and digital media (14; 48,28%)	Social and digital media (45; 47,37%)
Sales (13; 44,83%)	Writing skills (20; 54,05%)	Digital marketing (13; 44,83%)	Customer relations (38; 40%)
Digital marketing (11; 37,93%)	Administrative software (18; 48,65%)	Ad campaigns and advertising (9; 31,03%)	Digital marketing (34; 35,79%)
Social and digital media (11; 37,93%)	Public relations (16; 43,24%)	Customer relations (9; 31,03%)	Writing skills (34; 35,79%)

Figure 12: The Most In-Demand Soft and Hard Skills in Denmark, Germany, Slovakia and Across Countries

The subsequent chapters present and discuss the results regarding the most in-demand skills in each country separately and in more detail. The chapters consist of the presentation of the analysis results, including the subchapters about the most important soft and hard skills for marketing and public relations in each respective country. Within these two subchapters, other important skills and skills that do not occur within the sample, and the importance of previous experience and education are also discussed. Additional chapter which presents the inductively derived skills is also included.

5.3 The Most In-Demand Skills for Marketing and Public Relations in Denmark

This chapter presents the findings regarding the most in-demand skills in Denmark. The analysis is conducted on the purged sample of 29 ads. The following subchapters examine the soft and hard skills with the highest frequency of occurrence.

5.3.1 Top Soft Skills in Denmark

In the process of content analysis that was conducted as described in the section [4.4.3](#), it was discovered that the most in-demand soft skills for marketing and public relations in Denmark are *planning and organisational skills* (14), *motivation and positive attitude* (14), *communication skills* (13), *teamwork* (13), and *initiative* (11). These soft skills have the highest frequency in the sample of ads from Denmark.

First, *planning and organisational skills* are a category of soft skills that, alongside *motivation*, appear most often within ads from Denmark – they are requested by companies in 14 out of 29 ads. These skills relate to a high level of efficiency while managing the tasks at hand and can be related to planning, prioritisation, organisation as well as time-management (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018; Wellman, 2010). Within the sample, these skills are expressed in the job ads in a variety of ways: ‘skilled at prioritising tasks’ (D_M_1), ‘being structured’ (e.g., D_M_3 and D_M_19), ‘being organised’ (e.g., D_M_7 and D_M_8), ‘being systematic’⁶ (D_M_16), ‘having strong planning and organisational skills’ (D_PR_17), ‘having overview’⁷ (D_PR_12) or ‘having coordination skills’ (D_PR_9).

Second, the category *motivation and positive attitude* also occur most often out of all the deductive categories within the sample of ads from Denmark, i.e., in 14 ads. Motivation and positive attitude refer to the characteristic of having a strong desire and positive view on doing or achieving something (Hopkins et al., 2011; Bennett, 2002). Except ‘motivation’ (D_PR_8) and ‘positive attitude’ (e.g., D_M_15), other expressions that are coded under motivation are: ‘being optimistic’ (e.g., D_M_5), ‘having drive’⁸ (D_M_20), ‘being committed’⁹ (e.g., D_PR_5), ‘being self-driven’ (D_PR_7), ‘being ambitious’ (D_PR_16), and ‘being passionate’¹⁰ (D_PR_6).

⁶ Translated from Danish: ‘systematisk’

⁷ Translated from Danish: ‘at have overblik’

⁸ Translated from Danish: ‘at have et stort drive’

⁹ Translated from Danish: ‘at være engageret’

¹⁰ Translated from Danish: “Vi leder efter talenter, der brænder for...”

Third, *communication skills* appear in 13 out of 29 ads. A more traditional view on communication states that communication skills refer to different types of skills needed to effectively exchange ideas, messages, or information through different formats and across audiences (cf. Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Rios et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2009; Bennett, 2002). Based on the conducted literature review, communication skills include different types of subskills such as general communication skills, verbal communication skills, written communication skills, interpersonal communication skills, or corporate communication skills (cf. Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Echegaray & Martín, 2020; Royle & Laing, 2014; Walker et al., 2009; Bennett, 2002). The following types of communication skills are mentioned in the Danish job ads: general communication skills (e.g., D_M_2), verbal and written communication skills (e.g., D_M_15) and visual communication (D_M_20). Communication skills in job ads are often connected with the adjectives like ‘excellent’, ‘strong’ and ‘great’, which indicates the importance of mastering this skill at a high level.

Fourth, *teamwork* is also coded 13 times within the ads from Denmark. Teamwork means the ability to work and cooperate with a group of people, such as colleagues (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Echegaray & Martín, 2020; Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018; Hopkins et al., 2011). The terms used within ads that are coded under the category teamwork are the following: ‘teamwork’ (e.g., D_M_13), ‘cooperation’ (D_PR_9), ‘being a team player’ (e.g., D_M_5), ‘having a collaborative mindset’ (D_M_12), ‘having a team spirit’ (D_M_19), and ‘being able to work/collaborate in a team’ (e.g., D_M_20).

Fifth, *initiative* as a required characteristic is mentioned in 11 ads. This skill refers to the action of starting to act early without being told to in situations that require action (Hopkins et al., 2011; Wellman, 2010; Bennett, 2002). Within the sample of ads from Denmark, the following phrases are coded under the category called initiative: ‘taking the initiative’¹¹ (e.g., D_M_3; D_M_9), ‘self-starter approach’ (e.g., D_M_15) and ‘being proactive’ (e.g., D_M_19). In one of the ads, none of the above-mentioned expressions is used, but instead, the author of this ad communicates the importance of initiative through a particular example. They state that the right candidate for the position should not be “...afraid to reach out when necessary to solve the tasks (D_PR_2).” Although the term ‘initiative’ or ‘proactivity’ are not stated directly in this example, it is clear that initiative and action are expected from the candidate. In another job ad, the significance of proactive behaviour is expressed in connection

¹¹ Translated from Danish: ‘initiativtagende’ or ‘initiativrig’

to searching for information. It is stated that a candidate should "...have a curious and proactive approach to seeking information (D_PR_20)."

Overall, the sample of ads from Denmark shows a frequent occurrence of soft skills. In fact, at least one soft skill is mentioned in 28 out of 29 ads, which implies that soft skills are considered important for internships, entry-level and associate positions within marketing and public relations in Denmark.

Besides, most of the deductive categories containing soft skills are coded at least once, except *constructive criticism* (0), *critical thinking* (0), and *ethical behaviour and work ethics* (0). These skills have not been mentioned once within the sample, and one reason for this might be that these skills might be not that important for recruiters. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that other possible reasons for the absence of these skills in the job ads might be that these skills are already considered a standard in a majority of organisations, are taken for granted or are implicitly understood in other skills' labels, and thus, they might not be explicitly stated even though they are in fact expected.

5.3.2 Top Hard Skills in Denmark

The content analysis also generated results in connection to the most important hard skills for marketing and public relations positions in Denmark. The results show that the top hard skills are within the following categories *language* (17), *customer relations* (16), *general marketing* (14), *sales* (13), *digital marketing* (11), and *social and digital media* (11). These hard skills have the highest frequency in the sample of ads from Denmark.

First, the category *language* is coded the most frequently out of all the categories within hard skills, i.e., in 17 out of 29 ads. This category is coded every time the ad mentions a requirement concerning a specific language. In regard to specific languages, 16 job ads mention *English* as a requirement and 11 job ads mention *Danish* as a requirement. There can be multiple reasons why the English language occurs more often than the Danish language as a requirement within job ads from Denmark. First, it proposes that many companies in Denmark might be international and use English as a corporate language within an organisation but also in marketing communication and direct communication with clients from foreign markets. Hence, the widespread occurrence of English as a required skill might relate to the globalisation of job and labour markets. Second, some job ads might not mention Danish as a requirement because they consider it a standard in Denmark. An example might be an ad for the Search Engine Optimization Specialist position, which does not specify any language requirements

(D_M_16). Nevertheless, the job ad is written in Danish, and thus it can be assumed that Danish is used as a corporate language within this company and, thus, is most likely needed for performing the job.

In addition, some job ads also specify what types of language competencies are needed. Some ads mention the importance of written Danish and English as can be seen in the following examples: “strong grammar skills in Danish and English¹² (D_PR_4)”, “... [candidate] must be used to writing in English – and write well¹³ (D_PR_5)”, “... [candidate] writes flawless Danish and English¹⁴ (D_PR_6).” Other ads emphasise the importance of spoken or verbal Danish and English alongside written language competencies (e.g., D_M_9; D_M_19). Other languages that appeared within this data sample, although only a few times, are *German* (2), *Norwegian* (2), *Swedish* (2), and *Dutch* (1).

Second, skills related to *customer relations* also seem important for marketing and public relations positions in Denmark, as they occurred in 16 out of 29 job ads. A wide variety of customer-oriented subskills are coded within this category. The examples from the data sample include skills related to ‘customer service’ (e.g., D_M_1), ‘customer support’ (e.g., D_M_1), ‘customer success’ (D_M_1), ‘customer experience’ (D_M_1), ‘customer satisfaction’ (D_PR_9), ‘customer relationship management and CRM systems’ (D_PR_12), ‘partner relationship management’ (D_M_8), ‘business relationship management’ (D_PR_16), ‘account management’ (D_PR_17), B2C and B2B context (D_M_9), as well as general ‘customer-friendliness’ (D_M_19). The high frequency of skills related to customer relations and a wide variety of subskills covered here imply that customer orientation is important for companies in Denmark, and thus customer-oriented skills are also required for positions within marketing and public relations in Denmark.

Third, another category, which is coded in 14 ads in total, is *general marketing*. General marketing as a skill can be considered in terms of having general marketing knowledge and understanding of marketing-related terms (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Echegaray & Martín, 2020). Some ads within the data sample that include skills connected to general marketing emphasise the importance of having a “good understanding of marketing techniques¹⁵ (D_M_2)”, the ability to “coordinate marketing activities (D_M_12)”, ‘marketing mindset’ (D_PR_20), and “solid marketing ... background (D_PR_7).” Out of all the marketing-related

¹² Translated from Danish: “stærke grammatiske evner på dansk og engelsk”

¹³ Translated from Danish: “... skal være vant til at skrive på engelsk – og skrive godt”

¹⁴ Translated from Danish: “... skriver fejlfrit dansk og engelsk”

¹⁵ Translated from Danish: “God forståelse for markedsføringsteknikker”

skills, it has been expected that the category general marketing would have the highest frequency as the knowledge of general marketing is the core of all the other marketing-related skills, and that is why this category is coded every time a more specific marketing-related skill is mentioned and coded under other marketing-related categories (such as *digital marketing*, *marketing automation*, *marketing analytics*, *mobile marketing*, *strategic marketing*, among others).

Fourth, skills related to *sales* appear in 13 ads. There is a diverse number of subskills coded under this category, which relate to, for example, ‘sales management’ (D_M_2), ‘sales operations’ (D_M_2), ‘sales processes’ (D_M_2), ‘business development’ (D_M_4), ‘direct sales’ (D_M_5), ‘international sales’ (D_M_5), ‘cold calling’ (D_M_6), ‘wholesale’ (D_M_7), ‘retail sales’ (D_M_9), ‘technical sales’ (D_M_19), ‘internal sales’ (D_PR_7), and ‘sales consulting’ (D_PR_8).

Fifth, skills belonging to the category *digital marketing* are found in 11 ads. Another word for digital marketing is online marketing, as this type of marketing is done online. All the ads that required skills connected to ‘digital marketing’ (e.g., D_M_10), ‘online marketing’ (D_M_13), ‘email marketing’ (e.g., D_M_13; D_PR_5), ‘search engine optimisation (SEO)’ or ‘search engine marketing (SEM)’ (e.g., D_M_16; D_PR_4), and social media marketing (e.g., D_M_20; D_PR_7) are included within this category. As digital marketing also includes the use of social media and industry-specific tools, it is worth commenting on these two separate categories, which include the specific types of media and tools. The category *social and digital media* (11) includes the skills in connection to the following media, which occur most frequently: *SEO* (4), *email* (2), *Facebook* (2), and *Instagram* (2). When it comes to the category *industry-specific tools* (10), the following tools appear in the ads most often: *Meta/Facebook Business Manager* (3), *Google Ads* (3), *Mailchimp* (2), and *Google Analytics* (2). The frequent occurrence of different skills related to digital marketing as well as different types of social and digital media and digital industry-specific tools implies that the demand for skills is affected by the advancement of digital technologies.

Overall, the majority of the deductive categories containing hard skills are coded at least once, except *crisis communication* (0), *forecasting* (0), *law* (0), *office management* (0), and *general research skills* (0). Thus, the reason why these skills are not mentioned at all within the collected ads might be that these skills are less relevant for internships, entry-level and associate positions within marketing and public relations in Denmark compared to the skills that occurred at least once or multiple times. Nevertheless, the occurrence of specific skills depends on the specific job ad, position, and scope of work. It is possible that if more job ads

were collected, or collected job ads would be from a different job portal or potentially collected on a different date and time, these job ads might also include the above-mentioned skills that have not occurred in our sample.

Furthermore, it is relevant to also comment on the required experience and education in the job ads as both previous experience and education can substantially help with acquiring or improving hard skills. Both previous experience and education are either required or seen as an advantage in a high number of job advertisements in Denmark. In total, 21 out of 29 job ads mention previous experience, even though many of these are for internships or entry-level positions. Besides, 10 job ads mention a specific type of education that a candidate should have completed (usually for entry-level and associate positions) or be enrolled in (in case of internships that can be taken as part of the education).

5.4 The Most In-Demand Skills for Marketing and Public Relations in Germany

In the following, we list the results of the content analysis of job advertisements published in Germany. The analysis is conducted on the purged sample of 37 ads. Again, we first look at the analysis results regarding soft skills and then at the results regarding hard skills.

5.4.1 Top Soft Skills in Germany

The most frequently requested soft skills in the German job ads are *communication skills* (28), *planning and organisational skills* (21), *motivation and positive attitude* (16), *creativity and innovation* (14) and finally, *teamwork* (11).

Communicational skills (28) are named as the most frequent soft skill in German job advertisements, which confirms previous studies such as those by Rios et al. (2020), Walker (2009) or Bennett (2002), in which communicational skills were also identified as one of the essential skills in the industry. Communication skills refer to written, oral and non-verbal communication (Flynn, 2014) and internal and external communication (Ferreira et al., 2022). The demand for applicants' communicative skills is picked up in various forms in German job advertisements. Many job ads specify 'communicational skills' through the predefined LinkedIn category – one of the categories through which LinkedIn helps companies specify the skills they are looking for in a person (e.g., G_M_2). Other companies elaborate on the desired skill and use descriptions such as 'communicative team player' (G_M_7), demand

‘written as well as oral expression skills’ (G_PR_13) or state directly: “You are a communication talent¹⁶ (G_M_10).”

The category *planning and organisational skills* is the second most frequently coded category in Germany (21 job ads). This skill is also often mentioned in the form of predefined LinkedIn categories ‘organisational skills’ (e.g., G_PR_14), ‘time management’ (e.g., G_PR_15), ‘planning’ (e.g., G_PR_15), or ‘coordination’ (e.g., G_PR_20). Besides, the job advertisers frequently ask also for a structured work style (e.g., G_M_6) or, less frequently, for a high degree of self-organisation (e.g., G_PR_20).

Soft skill *motivation and positive attitude* is requested with an absolute frequency of 16 out of 37 job advertisements. In German job advertisements, synonyms, and paraphrases for the desire for this skill are also used in addition to ‘motivation’ (e.g., G_PR_7) and ‘positive attitude’ (e.g., G_PR_4). While job ad G_M_2 asks for “commitment and the willingness for taking responsibility”, in job ad G_M_4, it is colloquially described as “you want to move something.” Other job ads ask for ‘passion’¹⁷ (e.g., G_M_10), ‘energy’¹⁸ (e.g., G_PR_12) or ‘enthusiasm’¹⁹ (e.g., G_PR_14).

Also among the top five most requested soft skills is the category *creativity and innovation*, which is picked up by 14 job ads. Creativity and innovation refer to the development of ideas, whereby creativity is more geared towards originality, while innovation primarily encompasses new inventions (cf. Vehar, 2020). Both terms are used literally in job advertisements, either as nouns or adjectives.

Another important soft skill within the job advertisements is the category *teamwork*, which is picked up by 11 job advertisements. While the companies partly use the skill category ‘teamwork’ (G_M_7) predefined by LinkedIn, the job advertisements also often use the Anglicism ‘team player’ (e.g., G_M_7) or describe the ideal candidate as a person who “enjoys working in a team (e.g., G_PR_10).”

Within the dataset of ads from Germany, soft skills occur very frequently. As a matter of fact, all German ads include at least one soft skill, which implies that soft skills might be considered important for internships, entry-level and associate positions within marketing and public relations in Germany. Besides, some categories of soft skills are not mentioned in German job advertisements. Those are the categories *constructive criticism* (0), *critical*

¹⁶Translated from German: “Du bist ein Kommunikationstalent”

¹⁷ Translated from German: “Leidenschaft”

¹⁸ Translated from German: “Energie”

¹⁹ Translated from German: “Begeisterungsfähigkeit”

thinking (0), *emotional intelligence and empathy* (0), and lastly, *ethical behaviour and work ethics* (0). The fact that these skills are not mentioned might suggest that they are less in-demand in the German communications industry or that their weighting in relation to other skills could be lower. As already stated when discussing not mentioned soft skills in Denmark, there are also other possible reasons for the absence of these skills in the German job ads, such as that they are already seen as a must-have in organisations, are taken for granted or are implicitly understood in other skills' labels, and thus they might not be explicitly mentioned within the job ads even though candidates are expected to have these skills.

5.4.2 Top Hard Skills in Germany

In this paragraph, we will look at the hard skills most in demand in Germany. These are *general marketing* (29), *language* (27), *social/digital media* (20), *writing skills* (20), *administrative software* (18) and finally, *public relations* (16). These hard skills have the highest frequency in the sample of ads from Germany.

Our analysis results show that the hard skill *general marketing* can be described as the most frequently demanded hard skill, as mentioned in 29 job advertisements (out of 37) in Germany. The hard skill of general marketing is connected to a fundamental understanding of processes and methods within marketing (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023). Since this category is counted as fulfilled always when a certain subskill is in demand in the field of marketing, there are very different manifestations of this category. In the cases in which the general understanding of marketing is referred to, this is either done with the category 'marketing' (e.g., G_PR_2) or 'marketing measures' (e.g., G_M_14) predefined by LinkedIn, or it is listed directly in the text with formulations such as 'integrated marketing experience' (G_PR_18) or in the list of the necessary experience that an applicant should have (e.g., G_M_13).

Language is the second most frequently requested hard skill. This category is always coded as fulfilled if the job advertisement requires knowledge of at least one language. This occurred 27 times in the German sample. *English* is the most frequently requested (in 26 job advertisements), followed by *German*, mentioned as a required language in 19 job advertisements. The fact that English is asked for more often than German may be due to the internationalisation of the companies or that the German language is considered so fundamental that it is not even mentioned in some job advertisements. However, it is striking that none of the German job ads asks for another language besides German or English.

The third most frequently mentioned hard skills are *social/digital media* and *writing skills*, each in 20 out of 37 job ads. The social media category is always coded as fulfilled if the job ad either asks for a social media skill in general or if it addresses specific methods or platforms. These are then coded as well so that quantitative statements can be made about their absolute frequencies. For example, three job advertisements ask about the hard skill of *influencer marketing* or *influencer relations*, which is about the relationship with and rights use of influencers who are most active on social media. Three job advertisements also ask explicitly for skills related to the *YouTube* platform, either about the general use of the platform (G_M_13), one's activity on YouTube (G_PR_5) or the platform is again marked by the category 'YouTube' (e.g., G_M_8) predefined by LinkedIn within the job advertisement. Other platforms mentioned in the German job advertisements are *Facebook* (1), *LinkedIn* (1) and *Pinterest* (1). *Blogs* (2) and *email* (2) are also mentioned as digital channels. In addition, the German sample referred to methodological skills in *search engine optimisation* (1), *social media optimisation* (1) and *social media ads* (1).

The hard skill *writing* is also mentioned 20 times within the German sample. This category is also coded when either the general writing skills of a person are inquired about, for example, through the categories 'writing' (e.g., G_PR_13), 'texts' (e.g., G_M_8), or 'text creation' (e.g., G_PR_7) predefined by LinkedIn, or when particular text forms are addressed. In the German job advertisements, for example, these are *copywriting* (e.g., G_M_5), *direct mails* (e.g., G_M_14), *newsletters* (e.g., G_PR_2), *blog posts* (G_PR_5) and *marketing texts* (G_PR_12). Within the German sample for the search term 'public relations', the ability to write *press releases* is also asked several times. Once, the ability of *creative storytelling*²⁰ is also specifically asked about (G_PR_17).

The hard skill of administrative software is also mentioned relatively often, with 18 mentions. This category also includes the documentation of the software mentioned. *MS Office* is mentioned most frequently in 18 job advertisements. The *MS Excel* (4) and *MS PowerPoint* (5) programmes falling under MS Office are also in demand. *Outlook* and *Google Workspace* are also mentioned once each in the German job ads.

Finally, more than half of the German job ads mention the hard skill of *public relations* (16 of 37 job ads). On the one hand, this is often done through the category 'public relations' predefined by LinkedIn or by requiring specific public relations methods from the applicants. For the most part, this could be 'monitoring the press and social media platforms' (e.g.,

²⁰ Translated from German: "Kreatives Storytelling"

G_M_3), ‘media planning’ (e.g., G_M_12), or ‘planning press conferences’ (G_PR_14). While some job advertisements also ask for general knowledge in the field of public relations: “support in the conception and implementation of PR measures²¹ (G_PR_1)”, others ask more specifically for someone “who can expertly lead integrated consumer PR campaigns (G_PR_11).”

In addition, some hard skills are not mentioned even once in the German sample of job ads. These are *law* (0), *market research* (0), skills related to *designing and implementing marketing plan* (0), *marketing automation* (0), *marketing analytics/marketing metrics* (0), *mobile marketing and mobile apps* (0), and *product management* (0). Similar to the not mentioned soft skills, this means that their weighting in relation to other skills could be lower. It is also important to emphasise that the prevalence of specific skills is dependent upon the specific job ad, position, and scope of work. If more job ads were collected, or collected job ads would be from a different job portal or potentially collected on a different date and time, the job ads might also comprise the above-mentioned skills despite our sample not containing them.

Alongside soft and hard skills, it has been examined if the job advertisements mention whether the applicants should already have practical experience from previous jobs, engagements or projects or a particular form of training or education. In Germany, the question of previous experience is particularly asked (31 out of the 37 job ads). This even applies to advertised internships (e.g., G_PR_1) and entry-level jobs (e.g., G_M_9). In addition, 26 job advertisements out of 37 ask for specific kind of training. These include university programmes or commercial training in marketing, economics and business administration, communication science or digital media.

5.5 The Most In-Demand Skills for Marketing and Public Relations in Slovakia

This section presents the results regarding the most in-demand skills in Slovakia. The content analysis of job advertisements in Slovakia is performed on the purged sample of 29 ads. In the following subsection, the most frequently appearing soft skills are discussed and followed by the chapter about the hard skills with the highest occurrence.

²¹ “Unterstützung bei der Konzeption und Umsetzung von PR-Maßnahmen”

5.5.1 Top Soft Skills in Slovakia

The content analysis of job advertisements in Slovakia generated results that show that the most in-demand soft skills for marketing and public relations in Slovakia are *communication skills* (19), *teamwork* (17), *goal orientation and strategic thinking* (11), *motivation* (10), and *independency* (9). These soft skills have the highest frequency in the sample of ads from Slovakia.

First, *communications skills* are present in 19 out of 29 ads. As the literature review showed, there can be various subskills under this category, and these are, for example, general communication skills, verbal communication skills, written communication skills, interpersonal communication skills, or corporate communication skills (cf. Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Echegaray & Martín, 2020; Royle & Laing, 2014; Walker et al., 2009; Bennett, 2002). In connection to the analysed ads in Slovakia, the following subskills are considered most important by the potential employers: general communication skills²² (e.g., S_M_1), written communication skills (S_M_11), verbal communication skills (S_M_11) and internal communication skills (S_PR_16). Similarly, as in Danish ads, communication skills in the analysed job ads are often connected with the adjectives like ‘strong’, ‘great’ and ‘excellent’, which implies their high significance. Besides, some of the job ads provided more context for the use of particular skills. For example, a job ad for Email Marketing and Automation Specialist position mentions “strong written and verbal communication skills for collaborating with internal teams and clients (S_M_11).”

Second, skills related to *teamwork* occur in 17 ads in Slovakia. As already mentioned, teamwork refers to the ability to work and cooperate in teams (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Echegaray & Martín, 2020; Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018; Hopkins et al., 2011). The following expressions within the sample of ads in Slovakia are coded under the category teamwork: ‘teamwork’ (e.g., S_M_1), ‘being cooperative’ (S_M_12), ‘being a team player’ (e.g., S_M_12), and ‘ability to work in a team’ (e.g., S_M_13). Some job ads also emphasize the importance of cross-functional collaboration. For example, the job ad for the position of Marketing Executive mentions the “ability to work within a team collaboratively and support cross functionally (S_PR_4).” Similarly, the job advert for the position of Business Development Representative highlights the importance of finding a candidate “comfortable with collaboration across all levels of the business to deliver consistent results in work processes (S_M_2).”

²² Translated from Slovak: ‘komunikačné schopnosti’

Third, the category *goal orientation and strategic thinking* is coded in 11 ads. Both goal orientation and strategic thinking are skills connected to the focus on accomplishing a particular goal (Brunner et al., 2018; Paskin, 2013). Except for the terms ‘goal orientation’²³ (S_PR_9) and ‘strategic thinking’²⁴ (e.g., S_M_5; S_PR_6), the following expressions are coded under this category: ‘purpose-driven mindset’ (S_M_2), ‘being results-oriented’ (S_PR_4), ‘being solutions-oriented’ (S_PR_19), ‘performance-orientation’ (S_PR_16) and ‘being purposeful’²⁵ (S_PR_18).

Fourth, the category *motivation and positive attitude* appear ten times in the data sample. This category refers to the state of having a desire and positive view on doing or achieving something (Hopkins et al., 2011; Bennett, 2002). Within the data sample of job ads from Slovakia, the category motivation is coded for the following expressions that can be considered equivalent to motivation: ‘enthusiasm’ (e.g., S_M_2), ‘eagerness’ (e.g., S_M_2; S_PR_19), ‘drive’ (e.g., S_M_5), ‘willingness’ (e.g., S_M_9; S_PR_15), ‘being self-motivated’ (S_M_9), and ‘desire’ (S_M_15).

Fifth, the last category within soft skills presented here is *independency*. This category is coded nine times overall in the sample of ads from Slovakia. Independency can be understood as the ability to do work tasks on one’s own without constant supervision (Brunner et al., 2018). Within the sample, the category independency is coded every time it contains one of the following phrases: ‘independence/independency’ (e.g., S_M_9; S_PR_6), ‘ability to work independently’ (e.g., S_PR_4), ‘being an independent worker’ (S_PR_19), ‘ability to work/function autonomously’ (e.g., S_M_12; S_PR_4), ‘ability to work without close or with minimum supervision’ (e.g., S_M_12; S_M_15), and ‘the ability to execute individually’ (S_PR_20). The job ad for the position of Employer Brand Lead also emphasises the context within which ‘independency’ may be useful. According to them, an ideal candidate should be “... able to independently create own targets, work plans and milestones (S_PR_14).”

All in all, this data sample indicates the high importance of soft skills for internships, entry-level and associate positions within marketing and public relations in Slovakia. This can be supported by the fact that at least one soft skill is mentioned in 27 out of 29 ads.

Besides, the majority of theoretical categories containing soft skills are coded at least once, except *constructive criticism* (0), *critical thinking* (0), and *emotional intelligence and empathy* (0). Similarly, as it was discussed in relation to the ads from Denmark and Germany,

²³ Translated from Slovak: ‘ťah na bránku’

²⁴ Translated from Slovak: ‘strategické myslenie’

²⁵ Translated from Slovak: ‘byť cieľavedomý’

since these skills have not occurred once within the sample, it might imply either that these skills might not be that important for companies or that these skills might already be seen as a must-have in many companies, taken for granted or covered by other skills' labels and thus might not be mentioned explicitly even though they are expected.

5.5.2 Top Hard Skills in Slovakia

Based on the content analysis of job advertisements in Slovakia, the following hard skills can be considered most in-demand: *language* (25), *general marketing* (18), *social and digital media* (14), *digital marketing* (13), *ad campaigns and advertising* (9), and *customer relations* (9). These hard skills have the highest frequency in the sample of ads coming from Slovakia.

First, the category *language* is coded the most often out of all the categories belonging to hard skills, i.e., in 25 out of 29 ads. Each time an ad mentions a specific requirement regarding a particular language competency, then this category is coded. Most job ads mention *English* as a requirement, i.e., 22 ads. In contrast, only six ads mention the requirement for the *Slovak* language. Similarly, as it is with the Danish and German samples, the more frequent occurrence of English compared to Slovak can be caused potentially by the high number of international companies in Slovakia posting job ads on LinkedIn, and this might relate to globalisation. Besides, the data sample of Slovak ads includes a high number of remote (12) and hybrid (9) positions compared to on-site positions (6). Thus, some of the companies might be international without having direct offices in Slovakia. In addition, it is probable that many of the ads do not mention the Slovak language as a requirement because they already take it as a standard, especially job ads written in the Slovak language (e.g., S_M_5). Other languages that occurred within the sample but less frequently are *German* (3), *Czech* (2), *Hungarian* (1), and *French* (1).

Second, another category coded quite frequently is *general marketing*. This category is coded 18 times in total and can be understood in relation to general marketing knowledge and comprehension of the term related to marketing (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Echegaray & Martín, 2020). Nevertheless, this category is also coded in instances when a more specific marketing skill is mentioned and coded under other marketing-related categories (such as *digital marketing*, *marketing automation*, *marketing analytics*, *mobile marketing*, and *strategic marketing*, among others). All of these contain the 'keyword' marketing. The examples of skills and knowledge that are coded under general marketing look accordingly: 'marketing' (e.g., S_M_5), 'marketing communications' (e.g., S_M_13), 'marketing management' (S_PR_5),

‘marketing thinking’ (S_PR_9), as well as ‘marketing mix modelling’ (S_PR_14), ‘inbound marketing’ (e.g., S_PR_12), or ‘performance marketing’ (e.g., S_M_13).

Third, the next two categories with a high number of coded ads are *social and digital media* and *digital marketing*, which are coded in 14 and 13 job ads, respectively. These two categories are discussed collectively here, as they are closely related to each other. The category social and digital media is coded every time an ad mentions competency of using social and digital media or a specific medium that a candidate should know how to use and not necessarily for marketing purposes. The category digital marketing is coded each time an ad mentions ‘digital marketing’ as a skill or a specific type of digital marketing. Thus, a skill referred to as ‘social media marketing’, occurring four times in the sample of job ads from Slovakia, is coded both under the category social and digital media and digital marketing due to the fact that social media marketing implies the competency of using social media and also it is a type of digital marketing. The category social and digital media contains the skills in connection to the following media, which occur most frequently: *SEO* (6), *email* (4), *LinkedIn* (1), and *Instagram* (1). The category digital marketing includes the following coded phrases: ‘digital marketing’ (e.g., S_M_1 and S_PR_12), ‘online marketing’ (S_M_7), ‘email marketing’ (e.g., S_M_11), ‘search engine optimisation (SEO)’ or ‘search engine marketing (SEM)’ (e.g., S_PR_9), and social media marketing (e.g., S_M_14 and S_PR_6). As various skills connected to digital marketing and social and digital media appear quite frequently, it can be argued that the demand for skills reflects the accelerated development of new technologies.

Fourth, another category *ad campaigns and advertising* is coded in 9 job ads. This category refers to different types of advertising, including traditional and digital advertising. The following examples of expressions from the job ads are coded under this category: ‘advertising’ (e.g., S_M_1), ‘campaigns’ or ‘marketing campaigns’ (e.g., S_M_3; S_PR_20), ‘marketing campaign management’ (e.g., S_M_11; S_PR_12), and ‘paid campaigns’ (S_PR_14). Based on this, it can be argued that skills related to ad campaigns and advertising might be considered by many companies important for positions within marketing and public relations in Slovakia.

Lastly, the skills related to *customer relations* are also mentioned in 9 ads. These skills include a variety of skills that are oriented towards customers. The specific instances from the sample include the following skills: ‘customer service’ (e.g., S_M_12), ‘customer support’ (S_M_16), ‘customer interaction’ (S_M_15), ‘customer success’ (S_M_15), ‘customer experience’ (S_M_16), ‘customer engagement’ (S_M_11), ‘customer satisfaction’ (S_M_16), ‘customer orientation’ (S_PR_9), ‘customer relationship management and CRM systems’ (e.g.,

S_M_8; S_M_11), B2C and B2B context (S_M_8), as well as ‘client requirements’ (S_PR_19). As these examples demonstrate, the customers’ side might be also considered important in Slovakia, and thus, skills related to dealing with customers might be highly demanded as well.

In summary, many of the deductive categories containing hard skills are coded at least once, except *crisis communication* (0), *e-commerce* (0), *financial skills* (0), *forecasting* (0), *journalism* (0), *law* (0), *mobile marketing* (0), *office management* (0), and *website development* (0). The reason for the absence of these skills within the Slovak sample might be that such competencies might be less important for internships, entry-level and associate positions within marketing and public relations in Slovakia. However, as already mentioned with Danish and German ads, the appearance of certain competencies is dependent upon the job ad, specific position, and scope of work. In case additional job ads were collected, or job postings would be collected using a different job portal or perhaps saved on a different date and time, the collected job ads could contain the skills that have not occurred in this sample.

Besides, similarly, as with the previous countries, it is essential to discuss the findings regarding required experience and education. Within the data sample, experience and education are frequently considered a requirement or an advantage by companies. Overall, 14 out of 29 ads highlight the importance of previous experience – either as a requirement or a plus, and 6 job ads also mention a specific education.

5.6 Inductively Derived Skills

In this part of the analysis, we want to present the inductive skills that are not covered by the category system derived from the theory but are nevertheless mentioned in some job advertisements. This section discusses these skills jointly and summarises them within tables. As they appear within the analysis process, they should be further investigated by future research as they might be relevant for possible future theory building (see section [6.5](#)). Figure 13 shows the inductively derived soft skills.

Skill	Denmark (29 job ads)	Germany (37 job ads)	Slovakia (29 job ads)
Agility	0	0	2
Being hard-working	0	0	2
Big-Picture-Thinking	0	1	0
Curiosity	1	0	0
Decision-making	0	1	1
Deliverability	0	0	1
Entrepreneurial thinking	0	0	1
Good comprehension or understanding	0	3	0
Negotiation	0	1	2
Self-confidence	2	1	0
Seriousness	1	0	0
Unbiasedness	0	0	1

Figure 13: Overview of the Inductively Derived Soft Skills

As can be seen in Figure 13, the deductive categories currently cover the most frequently demanded soft skills in marketing and public relations. Only a few skills do not fit into the deductive categories.

Firstly, the skill of *self-confidence* appears within the Danish sample twice, using the adjective self-confident²⁶ to describe the ideal applicant (e.g., D_M_9; D_PR_3) or naming the skill itself (D_M_2). In one German ad (G_PR_10), the capability is listed within the advertisement by using the predefined LinkedIn category of ‘self-confidence’.

Secondly, the skill of *decision-making* is mentioned once by a German job ad, again using the predefined LinkedIn skill ‘decision-making’ (G_M_12), and once by a Slovak advertisement asking for a “passion for data-driven decision-making (S_M_11).” Thirdly, the predefined LinkedIn skill of ‘*negotiation*’ is picked up by two Slovak ads (S_M_5, S_M_8) and one German ad (G_M_12).

Some skills marked in green within Figure 13 were mentioned more than once but only within one country. The analysis of the German job ads shows that three ads request the soft skill of *good comprehension or understanding* (3 out of 37 job ads). However, this skill is not

²⁶ Translated from Danish: “selvsikker”

requested by either Danish or Slovak job ads and is not relevant for further international theory building. Similarly to the soft skill of good comprehension within Germany, the soft skills of *being hard-working* and *agility* appear each twice within the Slovak sample of job ads. The former is expressed in the ads simply as ‘being hard-working’ (S_M_2) and having the “ability to work hard daily with minimum direct supervision (S_M_15).” The latter relates to the ability to move or think quickly and easily. This skill is articulated in the ads as ‘being agile’ (S_PR_19) and having ‘high learning agility’ (S_PR_20). Nevertheless, although these findings do not agree with the concept of standardisation, further research should look out if these soft skills might become more relevant in the future within and outside of those countries.

Soft skills only mentioned once within the overall sample (marked in red in Figure 13) are *big-picture thinking* (G_PR_11), *curiosity* (D_M_16), *deliverability* (S_M_11), *entrepreneurial thinking* (S_M_8), *seriousness* (D_M_16), *unbiasedness* (S_M_17). Although they have not occurred often, they should be mentioned and looked out for within further research as they might occur more often within more extensive samples.

Likewise, some hard skills were found which could not be assigned to the categories derived from theory. Figure 14 lists those that occurred more than once.

Skill	Denmark (29 job ads)	Germany (37 job ads)	Slovakia (29 job ads)
Administration / Administrative assistance	0	0	2
Branding	6	7	2
Business management	4	1	0
Channel management	0	0	2
International Perspective/Global communication/other skills connected to globalisation	3	1	1
Operational Support / Operations management	3	0	0
Optimization / Facilitation	2	1	0
Strategy	0	0	2
Strategic communications / Strategic Initiatives	3	0	1
Working with data	0	1	5

Figure 14: Overview of the Inductively Derived Hard Skills (that occurred more than once)

The most prominent example of such an inductively derived hard skill is *branding* (e.g., G_PR_16). A total of 15 out of all 95 job advertisements ask for either the hard skill of branding itself or skills related to branding. In Denmark, six, in Germany, seven, and in Slovakia, two mention the hard skill of general branding or a related subskill (e.g., ‘brand perception’ (D_M_8), ‘brand awareness’ (G_PR_11; G_PR_11), ‘brand development’ (D_PR_6; G_M_17) or ‘brand activation’ (S_PR_14). The frequency of mentions of branding and related skills suggests that it has some importance within marketing and public relations, which should be considered in future research and that a possible theoretical derivation could be made.

Similarly to soft skills, there are small inconsistencies in connection to the repeated occurrence in some hard skills within a certain country but not others. For example, ‘business management’ (D_PR_2) and other related business-related skills (e.g., ‘business acumen’ (D_M_4) or ‘business planning’ (D_M_19)) are mentioned in four Danish job ads. In contrast, business-related skills are only mentioned in one German job ad (G_M_4) and none of the Slovak job ads. Another example is the hard skills related to *working with data*, picked up by five Slovak advertisements, but only by one German job advertisement (G_PR_1) and none of the Danish advertisements. Examples of these are ‘data analysis’ (S_M_5; S_PR_4), ‘data management’ (S_M_9), ‘data analytics’ (S_M_11), and ‘data collection’ (S_M_17). These examples might lead to the assumption that there are still different evaluations between countries regarding the importance of specific skills, and perhaps low standardisation regarding these skills across countries.

Among all the data, there have also been identified instances that ask for skills or competencies that can be considered as needed in order to navigate in a globalised job market. Examples of such skills are global communication (G_PR_11) and international perspective (D_PR_9). Two other ads offer more context – one of them requires a candidate to be “socially inclusive to the unique needs of a global team environment (D_M_15)”, and other two would prefer a candidate with experience working in international and/or multicultural companies, institutions, or teams (D_PR_7; S_M_12). The presence of these skills suggests that globalisation is a phenomenon that might be influencing the demand for specific skills. It is assumed that skills like global communication or international perspective might be needed due to the increased internationalisation of firms, which means that these skills might be needed for both internal (with colleagues) and external communication (with clients).

6 Discussion

The previous part presented the results in connection to the most relevant skills across countries and separately in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia as well as inductively derived skills. In this section of the project, we compare the results presented in the analysis and discuss the possible differences and similarities in the findings between the countries and fields. This chapter also explores possible practical and theoretical implications of the study results. All in all, this discussion section serves to answer the second part of the problem formulation about differences and similarities in the job ads across countries and fields, practical implications of the findings for study programmes and graduates and theoretical implications for academia.

6.1 Comparison of Findings Across Countries

To compare the skills across countries, we calculated the percentage of ads in which a specific skill occurs in each country. The total samples of ads in the countries differ, and therefore, the total number of ads in which a specific skill occurs is not a suitable metric for comparison. The following table shows the overview of the top skills within each country (see Appendix D in [Appendices](#) for the overview of all skills). Next to each skill, there is a percentage in brackets indicating what percentage of ads within a given sample includes a specific skill.

Denmark (29 job ads)	Germany (37 job ads)	Slovakia (29 job ads)
Soft skills		
Planning and organisational skills (14; 48,28%)	Communication skills (28; 75,68%)	Communication skills (19; 65,52%)
Motivation and positive attitude (14; 48,28%)	Planning and organisational skills (21; 56,76%)	Teamwork (17; 58,62%)
Communication skills (13; 44,83%)	Motivation and positive attitude (16; 43,24%)	Goal orientation and strategic thinking (11; 37,93%)
Teamwork (13; 44,83%)	Creativity and innovation (14; 37,84%)	Motivation and positive attitude (10; 34,48%)
Initiative (11; 37,93%)	Teamwork (11; 29,73%)	Independency (9; 31,03%)
Hard skills		
Language (17; 58,62%)	General marketing (29; 78,38%)	Language (25; 86,21%)
Customer relations (16; 55,17%)	Language (27; 72,97%)	General marketing (18; 62,07%)
General marketing (14; 48,28%)	Social and digital media (20; 54,05%)	Social and digital media (14; 48,28%)
Sales (13; 44,83%)	Writing skills (20; 54,05%)	Digital marketing (13; 44,83%)

Digital marketing (11; 37,93%)	Administrative software (18; 48,65%)	Ad campaigns and advertising (9; 31,03%)
Social and digital media (11; 37,93%)	Public relations (16, 43,24%)	Customer relations (9; 31,03%)
Industry-specific tools (10; 34,48%)		

Figure 15: Top Soft and Hard Skills Across Countries

Our study shows mostly similarities between datasets from individual countries and only a few differences. Although these differences are present, our sample is not that extensive, and thus it is crucial to emphasise here that in case more ads would be collected on a different date and time or potentially from a different job portal, the analysis could potentially show different results and make our findings regarding differences insignificant or even negligible.

6.1.1 Comparison of Soft Skills Across Countries

The examination of the results shows that similarities related to soft skills across countries prevail over the differences. Multiple soft skills are shared across all three countries and occur at least in 10 ads within each country sample. The skills that are relatively in high demand in all three countries are *communication skills*, *teamwork*, and *motivation and positive attitude*. This finding also complies with Hopkins et al. (2011), whose research also showed these three soft skills as highly desirable. As skills related to communication, teamwork and motivation and positive attitude are widespread in the ads from all three countries, it could imply a certain standardisation of the skillset across countries. Nevertheless, further research would be needed, including a larger number of ads and from additional countries, to verify this assumption.

Besides, there are only a few slight differences in the frequency of some soft skills across countries. When it comes to *communication skills*, they might be considered especially important in Germany (**75,68%**) and Slovakia (**65,52%**) as they are mentioned in more than half of collected job postings, whereas in Denmark, they occur only in **44,83%** of job ads. Despite the lower frequency of communication skills within Danish job ads, it cannot be argued with certainty that these skills are considered less relevant for employers in Denmark. There might be other reasons for these skills being less common in Danish job ads, such as they might be already regarded as a must-have in many companies or taken for granted and thus, they are not explicitly asked for within some job ads. It is also possible that communication skills might be implicitly understood in other skills' labels (such as language competencies).

The same principles apply to other skills which are either more or less emphasised in a certain country compared to the rest. For example, *planning and prioritisation skills* are demanded more often in Denmark (48,28%) and Germany (56,76%) compared to Slovakia (24,14%). Moreover, *creativity and innovation skills* are one of the top skills in Germany (37,84%) but not in Denmark (27,59%) and Slovakia (24,14%), where other skills have a higher frequency within job ads. *Teamwork* is the second highest occurring skill in Slovakia as it appears in 58,62% of ads, and that is also higher compared to Denmark (44,83%) and Germany (29,73%). Yet the importance of teamwork for marketing and public relations positions in Slovakia is considered interesting. Based on our knowledge of the Slovak work culture as well as personal experience (Natalia), there has been traditionally a tendency to prefer individual work and performance within organisations as well as when it comes to student work in primary, secondary, and higher education. Thus, the relatively higher frequency of this skill in Slovakia compared to Denmark and Germany might imply two things. First, Slovak companies requiring teamwork as a soft skill have started to follow the example of the ‘Western’ companies for which teamwork is more typical. Second, as part of the internationalisation, the international companies in Slovakia might require teamwork because of the frequent collaboration with teams from other countries.

Besides, there is also *goal orientation*, which is one of the top skills in Slovakia (37,93%), whereas in Denmark (27,58%) and in Germany (21,62%), it occurs less often, and there are other skills that appear more frequently than goal orientation in these two countries. Nevertheless, the same principles explained in the above paragraphs apply to this example, as this slight variation cannot prove with certainty that goal orientation is less important in Denmark and Germany than in Slovakia.

Getting back to the commonalities that job ads display across countries, there is an absence of the same deductive-derived skills, which were discovered through the literature review and used as categories for the analysis. In Denmark, they are *constructive criticism*, *critical thinking*, and *ethical behaviour and work ethics*. The sample of ads from Germany does not mention once *constructive criticism*, *critical thinking*, *emotional intelligence and empathy*, and *ethical behaviour and work ethics*. In Slovakia, the absent skills within collected job ads are *constructive criticism*, *critical thinking*, and *emotional intelligence and empathy*. Thus, *constructive criticism*, which was initially deducted from Brunner et al. (2018) and *critical thinking*, initially deducted from Todd (2009) and Hopkins et al. (2011), do not occur in our dataset at all. Emotional intelligence and empathy, initially deducted from Ferreira et al. (2022),

occur in four ads in Denmark and ethical behaviour and work ethics, initially deducted from Bernhard & Russmann (2023), appear only once within ads from Slovakia.

These skills rarely occur within our overall sample, and one possible reason for that might be that these skills are not that essential for companies in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. Nevertheless, as already mentioned in each country section within [5 Analysis](#), another possible cause of the lack of these skills in the job ads might be that these skills could already be considered a standard in many organisations in Denmark, Germany and Slovakia, or could be taken for granted or contained in other skills' label and thus, these skills might not be explicitly mentioned although they are expected.

Unsurprisingly, the skillset that is demanded in Denmark, Germany and Slovakia can be considered highly standardised or globalised as there are many similarities present, whereas differences are minor. There are no significant differences in the required skillset – there is no skill that would be among the top skills in one country and not at all demanded in others. It is believed that further research and a larger sample are needed to assess if the small differences in the required skillset across countries that have been discovered in this research are applicable to a larger and more global context.

Besides, as soft skills frequently occur within the job ads in all three countries, they might be considered important by companies in all three countries. One reason for their high occurrence could potentially be the rise in hybrid and remote work settings, as recent research by Ferreira et al. (2022) showed higher demand for soft skills as well as an increase in the number of companies integrating training for new employees focused on soft skills after Covid-19 compared to pre-pandemic era.

6.1.2 Comparison of Hard Skills Across Countries

When it comes to required hard skills, there are also more visible similarities than differences. There are certain hard skills which occur across all three countries and at least in 10 ads within each country sample. The skills that are relatively in high demand in all three countries are *language*, which complies with Kovacs and Zarandne (2022) and Echegaray and Martín (2020), who highlighted the significance of language competencies, *general marketing*, which complies with Echegaray and Martín (2020) and Di Gregorio et al. (2019) discussing the importance of core marketing skills and conceptual marketing knowledge, respectively, and *social and digital media*, which complies with for example Meganck et al. (2020), whose results also showed the importance of social and digital media.

When it comes to a specific language, English dominates in all three countries. As already mentioned, the dominance of English over national languages can be intensified by the fact that some job ads might not mention national languages as a requirement in the given countries simply because they consider it already a must-have within these countries. This can be especially true for job ads written in the national language of given countries (i.e., Danish, German, or Slovak) and which simultaneously do not mention a requirement of being proficient in that tongue. In order to comprehend what are the specifications of the position described in the job ad, a native tongue is needed, and thus it is highly probable it is also a requirement for this position. Still, the fact that the English language occurs more often than national languages as a requirement within job ads implies a widespread diffusion of English as a language and certain standardisation of skillset. Thus, the high occurrence of English as a required skill might relate to the globalisation of job and labour markets.

Moreover, there are only minor variations in the occurrence of certain hard skills among different countries. The first minor difference is that skills related to customer relations (**55,17%**) and sales (**44,83%**) are required more frequently within marketing and public relations jobs in Denmark compared to Germany (customer relations (**35,14%**), sales (**22%**)) and Slovakia (customer relations (**31,03%**), sales (**13,79%**)). Besides, the top skills in Germany also include skills that might possibly seem less relevant in Denmark and Slovakia, and these are *writing skills* and skills related to *administrative software* and *public relations*. Regarding writing skills, **54,05%** of job ads in Germany mention skills related to writing compared to **24,14%** of job ads both in Denmark and Slovakia. The knowledge of a certain type of administrative software is mentioned in **48,65%** of German ads compared to **17,24%** of ads from both Denmark and Slovakia. Skills related to public relations also seem essential, especially for positions in Germany, with **43,24%** of examined ads mentioning these skills compared to **17,24%** of Danish ads and **24,14%** of Slovak ads. Since these differences are only minor, it is not possible to make certain statements regarding what they mean. The occurrence of specific skills depends on the specific job ad, position, and scope of work. Suppose job ads were collected from a different job portal or potentially collected on a different date and time, the job ads might also consist of the above-mentioned skills in varying degrees.

Overall, the skill requirements in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia can be considered highly standardised, as there are many similarities and only minor differences. There are no significant variations in the essential skills required, and no skill is exclusively demanded in one country and not in the others. For this reason, more extensive research with a larger sample

size is necessary to determine if the slight differences in skill requirements explored in this study can be applied to a broader global context.

Besides, multiple categories of hard skills are not coded even once within individual countries. For example, *law*, which was deductively derived based on Bernhard and Russmann (2023), does not occur in any ad in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. Thus, it can be concluded here that knowledge and skills related to the law might not be that important for positions within marketing and public relations in general. There are also additional skills that were first deductively derived but do not appear within the job ads in two out of three countries. These are skills related to *crisis communication* (Bernhard & Russmann, 2023), *forecasting* (Saeed, 2015), *mobile marketing* (Di Gregorio et al., 2019; Royle & Laing, 2014), and *office management* (Brunner et al., 2018), and thus these competencies might also be less relevant for marketing and public relations positions. When it comes to ads from Germany, it is important to point out that many of the marketing-related subskills do not appear at all in German ads, even though they are frequent in Danish and Slovak ads. These are the deductively derived skills related to *market research* (Saeed, 2015), *designing and implementing marketing plan* (Saeed, 2015), *marketing automation* (Ferreira et al., 2022), and *marketing analytics/marketing metrics* (Di Gregorio et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the category general marketing is the most frequently coded category within German ads (coded in **78,38%** of examined ads) which might imply that, for companies in Germany, it is more important to have the knowledge and competencies related to marketing generally instead of focusing on specific areas within marketing and related subskills. This might also imply a certain degree of standardisation on the general marketing skills level across Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia but missing standardisation for the more specific marketing-related skills.

Besides, our dataset includes job ads for internship, entry-level and associate positions, which should be suitable for students and new graduates with limited work experience. Despite that, experience seems quite important in all three countries. 31 out of 37 (**83,78%**) German ads mention the importance of previous experience compared to 21 out of 29 (**72,41%**) ads in Denmark and 14 out of 29 (**48,28%**) ads in Slovakia. The fact that companies require or prefer a certain type of experience, even for internships and entry-level positions, might make it very challenging for new graduates to find their first full-time positions. Besides, having previous educational training is quite essential in Germany, with 26 out of 37 (**70,27%**) ads including this precondition compared to 10 out of 29 (**34,48%**) ads in Denmark and only 6 out of 29 (**20,69%**) ads in Slovakia.

6.2 Comparison of Findings Across Fields

In this section, the similarities between the two fields of marketing and public relations are discussed in more detail. Like in the previous sections, we distinguish between soft and hard skills. Before we go into the substantial similarities and differences, it must be mentioned that during data collection, some of the same job advertisements were displayed under the different search terms ‘marketing’ and ‘public relations’. In Denmark, seven job advertisements appeared in both keyword searches for ‘marketing’ and ‘public relations’. The same case occurred with the job ads from Slovakia. Here, three job ads are repeated.

While repeating job ads are only counted once in the data analysis to evaluate the frequency of the different skills overall, and for the comparison across the different countries, for the evaluation of similarities and differences between both fields, they must be considered once within the marketing sample and once within the public relation sample. The following table (Figure 16) shows the overview of the top skills within the different fields.

Marketing (49 job ads)	Public Relations (56 job ads)
Soft skills	
Communication skills (31; 63,27%)	Communication skills (34; 60,71%)
Motivation/positive attitude (23; 46,94%)	Planning and organisational skills (25; 44,64%)
	Teamwork (25; 44,64%)
Planning and organisational skills (21; 42,86%)	Creativity (20; 35,71%)
Teamwork (21; 42,86%)	Motivation/positive attitude (20; 35,71%)
Independency (16; 32,65%)	Initiative (18; 32,14%)
	Goal orientation/strategic thinking (18; 32,14%)
Creativity (13; 26,53%)	Independency (15; 26,79%)
Hard skills	
Language (34; 69,39%)	Language (39; 69,64%)
General marketing (31; 63,27%)	General marketing (38; 67,86%)
Social/digital media (22; 44,5%)	Social/digital media (31; 55,36%)

Customer relations (21; 42,86%)	Public relations (24; 42,86%)
	Writing skills (24; 42,86%)
Digital/online marketing (18; 36,73%)	Digital/online marketing (23, 41,07%)
IT skills/technological knowledge (17, 34,69%)	Customer relations (19; 33;93%)

Figure 16: Top Soft and Hard Skills Across Fields

6.2.1 Comparison of Soft Skills Across Fields

When looking at Figure 16 and the markings used, it becomes clear that in the categories of soft skills, the similarities outweigh the differences when comparing the occupational fields. In the job advertisements of both fields, an applicant's *communication skills* are most frequently requested. The proportion of job advertisements asking for these skills is also comparably high: of the job advertisements found under the search term 'marketing', **63,27%** asked for communication skills, while **60,71%** of the advertisements found under the search term 'public relations' did so.

Soft skill *motivation/positive attitude* is also one of the most frequently requested in both fields. **46,94%** of the ads assigned to the field of marketing ask for this soft skill, making it the second most requested soft skill in the field of marketing. Within the ads assigned to the field of public relations, **35,71%** ask for this soft skill.

The job ads collected using the search term 'public relations' mention *planning and organisational skills* (**44,64%**) second most frequently. This skill also appears frequently under the search term 'marketing' with **42,86%**. Soft skill *teamwork* is also frequently mentioned in both fields: in the marketing sample in 21 advertisements and in the public relations sample in 25 advertisements.

In addition, soft skills *independence* (marketing: 16 job ads; public relations: 15 job ads) and *creativity* (marketing: 13 job ads; public relations: 20 job ads) are relatively often demanded within both samples.

In the field of public relations, the soft skill *initiative* is frequently requested with **32,14%**, which is asked for in the job ads under the search term marketing in a smaller proportion of **24,49%**.

Another minor difference between the two fields is the frequency of the soft skill *goal orientation*, which is mentioned ten times in the marketing sample (**20,41%**), while the public

relations sample mentions it repeatedly, with **32,14%**. Another common feature of the two samples, according to the search terms ‘marketing’ and ‘public relations’, is the absence of the soft skills of *constructive criticism* and *critical thinking*.

6.2.2 Comparison of Hard Skills Across Fields

Concerning the most sought-after hard skills for internship, entry-level, and associate roles, marketing and public relations have more similarities than differences. This is also clearly shown by the colour coding in Figure 16. The three most in-demand hard skills are almost identical in terms of rank and share of the total sample. The hard skill *language* is mentioned most frequently in job advertisements.

Within the job ads found using the search term ‘marketing’, **69,39%** mention at least one language the applicant must know. **91,12%** mention English and that is 31 job ads out of 34 which mention at least one language. English is thus the most requested language in the field of marketing. This data is again consistent with the job ads found using the search term ‘public relations’. **67,86%** ask for at least one language. Once again, English is the most often requested language: **97,44%** of the job ads in public relations that mention at least one language mention English. In both cases, this decision suggests an internationalisation within marketing and public relations, which means that many companies expect applicants to be proficient in English. This can also be easily seen in Figure 17, which lists the languages mentioned and the respective percentages. It shows not only that English is considered necessary by most companies but what other languages are mentioned. Although the study only covers three countries, many more languages are mentioned, especially within the marketing ads. This could indicate an internationalisation of the marketing field and general importance of foreign language competencies.

Language	Marketing	Public Relations
Czech	2 (4,08%)	0
Danish	5 (10,2%)	7 (12,5%)
Dutch	1 (2,04%)	0
English	30 (61,22%)	38 (67,86%)
French	1 (2,04%)	0
German	13 (26,53%)	11 (19,64%)
Hungarian	1 (2,04%)	0

Norwegian	1 (2,04%)	2 (3,57%)
Slovak	4 (8,13%)	2 (3,57%)
Swedish	1 (2,04%)	1 (1,79%)

Figure 17: Frequency of Languages Across Fields

The second most frequently mentioned hard skill in both fields is *general marketing*. This observation is particularly striking in the public relations sample, where job ads ask for the hard skill *general marketing* (**67,86%**) more frequently than for the hard skill *public relations* (**42,86%**). This also allows theoretical conclusions to be drawn, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section. The research units in the public relations sample mention the hard skill of *general marketing* even slightly more frequently than those in the marketing sample, in which the hard skill is mentioned in **63,27%** of job ads.

As mentioned, the third most demanded hard skill also coincides between the two fields: *social and digital media*. Here, too, the digitalisation trend becomes visible, which influences both occupational fields according to the study's results. The advertisements belonging to the marketing sample mention this hard skill a total of 22 times (**44,5%**). The proportion of job ads belonging to the public relations sample is even slightly higher at **55,36%** (31 job ads).

On the other hand, the hard skill of *customer relations* is in demand a little more often in the marketing field (**42,86%**) than in the public relations field (**33,93%**). A similar picture emerges regarding the hard skill of *digital marketing*, which is mentioned in 23 job advertisements (**41,07%**) within the public relations sample, whereas the share within the marketing sample is somewhat lower at **36,73%**.

There are more significant differences regarding the hard skills connected to *writing* and *IT skills and technological knowledge*. While writing skills are mentioned relatively frequently in the job ads for the search term 'public relations' (**42,86%**), it is mentioned less frequently in the job ads for the search term 'marketing' (**14,29%**). The public relations sample findings confirm Bernhard and Russmann's study results (2023). The hard skill *IT skills and technological knowledge* is mentioned much more frequently within the marketing sample (**34,69%**). Within the public relations sample, on the other hand, only five job advertisements (**8,93%**) mention this hard skill.

A hard skill not mentioned once in either of the two samples is the *law*, which was requested in the study by Bernhard and Russmann (2023), at least in job advertisements for

public relations positions within the DACH region (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland). The question arises whether this hard skill has lost relevance or whether the sample used for this work is too small. In this respect, advice can be given to follow-up research to check a larger amount of data for the categories used by this study.

On the other hand, some skills are mentioned within one of the fields but not in the job advertisements of the other field. Not mentioned skills within marketing are crisis communication and journalism, and not mentioned skills within public relations are financial skills, forecasting and marketing automation. However, the number of mentions in these fields is generally deficient.

Finally, the categories of *experience* and *education* should be briefly discussed at this point. Commonalities are also found concerning these. In both fields, the applicants' practical experience is considered very important. In marketing, **61,22%** (30 out of 46 job advertisements) state that a specific practical experience is desired. The proportion in the public relations sample is even higher in this respect – at **73,21%** (41 of 56 job advertisements).

6.3 Evaluation of Comparison Models of Kotler and Mindak

In this paper's theoretical part, we presented and discussed the five different comparative models of Kotler and Mindak (1978) (see the section [3.3](#)). Before conducting the content analysis, we wanted to avoid committing ourselves to one of these models but wanted to test the five models scientifically utilizing our research results. In this section, we evaluate the different models accordingly.

Model A represents the traditional view of marketing and public relations, in which both fields can be regarded as separate from each other and differ in their areas of activity and goals (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). However, this model is refuted based on our research results. Not only do soft and hard skills coincide in various job advertisements across fields, but some of the same job advertisements are even found under the different search terms 'marketing' and 'public relations'.

Likewise, the fifth model can be refuted, in which marketing and public relations are considered inseparable, following the same goals and methods (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). Although our research results showed more similarities between the fields of marketing and public relations, the content analysis also revealed specific differences regarding the skills in demand. For example, although individual job advertisements found using the search term marketing include the soft skills *initiative* and *goal orientation and strategic thinking* as well

as the hard skills *public relations* and *writing skills*, the proportion is significantly lower than in the job advertisements using the search term public relations. The opposite picture emerged regarding the hard skill of *IT skills and technological knowledge*, which is mentioned proportionately more often in marketing job advertisements.

What can be confirmed by our research is that there is a certain overlap between the fields of marketing and public relations. This can be seen primarily in displaying the same job advertisements despite the different search terms ‘marketing’ and ‘public relations’. The agreement of the essential mentions and their frequency of the various soft and hard skills also speaks for an overlap of the fields. The applicants’ personal and social qualities are valued similarly within both fields, and the same knowledge and methods are usually demanded of them.

This research result verifies Model B, which attributes different functions to the fields, but sees some correspondence regarding goals and certain methods (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). However, models C and D could also be considered, whereby model C describes marketing as the dominant field, integrating public relations (Kotler & Mindak, 1978). The opposite form is represented by Model D, which perceives public relations as a dominant field that encompasses the spectrum of marketing tasks. This study’s results cannot be used to make a more precise statement about which of the models, B, C or D, applies. This could be addressed by further research.

6.4 Practical Implications

This part discusses the practical implications of the most prominent findings of our study. Hence, we examine how the study results can potentially be utilised in practice by students, new graduates, study programmes and educators, as well as companies. As presented and discussed in the analysis section of this project, the most in-demand soft skills overall are *communication skills, planning and organisational skills, teamwork, motivation, creativity, and initiative*. The most in-demand hard skills overall are *language, general marketing, social and digital media, customer relations, digital marketing and writing skills*.

First, the results can be valuable for professors, lecturers, tutors and career advisors from CCG, Aalborg University and other universities in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia to design curricula and study programmes so that they include the skills that are needed in practice to perform marketing- and public-relations-related jobs. The approach for teaching soft and hard skills should vary. As pointed out in the theoretical framework of this project (section

[3.2.1](#)), hard skills can be easily assessed and measured. In contrast, soft skills are not that easy to evaluate objectively (Imdorf, 2007). That is why there should be different methods and approaches for improving soft skills and teaching hard skills (Laker & Powell, 2011), and that should also be reflected in the educational curricula. There could be perhaps also a more practical approach for learning soft skills, such as communication and planning and prioritisation skills so that students can learn them by doing practical exercises designed to enhance these skills.

In connection to hard skills, our research showed quite a high demand for different types of digital skills, including social and digital media and digital marketing, as well as the importance of various digital tools, such as industry-specific tools and administrative software. This complies with multiple authors in academia, who also emphasised the crucial importance of digital and technical skills (cf. Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Di Gregorio et al., 2019; Veer & Dobeles, 2019; Verčič et al., 2015; Royle & Laing, 2014; Valenti, 2012). When it comes to teaching these skills, a mixture of theoretical and practical approaches could be useful here. Thus, we believe students should be taught theory about social media and digital marketing but also should be given a chance to learn to use in practice different kinds of social media, industry-specific tools, and administrative software. All in all, our results show that even for the internship and entry-level positions, competency in various social and digital media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, SEO), administrative software (e.g., Excel) and industry-specific tools (e.g., Google Analytics) is essential.

Nevertheless, we believe universities should not be left alone in providing the right skills for graduates. As there are too many different kinds of social and digital media, administrative software, and industry-specific tools, it is not possible to teach students everything. Therefore, companies should not require students and fresh graduates to possess experience in these tools; instead, they should provide training in these tools. Alternatively, they could cooperate with higher education institutions in providing these skills, for example, through offering internships, courses, or workshops to students during which they could learn to work with frequently required tools.

Besides digital skills, also language skills, especially English, are in high demand in all three of our chosen countries. This means some university courses should also focus on developing strong verbal and written English competencies of students. Any additional language included as a supplementary course would be viewed as an advantage of a given university programme as job ads often ask for the language competency in an additional language.

Second, the study results can also be helpful for students, new graduates, and first-time job seekers, as this study proposes which soft and hard skills are currently in demand, and thus, which skills are important to be learned or enhanced for improving career prospects within the fields of marketing and public relations. Our research can help young people choose higher education programmes with curricula developing the right soft and hard skills (mentioned in the paragraph above). Apart from university programmes, students, new graduates, and first-time job seekers can seek additional training, courses or certificates that are easy to get access to, even online, in today's digitalised era. Many online learning platforms include courses focused on improving in-demand soft and hard skills, including digital competencies and tools, as well as languages.

6.5 Theoretical Implications and Further Research

In part [6.3](#), we have already discussed the theoretical implications of Kotler and Mindak's (1978) comparative models. At this point, we will discuss further theoretical implications of our research that have not yet been mentioned.

First of all, at this point, we address once again the skills that were inductively derived from the research units (see the section [5.6](#)). They should be further investigated by future research as they might be relevant for possible future theory building. Both in terms of soft skills (e.g., self-confidence) and hard skills (e.g., business management), there are some skills that are mentioned by several job advertisements in all three countries. Even though there are only a few mentions, the use of a larger sample should prove how relevant these skills are for the professional fields of marketing and public relations. The same applies to skills that are mentioned more frequently within one country but not in the other countries as shown in Figure 13 and in Figure 14 (in section [5.6 Inductively Derived Skills](#)).

All in all, as it emerged already from the literature review, further research focusing on identifying the most 'in-demand' skills within marketing and public relations is constantly needed. In order to keep up with the rapidly changing demand for skills, it might be advantageous to continually update the academic field concerning the acquisition of proper skills with the latest and most relevant findings (Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Di Gregorio, 2019) and that is what this study did as well. Our study offers concrete and latest theoretical implications based on our research findings, i.e., the most in-demand skills within the fields of marketing and public relations which comply with the current state of the literature,

additionally inductively derived skills from job ads and implications in terms of the relationship between marketing and public relations.

The existing literature examined the skills demanded, for example, in English-speaking regions (e.g., Meganck et al., 2020; Di Gregorio et al., 2019; Finch et al., 2012), Australasia (Veer and Dobeles, 2019) or France, Italy and Spain (Di Gregorio et al., 2019), and as far as can be seen, focused on only one of the fields of marketing and public relations. In contrast, our study focuses on both these fields and clarifies similarities and differences between the fields in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia, which have hardly been examined so far (an exception here is the study by Bernhard and Russmann (2023) and Di Gregorio et al. (2019), which focus on the skills required in Germany, among other countries, for the field of public relations and marketing, respectively). Besides, our study can be considered one of the newest studies within this field, contributing to the newest findings based on the job markets no longer affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Further research could focus on the verification of our findings. For example, in the form of the iterative research process, it would be possible to test our results further, which could be potentially done through expert interviews. Interviews could be done in cooperation with marketing and public relations experts, who would be asked about their beliefs and opinions regarding the most vital skills for marketing and public relations positions and the relationship between marketing and public relations. Another possibility is to conduct an extensive quantitative longitudinal study involving repeated observations over a certain period. Such a study would require using specialised statistical software to count the frequency of skills within job ads. Nevertheless, it would generate more generalisable results and serve to form concrete hypotheses and models. Apart from that, it would be possible to include additional countries in which similar research has not been carried out before, as well as other industries or focus on the communication field as a whole.

7 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the purpose and process of this research and answers the problem formulation. This paper's primary goal was to provide new insights and understanding of the problem formulation set out at the beginning of this project, which states the following:

- What are currently the most in-demand skills for marketing and public relations professionals based on the job advertisements in Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia?
- What differences or similarities do the job ads display across countries and fields?

- Which practical implications do the findings have for study programmes and graduates within marketing and public relations, and what theoretical implications do they constitute for the academic field?

In order to answer this problem formulation, the literature review was conducted covering the search for academic articles for two purposes: 1) the examination of the articles that, similarly to our study, identify the most relevant, essential or in-demand skills for the fields of marketing and public relations and 2) theory building using the academic articles which contain definitions of relevant concepts and themes. Following the formation of the theoretical framework, the deductive model was proposed using the models of the possible relationship between marketing and public relations by Kotler and Mindak (1978) and additional findings from the literature review regarding required skills for the fields of marketing and public relations. Deductive categories used for the content analysis were derived from this model.

Next, the mixed quantitative and qualitative content analysis was conducted on the job advertisements collected from LinkedIn involving three countries – Denmark, Germany, and Slovakia. The analysis generated results which are adequate for answering the problem formulation.

In order to answer the first part of the problem formulation identifying the current most in-demand skills for marketing and public relations professionals based on the job advertisements in Denmark, Germany and Slovakia, it can be concluded that the most in-demand soft skills are *communication skills, planning and organisational skills, teamwork, motivation, creativity, and initiative*. The most in-demand hard skills are *language, general marketing, social and digital media, customer relations, digital marketing and writing skills*.

Soft skills are mentioned in most ads, and their frequent occurrence could mean that companies perceive them as necessary. At the same time, the high frequency of soft skills might be connected to the rise in hybrid and remote work environments after Covid-19. Concerning the most in-demand hard skills, they might be influenced by both globalisation and new technology trends. English might be considered a *lingua franca* of the business world as many companies make it a requirement in their job ads, and that might be a sign of the globalised job market. Besides, skills related to social and digital media and digital marketing are considerably influenced by the advancement of technology. At the same time, the required skillset does not reflect the need for very recent technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of

Things, metaverse or blockchain. Nevertheless, it is expected that demand for these skills might increase in the near future as businesses start to implement such technologies to a higher degree.

When it comes to the second part of the problem formulation, there are more differences than similarities across countries and fields. The results potentially show the presence of standardised or globalised skillset, and the minor differences that occur would require additional verification through the analysis of a larger number of ads over a more extended period of time. Besides, some ads also mention skills that could have resulted from globalisation, such as *global communication* or *international perspective*.

Our research also offers practical implications for study programmes and recent graduates. Educators might use our results for building up the curricula and teach students the right skills potentially in cooperation with companies, while students, thanks to our research, should know which skills are essential to acquire.

The current study can answer the problem formulation at hand, but its scope is limited. The findings are derived from a specific dataset, meaning that different research methods and datasets could potentially yield varying outcomes. As the primary purpose of this study was to explore the problem and provide new insights, the generalisability of this research is not possible. Further research could verify our results using an iterative process or entail a quantitative longitudinal study that could generate more generalisable results.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Key Findings from Literature Review

Reference (in Chronological Order)	Field	The Focus of Research	The Most Important Skills and/or Findings
Middleton & Long (1990)	Marketing	Relevance of marketing education and training reflected in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employers are portrayed as knowledgeable, but in fact, they are missing a clear understanding of the specific skills required from their marketing employees - in order to improve marketing education and training, it's crucial to strengthen the relationship between academics and employers by promoting better communication and collaboration
Bennett (2002)	Multiple fields	Identification of the most important transferable personal skills within marketing, general management, finance, and human resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication skills, IT skills, initiative, motivation, and presentation skills important for marketing - ads offering higher positions and higher salaries demand a specific skillset
Todd (2009)	Public relations	An email survey to analyse educators' and practitioners' perceptions of public relations education (US)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - professionals and educators consider the same areas important: public relations ethics, public relations management, and new media technologies - professionals value new media technologies and technical skills and internships - educators value critical thinking, ethics, management skills, and theoretical foundations
Walker et al. (2009)	Marketing	Examination of graduate and employer perspectives on the skills and knowledge needed by graduates to effectively carry out job responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when marketing graduates start their employment, they often lack the skills to effectively fulfil their role in the company - recognised as being vital to both graduates and employers: communication skills, sales knowledge and marketing analytical skills

Schlee & Harich (2010)	Marketing	Identification of the most important skills required for marketing positions at different levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - required skills and knowledge differ based on the position level (entry-level, lower-level, middle-level, upper-level) - technical knowledge and skills important at all levels: Microsoft Office, Outlook, statistical software and analytics
Wellman (2010)	Marketing	Identification of the most important skills for new marketing graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skills: planning and prioritisation, general and written communications, and the knowledge of information and communications technology - personality traits: creativity and innovation, responsibility, initiative, credibility, and attention to detail
Harrigan & Hulbert (2011)	Marketing	Development of the model which should help marketing academics and education serve marketing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - despite the technology having a significant impact on marketing in actual practice, it receives relatively less attention in both academic theory and in the curriculum of educational institutions
Hopkins et al. (2011)	Marketing	Identification of essential marketing skills and characteristics to assist educators in helping students develop 'sustainable competitive advantage'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recruiters ranked skills related to critical thinking, such as problem-solving, and quantitative skills, such as application of marketing metrics, a lot higher than students or educators - important soft skills: taking the initiative, teamwork, interpersonal skills, oral communication, motivation, and personal selling skills
Finch et al. (2012)	Marketing	Examination of the most important areas for enhancement in marketing education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practitioners value the most the expertise connected to measuring return on investment and strategic marketing - skills that are vital but need improvement when it comes to teaching marketing are problem-solving, creativity, business writing and prioritisation skills

Verhoeven et al. (2012)	Digitalization in public relations	An exploratory study about the influence of digital communication and social media on PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - significant influence of digital communication and social media - social networks and online videos are considered the most important social media tools - increase in the importance of social media within the industry - fear of the uncontrollability of dialogue and the rapid dissemination of information
Finch et al. (2013)	General	Identification of factors influencing the employability of graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - soft-skills are regarded as the most crucial factor by employers when recruiting new graduates - important soft skills: communication and professionalism
Paskin (2013)	Public relations	A survey among professionals in the U.S. about the importance of traditional and new technical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practitioners see traditional skills (writing, communication, strategic thinking and planning) as similarly important as new technical skills
Flynn (2014)	Public relations	Literature review on skills necessary for twenty-first-century public relations practitioners in Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general communications skills (written, oral, and non-verbal) are a necessity - besides, today's practitioners must also have the ability to demonstrate competency in strategic planning, measurement/evaluation, cultural awareness and understanding, and the ability to be flexible and collaborative - they must listen actively, engage, and build and cultivate relationships on- and offline, in real time and around the world
Royle & Laing (2014)	Digital marketing	Identification of the most important skills for digital marketing professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Digital Marketer Model' - business management skills: corporate communication, client engagement skills - technical skills: technological knowledge, measurement, monitoring and evaluation skills - identified challenge: incorporating principles of

			digital marketing into the traditional marketing approach
Saeed (2015)	Marketing	The gap between desired and existing marketing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - desired skills that need improvement: designing and implementing a marketing plan, conducting market research, and forecasting and budgeting
Valentini (2015)	Digitalisation in public relations	Critical discussion of the 'positive' impact of social media on the PR-field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - existing studies can only make case-related statements about the influence of social media - benefits of social media are difficult to measure
Verčič et al. (2015)	Digitalisation in public relations	Meta-analysis of 155 articles on PR and 'ICTs, and digital, social and mobile (DSM) media'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social media as a sub-area of public relations is an important topic - mobile media are not discussed as often
Auger & Cho (2016)	Public relations	Content analysis to compare the courses taught within public relations curricula (in the US) to descriptions for entry- and advanced-level public relations jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employers look for graduates with the abilities to compose and author materials, speak in front of people, work with journalists, use emerging channels of communication, and develop tactics and strategies - results indicate that the curricula appear to meet the needs of the practice and that the perceived gap between offering social media courses and the needs of practice may be temporary
Brunner et al. (2018)	Public relations	Content analysis of entry-level employment ads in the USA to find out what skills employers want and expect new graduates to have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - major findings include the need for graduates to possess not only hard skills, such as writing, but also soft skill abilities, such as time management, deadline orientation, and collaboration
Di Gregorio et al. (2019)	Marketing	Identification of the most important marketing skills with a focus on 'digital transformation'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - framework identifying the skills which are most relevant and useful for new marketing graduates for acquiring their first jobs as well as subsequent career advancement - five distinct groups of skills were identified: basic soft

			skills, digital and technical skills, core marketing skills, analytical skills and customer insights skills
Veer & Dobebe (2019)	Digital marketing	Importance of digital skills for marketing professionals and new marketing graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - digital skills are considered to be imperative by marketing professionals, their employers and clients - current shortage of skills related to digital marketing - perceived importance of digital skills to future
Echegaray & Martín (2020)	Marketing	Identification of skills required for entry-level marketing positions in the Spanish B2B sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - technical skills: social media, MS Office and Search Engine Optimization/Search Engine Marketing (SEO/SEM) - meta-skills: high English proficiency, written and oral communication and teamwork - conceptual marketing knowledge: knowledge of digital marketing concepts, ad campaigns and developing marketing plans
Meganck et al. (2020)	Public relations	Identification of the most requested entry-level public relations job skills by employers (focus on traditional and advancing skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the most frequently requested skills in the sampled postings include written communication skills, organizational skills, administrative software skills, social/digital media skills, leadership abilities, ability to work in teams, and graphic design
Rios et al. (2020)	General	Identification of the most important 21st-century skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - oral and written communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills - some skills deemed necessary by authors in academia are considered unnecessary by employers (e.g., social responsibility)
Verma et al. (2021)	Social media marketing	Identification of the most important skills for social media positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skills: digital marketing skills, employee attributes, problem-solving, and IT skills - software tools: Search Engine Optimisation/Search Engine Marketing (SEO/SEM) and Hootsuite

Ferreira et al. (2022)	Digital marketing and advertising	Identification of the most critical soft and hard skills before and during the Covid-19 pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increase in remote work has accelerated the rise in demand for soft skills - increase in the number of companies integrating training for new employees focusing on soft skills, such as basic interpersonal skills, internal and external communication, emotional intelligence and empathy - hard skills needed for the industry to grow in the future and are currently in short supply: marketing analytics, marketing automation, user experience, digital video marketing and digital content marketing
Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne (2022)	Digital marketing	Identification of the essential soft skills for digital marketing professionals during the Covid-19 period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - soft skills: oral communication and presentation skills, knowledge of the Internet and software, teamwork, precision and attention to detail, and planning - the importance of foreign language knowledge and software knowledge
Bernhard & Russmann (2023)	Public relations	The impact of digitalization on the required skillsets of public relations practitioners in Austria and Germany between 2015 and 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - digitalisation in PR is changing job profiles only with respect to hard skills - PR practice is seeking a blend of traditional and digital skills in a hybrid communication system - the 'ideal' candidate in job advertisements is portrayed as an expert in general communication skills, work ethics, teamwork, financial skills, B2C skills, content generation, and research skills, as well as social media and interactive media skills

Appendix B – Data Categorisation Table

	Type of category	Theory	Category	Subcategory
1	Formal Category		Data citation or code number of the study unit	
2			Date of coding	
3			Publication date	
4			Country	
5a			Company	Name of the company
5b				Size of the company
5c				Industry
6a			Formal information about the job offer	Job title
6b				Job location
6c				Place of execution
6d				Internship/Entry-level/Associate
			Exclusion category	
	Content-Specific Categories (deductive/inductive)			
7	Soft Skills (also called personality traits) - often transferable	Di Gregorio et al., 2019	Analytical skills	
8		Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018	Attention to detail (detail-orientation skills/precision)	
9		Rios et al., 2020, Bennett, 2002; Walker et al., 2009; Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; etc.	Communication	
10		Brunner et al., 2018	Constructive criticism (e.g. able to give to colleagues/handle when received)	
11		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018	Creativity skills/innovation skills	
12		Todd, 2009; Hopkins et al., 2011	Critical thinking	
13		Ferreira et al., 2022	Emotional intelligence/empathy	
14		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Ethical behaviour/work ethics	

15		Flynn, 2014	Flexibility	
16		Brunner et al., 2018; Paskin, 2013	Goal orientation/strategic thinking	
17		Bennett, 2002; Wellman, 2010; Hopkins et al., 2011	Initiative	
18		Brunner et al., 2018	Independency	
19		Brunner et al., 2018	Interpersonal skills (relationship building/maintaining)	
20		Meganck et al., 2020	Leadership	
21		Hopkins et al., 2011; Bennett, 2002	Motivation/positive attitude	
22		Brunner et al., 2018	Multitasking skills	
23		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Brunner et al., 2018; Kovacs & Vamosi Zarandne, 2022; Meganck et al., 2020; Wellman, 2010	Planning and organisational skills	
24		Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018	Presentation skills	
25		Hopkins et al., 2011; Finch et al., 2012; Rios et al., 2020, etc.	Problem-solving skills	
26		Wellman, 2010	Responsibility/credibility	
27		Brunner et al., 2018	Stress resilience	
28		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018; Hopkins et al., 2011	Teamwork/collaboration/team player	
29			Prioritisation of soft skills	
30			Other mentioned soft skills	
31	Hard Skills (also called functional skills; technical skills; specialised knowledge and competencies)	Echegaray & Martín, 2020	Ad campaigns/advertising	
32		Meganck et al., 2020	Administrative software	
33		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Customer relations	

34	- often non-transferable	Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Ferreira et al., 2022	Content generation/creation	
35		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Crisis communication/management	
36		Di Gregorio et al., 2019	E-commerce	
37		Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018	Event-planning	
38		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023, Meganck et al., 2020	Financial skills	
39		Saeed, 2015	Forecasting	
40		Meganck et al., 2020	Graphic design	
41		Meganck et al., 2020	Industry-specific tools	
42		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	IT Skills/technological knowledge (e.g., knowledge of the Internet)	
43		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Journalism	
44		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Languages	
45		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Law	
46		Saeed, 2015	Market research	
47a		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Echegaray & Martín, 2020	Marketing	General (traditional marketing)
47b		Echegaray & Martín, 2020; Verma et al., 2021; Ferreira et al., 2022; etc.		Digital marketing/online marketing
47c		Saeed, 2015		Designing and implementing a marketing plan
47d		Ferreira et al., 2022		Marketing automation
47e		Walker et al., 2009; Di Gregorio et al., 2019; etc.		Marketing analytics/marketing metrics (measurement, monitoring and evaluation skills, e.g. measuring return on investment)
47f		Royle & Laing, 2014; Di Gregorio et al., 2019		Mobile marketing/mobile apps

47g		Finch et al., 2012		Strategic marketing/marketing strategy
47h				Other
48		Brunner et al., 2018	Office management	
49		Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018	Public relations	
50		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Brunner et al., 2018	Project management/project-based working	
51		Meganck et al., 2020	Research skills	
52		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Sales	
53		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023; Meganck et al., 2020; Brunner et al., 2018	Social media	
54		Schlee & Harich, 2010	Statistics/statistical software	
55		Ferreira et al., 2022	User experience (design)/knowledge of customer touchpoints and journey	
56		Verhoeven et al., 2012; Ferreira et al., 2022	Video	
57		Meganck et al., 2020	Website development	
58		Bernhard & Russmann, 2023	Working with products	
59		Brunner et al., 2018; Paskin, 2013	Writing skills	
60			Prioritisation of hard skills	
61			Other mentioned hard skills	

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Appendix D – Coding Sheet, Codebook, and Analysis Results

The Excel document is uploaded as an attachment during project hand-in.

Appendix E – Data Sample

Three PDF documents named ‘Data – Denmark’, ‘Data – Germany’, ‘Data – Slovakia’ are uploaded as attachments during project hand-in.