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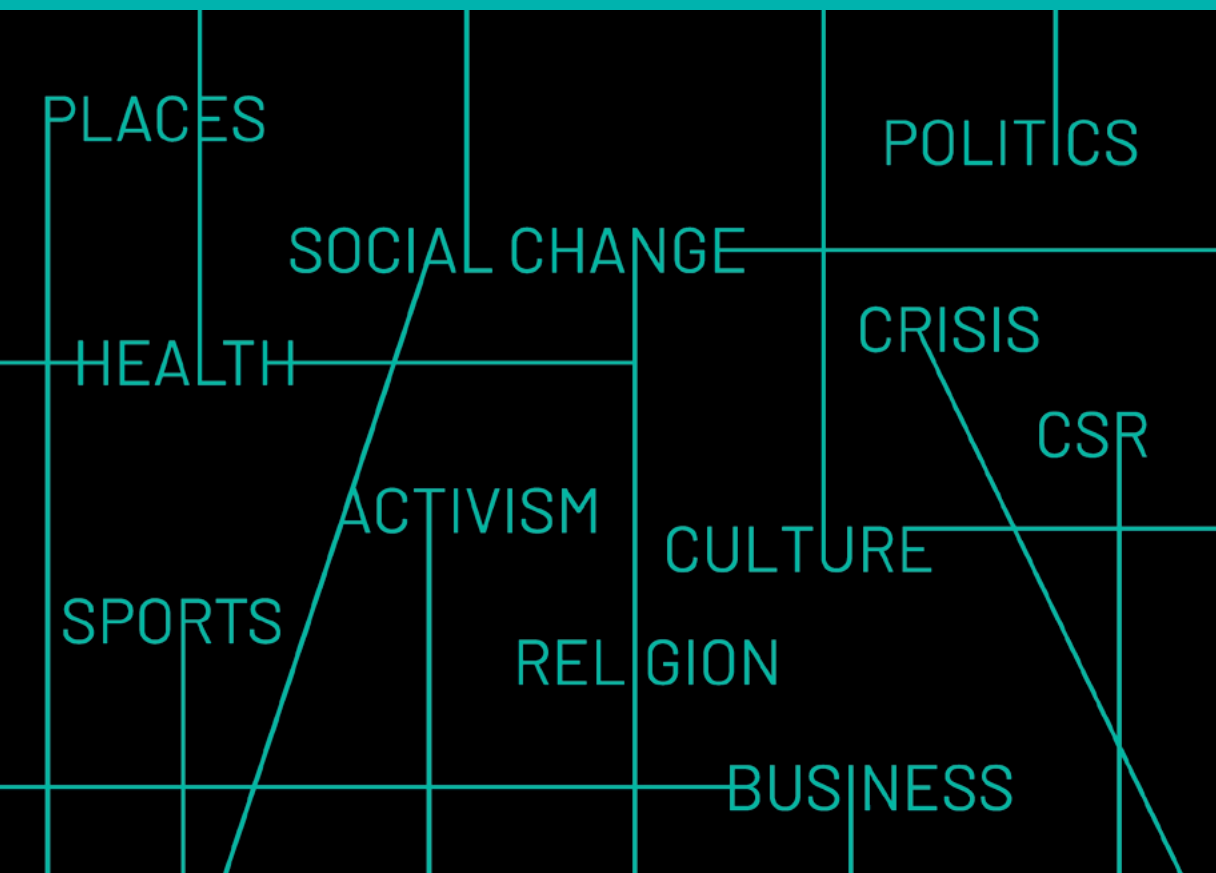# Strategic Communication in Context
Theoretical Debates and Applied Research

Sara Balonas, Teresa Ruão and María-Victoria Carrillo (Eds.)

CECS
centro de estudos
de comunicação
e sociedade

PLACES

POLITICS

SOCIAL CHANGE

CRISIS

HEALTH

CSR

ACTIVISM

CULTURE

SPORTS

RELIGION

BUSINESS

Sara Balonas is assistant professor at the University of Minho, researcher at the Communication and Society Research Centre (CECS), and has a PhD in communication sciences. Her research work is focused on advertising beyond consumption and advertising for social change. She is coordinator of Createlab (CECS) and CEO of B+ Communication. Teaches strategic communication, brands, advertising and creativity.

Teresa Ruão is associated professor at the University of Minho and vice-head of the Communication and Society Research Centre. She has a PhD in communication sciences. She works as an expert evaluator for the Portuguese Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education. Researches and teaches on organizational and strategic communication, brands and public relations, science communication and health communication.

María-Victoria Carrillo is an associate professor in the audiovisual communication and advertising department of the University of Extremadura - Faculty of Library and Communication Science, Department of Information and Communication. She is the leading researcher on AR-CO (group of research on digital and corporate communication). Researches and teaches in strategic communication.

Strategic Communication in Context
Theoretical Debates and Applied Research

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Strategic Communication in Context: Theoretical Debates and Applied Research integrates 28 researchers belonging to 17 higher education institutions representing nine countries: Argentina, Brazil, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Uruguay. The editors are deeply grateful to all researchers who participated in this book. With their diverse and rich contributions, it was possible to edit a comprehensive publication, acknowledging different perspectives from distinct parts of the globe. The enthusiasm for the topic and the quality of the chapters are the essence of the project: developing a scientific look on the state-of-the-art and multiplicity of contexts to which strategic communication applies, reflecting the complexity of today's societies.

Introduction
How Far Can We Take Strategic Communication? The Sky Is the Limit

https://doi.org/10.21814/uminho.ed.46.1

Teresa Ruão[1], Sara Balonas[2] and María-Victoria Carrillo[3]

[1,2] *Communication and Society Research Centre, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal; [3] Department of Information and Communication, Faculty of Library and Communication Science, University of Extremadura, Extremadura, Spain*

[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9723-8044;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0885-1718;* [3] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1256-8870*

As a scientific area of knowledge, strategic communication studies are an emerging field within communication sciences and organisational communication research. It is a disciplinary field concerned with the influence of communication in fulfilling the organisational mission — that is, with its "strategic" dimension (van Ruler, 2018). The word "organisation" is used in this book in its broadest sense to refer to companies and institutions, that is, for-profit and non-profit entities, which may include corporations but also activist groups, non-governmental organisations, political parties or movements.

Regardless of the activity area, today's organisations compete heavily for the attention, admiration and loyalty of its stakeholders — such as customers, employees, investors, interest groups, or the general public. For that to happen, different strategic decisions have to be made in finances or human resources, but also in terms of communication. In fact, studies show that the strategic vision on communication improves organisational performance, increases product sales, motivates investors, and builds stronger relationships (Hallahan et al., 2007). In this context, as suggested by Argenti et al. (2005), contemporary organisations face the "strategic communication imperative — an increasingly urgent need for executives to ensure that their communication practices directly contribute to the implementation of the organisational strategy" (p. 83).

Yet the establishment of this scientific field is recent. The *International Journal of Strategic Communication* in 2007, and the *Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication* in 2014 (authored by Zerfass & Holtzhausen, 2014), have formalised the strategic communication ground. These two reference publications embodied a process of disciplinary affirmation at the beginning of this century, to which followed the exponential growth in the number of papers and books on the subject, as well as the adoption of the "strategic communication" concept to designate undergraduate programs and postgraduate studies, worldwide (Zerfass et al., 2018).

However, after a decade of scientific production, it is time for the academy to debate the current state of research on strategic thinking applied to communication, mainly because the issues that seemed to constrain the establishment of the field have already been widely discussed and overcome. Although some authors continue to argue that the field lacks clarity (Nothhaft et al., 2018), that its disciplinary status remains uncertain (Werder et al., 2018) and that its two main concepts, "communication" and "strategy", are topics that have not, until now, been explored to their full extent (van Ruler,

2018; Winkler & Etter, 2018; Zerfass et al., 2018). However, there seems to be widespread recognition of the importance of its insights for the organisational universe.

One of the strongest arguments in this discussion underlines the strength of the interdisciplinary nature of strategic communication, considered even as a condition for the development of the field (Werder et al., 2018). And we could not agree more with this statement, as we see in its interdisciplinary dimension a key requirement for the consolidation of this scientific ground. In fact, strategic communication increasingly requires the contribution of other disciplines, especially when we look at the practices in specific contexts, as evidenced by some of the researchers in this book.

Therefore, we intend, above all, with this publication to analyse strategic communication through the lens of communication sciences but opening up to other academic fields. We therefore emphasise that the basis for communication processes in organisations is the same as that of any human communication activity, for "the essence of the human being is to communicate and receive communication" (Thayer, 1968/1979, p. 35). Furthermore, this book follows the assumption that communication — and organisational communication in particular — always seeks to exert influence and that, following this reasoning, "persuasion is [admittedly] the essence of strategic communication" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 24).

As so, the *Strategic Communication in Context: Theoretical Debates and Applied Research* book has managed to gather up-to-date knowledge regarding the approaches, methodologies and impacts of human communication in organisations of all kinds and contexts. It reveals how strategic communication can express its elasticity when applied to different sectors and environments without losing its vitality. Its foundational principle is actually common to all domains — to help fulfil the organisational mission in a given context. As pointed by Holtzhausen (2008), a communication entity encompasses different types of economic and social contexts, from "trade and industry, politics, non-profit and government agencies, activist groups, and even celebrities in the sports and entertainment industries" (p. 4849). And strategic communication can act on behalf of all these entities.

To be able to discuss this global vision of the field, the book proposes two significant approaches to the strategic communication topic: the first part focuses on major current issues identified by the literature that cross all sectors and contexts, including crisis communication or social practices;

and the second part explores this scientific domain when applied to different settings, such as development and social change, health, business, science, politics, activist movements, culture, corporate social responsibility, territories, religion or sports. It proposes a kaleidoscopic view through the lens of several researchers who have looked at very different contexts to understand the vitality of the discipline in the quest for solutions that lead to a balanced evolution of societies.

The first part of the book is then devoted to relevant debates on strategic communication. The paper "Strategic Communication Requires Strategic Thinking" written by Peggy Brønn opens the book. Aligning with the approach of the "communicative constitution of organisations", this work describes strategic communication as a fundamental phenomenon for the survival and sustainability of a collective entity. From this standpoint and based on previous research, the author argues that strategic communication needs leaders who are strategic thinkers to be successful. This study concludes that communication executives need to have competencies in strategic thinking to make decisions aligned with the organisation's mission and objectives.

Afterwards, it presents the article "Systematic Review of Recent Literature on Strategic Communication: Analysis of the Scientific Production in Web of Science (2011–2020)". This work, by Javier Trabadela-Robles, brings a systematic review of the most recent scientific output on strategic communication, namely between 2011 and 2020. The main objective of this research was to analyse that output quantitatively, to determine whether the number of publications has grown, from which scientific fields they have originated, the most prolific authors, and the most cited works. Among the results found, it stands out the exponential growth of the scientific production in the field compared to previous periods. Most of the studies are published in English and originate from communication, business, and management. In addition, the authors of such papers are mainly from the USA, Spain, Germany, and England, and they published in 274 journals, with the *Journal of Communication Management*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Corporate Communications* being the ones with more publications in this field.

"Developing Effective Health Communication Campaigns" is the following work, written by Ralph Tench and Gemma Bridge. This chapter discusses the importance of health communication campaigns to address and promote risky behaviour change. However, the authors argue about the need to improve the success of these campaigns to avoid inadvertent social

norming of risk behaviour. This change highlights the importance of targeting a campaign to the audience, considering this audience in developing and disseminating the message. To analyse these arguments, the authors presented examples of targeted and broad health communication campaigns. The conclusions of this study show that campaigns could also be co-developed with the audience to ensure relevance and that digital technologies, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence, can effectively tailor messages to the target audience.

The study on "Social Movement Activism: Analysis of Strategic Communication in Context", by Robert L. Heath and Damion Waymer, analyses the relationship between social movement activism and strategic communication. The authors argue that social movement activism presumes strategic communication processes by which groups achieve extra-governmental public and private policy changes through public pressure. They present several cases to explain and defend this idea and highlight the USA civil rights movement and the activist career of John Lewis. The writers conclude that language is the essence of strategic communication and that, in the case of social movement activism, terms are an incentive and a means to persuasion as the communities are divided by language.

More on the debate about strategic communication, we suggest the reading of "Crisis Communication as Course Correction: Communicative Efforts Revive Goals", a chapter written by W. Timothy Coombs. This research discusses the relevance of crisis communication. It examines its role beyond the typical function as a reactive form of communication intending to protect an organisation from a threat. For this, the author analyses two theories — stealing thunder and situational crisis communication theory — that help managers understand which response strategies are ideal for their specific crisis. The author concludes that crisis communication can be proactive and used as a form of strategic communication designed to guide managers to pursue organisational goals.

Ending the first part of the book, Ivone de Lourdes Oliveira, Fábia Pereira Lima, and Isaura Mourão Generoso share their study about "Mediated Strategic Communication: Meaning Disputes and Social Practice". This research seems to debate the reference models of communication and strategy adopted by organisations, especially in a media society, to outline a new approach to strategic communication. The authors analysed the positioning of organisations during the event of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, examining their interactions and symbolic confrontations in the media

space. The analysis shows that organisations need to understand media communication production processes and their connections with individual and collective issues, which follow the meanings, discursive practices, and organisational strategies.

The second part of this book presents several texts that discuss strategic communication in context. This section starts with the contribution of Sara Balonas about "Social Change: Bringing Allies to the Field. An Interdisciplinary Model". This work seeks to emphasise the importance of strategic communication on behavioural and effective social change. For this, the author summons participatory communication, social marketing and behavioural sciences to create a strategic communication matrix for social change based on a cross-disciplinary perspective. Finally, the article proposes a working model that articulates the contributions of the mentioned topics that can apply to the communication strategies of sustainable development goals.

Continuing the second part, Teresa Ruão and Sónia Silva presented their study about "Science Strategic Communication: The 'Flatten the 'Curve' Metaphor in COVID-19 Public Risk Messaging". This chapter discusses the emergence of the " flatten the curve" metaphor in the context of COVID-19 science communication strategies and explores several ways in which this curve was used in public messaging efforts that aimed to inform worldwide populations and mitigate the effects of the pandemic. In conclusion, the authors realised that, even though the "flatten the curve" metaphor was not developed in an aligned way (as it resulted from a series of isolated interventions by different social actors), it became a science strategic communication device, able to convey complex information attractively and creatively while being precise, objective and clear to the general public.

The following text is "Strategic Communications and the Toms Case: Aligning Business Strategy With Strategic Communications" by María-Victoria Carrillo and Ana Castillo. In their research, the authors analysed the principles of this scientific field, taking the case of the Toms firm as an example in which business strategy aligns with communication. This case study demonstrates that an organisation wishing to apply communication strategically must articulate its tactics and action plans with its ultimate objectives while maintaining its vision and business mission. In addition, this work concludes that strategic communication is a sub-discipline that today's new business models, rather than the traditional ones, should define.

The chapter by Emilia Smolak Lozano and Atsuho Nakayama relates strategic communication and politics. Their research drew on the fact that Twitter has become a powerful tool for political communication with a significant role in elections, especially in countries like Spain, where digital media has considerable influence in society. Applying text-mining methods to tweets from the 2019 European elections, the authors analysed the content, frequently used keywords and expressions, sentiment and tone of the political discourse of the leading Spanish political parties. The study aimed to compare the presence of the different political parties on Twitter. The conclusions show the low maturity of democratic public debate and proved that the Spanish political stakeholders could improve their Twitter content and tone.

Furthering this section of the book, "Improvisation Takes a Lot of Planification: Strategic Communication and Sociopolitical Contemporary Activism", is the research presented by Naíde Muller. In this essay, the author argues that strategic communication approaches that successfully established mass consumption as a way of life can give public voice to socio-political-contemporary activists and increase shared global views for social change, such as the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. To justify this idea, a literature review on this topic is presented, followed by a description of practical examples. The conclusions of this work show that strategic communication plays a crucial role in inducing social change. Its applicability in an organisational context is relevant for activist movements as it facilitates collective action, the call for civic participation and interaction with other social and political institutions.

Afterwards, the study "Communication Strategy for COVID-19 in Uruguay" by Patricia Schroeder and Belén Amadeo focuses on the field of health communication. This research summarises the main communication decisions made by the Uruguayan government and the ministry of public health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Uruguay has managed to minimise the pandemic's adverse effects conveyed to other countries in Latin America through exact health and communication strategies based on transparency and real-time information. The authors analysed this example of health communication and explained how this country implemented its communication strategy, applying conceptual models taken from strategic communication, political communication, and crisis management.

The following is the text "Strategic Communication in Cultural Organizations, the Landscape Museum" by Maria João Centeno. The article explores the role of strategic communication in cultural organisations, presenting

the Landscape Museum. It seeks to address one aspect of communication: its power to build and maintain relationships or networks through dialogue. According to this principle, the author argues that the museum, as a digital platform, can play an active role in articulating the lifeworld and the political and economic systems by guaranteeing free spaces for dialogical communicative experiences that build the idea of a shared symbolic space. This study concludes that the Landscape Museum, specifically through its educational service, has promoted acceptance through dialogue thus contributing to landscape citizenship.

The chapter "Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Brand Advocacy. A Reflection in a Time of Crisis" by Ivone Ferreira, Luís Eusébio, Antonio Raúl Fernández Rincón and Pedro Antonio Hellín Ortuño continues this section. This work discusses the process of stakeholder empowerment in the context of web 2.0 and the consequent loss of control by companies over the dissemination and circulation of information that concerns them. Given the existence of increasingly demanding communities and groups and the relevance that public opinion has on organisational reputation, this research argues that it is essential that organisations adopt ethical and transparent conduct, which will allow them to gain trust and long-term customer support. Thus, the authors conclude that corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies are essential drivers of consumer loyalty to the brand and further online advocacy.

Ana Duarte Melo presents her research named "What's in a Place? The Contribution of Strategic Communication to Placemaking and Territorial Communication" in a different approach" This article, set in territorial communication, summons the various contributions of strategic communication to placemaking and promotion, approaching them both through a mind-frame path, a multi-layered concept, and an operational approach as a practical tool. With some examples, this work reflects on several experiences to illustrate the potential of strategic communication to add value to places in different sets and scales, from building a place almost from scratch to nation branding strategies, from positioning and re-positioning objectives to building up awareness or developing communities' sense of belonging to a territory. In addition, this research traces an evolutionary frame of territorial communication in the light of its strategic dimension, drawing on key concepts and trends, influences, and achievements.

Still, on applying strategic communication, is the work "Conveyed Religion: A Strategic Communication Proposal for Religious Institutions" written by José Gabriel Andrade. Trying to approach how religion can use strategic

communication in contemporary times starts from the review of a theoretical corpus on religion, communication, and society, crossing reflection with theories of strategic and crisis communication. Analysing religious institutions as living organisations that need to accept the moment we live in to develop a strategic communication plan, this research concludes that the Catholic Church has been showing correct use of new media for strategic communication and that continuous training is vital for the improvement of strategic communication plans.

The value of strategic communication in sport is the theme of the chapter "Communication and Sport: A Call to Action" by Paulo Salgado. This text starts from the assumption that using a strategic communication approach in the sports industry must consider a broader and more profound reflection of how the world of sports intertwines with communication and its interactive process of creation, selection, and retention of meaning. Through his work, the author advocates that studies in sports contexts might contribute to a better understanding of management and communication functions in organisations. Following a close connection between sports, identities, communication, organisations, communities, and media, this study concludes that any strategic communication program must address the singularities of sports organisations.

English revision: Anabela Delgado

Acknowledgements

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Part I
Debates on Strategic Communication

Strategic Communication Requires Strategic Thinking

Peggy Simcic Brønn

Department of Communication and Culture, Norwegian Business School, Oslo, Norway
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2541-8350

Abstract

Using a definition of strategic communication that focuses on communication that is critical for the "survival and sustained success of an entity" (Zerfass, Verčič, et al., 2018, p. 487), this chapter argues that to be successful, strategic communication needs communication leaders who are strategic thinkers and who take a systems approach. The chapter begins with a brief overview of strategic communication. This is followed by a discussion of what is meant by strategy and where strategic communication fits in strategic planning. The chapter then takes up the idea that to be part of strategic decision making, communication executives need to exhibit competencies in strategic thinking. Much of the work in this chapter is based on previous research by the author, who found that leaders who view their communication directors as having a strategic orientation are more likely to value them and the contribution of the communication function to their organization's success. But not only that, communication executives demonstrating a strategic orientation are more likely to be invited to strategic meetings, and they would be invited early in the process.

Keywords

strategic communication, strategic thinking, strategy, systems thinking, proactive

Strategic Communication

There are many definitions of strategic communication. However, many researchers credit a seminal definition of strategic communication to Hallahan et al. (2007) in the first edition of the *International Journal of Strategic Communication* in 2007. According to these authors, strategic communication is "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 3). They differentiate strategic communication from integrated communication, which attempts to coordinate communication activities such as public relations and marketing communication. For them, strategic communication "is how an organization communicates across organizational endeavors" and "how an organization functions as a social actor to advance its mission" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 7).

Zerfass, Verčič, et al. (2018) build on this definition to define strategic communication as encompassing:

all communication that issubstantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, (…) [it] is the purposeful use of communication by an organization or other entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals. (p. 493)

Key to this definition is the word "substantial", as in issues facing an organization that are substantial or significant for an organization/entity's "development, growth, identity or survival" (Zerfass, Verčič, et al., 2018, p. 493). According to the authors, this separates strategic communication from communication that may have a purpose but where the purpose is operational rather than strategic.

Another view of strategic communication is offered by Botan (2018), who views it is as "the use of information flowing into the organization (research) to plan and carry out a communication campaign addressing the relationship between an organization and its publics" (p. 29). For Botan (2018), strategic communication is research based, and publics centered rather than organization or message centered. He differentiates between those who plan and those who implement by saying the planner is being strategic while the implementer is just practicing tactical communication.

Argenti et al. (2015) define strategic communication as "communication aligned with the company's overall strategy, to enhance its strategic positioning" (p. 61). For them, strategic communication is an essential influence on corporate strategy.

This chapter focuses on communication as supporting the survival and sustained success of the organization. To do this, it is necessary for communication executives to contribute to strategy and strategic decisions at the highest level of the organization. This demands distinguishing between an operational purpose and a strategic one, a strategic plan and a tactical one.

Strategy and Strategic Decisions

The idea of strategy and being strategic is widely discussed in the public relations literature (for a discussion on strategy and the communication field see Frandsen and Johansen, 2017) but is particularly significant when discussing strategic communication.

Strategy is a field of study and practice that is concerned with the overall performance of a system, usually in terms of human activity systems.

Strategy implies a high-level perspective, a broader scope, and greater responsibility that contrasts with the tactical or operational levels of the firm. Strategy is about planning based on long-term goals and objectives, while at the same time acting and allocating resources to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies determine courses of action and should address how to gain and sustain advantage over competitors, all in a dynamic and changing business environment (Dhir et al., 2018).

A very simplistic picture of planning and strategy comprises three levels: corporate planning and strategy, business planning and strategy, and functional planning and strategy (Chakravarthy & Lorange, 1991). Corporate planning is at the top level and is where corporate objectives are established that lead to forming the corporate strategy. The organization's objectives and goals are determined here along with decisions on acquiring and allocating resources. This is where the overall direction of the organization is set, including its vision and mission. Botan (2018) refers to plans made at this level as the grand strategy, or policy-level decisions made about goals, alignments, ethics, relationships, and other issues in the organization's environment.

Business planning leads to formulation of business strategies, that is, the scope of what different individual units or divisions will do to satisfy overall organizational strategy. Strategies at this level are subordinate to the grand strategy. Involvement at this level is by lower level managers. These lower level strategies become operational and culminate at the functional level where managers are most concerned with the specific details of implementing strategies decided at the upper levels. Involvement is by even lower level managers and their teams who have responsibility for functions such as marketing, sales, engineering, and so on.

Strategic decisions are those decisions that determine an organization's overall direction and viability. Decisions of this kind have a long-term perspective. In contrast, operational decisions tend to focus on the short term and are anchored in the strategic plans of the organization. Operational decisions result in specific actions that are narrower in scope and that organizations must carry out to implement higher level strategies. For example, a marketing strategy involves decision making on issues of product mix, promotional and advertising activities, budgeting, and timing. An operational decision might, for instance, relate to price setting in a particular geographic region.

This overly simplistic view ignores many aspects of strategy and planning; however, it illustrates that corporate planning provides the strategic umbrella under which lower level strategies are drafted or operationalized. People involved at this level are normally from what is called the top management team or dominant coalition, including the chief executive officer and others who perhaps hold titles such as executive director or senior vice president. Being involved in strategic planning requires being part of the dominant coalition or top management team. Therefore, if strategic communication professionals want to have an influence on strategic decisions and engage in conversations of strategic significance, they must participate in strategic decision making. This is as true for communication executives as for any other executive. As noted by Broom and Dozier (1986), it is important for public relations leaders to play an integral role in strategic decision making so that they can effectively help the organization achieve its mission, goals, and objectives.

History of Communication Executives Involvement in Strategic Planning

The degree of involvement by communication executives in strategic planning has been the subject of study by public relations research scholars for many years, and an ongoing concern of practitioners. Examples of research include: L. A. Grunig (1992) — public relations practitioners are seldom included in the dominant coalition —; White and Dozier (1992) — communication managers are rarely formally empowered as decision-makers at the strategic level where they would encounter the dominant coalition —; and J. Grunig (2006) — reasons for this include lack of broad business expertise, passivity, naiveté about organizational politics, and inadequate education, experience or organizational status.

Several antecedents have been identified within the public relations literature as necessary for participating in strategic decision-making. These include managers' previous education, their perceived position in the organization, and the dominant role enacted by the public relations manager. It is this last antecedent that has received the most attention however as a determinant of whether public relations practitioners participate in strategic decision making. Two primary roles have been identified: the technician role and the managerial role. These two roles represent the main role dichotomy of public relations practitioners within organizations and provide the basis for several propositions dealing with role enactment.

According to Dozier (1992), those who enact primarily the manager role are more likely to be involved in management decision making. While the technician is seen as someone who produces, for example, brochures, pamphlets (the various task-related or operational aspects of public relations); the managerial role, as described by Dozier, is measured by asking respondents if they (a) take responsibility, (b) are viewed as an expert, (c) observe that they are held accountable, (d) make policy decisions, (e) operate as a catalyst in management decision making, (f) recognize the need for planning, and (g) keep management informed.

These claims are still being tested. For example, Wilson (2016) found that top management team members' "perceptions of the manager role potential of the Public Relations department was the strongest predictor of their perceptions that the department participates in organizational decision making" (p. 226). Recent work by Cardwell et al. (2017) found that internal relationship management is a "prerequisite to corporate Public Relations practitioners' success in developing mutually beneficial relationships with key publics" (p. 152). The authors maintain that their findings have implications for the discussion of the technician versus strategic manager role of public relations and the advancement of the field to a professional status.

While it seems that enacting the managerial role is key for public relations practitioners to be accepted by their executive peers, Cardwell et al. (2017) note that communication practitioners still struggle with their status in organizations, and there appears to be little research providing guidance on how to improve it. However, in 2001, Brønn (2001) raised the question if focusing on role enactment is the right metric for measuring a communication practitioner's acceptance by the top management team. Enacting the managerial role, by some accounts, is after all nothing more than performing high-level technical activities. A new measurement of managerial competency is necessary, strategic thinking.

New Antecedent — Strategic Thinking

Katzenbach (1996) asserts that managers know how to do things — they can create budgets, enforce policies, and carry out procedures, and today, being a manager is not as important as being a "leader". Hinterhuber and Popp (1993) differentiate between strategic leaders and operational leaders. Operational leaders have skills that enable them to manage resources. Strategic leaders, on the other hand, are skilled in "selecting future markets

to enter and achieving growth for the organization" (Zabriskie & Huell-mantel, 1991, pp. 25 – 26). There is a clear dividing line between managers and strategists, those who are successful at, among other things, visioning, empowering, and embracing an entrepreneurial approach to business.

According to Mintzberg (1989) the only necessary competency for help-ing with the planning process is sharp minds in touch with the situation. He proposes that the best thing planners can do is to stimulate others to think strategically, and that the real art of planning has to do with the ability to detect what he calls discontinuities.

Schilit (1993) found that the most often-mentioned method of upward in-fluence between middle-level managers and their superiors in strategic decisions was the ability to logically present ideas through rational or per-suasive argument. Finally, Vaghefi and Huellmantel (1998) found that at the leadership level of senior manager, defined as directors, vice presidents, executive vice presidents, among others, 70% of the skills needed were strategic-conceptual and entrepreneurial, which they defined as strategic thinking, scenario planning, and issues management. Chakravarthy and Lo-range (1991) list nurturing strategic thinking as a critical element of top management when it comes to successful strategic processes. Hayes (1985) says managers must be able to think strategically to:

- understand the appropriate external environment;

- understand the capabilities and objectives of the organization;

- understand the connections between loosely connected events;

- recognize several influencers;

- sense new opportunities;

- see several strategies or solutions.

As Mintzberg (1994) stresses "strategic planning isn't strategic thinking. One is analysis, and the other is synthesis" (p. 107). Strategic thinking is recognized as a prerequisite for planning activities within an organization and is an important characteristic of managers. Strategic thinking is "the process of finding pattern or common thread related to the organization's activities which are derived from its policies, objectives and goals" (Dhir

et al., 2018, p. 272). It is an ability that enables individuals to understand, visualize, and confront a given context. These authors identify four dimensions of strategic thinking: reflection, organizational awareness, trend analysis, and pattern recognition.

A study by Nuntamanop et al. (2013) found seven characteristics of strategic thinking that impact strategy formulation, strategic actions, and business performance: conceptual thinking ability, visionary thinking, analytical thinking ability, synthesizing ability, objectivity, creativity, and learning ability. According to Brønn (2014), a communication practitioner with strategic thinking competencies is likely to be proactive, issues-oriented, creative and innovative, organizationally well-informed, future-oriented, and a systems thinker. These are defined below:

- Organizationally aware — has extensive knowledge of important issues within the organization.

- Issues-oriented — has extensive knowledge of issues and changes in the external environment.

- Proactive – is proactive and encourages the introduction of new structures, methods, and guidelines.

- Creative and innovative — comes with very creative and innovative ideas.

- System thinkers — rises above the immediate problem or situation and sees the broader problem areas/issues and far-reaching consequences of them.

- Future-oriented — determines future priorities and can forecast foreseeable changes to meet future.

Creativity is required because of the need to be future-oriented, to make or create scenarios based on today's view of the world and possible futures. Analysis is required to make sensible and logical extrapolations and to present them in a readable and understandable manner.

Another model of strategic thinking competency is illustrated by Nuntamanop et al. (2013; Figure 1), who found evidence that strategic thinking competency impacts strategy formulation, which in turn influences

strategic actions and subsequently business performance. In other words, strategic thinking competency contributes to the quality of the strategies and strategic directions.
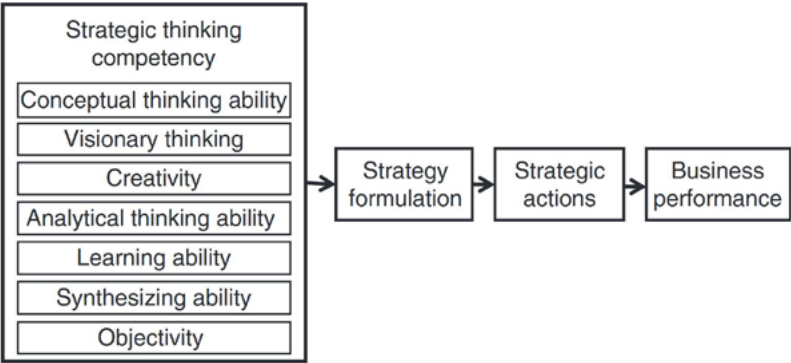
Figure 1 Model of strategic thinking competencies.
Source. From "A New Model of Strategic Thinking Competency", by P. Nuntamanop et al., 2013, *Journal of Strategy and Management, 6*(3), p. 256 (https://doi.org/10.1108/JSMA-10-2012-0052). Copyright 2013 by Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

The ability to think strategically is a primary requisite for being able to perform at the highest levels of an organization. The capability to create "sanity" out of an often unpredictable environment by making decisions that are complex and have a huge impact on the organization are key characteristics of managers who are part of the dominant coalition. And there is evidence that having a strategic orientation or being a strategic thinker is critical for communication's executive participation in decision-making. Brønn's (2014) research shows a correlation between strategic thinking and the personal influence of the communication executive, whether they have the support of top management, and the perception of the communication function on organizational success. More importantly, however, is the impact that strategic thinking has on communication executives' participation in top level meetings and the timing of participation in decision-making. They are significantly more likely to be invited to these meetings and at an early enough stage to make meaningful contributions.

Becoming a Strategic Thinker

The set of abilities and skills discussed above are evidence of possessing "strategic thinking competency". Performing well on this competency is key to being involved in strategic decision-making with the top management team. However, the concept of "strategic thinking" is a difficult abstraction and while it is easy to report on what characteristics describe a strategic thinker, the question is if these can be learned, that is, is it possible to become a strategic thinker.

Most researchers agree that strategic thinking is built on the systems perspective, and that strategic thinking is also systems thinking (Haines, 2009; Liedtka, 1998). Systems thinking is concerned with developing and testing operational explanations of organizational behavior and requires an understanding of the whole through the relationships between organizational pieces. It also "focuses on relationships, multiple outcomes, holism and boundaries, the environment, the larger system and feedback" (Haines, 2009, p. 1). As noted by Liedtka (1998), the systems thinker has a mental model "of the complete end-to-end system of value creation and understands the interdependencies with it" (p. 122). The differences between traditional thinking and strategic or systems thinking are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Comparing thinking traditions.
Source. Richmond, 1997.

Traditional thinking	Strategic/systems thinking
Understanding the whole by understanding the pieces.	To understand the whole, one must understand the relationships between the pieces. The relationships generate performance over time.
To understand the pieces, one must drill deeply into the details.	To understand relationships or interconnections, it is necessary to have the knowledge and ability to understand relationships and interdependencies between system elements and push back from the detail of the individual pieces.
The pieces are unique; the boundaries are sharp; it is easy to categorize as "this, and not that". Thus, to understand the pieces, precise measurement is required.	Pieces are unique, but relationships are generic; distinctions are not either/or but fall along a continuum. Quantification can aid in better understanding relationships, measurement comes later.

Mental models are influenced by, for example, education, experiences, social roles and culture, and assumptions regarding the cause and effect relationships relevant for a problem.

Strategic thinking as a mental model arises from specific experiences (personal, interpersonal, organizational, and external), which occur gradually over time, normally 10 or more years (Goldman, 2007). Personal experience that influences strategic thinking include family upbringing and education, general work experience, and becoming a top leader. Interpersonal experience includes being mentored and being challenged by colleagues. Monitoring results and benchmarking, doing strategic planning, and spearheading a major growth initiative comprise organizational experiences. Finally, external experiences that impact strategic thinking are dealing with a threat to organizational survival and vicarious experiences.

In a qualitative study, Mellon and Kroth (2013) identified the experiences contributing to their subjects' development of the ability to think strategically. These were: being mentored, other people in their profession, education, practical experience, challenging experiences, experience in other cultures, and reading books. Table 2 lists the experiences and the characteristics associated with the experiences that contributed to the ability to become strategic thinkers.

Table 2 Important characteristics of experiences for learning strategic thinking.
Source. Mellon and Kroth, 2013, p. 73

Experiences contributing to strategic thinking	Important Characteristics
Being mentored	Experienced strategic thinking
	Affirming relationship
	Facilitates reflective practice
Other peers	New ideas
	Mutually supportive colleagues
Education	New ideas
	Challenging assumptions
	Learning to think critically
Practical experience	Variety
	Repetition
	Responsibility

Challenging experiences	Significant organizational impact
	Responsibility
	Required focus
Experience in other cultures	Challenging assumptions
	Learning to listen
Reading books	New ideas
	Challenging assumptions

While strategic thinking is an individual competency, according to Goldman (2007) there are things that organizations can do to improve strategic thinking. Bonn (2001) refers to this as strategic thinking at the organizational level with the organization providing opportunities for individual strategic thinking. This includes creating structures, processes and systems that encourage strategic dialogue among top team members, and taking advantage of the "ingenuity and creativity of every individual employee" (Bonn, 2001, p. 66). Program suggestions by Goldman (2007) include:

- making strategic thinking a formal component of management development programs;

- requiring managers to develop strategic thinking of subordinates;

- encouraging early participation in strategic planning and benchmarking activities;

- supporting activities that incorporate experiential learning;

- maximizing the benefits of strategic planning sessions.

It is imperative that programs are highly individual as mental models are not the same in any two people. Further, programs must take place over at least a year and emphasis put on encouraging individuals to take responsibility for completing any initiatives.

Goldman (2007) does not address the communicative challenge of changing mental models, in this case moving from traditional thinking to systems thinking. This requires skills identified from the organizational learning literature (Argyris & Schön, 1974): reflection, inquiry, and advocacy. These three organizational learning skills are central to the successful mastery of

working with mental models. Reflection is an internally focused skill whose objective is to make the practitioner more aware of his or her own thinking and reasoning processes. Inquiry engages parties in a joint learning process where the objective is to understand the thinking and reasoning processes of the other party.

Advocacy is the process of communicating one's own thinking and reasoning in a manner that makes them visible for others. The reflective manager seeks to find a balance between inquiry and advocacy. Too much advocacy results in one-way communication with little feedback, too much inquiry means being bogged down. The objective of consciously developing these skills is to be able to surface the mental models and their underlying assumptions that are activated in a particular situation.

Public Relations Tools and Strategic Thinking

Thinking in terms of a formula of steps is the "essence of the strategic thinking Public Relations managers use", according to Heath and Coombs (2006, p. 137). Another characteristic that distinguishes a strategic thinker in public relations is "knowing that Public Relations tactics are not an end in and of themselves" (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 167) but are for achieving objectives and accomplishing goals. This definition focuses on the planning aspect of work within public relations/strategic communication but as noted by Gulbrandsen and Just (2020), a plan does not determine the success of strategic communication, neither is strategic planning strategic thinking (Mintzberg, 1994).

Mapping techniques are an important aid for developing a systems perspective (Liedtka, 1998). Fortunately, students of public relations or strategic communication already have such tools. These are tools that reflect, and are recognized as being employed by, practitioners who are proactive or futures oriented. These tools deal with detecting and analyzing issues, selecting courses of action, and evaluating outcomes. They thus mirror the processes that represent a strategic way of thinking. They are all also systems models in that they imply iterative processes that occur continually within organizations as they seek to survive in rapidly changing environments.

One well-known tool is issues management (IM), developed in the 1970s by W. Howard Chase, a veteran corporate public relations officer for American Can Company. IM is seen as a method for managing the numerous challenges and occurring changes facing organizations by identifying and analyzing

issues, setting priorities, selecting strategy options, implementing a program of action and communication, and evaluating effectiveness.

Although communication was not explicitly identified, the IM model was designed to improve the effectiveness of organizational communication and to allow organizations to become proactive by identifying potential issues early enough for effective action. It adds value to organizations, according to Heath (2003) by strategically taking actions that can reduce costs and increase revenue. It is also a systems approach as it implies that change in one element of the system correspondingly affects other parts (Heath & Nelson, 1985). The steps go on and on throughout all parts of the IM process system until the organization either succeeds or fails at its desired mission.

Issues monitoring requires environmental scanning, a radar-like vigilance used to spot potential or actual issues at their earliest point of development. As issues develop and mature, efforts are needed to identify and analyze them. Environmental scanning enables firms to identify both potential issues and stakeholders before they become problematic, or, conversely, to develop opportunities. Environmental scanning is an organizational methodology for collecting and analyzing information about every sector of the external environment that can help management. It is the activity that follows what is occurring within the environment that the organization operates. Environmental scanning is the acquisition and use of information about actors (stakeholders), events, trends, and relationships in an organization's external environment, the knowledge of which assists management in planning the organization's future course of action. It is generally agreed that this activity is a key component of strategic processes, as the acquisition of information is a major organizational effort.

Another tool is stakeholder mapping. Organizations exist in environments made up of stakeholders, those persons or groups of persons who are (a) impacted by the implementation of change initiatives, and/or (b) have a vested interest in the outcome of these initiatives (Freeman, 1984). It is imperative that communication departments are knowledgeable of an organization's stakeholders. Stakeholders may include donors to non-profit organizations, potential members, elected officials, church groups, judges and the legal community, business leaders, minority communities, trade associations, women's leaders, teens, senior citizens, and the general public. In addition to these important outside audiences, it is important for the organization not to forget its internal audiences, such as staff and board members.

The ability to identify and analyze stakeholders (both internally and externally) is critical for an effective communication strategy. Managers can use a stakeholder analysis to identify the key actors and to assess their knowledge, interests, positions, alliances, and importance. This allows policymakers and managers to interact more effectively with key stakeholders and to increase support.

By combining influence and importance, stakeholders can be classified into different groups, which will help identify assumptions held by stakeholders. Influence refers to how powerful a stakeholder is; importance refers to those stakeholders who are the priority for the success of the communication efforts. Influence is perhaps best understood as the extent to which people, groups, or organizations (i.e., stakeholders) can persuade others into making decisions and following certain courses of action.

Exhibiting the use of these tools combined with an ability to think strategically can significantly increase a communication professional's standing within an organization. However, even though there are tools particularly relevant for strategic thinking, Zerfass, Volk, et al. (2018) found in a study of the use of management tools in corporate communications that there is room for improvement. The most used tools by communication professionals are editorial planning, topic planning, and media response analysis. Stakeholder maps were used in three out of four communications departments, but significantly fewer practitioners (57.7%) are satisfied with their practical application.

Ongoing Issues

The comparative excellence framework for communication management (Tench et al., 2017) identified nine principles of excellence at the organizational, departmental, and professional level. At the departmental level, an excellent department is characterized as: embedded in decision-making processes, working closely with top management; datafied, using data for insights and automated communication; and strategized, which refers to the alignment of communication activities to overall goals. However, studies show that there is still a gap between how communication professionals view their contribution to organizations and how other leaders view their contribution, with communication professional rating their contribution significantly higher (Falkheimer et al., 2017; Zerfass & Sherzada, 2015).

Zerfass, Verčič, et al. (2018) found that even communication professionals themselves seem to have difficulties describing the core contributions of communication and in particular the strategic role of the department. Falk-heimer et al. (2017) say this raises questions about the consequences of these views. For example, if the communication practitioners' function and contribution are not seen as important, their influence on strategic decision making may be reduced. Closing this gap then becomes tantamount and could be done by making the professionals' strategic thinking abilities clearer to other managers.

Perceived influence of communication executives was part of a 2019 study of corporate communication officers (CCOs) in Scandinavia's 150 most visible firms listed in the RepTrak reputation rankings (Brønn & Brønn, 2019). To learn more about the communication executives' position in their organizations, a simple exercise was carried out to map their visibility and presentation on the companies' websites; whether they were listed with the top management team, on the firm's site for press contacts/media relations, or both.

Results showed that many communication executives are not recognized as legitimate members of the top management team, but instead are only listed on a press contacts site. Sweden is clearly the leader in recognizing their CCOs as part of their top management team on firm websites, with 67% of CCOs listed with the chief executive officer and other top leaders and 33% only under press contacts. Norway follows with 54% listed with the top management team and 46% only under press contacts/media relations. The results for Denmark are distinctly different. A mere 13% of the CCOs in Denmark's most visible firms are listed with their top management team, meaning that a high 87% of Danish communication executives are only listed under media relations/press contacts.

It is possible to argue that inclusion with senior leaders on the website sends a signal that the head of communication is equal to other top executives. This is important as where CCOs sit within an organization says something about the organization's perception of the importance of not only the CCO's role, but also of communication itself. The findings presented here represent only three countries, one of which performed very poorly. Clearly, there is more work to be done.

Conclusion

In a 2012 interview with Public Relations Society of America, Robert Scott Pritchard, instructor and faculty adviser at the University of Oklahoma, was asked what is most important for students to learn and what tools do they need to be fluent in, in order to succeed. He answered that:

> it was less about the tools and more about their strategic thinking. Being able to see the big picture can be learned if students are willing to put in the effort to do so and if we coach them correctly. Developing a leadership mentality is also of prime importance. One of the myths of leadership is that you have to have the title to be a leader. (Jacques, 2012)

For public relations executives, the three most important qualities of excellent leadership are: strategic decision-making capability, problem-solving ability, and communication knowledge and expertise (Meng et al., 2012). These competencies clearly match those demonstrated by strategic thinkers. However, subsequent research from Meng (2013) shows that students of public relations find the top three unique leadership qualities are: having the ability to cultivate relationships with key publics, having a comprehensive understanding of the needs and concerns of diverse publics, and having a compelling vision of communication for the organization. This is a considerable gap in perceptions, but as noted by Meng, the gap provides insight into how curriculum changes can be made that might better prepare public relations students for leadership positions.

Leadership tools and education are both available, as are strategic thinking tools and education. Key for practitioners is learning and enacting them. Otherwise, strategic communication becomes just another buzz word and never fulfills its promise of contributing to the survival and sustained success of an entity because communication professionals will continue to be viewed as message producers and technicians.

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Systematic Review of Recent Literature on Strategic Communication

Analysis of the Scientific Production in Web of Science (2011–2020)

Javier Trabadela-Robles

Department of Information and Communication, Faculty of Library and Communication Science, University of Extremadura, Badajoz, Spain
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5338-9257

Abstract

In recent years, there have been numerous studies addressing strategic communication from different angles. These have helped to better define and contextualize the object of study. The present work constitutes a systematic review of the most recent scientific output (2011–2020) on strategic communication. The main objective was to analyse that output quantitatively, to determine whether the number of publications has really grown, from which scientific fields they have originated, the most prolific authors, and the most cited works. In addition, the latest works from the field of communication are analysed, with the aim of summarizing the latest research trends on the object of study. For this reason, the analysis is limited to the works contained in the main databases of the Web of Science (WoS), as this is one of the bibliographic databases of reference. An advanced terminological search was carried out, and the results were analysed quantitatively. From that resulting population of 460 documents, a sample of 89 was extracted and subjected to a brief qualitative analysis. Among the results, there stands out that scientific production on the subject in the period studied has grown exponentially compared to previous periods. Most of the studies are published in English and originate from the fields of communication, business, and management, although, it being such a cross-sectional topic, there are 82 WoS categories represented. The authors were mainly from the USA, Spain, Germany, and England, and they published in 274 journals, with the *Journal of Communication Management*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Corporate Communications* standing out.

Keywords

strategic communication, systematic review, Web of Science, scientific production, strategy, organization

Introduction

In society over the last decade, strategic communication (SC) has become increasingly important in organizations of all kinds. For this reason, there has been a parallel growth of interest of the scientific community in the subject (Carrillo, 2014; Niño Benavides & Cortés Cortés, 2018). A systematic review of the literature on SC is presented here, in which the starting hypothesis is that the subject has been dealt extensively in numerous investigations which have taken different approaches. Although there have

been other literature reviews, such as the one mentioned above by Niño Benavides and Cortés Cortés (2018), the truth is that they take a transversal and qualitative approach, although in a very interesting way since they also address related topics such as corporate social responsibility or organizational theory (Niño Benavides & Cortés Cortés, 2018). A more quantitative approach is intended in the present work, with the aim of studying the number of documents produced and their main characteristics in order to test the starting hypothesis, as well as to characterize the documents retrieved. To this end, an exhaustive quantitative analysis of the population under study is carried out, investigating in which languages the studies are published, from which disciplines, the authors of the publications, their geographical locations, and which media and works are the most cited.

Although qualitative approaches abound in the other works in this book, the present research also includes an at least brief qualitative analysis of the documents found that were published in the last 3 years. The objective was to try to determine the most recent research trends represented in the works indexed in the Web of Science (WoS). But the main contribution of this research is that its focus is on a quantitative approach, providing a "snapshot" of recent studies on SC found in the main collection of the Web of Science.

Methods and First Results

The methodological approach used in this research was that of a systematic or systematized review (Codina, 2017) of the scientific production on SC. This approach, although initially used more in the field of health sciences (García Peñalvo, 2017; Grant & Booth, 2009; Mallett et al., 2012; Moher et al., 2009), is also relevant to research in the social sciences, as noted by Kelly (2015), Littell and Maynard (2014) and Victor (2008a, 2008b). There have been various studies of this type on the discipline of communication in recent years. Examples are those of Martínez-Nicolás and Saperas-Lapiedra (2016), Montero-Díaz et al. (2018), and Trabadela-Robles et al. (2020), and also works addressing specific topics such as Díaz-Campo & Segado-Boj (2017) on communication ethics, Compte-Pujol et al. (2018) on public relations and Galán Arribas et al. (2018) on radio podcasts.

With regard to the procedure, it was decided to search for the most recent works in the Web of Science since this is the reference database for research in this field. We are aware that, by limiting the search for works to those indexed in the WoS collections, other works of interest contained in other

databases are left out of the analysis, so that this is a limitation of the study as is the case in any review work that does not include all existing databases.

A terminology search was performed on the Web of Science website (Clarivate Analytics) using its advanced search engine. The query "AK = (strategic AND communication)" was made, that is, the documents of the main collection of the WoS databases were searched for that included the terms "strategic" and "communication" in the keywords field (AK)[1]. It was decided to search in this field and not in others, such as the titles of the works, because it is possible that the object of study is dealt with in a publication without both terms necessarily expressly appearing in the title. However, if the authors include the terms in the keywords, it is because they consider that their research is connected to a greater or lesser extent with SC.

As we wanted to confirm or refute the hypothesis that scientific production on the subject has increased significantly in recent years, a quantitative analysis of the works produced since 1994 was carried out, the year corresponding to the first results retrieved from the selected database. In this way, the number of works published annually and indexed in the WoS main collection from 1994 to 2020 was determined, resulting in the chart shown in Figure 1.
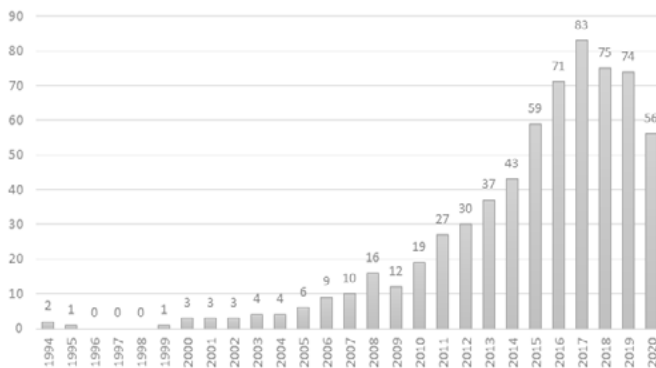
Figure 1 Papers published per year and retrieved from the WoS main collection according to the search criteria specified in methods, including all types of documents.

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[1] This search key is used instead of "strategic communication" in order not to miss works of interest that introduce some other word between these two terms (for example, "strategic visual communication"). Moreover, if the search had been limited to contiguous terms, fewer results would have been obtained (300 unfiltered), leaving some relevant related work out of the analysis.

It should be clarified that the data was obtained on September 2 2020, so that the quantified production of that specific year corresponds to what had been indexed up to that moment (the first 8 months of the year), which could explain the lower number of publications compared to previous years.

Since the aim was to study the most recent scientific production, for the exhaustive quantitative analysis the review was limited to documents published in recent years, specifically from 2011 to 2020. Within the results obtained, we wished to focus the analysis on works published in an article format (both research articles in journals and book chapters). Therefore, proceedings papers (in book format or article format) and book review articles were removed from the sample. For the qualitative analysis, a subsample was drawn from the population of results, limiting this study to the works indexed in the communication category and published in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Quantitative Analysis

The keywords search yielded a total of 555 documents, of which 31 were works published in book format (complete work or a chapter), 448 were journal articles, and 76 proceedings. Filtering the results as explained in the previous section, the final population for analysis comprised 460 documents.

Publication Language

With respect to the language in which the papers are published, although the search was in English, the research found was not published in its entirety in that language. While most of the works (401) are written in English, but there are also 35 in Spanish, six in Russian, four in Malay, three in Portuguese, two in German, two in Korean, two in Turkish, one in Afrikaans, one in Dutch, one in Italian, one in Norwegian, and one in Slovak.

WoS Categories

In order to analyse the scope of the research papers, they were quantified in accordance with the categories of the Web of Science[2]. Documents indexed in 82 different categories were found (Table 1), indicative of the cross-cutting nature of the object of study. However, it must be clarified

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[2] https://images.webofknowledge.com/WOKRS535R95/help/WOS/hp_subject_category_terms_tasca.html

that a document may be published in a medium associated with one or more thematic categories. The results by categories are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Number of publications by WoS category.

WoS category	No. documents
Communication	196
Business	84
Management	42
Economics	26
Information science, library science	23
Political science	22
International relations	16
Social sciences, interdisciplinary	15
Education, educational research	12
Linguistics	10
Environmental studies	9
Hospitality, leisure, sport, tourism	8
Language, linguistics	7
Sociology	7
Psychology, applied	6
Development studies	5
Environmental sciences	5
Green, sustainable science, technology	5
Health care sciences, services	5
Humanities, multidisciplinary	5
Information systems	5
Computer science, information systems	4
Multidisciplinary sciences	4
Philosophy	4
Psychology, clinical	4
Psychology, social	4
Public administration	4
Regional, urban planning	4
Social issues	4
Behavioral sciences	3
Engineering, electrical, electronic	3
Engineering, multidisciplinary	3
Health policy, services	3

History, philosophy of science	3
Operations research, management science	3
Psychology, experimental	3
Zoology	3
Archaeology	2
Area studies	2
Art	2
Biology	2
Education, scientific disciplines	2
Engineering, industrial	2
Immunology	2
Industrial relations, labor	2
Infectious diseases	2
Mathematical methods	2
Medical informatics	2
Medicine, general, internal	2
Pharmacology, pharmacy	2
Religion	2
Social sciences, mathematical methods	2
Telecommunications	2
Water resources	2
Agricultural economics, policy	1
Biodiversity conservation	1
Computer science	1
Computer science, theory, methods	1
Energy, fuels	1
Ethics	1
Family studies	1
Finance	1
Food science, technology	1
Forestry	1
Geography	1
Geology	1
Geosciences, multidisciplinary	1
History of social sciences	1
Interdisciplinary applications	1
Mathematical, computational biology	1
Mathematics, applied	1
Mathematics, interdisciplinary applications	1

Meteorology, atmospheric sciences	1
Nursing	1
Psychology, developmental	1
Psychology, multidisciplinary	1
Public, environmental, occupational health	1
Radiology, nuclear medicine, medical imaging	1
Respiratory system	1
Social work	1
Statistics, probability	1
Transportation	1

One observes that 196 works are indexed in the communication category, which represents 42.6% of the total retrieved. This is followed by business with 84 documents (18.3%) and management with 42 (9.1%). These three categories therefore cover roughly two thirds of the total papers, thus characterizing the framework of the principal disciplines involved, and therefore the focus of most of the publications.

Source Title

In studying the sources of the works, that is, the publishers' source titles, there are 274 different journals in which documents matching the search criteria are found. Of these journals, only 29 publish three or more articles (Table 2), 27 publish two, and the other 218 have a single publication (47.4% of the total documents), which once again reflects the diversity and cross-cutting nature of the object of analysis.

Table 2 Number of publications per journal (only those that have published at least three investigations in the period analysed are included).

Source title	No. documents
Journal of Communication Management	38
Public Relations Review	35
Corporate Communications	14
Asian Journal of Communication	7
Communitas	6
Public Relations Inquiry	6
International Journal of Business Communication	5

Journal of Economic Behavior, Organization	5
Journal of Economic Theory	5
Business Horizons	4
International Journal of Communication	4
Journal of Environmental Planning and Management	4
Jurnal Komunikasi-Malaysian Journal of Communication	4
Political Communication	4
Profesional de la Información	4
Revista Internacional de Relaciones Publicas	4
American Behavioral Scientist	3
Animal Behaviour	3
Communication, Sport	3
Doxa Comunicación	3
Hague Journal of Diplomacy	3
International Communication Gazette	3
International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age	3
Journal of Applied Communication Research	3
Journal of Political Marketing	3
Media and Communication	3
Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies	3
Palabra Clave	3
Sustainability	3

The three journals that publish the most on the subject are: *Journal of Communication Management* (Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.), *Public Relations Review* (Elsevier Science Inc.), and *Corporate Communications* (Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.). These journals, with 87 papers, account for almost a fifth (18.9%) of the total production. The rest of the journals included in Table 2 (with three or more published works) account for 22% of the production (101 works). Finally, the 27 journals with two documents published (54 papers) represent 11.9% of the total.

Authorship

Taking the authorship of reference to be the lead author (the one who signs the research study in the first position), one observes (Table 3) that there are few authors with more than one work on the subject published in the period under analysis.

Table 3 Number of publications by the document's lead author.

Author	No. documents
Zerfass, A.	4
Besley, J. C.	3
Gutiérrez-García, E.	3
Preciado-Hoyos, A.	3
Wiesenberg, M.	3
Aggerholm, H. K.	2
Barker, R.	2
Bowen, S. A.	2
Buhmann, A.	2
Capriotti, P.	2
Ciszek, E. L.	2
Ertac, S.	2
Fahnrich, B.	2
Fernandez, L.	2
García-Carbonell, N.	2
Hagenbach, J.	2
Hoffjann, O.	2
Ihlen, O.	2
Jugo, D.	2
Mahbob, M. H.	2
Mortenius, H.	2
Neal, K. L.	2
Palmieri, R.	2
Paz, J.	2
Roennfeldt, C. F.	2
Sheremeta, R. M.	2
Siano, A.	2
Slabbert, Y.	2
Stromback, J.	2
Wiggill, M. N.	2

There are 30 authors who have published more than one article as lead author. Zerfass stands out with four publications, followed by Besley, Gutiérrez-García, Preciado-Hoyos, and Wiesenberg with three research articles each.

The Most Cited Works and Their Authors

Just as the authors who publish the most on the subject as lead authors were determined, the works that have been most cited are analysed. For this purpose, the information provided by the WoS in its section "Cited reference count" was used. Table 4 lists the most cited works (those with 100 or more citations).

Table 4 Authors and titles of the most cited works (at least 100 citations) and number of citations.

Authors	Article title	Cited reference count
Manfredi-Sánchez, J. L.	Globalization and Power: The Consolidation of International Communication as a Discipline. Review Article	241
Yu, X. Y., Chen, Y., Nguyen, B., and Zhang, W. H.	Ties With Government, Strategic Capability, and Organizational Ambidexterity: Evidence From China's Information Communication Technology Industry	172
Rahimnia, F., and Molavi, H.	A Model for Examining the Effects of Communication on Innovation Performance: Emphasis on the Intermediary Role of Strategic Decision-Making Speed	142
Walther, F., Vogt, S., and Kabst, R.	A Strategic Foresight About Future Public Service Developments From the Citizens' Perspective	138
Magen, C.	The Israeli Mossad and the Media: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives	134
Nche, G. C.	The Church Climate Action: Identifying the Barriers and the Bridges	130
Penn, D. J., and Szamado, S.	The Handicap Principle: How an Erroneous Hypothesis Became a Scientific Principle	127
Shapiro, J. M.	Special Interests and the Media: Theory and an Application to Climate Change	126
Van Aelst, P., and Walgrave, S.	Information and Arena: The Dual Function of the News Media for Political Elites	126
Mavis, C. P., Richter, A., Landau, C., Schmidt, S. L., Simons, T., and Steinbock, K.	What Happens When Companies (Don't) Do What They Said They Would? Stock Market Reactions to Strategic Integrity	124
Crawford, V. P.	Experiments on Cognition, Communication, Coordination, and Cooperation in Relationships	120
Metz, P.	Distances, Multinational Organisational Learning, and Firm Performance: A New Perspective	117
Hoffmann, C. P., Tietz, S., and Hammann, K.	Investor Relations – A Systematic Literature Review	113

From the 30 most cited works listed in the table, it can be seen that there is no direct relationship between the number of works published by an author and the number of citations. The most cited works correspond to authors who have a single work as lead author, as is the case of the three-top ranked in citations, those of Manfredi-Sánchez (2020), Rahimnia and Molavi (2020) and Yu et al. (2014). One notices that, for example, Zerfass appears in the list, but not as a lead author.

Geographical Location

Regarding the countries of origin of the publications, again the lead author is taken into consideration, so that the geographical location of that author's affiliation and address are used as they appear in the WoS registry. Of the 460 documents found, one is not signed by any author, and is therefore not included in the quantification of the research studies by country of origin. Table 5 presents the distribution of the remaining 459 documents.

Table 5 Scientific production by country of origin (lead author's affiliation).

Country	No. documents
United States of America	110
Spain	43
Germany	36
England	28
South Africa	21
Sweden	18
Denmark	12
Netherlands, People's Republic of China	11
Canada, Italy	9
Belgium	8
Colombia, Norway, Russia	7
Australia, Austria, Ecuador, Malaysia, Singapore, Switzerland, Turkey	6
South Korea	5
Brazil, Hungary, Iran, Slovenia	4
Croatia, India, New Zealand, Serbia, Taiwan	3
Bolivia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Israel, Kuwait, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Venezuela	2
Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Cyprus, Estonia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Wales	1

One observes that the country with the highest output is the USA with 110 documents, which represents almost a quarter (24%) of global production. There follows Spain with 43 documents (9.4%), Germany with 36 (7.8%), England with 28 (6.1%), and South Africa with 21 (4.6%).

By geographic region, there is a large core of production in North America (USA, Canada, Mexico) with a total of 121 documents. The other major source of production (more segmented) is in Europe, mainly in Spain, Germany, England, The Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries (181 documents), as well as other relevant European nations. In Africa, the production of South Africa (21 publications) stands out. In Asia, the productions of China, Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey, South Korea, and Iran stand out (38 publications). In Oceania, Australia and New Zealand account for 9 publications which does not represent any very major volume of research on the object of study in that region. Finally, it is worth mentioning the production of South American countries, including Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, and Cuba (17 studies).

Brief Qualitative Analysis

Of the 196 works in the communication category, the qualitative analysis was limited to the most recent, in particular, those published in 2018, 2019, and 2020 (up to the aforementioned search date). This meant that a total of 89 documents are analysed.

It was observed that there are works on different topics and applying different methodological approaches. One could highlight the following as the thematic lines of interest in these recent years:

- Research that continues to focus on the importance of SC of all kinds within any organization, or on the definition of the concept itself and its characteristics (for example, Andersson, 2020; Castello-Martínez, 2019; Goransson & Fagerholm, 2018; Gutiérrez-García & Recalde, 2018).

- Works with a focus on technological or novel aspects related to communication management. This is the case, for example, of research on big data (Miquel Segarra & Aced Toledano, 2020; Wiesenberg & Moreno, 2020), on artificial intelligence (Zerfass et al., 2020), or on social media (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020; Fähnrich et al., 2020; Gil Ramírez et al., 2020; Navarro et al., 2018; Negrete-Huelga & Rivera-Magos, 2018).

- Publications on the object of study applied not only to firms or institutions, but also to other entities such as non-governmental organizations or associations (Fröhlich & Jungblut, 2018; Fu, 2019; Harrison, 2019; Ongenaert, 2019).

- And also, literature or systematic reviews on certain related concepts, such as SC in international communication (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2020), on the ecosystem of start-ups and how they face the key challenges of this type of communication (Wiesenberg et al., 2020), or on the evolution of public relations (García-Nieto et al., 2020).

Although very diverse methods and techniques are used in these research studies, qualitative studies predominate over quantitative ones, and questionnaires and semi-structured interviews predominate as the techniques used, with content analysis also frequently being applied. There are numerous single case studies (Hansson, 2018; Torres-Mancera & De las Heras-Pedrosa, 2018; Vazquez Bonne & Saldrigas Medina, 2019; Yue, 2019) and various multiple case studies (Coll Rubio, 2019; Galarza Fernández et al., 2020; Hearit, 2018; Köhler & Zerfass, 2019).

It must be said, however, that everything mentioned corresponds to what is usual in social sciences research, with the methods and techniques observed in the sample corresponding to what one would expect of research on SC within the general framework of social sciences.

Conclusions

In relation to the initial hypothesis about the increase in scientific production dealing with the object of analysis, there was indeed a considerable growth in publications on the subject during the period of analysis (2011-2020) with a total of 555 works[3], whereas in the previous 10 years (2001-2010) 86 works were published, and before that (1994-2000), which is when publications began on the subject, there are only seven records in the database. Undoubtedly, this is a reflection of the transfer of the growing importance of SC in all areas of society to the interest of the scientific community. In addition, there may be other reasons for this growth such as, for example, the considerable increase in the number of journals incorporated into the database that was studied.

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[3] All these data are from the unfiltered results according to their type (hence the 555 initial records do not coincide with the 460 studied in the reference period of this research, as explained at the beginning of Section Quantitative Analysis).

With regard to the objective of making a quantitative analysis of the 460 documents found, this was carried out satisfactorily.

For the language of the texts, it was to be expected that most of the works would be in English, and this was the case. But there were also a not inconsiderable number of investigations written in Spanish (7.6%) and other languages (5.2%), which is related to the disparity in the origin of the publications. In this sense, there is confirmation of the interest of scientific communication about SC, as well as the cross-cutting nature of the subject since there are documents in publications indexed under 82 WoS categories. Among these, communication stands out, but also others related to firms and institutions (business, management, and economics), as well as to information (information science and library science) and political and public relations (political science and international relations). It was also observed that the journals which publish most studies on the subject are those related to the aforementioned disciplines: *Journal of Communication Management*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Corporate Communications*, corresponding to publishers of great scientific prestige.

In relation to the authorship (the lead authors), there are not many authors who publish much on the subject, although perhaps the period of analysis is not long enough for any such tendency to have become evident. Furthermore, as has been confirmed in other studies, the number of works of a lead author is not related to a higher citation rate. Indeed, the most cited works of those analysed correspond to authors with a single work among the documents retrieved, as in the cases of Manfredi-Sánchez or Rahimnia, with in both cases it being striking that the corresponding publications are very recent and, at the time of the study (just a few months after publication), they have already been highly cited.

There is a predominance of studies by lead authors based in the USA and Europe (mainly in Spain, Germany, and England, although also in other countries). This pattern of origins of the production on the subject under study is similar to that found in previous studies on the discipline of communication as a whole (Trabadela-Robles et al., 2020), including in the existence of other nodes of production such as the Pacific region (Asia and Oceania), South Africa, and Latin America. With regard to the greatest impact of the production, the most cited works come from, among others, Spain (Manfredi-Sánchez), China (Yu), Iran (Rahimnia), Germany (Walther), Israel (Magen), and South Africa (Nche). Except for the case of the USA, this coincides with the countries that have the highest output.

With respect to the goal of making a brief qualitative analysis of the documents retrieved, although it was not a primary objective, it can be concluded that there are some clear thematic lines as were described and exemplified in the previous section. They are summarized in studies whose focus is on advancing in the definition and characterization of SC, on the evolution of technology and media (artificial intelligence, big data, and social media), and on the application of SC by "new" actors such as non-governmental organizations, as well as review papers on SC-related concepts.

In short, research on SC has increased significantly in recent years. Also, given that the results of the quantitative study show that SC is being approached from very diverse fields, everything indicates that it will continue to be of interest to the scientific community in the coming years.

Acknowledgements

European Regional Development Fund

A way of doing Europe

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Developing Effective Health Communication Campaigns

Ralph Tench[1] & Gemma Bridge[2]
[1,2] *Leeds Business School, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, United Kingdom*
[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7760-2606;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3888-0202*

Abstract

Health communication campaigns have been used to address many of the most prevalent non-communicable disease risk factors, such as physical inactivity. Typically, campaigns are shared via mass media to reach a high proportion of the population and at a low cost per head. However, the messages shared are in direct competition with other campaigns, such as product marketing, which can result in the campaign not being seen adequately to lead to behaviour change. Moreover, as health campaigns are shared widely, the messages may not be understood or considered appropriate by certain audiences due to their broad nature. This can lead to unintended consequences, such as inadvertent social norming of the risk behaviour. To improve the success of health communication campaigns, they should be based on theory, with the theory of planned behaviour, the elaboration likelihood model, and the extended parallel process model, three of the most widely used. Such theories highlight the importance of targetting a campaign to the audience. Targetting a health communication campaign involves considering the audience in the development and dissemination of the message. Campaigns could also be co-developed with the audience in question to ensure relevance. Digital technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence can be used to tailor messages to the target audience effectively. Examples of targetted and broad health communication campaigns are presented.

Keywords

health communication, strategic communication, behaviour change, non-communicable diseases, social media

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of what health communication is, with a focus on targeted campaigns. Examples of public health communication campaigns are provided, not as a guide for best practice, but as opportunities to develop insights that could inform future strategic communication efforts. The topics covered in the chapter include:

- definition of health communication;

- health communication campaigns and behaviour change;

- limitations and unintended consequences of communication campaigns;

- theory of successful health communication campaigns;

- targeted health communication campaigns;

- case studies of health communication campaigns;

- conclusion and key takeaways for developers of health communication campaigns.

What is Health Communication?

Communication involves the exchange of information via multifarious on and offline channels to reach intended audiences. Health communication is fundamental to promoting public health, with the aim of "influencing and supporting individuals, communities, health care professionals, policy makers or special groups to adopt and sustain a behavioural practice or a social or policy change that will ultimately improve health outcomes" (Schiavo, 2007, p. 7). Health communication is multifaceted, drawing on numerous disciplines including strategic communication, marketing, psychology, and health education, and it is relevant across all aspects of health and wellbeing, including quality of life and disease prevention (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). Although most often associated with public health, it is also an increasingly important field in the non-profit and commercial sectors (Schiavo, 2007). Communication campaigns in health have been defined as:

> purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviours in large audiences within a specified time period using an organized set of communication activities and featuring an array of mediated messages in multiple channels generally to produce non-commercial benefits to individuals and society. (Aitkin & Rice, 2012, p. 3)

Such campaigns are often shared using mass media, including television, radio or print media, to expose a large proportion of the population to certain messages. Messages can also be shared via digital platforms, such as social media and via blogs.

Health communication campaigns have been used to address many of the most prevalent non-communicable disease risk factors including poor diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and alcohol consumption (Peters et

al., 2019). Such campaigns are considered critical to intervention efforts to improve population health, with greater investment in campaigns linked to greater public health success. For instance, in terms of tobacco control, research indicates that the more that is invested in communication campaigns, the greater the success rate of quit attempts (Kuipers et al., 2018). However, the success of health campaigns is hampered by competition with pre-existing social norms, strong marketing, and pervasive behaviours are driven by habit or addiction (Wakefield et al., 2010). Furthermore, messages can fall short due to factors such as the increasingly fractured and cluttered media environment, the heterogeneous audience which does not respond equally to homogeneous messages, and campaigns that target behaviours that the audience lacks the resources to change (Wakefield et al., 2010).

Public Health Communication Campaigns and Behaviour Change

Public health communication campaigns can be considered in the context of health education, social marketing or as a combination of both (Zhao, 2020). Educational campaigns are typically clinically or institutionally focussed, whilst social marketing campaigns often have a broader audience and utilise marketing tactics to incentivise behaviour change (Zhao, 2020). Despite their differing contexts and research traditions, health communication campaigns have a similar development process, involving the creation of campaign objectives and message strategies, dissemination of the message via appropriate channels, and the evaluation of the campaign to assess its impact (Rice & Atkin, 2012). Moreover, irrespective of the context, the aim of health communication campaigns is typically to change behaviour, doing so directly or indirectly (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003). Direct campaigns aim to invoke an emotional response about a certain behaviour or seek to affect decision making before engaging in certain behaviour. In contrast, campaigns that aim to achieve behaviour change indirectly, seek to do so by setting an agenda and increasing discussion about a health issue in a network. Doing so increases the perceived social norm of behaviour and therefore alters an individual's intention of engaging in that behaviour (Wakefield et al., 2010). As communication involves understanding and sharing meanings (Pearson & Nelson, 1999), whether seeking direct or indirect influence, health communication campaigns need to be based on messages that are easily understood by the intended audience.

Barriers to the Success of Health Communication Campaigns

Health communication campaigns are often shared widely via mass media, such as television, radio, and newspapers, to expose large populations to messages (Wakefield et al., 2010). Whilst this approach can ensure a behaviourally focused message reaches a high proportion of the population and at a low cost per head, the messages shared are in direct competition with other factors, such as product marketing. This can reduce the visibility of the campaign message and as behaviour change, requires frequent exposure to the campaign for an adequate period of time (Friedman et al., 2016), such competition can limit the effectiveness of the campaign on long term behaviour change. This has been supported in relation to tobacco control campaigns whereby withdrawal of the campaign reduced the beneficial effects of the messages being shared (Wakefield et al., 2008). Similar results have been indicated in relation to physical activity and nutrition, with behavioural changes not maintained after campaigns end (Cavill & Bauman, 2004). However, there is a balance to be achieved in terms of adequately sharing health messages, since inertia or lethargy to the message can occur if the audience is exposed too frequently (Illeditsch et al., 2012; Webb & Byrd-Bredbenner, 2015), or if the individual is exposed to too much information, as has been noted during the COVID-19 "infodemic" (Nielsen et al., 2020; World Health Organization, n.d.).

Other barriers to the success of health communication campaigns include:

- A lack of perceived message applicability (Cho & Salmon, 2007), which could occur if the message was not pre-tested with the target audience prior to being shared, if the message was not tailored to the appropriate stage of the behaviour change process (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), or if the meaning of the message has been changed, for instance through the addition of comments or images by audience members on social media.

- Inadvertent social norming of the risk behaviour (Cialdini, 2003). This could occur as a result of a campaign aiming to reduce a behaviour by highlighting its prevalence, but instead of reducing the behaviour, the campaign results in that behaviour being perceived as normal, and thus acceptable, by the target audience (Dempsey et al., 2018).

- Pushing the behaviour of the audience in a direction opposite to that which the campaign aimed to achieve (i.e., the boomerang effect; Hart, 2013). This can occur in adolescents due to psychological reactance to

the "forbidden" behaviours (i.e., the forbidden fruit appeal; Henriksen et al., 2006; Steindl et al., 2015).

• A lack of familiarity with technology and/or the dissemination platform can reduce the frequency with which a target population is exposed to the message, making it important to consider the level of technology use in the target audience (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009).

What Theoretical Factors Are Associated With a Successful Health Campaign?

For health communication campaigns to be effective, they need to be based on research evidence and theory. If theories are not considered, health communication campaigns are developed based on trial and error, which will result in inefficient and ineffective results (Zhao, 2020). Numerous theories have been applied to health communication. The most visible of these being behavioural theories which help to explain what drives individual behaviour and how behaviours can change. Communication theories are also used in the development of health campaigns. Such theories highlight that the channel source, the receiver, and the message itself are all essential components of the communication process, and need to be considered when developing a health campaign. Both behavioural and communication theories indicate that information does not fall into a social vacuum, instead, information is received through processes of selective exposure, selective perception, prior knowledge, and macro-social levels, and these can all impact how health campaigns are received and acted upon (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). Three of the most widely applied theories to health communication are the theory of planned behaviour, the elaboration likelihood model, and the extended parallel process model.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1985) proposes that volitional human behaviour is a function of the intention to perform the behaviour and perceived behavioural control. Thus, for health communication campaigns, the TPB suggests that to understand why people behave the way they do, and to, therefore, change that behaviour, we must first understand their intentions. And, those intentions are themselves influenced by attitudes, which represent the judgements people make about a behaviour; subjective norms, which relate to an individual's concern about how a

group would perceive a certain behaviour and motivations to comply with a group's ideals; and perceived behavioural control, which relates to an individual's belief that they can perform a behaviour and what results that behaviour will lead to (Ajzen, 1991). Thus to achieve a successful health communication campaign, it would be expected that the message must consider the intended audience's attitudes about the behaviour, their subjective norms, and their levels of perceived behavioural control.

Although the TPB is not without criticism, for instance Sheeran et al. (2013) argued that the TPB is overly simplistic as it exclusively focuses on rational reasoning, without consideration of unconscious influences on behaviour, whilst others argue that the TPB has limited predictive validity since it does not explain "inclined abstainers", that is, people who form an intention but fail to act (Orbell & Sheeran, 1998), the TPB has been extensively applied in the context of health. For instance, it has been explored with smoking (Alanazi et al., 2017; Godin et al., 1992), exercise (Bozionelos & Bennett, 1999) and food choice (McDermott et al., 2015). Although it has been suggested that the TPB has the potential to inform behaviour change interventions (Rutter, 2010), including health communication campaigns, its use as a basis for campaigns is limited. However, research that has the TPB to both design and evaluate a communication campaign for reducing negative health behaviours found that the TPB informed campaign was able to change behaviour, encouraging drivers to slow down, highlighting the theory's potential to change attitudes (Stead et al., 2005).

Elaboration Liklihood Model

An alternative theory that has been used in the context of health communication is the elaboration likelihood model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The ELM has been applied to improve health outcomes across numerous health issues including smoking (Flynn et al., 2011), nutrition (Wilson, 2007) and reducing risky behaviour in relation to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS; Dinoff & Kowalski, 1999). The ELM has also been used as a framework for exploring the impact of health communication campaigns on attitudes and behaviour (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The key question that the ELM asks is "how do people react to the messages that they are exposed to?". The ELM suggests that some people are engaged by a message and others are not. Those that are involved with the message and understand its content are more likely to be influenced to act and change their behaviour. Those that are not involved with the message can still be

influenced, but the message must be tailored in a way to catch their attention. By considering how people react, messages in health campaigns can be designed to target the intended audience. The ELM has been used in advertising because it can help messages to be seen and heard in the crowded message space (Cho, 1999). The ELM also highlights that the intended audience needs to understand the information being shared in order to change their behaviour. Although the ELM is an influential and popular framework for exploring attitudinal and behavioural change (Morris et al., 2005), doubts about its predictive abilities have been raised (Szczepanski, 2006). Moreover, the ELM was developed prior to the advent of digital communication technologies such as social media, and therefore it may not be reactive to the current, congested digital landscape (Kitchen, 2013).

Extended Parallel Process Model

A third theory that has been used to inform health communication campaigns is the extended parallel process model (EPPM; Witte, 1992). The EPPM was based on the health belief model (Rosenstock et al., 1988), which was initially built to improve healthy behaviours by influencing behavioural intention. Although the EPPM considers many of the factors discussed in the TPB and the ELM, it also considers the role of emotion, in particular fear, in understanding and acting upon a health message. The EPPM highlights that because many health behaviours are habitual, a trigger is needed, and that is often tied to fear-based emotions. The EPPM has been applied to understand and explore behavioural changes in several health contexts including breast cancer prevention campaigns (Chen et al., 2019) and reducing risk behaviours in HIV/AIDS (Witte, 1994). These studies have reveleaved that fear is related to an individual's motivation to act, but that the relationship is curvilinear, whereby fear motivates change, but only to a certain point. If individuals become too afraid, they will be crippled and unable to take steps to change. The EPPM thus suggests that whilst fear can be used to motivate behaviour change in health communication campaigns, it must be used with caution, and with consideration of the intended audiences efficacy or belief in their ability to make changes.

Taken together, the TPB, the ELM and the EPPM highlight that for health communication campaigns to be successful, they need to do the following:

- Consider the intended audience's attitudes about the behaviour, their subjective norms and their levels of perceived behavioural control (TPB).

- Be clear and understandable since those that understand the message content are more likely to be influenced to act and change their behaviour (ELM);

- if the audience is not involved with the message, the message must be tailored in a way to catch their attention (ELM).

- Emotional messages, for instance those using fear, can be effective in motivating change. However, the relationship between fear and motivation is curvilinear (EEPM).

- Fear, if used, needs to be done so with consideration of the intended audience's fear threshold and their perceived levels of self-efficacy (EEPM).

What Is a Targeted Campaign?

The TPB, ELM, and the EEPM highlight that intentions to act are related to attitudes, social norms, and perceived situational control (Ajzen, 2005), and emphasise the importance of understanding constructs like issue beliefs and personal efficacy as key predictors of campaign resonance. Such factors support the need to consider the audience when delivering a health campaign. In practice, messages tailored to a specific population are more likely to resonate and have an impact as the group is likely to share similar pre-existing behaviours (Snyder, 2007), understandings of the health consequences of the target behaviour (Zhao, 2020), and emotional responses to the messaging (Borawska et al., 2020). As a result, focusing attention on specific subgroups will help to ensure the best return for efforts by boosting chances of campaign effectiveness. In support, Compton and Pfau (2009) found that using inoculation theory, which aims to confer resistance to persuasive influence, as a messaging strategy, could be used effectively to prevent pre-teens from starting smoking but was not successful at altering smoking behaviour in other (Compton & Pfau, 2009).

Identification of the Target Audience

To identify the target audience, campaign designers often base their decision on demographic factors such as age, sex, and location (Slater, 1995). However, it can be more helpful to consider theoretically meaningful factors such as determinants of behaviour. By doing so, campaign designers will be better able to assess who is likely to respond to the campaign

activities, and how likely the audience is to change their behaviour (i.e., are they unaware of the harmful behaviour, are they contemplating changing it, or have they already made a decision to change it; Slater, 1995). By identifying the target audience based on determinants of behaviour, campaign messages are more likely to support the group to move to the next stage of their behaviour change process (Slater, 1999). Previous research indicates that models such as the extended parallel process model (EPPM; Witte, 1994) a model which suggests that behaviour is influenced by an individual's evaluation of perceived and actual efficacy and threat, could be used to aid the process of audience segmentation when determinants of behaviour are the focus (Campo et al., 2012). To understand how responses may vary, representatives from the population of interest could be included in the design of the campaign (Schiavo, 2007).

Dissemination of the Campaign

Whilst unique campaign approaches are theoretically optimal, in practice, developing a campaign for each target group could be prohibited by time and cost. As an alternative, campaign designers can acknowledge the diversity of their target groups in their campaign but continue to use a standardized message. For instance, the campaign could be adapted based on when and where the messages are shared (Snyder, 2007). Such tailored dissemination approaches vary from traditional large scale health communication campaigns, which have relied on the mass media as the primary vehicle of delivery (Zhao, 2020). Messages could be shared via text message or email, with such digital triggers focusing an individual on a desired goal at a certain time (Muench & Baumel, 2017). Targetted dissemination could also utilise social media, which in the increasingly mediated world, is growing in importance as a platform for the dissemination of health communication campaigns. However, due to the quantity of information that is presented to audiences via social media, it is important to ensure that the message is given sufficient exposure to ensure that the campaign reaches the target audience with adequate frequency (Zhao, 2020). What is more, if social media is used for dissemination, message fidelity needs to be considered. Although engagement with the post is important, and can increase the reach of the campaign, it can act negatively as the audience could alter the meaning of the campaign message through commenting, reposting, and adding memes or images. Therefore, campaigns on social media will need to be monitored and adjusted to ensure the message retains its original meaning and reaches the targetted audience effectively.

The Use of Digital Technology to Tailor Messages

Thanks to developments in digital technology, automated methods for tailoring campaigns and enhancing information relevance for specific audiences are being explored. Such methods are helping to make campaigns tailored for each target group more time and cost efficient. The application of artificial intelligence, through machine learning using both supervised and unsupervised learning algorithms, is of particular interest since it provides a mean to interpret external data correctly, learn from such data, and exhibit flexible adaptation, which could enable campaigns to adapt and meet the needs of the target audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019), which is important in terms of reducing the "noise" that individuals receive when navigating the mediated world in which we live, where there is a huge amount of information available 24/7 (Tench et al., 2017). Digital technologies such as machine learning could also be used in the monitoring and evaluation stages of health communication campaigns, for instance, helping communicators to analyse communication (e.g., social media posts) to devise future campaigns that are more persuasive for the population of interest (Davenport et al., 2020). Alternative uses of digital technologies in health communication campaigns include monitoring and analysing content on social media to understand population sentiment and/or awareness of a certain topic (Loukis et al., 2017). Such insights would provide valuable data that could be used to further tailor campaigns to the needs of different populations. The use of applications (chatbots) that can interact with users, mimicking human conversations is another potential direction for artificial intelligence in health communication campaigns. Chatbots can understand a spoken language and use speech communication as a user interface (Androutsopoulou et al., 2019; Poola, 2017), and such capabilities could be applied to the context of health communication campaigns to answer questions or share specific information based on the needs of the individual.

Case Studies of Health Communication Campaigns

Man Therapy, Substance Abuse and Suicide Among Men: Targeted Health Communication Campaign

"Man therapy" is a targeted health communication campaign that was developed to address high numbers of suicides by men in America. "Man therapy", which was created by the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention

in collaboration with the Carson J Spencer Foundation, used humour in its messaging to reach its target audience of working-age men and to reduce the stigma of mental health in the population. The campaign included videos, an online support group and a website (https://www.mantherapy.org/). The resources and the campaign itself were developed following multiple focus groups and in-depth interviews with the target audience (Spencer-Thomas et al., 2012). Although no peer-reviewed evaluations have been conducted (Gretz & Rings, 2020), internal reports suggest that the campaign reached thousands of men in the target audience, with over 350,000 website visits within 18 months of launch, and encouraged over 50% of men surveyed to consider seeking mental health support who would not have otherwise done so (Spencer-Thomas et al., 2014). However, even targeted campaigns such as this are not without limitations. As suggested by Mocarski and Butler (2016) in their evaluation of the campaign, using humour as a strategy to reach a target audience can be risky, because the audience must be on the same page as the person leading the campaign for it to be successful (Martin, 2004).

"Stay Alert, Control the Virus, Save Lives": Non-Targeted Communication Campaign

Following the lifting of the strict lockdown for COVID-19 control in the UK, the UK government released a new campaign with an associated slogan to encourage the population to "stay alert, control the virus, save lives" (Figure 1). The campaign was not targeted and was criticised for being vague, open to interpretation and released out of context, making behavioural responses difficult, if not impossible (Hickman, 2020). Criticism was apparent across social media. For example, world renowned author J. K. Rowling (2020) responded immediately on Twitter stating: "is Coronavirus sneaking around in a fake moustache and glasses? If we drop our guard, will it slip us a Micky Finn? What the hell is 'stay alert' supposed to mean?". Such criticism resulted in the government releasing a follow-up announcement on social media to clarify their message, but even that was not received well. Many again criticised the campaign stating that the second message highlighted the ambiguity of the slogan and complicated the messaging.

Figure 1 UK government slogan, release as the initial lockdown was eased.
Credits. Jon Le-Bon – stock.adobe.com

Conclusion

Public health communication campaigns can positively alter health-related behaviours such as smoking, tobacco use, and inadequate physical activity. However, due to the mediated world in which we live, where information is available 24/7, and the pervasive marketing efforts of multi-national corporations, health campaigns must be carefully planned to ensure the target audience is exposed to planned messages frequently enough to enable them to take in the messages and respond. For optimal return on campaign investment, health communication campaigns must be tailored to the audience. All public health communication campaigns

should be monitored to ensure messages are not altered, and finally, campaigns should undergo rigorous independent assessment upon completion to ensure learnings are captured and future campaigns can be improved.

Key Takeaways for Health Communicators

- Tailor messages to the target audience to ensure the messages are understood and can achieve the greatest impact.

- Use a multidisciplinary approach to the development of health communication campaigns, incorporating expertise from a variety of professional backgrounds and insights from the target audience.

- Pre-test messages to guard against unintended consequences and to ensure that the messages resonate with the intended audience.

- Sufficient funding should be reserved for health communication campaigns to ensure the audience are exposed to messages continuously over time.

- Monitor campaigns shared via social media and be prepared to adjust messages if altered by the audience.

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Social Movement Activism

Analysis of Strategic Communication in Context

Robert L. Heath[1] & Damion Waymer[2]

[1] *Department of Communication, University of Houston, Houston, United States of America; [2] Department of Advertising and Public Relations, College of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Alabama, Alabama, United States of America*
[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7754-5629; [2] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5530-535X*

Abstract

Social movement activism presumes strategic communication processes by which groups achieve extra-governmental changes to public and private policy through public pressure. Such pressure presumes conditions of five kinds: strain, mobilization, confrontation, negotiation, and resolution. To explain this process, several cases will be offered but especially the U.S. civil rights movement and the activist career of John Lewis. Social movement activism is a test of wills, a test of character, strength, fact, value, identity, identification, and place.

Keywords

social movement activism, strain, mobilization, confrontation, negotiation, resolution

Social Movement Activism: Analysis of Strategic Communication in Context

Perhaps no strategic communication topic is more appealing to the discussion of political economy, social justice, self-determination, civil society, and self-governance than activism, short for social movement activism. Including social movement under the conceptual umbrella of strategic/strategy is valuable because activism is collective action, a communitarian (grassroots) rhetorical rationale and context for strategic communication (Heath, 2018) and public relations (Bourland-Davis et al., 2010; Smith & Ferguson, 2001, 2010) designed to change some aspect of society from outside of the establishment.

Recent news out of Hong Kong has featured efforts, for instance, by citizens to blunt the regulatory influence of the Beijing government. Citizens of Hong Kong adore the prospects of maintaining their self-determination, their self-government against what they believe to be a big, oppressive government located in Beijing. Much quieter is the citizenry of Taiwan, which is watching Hong Kong closely worried that its own autonomy will also be denied. It is drawing on the Hong Kong example to know how, and whether, to invoke social movement activism. The secession movement in Catalonia, Spain, aspires for self-governance independent of Madrid. Strategic communication as the expression of activism is a tool used to seek constructive, and preferably, collaborate change.

These current examples are among the few. As will be developed later in this chapter, the civil rights movement in the USA is an iconic example of strategic communication as social movement activism. This movement is updated by the "Black Lives Matter" movement. Such efforts, rhetorical applications of strategic communication, reach back to the golden age of Greece, when discourse processes were set into theoretical perspective by Socrates, Aristotle, and Isocrates. In this tradition, activism results from the organization, management, and strategic communication of issue positions that challenge the legitimacy of hegemonic institutions, often referred to as "the establishment". Whereas in ancient Greece, the right and responsibility to speak was constituted as male citizenship. It was orderly and privileged.

Activism might be privileged, but also it might entail what Boyd and VanSlette (2009) called "outlaw discourse". Although the strategic communication of activists employs the standard argument-response approach, it also may "eschew such conventional, recognizable methods" (Boyd & VanSlette, 2009, p. 328). "Outlaw discourse employs a logic that, when translated into the dominant system, is deemed illogical, immoral, or illegal" (Boyd & VanSlette, 2009, p. 333). One might, for instance, presume that the strategic communication expressed through sit-ins at segregated lunch counters is illogical, at least, and perhaps immoral, and was interpreted as illegal. But, does the textuality of a sit-in say we will endure injustices, injury, and insults as the enactment of change? Tolerating peacefully such injustices provides knowledge about the character of the activists and those who seek to condemn their public action. Such outlaw acts ask the question, does peaceful protest demonstrate the illogic and injustice of segregation?

The central theme is the ability of activism to achieve engagement. Engagement can be viewed from a dominant organization or institution's point of view, self-interest. It also can be understood as grassroots activism. As such, activists' effort to engage may be unfulfilled, unreciprocated. Thus, "the value of activism as an engagement approach is that activists are seen for what they do, not what organizations do in response to activists or how organizations can co-opt activism" (Saffer, 2018, p. 288). "Shared meaning and social capital are two outcomes of engagement impact, activists' efficacy" (Saffer, 2018, p. 288).

In this heritage, one most dear to the authors of this chapter occurred in the late 18th century, when the 13 loosely affiliated colonies of British America planned, argued for, and accomplished independence and self-governance. Central to that effort was the statement of grievances justifying

independence: the Declaration of Independence. Since gaining its freedom, the United States of America has been a country that endures and predominantly tolerates social movement activism as a strategic communication means by which citizens shape their relationship with one another, their government's policies, free enterprise organizations and non-governmental organizations, such as the National Rifle Association. From its inception as colonies, and the introduction of slavery, one of the enduring themes of social movement activism is the nature of freedom, independence, and self-determination. Relevant to African Americans, the Southern states engaged, through social movement activism, to create a confederacy intended to maintain the institution of chattel slavery; that led to civil war. Counter to the agitation to maintain slavery was the continuing effort to end the institution of slavery, before and after the civil war. Although the civil war and three amendments to the U.S. constitutions ostensibly ended oppression of African Americans, the years between the end of the war, 1865, to today have witnessed continued social movement activism regarding the status of those citizens.

Starting in the late 1860s, social movement activism dedicated to White supremacy began to reject the principles of African American freedom and self-determination asserted by the union over the south. That rejection, a White supremacy social movement, used activism to reassert hegemonic control over African Americans; that movement led to oppression which motivated the counter activism of the civil rights movement of the 20th century. That movement gained renewed impetus after World War II (WWII), especially vibrant in the 1960s. Also, 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in the USA. So as has often been observed, social movement activism is as American as apple pie!

As social movement activism, strategic communication fits the rhetorical paradigm (as opposed to an information theory paradigm) as it is collective incentivization to action based on strategic choices to influence followers and opponents to change by challenging hegemony. As such, strategic communication is discourse/text (in all of its dimensions) facilitating collective, collaborative decision-making. It seeks agreement in opposition to disagreement as conflict issues management. Strategy is choice-driven communicative actions regarding types of influence relevant to individual, group, relational, community, and societal existentialism. It engages the definition and redefinition of people, relationships, power, community, and society.

In light of its status in U.S. culture, this work offers an explanation and examination of activism as strategic communication, or the strategic communication aspects of activism. Thus, the first part of the chapter provides a detailed, conceptual, and theoretical explanation of the strategic communication processes of activism. Although various examples may be offered along the way, the second major section of the work will focus on the activism of, and on behalf of, African American citizens, especially in the legacy of the honorable John Lewis (1940–2020), who was a civil rights icon for more than 50 years (Meacham, 2020). He left a legacy of courage in the face of death to achieve change through non-violence. That is a fitting legacy and useful theme in the chapter, since social movement activism is not always non-violent. It, as are most topics of strategic communication, is multi-dimensional, multilayered, and multi-textual. Inherently rhetorical, it is essentially dialectical — the push and shove of defined issue positions and interest against defined interest (Heath, 1973b). It is extra-governmental because it presumes the need for change, which is not occurring sufficiently through government or is being opposed by government. It asks the strategic communication question of how can people change their community, their society, through discourse — and other means?

Activism as the Strategic Communication of Managing Change in Context

Often associated with the concept of "grassroots" ("bottom up" struggle against a hegemony), activism is traditionally seen as people exerting pressure from outside the established power structure of society (Heath, 2018, pp. 2–3). As such, a sense of marginalization offers the incentive and rhetorical rationale for change. However, it is quite conceivable that the powerful can use activism against "activists". This can be done when the powerful instrumentalize a segmented public to its interest or even presents itself as victim.

Developing a corporate strategic communication view of activism, Grunig (1992) reasoned that the presence of activism groups "makes the environment of organizations most turbulent" (p. 503). Consequently, she reasoned, public relations managers need to be in place to help others in management interact constructively with activists. Her analysis is based on Olson's (1982) theory of collective action, which looks upon activism through the lens of pressure groups. Activist groups aspire and work to change the organization's policies from the outside. This outsider paradigm presumes that activists need to know how and be able to gain and exert power because,

as outsiders, they do not have it as their intrinsic role in organizational life or society. They do so by making issues out of problems. For these reasons, Grunig (1992) argued, taking an inside-looking out at activist groups approach, that public relations' role in management is a means for collaboration, rather than collision, with activists.

Holtzhausen (2007) adopted a similar perspective but featured it as strategic outside-looking-in communication. By such means, she reasoned, public relations practitioners can support management by acting as internal activists, on behalf of external activists, exploring the means, methods, and rationale for constructive change. As much as both the Grunig (1992) and Holtzhausen (2007) theses could be seen as constrictively supporting efforts of social movement activism, they could as well be seen as coopting, mitigating, and even stifling efforts, such as civil rights, as they collide with corporate hegemony.

Emphasizing the possibility of co-optation (and not limited to issues salient with African American interests), Smith (2005) noted:

> co-optation is a strategy used by dominant institutions or organizations to respond to and eventually neutralize activists who threaten to disrupt the dominant group. The strategy takes a variety of forms, but essentially the more powerful organization creates the appearance that they share the less powerful group's aims and grants some concessions or shares power with the less powerful group. (p. 196)

The strategic outcome is the appearance of change without that reality either in issue position or power sharing. Ostensible dialogue may in actuality be monologue. Issue position and power sharing are two central aspects of the strategic communication of social movement activism.

The 1960s in the USA was a robust era of social movement activism. It was studied by sociology, social psychology, political science, and communication scholars. They agreed that a grievance rationale, the recognition of problems as strains, provided the rationale for activism (Alinsky, 1971; Gamson, 1968, 1975; Griffin, 1952; Moe, 1980; Oberschall, 1973, 1978; Olson, 1982; Simons, 1970, 1972, 1974; Smelser, 1963; Toch, 1965). This claim, among others, supported Heath and Nelson's (1986) exploration of strategic issues management as a practitioners' and scholars' approach to understanding the strategic communication means by which social movement activism is a vital part of societal public policymaking. Centered on the incentive driven

communicative and managerial processes of social conflict as collective action, activism was viewed as rational problem-solving behaviors capable of collaborative outcomes. As Heath (2018) noted, "activism is a genre of communication, and activists organize to communicate, and communicate to organize" (p. 2). Moloney and McKie (2016) emphasized Saul Alinsky's (1971) disruptive paradigm as a constructive turn in public relations.

This exploration led to a modeling of social movement activism on the assumption that it is the rhetorical rationale for collective, collaborative decision making, at least in principle if not prevalent in practice. Prevailing public relations philosophy tended to presume that advocacy (counter-advocacy) could blunt the criticism voiced by activists. It could even yield to pressure tactics, the exercise of hegemonic power. Activism was also viewed as illegitimate behavior insofar as it challenged the rationale of the established order. It could be illegal, criminal, and likely irrational. Opponents to activists often ask, "how dare they?".

The model Heath and Nelson (1986) proposed featured strain, a concept championed especially by Smelser (1963) as foundationally motivating. In addition to strain, the model featured mobilization (power gaining), confrontation (power using argumentation), negotiation, maintenance, and termination. About a decade later, truncated the model by assuming maintenance and featuring resolution instead of termination (Heath, 1997; Heath & Palenchar, 2009). The improved five-factor model presumed a strategic arc from strain to resolution, the end of strain, the resolution of conflict. Strategic issue communication is vital to each of the five stages.

Strain presumes shared problem recognition: activists desire to change conditions that cause discomfort or prevent people from obtaining or enjoying advantages they believe they deserve. "A social movement represents an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem that they feel they have in common" (Toch, 1965, p. 205). The feeding ground of activism is "the ranks of persons who have encountered problems" (Toch, 1965, p. 9). That logic fits the rationale for strategic change integrated in speech communication public speaking classes during the 20th century. Millions of students were prompted to build their speeches to feature a problem of relevance, shared by the audience, and propose a solution. The test of a solution's persuasiveness is its ability to solve the problem in ways that benefit, are agreeable to, the audience.

Strain is motivational because it is intrinsically comparative: what is versus what is preferred, what ought to be (Smelser, 1963). In that regard, it is a rhetorical test of identity (Heath, 2012), identification, and place, associations people form to express their identities. For that reason, the aspirational goal of activism based on strain presumes some issue range between dissatisfaction and improved condition, perhaps a better answer to a corporate or public policy issue. It weighs what is against what could and should be as incentivized strategic communication. Activists gather information, through various kinds of research — often direct experience and lay observation; this is subjected to values analysis, judgments such as fairness, safety, equality, and environmental quality. In the case of civil rights, the facts put into play may be as harmful as lynching, as injustices at the ballot box, and as hidden as multivariate analysis of salary/wage, promotion, hiring, and safety in workplace practices. As strategic communication, activists isolate issues and point to choices (advantages versus disadvantages) as motivation for change. Individuals cherish "the images of society, of right and wrong, justice and injustice, success, and other moral components of their view of the world and where they themselves are situated in it" (Oberschall, 1973, pp. 83–84). That not only justifies activism, within communities, but it also serves to motivate and mobilize actions. Through strategic communication, strain incentivizes collective action; mobilization is the enactment of collective action.

Mobilization occurs when disparities between what is and what ought to be incentivize or motivate social movement collective behavior: organized activism. Such mobilization can translate into formal organization, even with officers and position/activity assignments. Such mobilization seeks to redistribute stakes from stakeholders to stakeseekers. Mobilization requires numbers of individuals with joined, purposeful actions. It is the gathering and deployment of power resources. It might, as will be seen in the case of civil rights, translate into marches and demands.

As such, mobilization is the manifestation of organized change management in the face of resistance. Such resistance may range from police violence to very subtle use of research and deliberation, planning and programming change to appear to be committed to and achieving change, as smoke and mirrors. It is not unlikely, especially the case with 1960s civil rights that the mobilization of conflicting interests leads to clashes that become violent. As such, social movement activism tests willingness to risk as an establishment vulnerability (Heath, 1979). Dominant society presumes that, perhaps through policing, it can raise a threshold of risk of bodily

harm that activists will not cross. But what if they cross that threshold, as civil rights marchers did, at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, on "bloody Sunday", March 7, 1965 (Klein, 2020; Meacham, 2020)? That clash was heard around the globe. It marked the moment of high risk taking necessary to translate mobilization into confrontation.

If mobilization creates a focalized tension on issue positions, confrontation occurs. Confrontation is a test of wills, a test of character, strength, fact, value, identity, identification, and place. Confrontation may occur in the streets, in media content, in court, in the court of public opinion and public interest. Skilled activists confront to narrow the options and opinion positions of their opponents. Confrontation is dialectical, discursive. It frames issues and operates from frames to present arguments and to advance as well as deny power. It is, as Kenneth Burke (1968, 1969) reasoned, the tension between merger and division. It is the rhetoric of identification which appeals as courtship, the invitation to share issue positions, preferences, identities, identification, and place. Burke's (1969) theory of language offers rationale for strategic communication in general and social movement activism in specific. It depends on terms for reality/positive terms (terms about things/experience, reality), dialectical terms (terms the meaning of which is based on opposites/opposition: freedom/tyranny, justice/injustice), and ultimate (God, unitary, and overarching) terms (those that people act in the name of, freedom, for instance).

Confrontation can be purely terministic, the expression of division, or communicatively demonstrative. As in the case of the violent abolitionist, John Brown, his "violence jarred a nation into action, but violence can only succeed if it achieves legitimacy through earned social capital, that being the public relations challenge facing terrorists and their supporters" (Heath & Waymer, 2014a, p. 209). Confrontation, however peaceful, reasonable, dramatic, or violent, is a test of character and social capital. It asks, can society advance to produce gains, social capital — these sought-after values and outcomes? It is demonstrable that John Brown was hanged for an individual act of terrorism (as he attempted to abolish slavery in the USA) which he believed was justified by his religious Calvinism. In contrast, Jefferson Davis (president of the Confederate States of America) was not hanged for his attempt at the violent overthrow of the U.S. government (as he fought to preserve the institution of slavery in the USA); Davis was widely lauded throughout the south. Monuments, schools, roads, and such were placed and named in his honor (Heath & Waymer, 2014a, 2014b). Activists' discursive,

textual search is for knowledge, values, identity, identification, and place needed to create a fully functioning society.

Because of the nature of language, the layeredness of meanings, dialectical terms become elevated to be ultimate terms. This means that they can transcend division and achieve merger. As Burke (1969) concluded, "there must be a principle of principles involved in such a design — and the step from principles to a principle of principles is likewise both a fulfillment of the previous order and the transcending of it" (p. 189; see also Heath, 1973b). The inherent logic of Burke's (1969) theory of language is that terms, as terministic screens (defining and attitudinizing reality), operate definitionally and evaluatively, adjusting individual and collective minds — and perceived/interpreted reality. As Heath (1973b) observed,

> confrontation demands that the people involved transcend the level at which there is division. Upward movement resolves division and establishes new identifications and priorities. In transcendence there is purification as the nonessential and divisive elements are eliminated or revalued in priority. (p. 171)

Rhetorical clash is not only a contest of merger and division, but also an invitation (courtship) to consider a different perspective for organizing society. Such rhetorical dialectic is foundational to strategic communication because "ideally the dialogue seeks to attain a higher order of truth, as the speakers, in competing with one another, cooperate towards an end transcending their individual positions" the reconciliation of differences as a higher synthesis (Burke, 1969, p. 53).

Presuming that confrontation sufficiently pushes those who hold competing perspectives, then differences can be, need to be, reconciled. Difference is harmful to self-determination. Society cannot easily balance issue positions at odds with one another. Thus, negotiation is a concerted search for order in the face of unproductive disorder. It is a kind of "deal striking", striking a deal, making a collective, win-win decision. One of the daunting aspects of social movement activism is that negotiation may fail if it presumes a common ground, a mid-point in differences. Thus, if the issue of civil rights activism is the right to vote, a partial, conditional right to vote may not be, and likely is not a negotiable answer to "the right to vote". In fact, the Reconstruction, Jim Crow answer to voting often was an impediment that was supposed to be a tolerable half measure. So, voting was not a citizenship right but the result of the ability of some people to get over a

hurdle which often was never a level playing field; the bar was higher for African Americans to vote than for White European Americans.

Compromise might suffice as negotiation. But it might not. If negotiation presumes that both sides can and must be satisfied, that conclusion misses the strategic communication dynamics of confrontation. Negotiation may presume capitulation by one side to the other. That logic reaches back in American society to the years after the civil war when White supremacists refused to accept the war's outcome, including three constitutional amendments. Equality, equal treatment under the law, was a half measure even in the face of demonstrated capability to aspire, lead, and achieve (Heath, 1975). Negotiation failed to bring social tranquility between 1865 and 1955 because equality, equal treatment under the law, was not achieved during this time period. Thus, strain existed for mobilization and confrontation to continue or reemerge as the contest of social cohesion and social justice.

If negotiation succeeds and division gives way to merger, then the voices in social movement activism can and have achieved resolution. The test of resolution is whether the changes agreed upon become the new hegemony. If not, or to the extent not, strain continues to be an incentive for calls to change, to mobilize and to confront.

Strategic communication as social movement activism is most relevantly examined and enacted in context. The incentivizing strain is contextual, as is mobilization, confrontation, negotiation, and resolution. For instance, social movement activism has opposed the oil production industries practices of fracking (Ferguson & Smith, 2012a, 2012b; Ferguson et al., 2016; Smith & Ferguson, 2013).

The strategic communication of social movement activism is the enactment of angst driven existentialism. It presumes the potential social capital of co-created meaning as the rationale for a new relational hegemony (Saffer, 2018). It asks how should we act toward one another in ways that constructively manage change in the aura of transcendent textual perspectives? That has been the question surrounding the shared meaning and social capital of African Americans in U.S. society. That point can be better understood by a brief case analysis of the civil rights movement especially viewed through the experience of the recently departed, John Lewis, the last of those featured speakers at the historic August 1963 march on Washington (National Geographic, n.d.) — one who had his skull cracked during the aforementioned mobilization turned confrontation at

the Edmund Pettus Bridge. His mantra was the right of all citizens to vote as the highest form of self-determination.

As this section has featured a five-part model, the case that follows will demonstrate how that model is issue or topic sensitive. Social movement activism, especially in the case of African American social justice is older than the U.S. civil war, was reinvigorated after the war as White supremacy launched its own renewed social movement activism. The case that follows picks up that narrative in the 1960s.

African American Social Movement Activism

Although this section focuses primarily on the civil rights movement post WWII in the USA, a couple of glimpses are worth noting regarding this issue. Almost from the introduction of Africans in bondage to Jamestown in 1619, critics of this labor and commercial practice collided with opponents who believed that God abhorred slavery. Consequently, the antislavery movement was the first concerted effort to combat slavery which became set in stone by the U.S. Constitution, particularly the 3/5 clause and the requirement that slaves fleeing their condition must be returned to their owners. The civil war partially settled this matter, once a coalition of radical republicans and a few civil rights leaders such as Frederick Douglass successfully passed three constitutional amendments. All of that happened because of sustained social movement activism. In the United States, colonists' activism led to the war of independence; the new nation that was created was soon challenged by "democratic activism": the Whiskey Rebellion, Shaw's Rebellion, anti-slavery activism, states' rights secessionism, and Jim Crowism.

Importantly, however, immediately after the civil war, White Southerners set about re-imposing control over Black labor to restore the old order. This mobilization was pressed by social movement activists such as those that created the Ku Klux Klan and eventually the Sons of Confederate Soldiers and Daughters of the Confederacy. These latter activist groups not only fought for labor, economic, political, and social restrictions on African Americans but also shaped southern culture based on the lost cause principle that the south would rise again to achieve White dominance and states' rights freedoms of local determination. These social movement tactics of racial superiority are not unique, as Adolph Hitler also began his political career and climb to power as a social movement activist (Range, 2016).

Because the problem is White supremacy, that is the starting point of African American civil rights social movement activism. White supremacy is the immoveable object against which African American civil rights activism is an irresistible force. Some might say that Christianity, the dominant religion that espouses one God, one faith, one baptism for all (the Jew and gentile alike) in the USA would mitigate the oppressive nature of White Americans towards non-White Americans, particularly African Americans. Jones (2020) argued the opposite: "the Christian denomination in which I grew up was founded on the proposition that chattel slavery could flourish alongside the gospel of Jesus Christ. Its founders believed this arrangement was not just possible but also divinely mandated" (p. x). It is telling that more than 5 decades ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used principals of Christian theology with varying degrees of success in his attempts to find common ground with White American Christians on the issues of racial reconciliation and justice with and for African Americans (Tisby, 2018). A key point in this process is that the rhetorical dialectic of social movement activism is argumentative, adversarial, and assertive. Even as it presumes to challenge opponents over values, it can fail because of the poverty of values, their fluidity and ambiguity. One might assume that in a nation dedicated to freedom that value would be universally rather than contextually applied to public decision making (Heath, 1973a).

As noted above, it is reasonable to see the civil rights movement created and energized by African Americans was in fact a counter movement, counter activism. Reflecting on the roots of oppression, Jones (2020) concluded:

> while the South lost the war, this secessionist religion not only survived but also thrived. Its powerful role as a religious institution that sacralized white supremacy allowed the Southern Baptist Convention to spread its roots during the late nineteenth century to dominate southern culture. (p. 2)

That awareness of church influence has created awareness of White European origin citizens that they must join in support of African American civil rights and must work to make their churches and local communities inclusive (Waymer & Cripps, 2018); thus, African American civil rights as social movement activism is a White problem as well as an African American problem, one needing reconciliation and change (Jones, 2020; see also Lee, 2019).

WWII brings us closer to the time when the contemporary civil rights movement aspired to end White hegemony. African American soldiers fought

against the tyranny of nazism, fascism, and imperial Japan. Segregation was often the status in military ranks. One of the most blatant racist societal and military policies was not allowing blood from Black service personnel to be administered to White service personnel (Guglielmo, 2015). But, after the war, military forces (as had been the case after WWI when African American soldiers were lynched in uniform) returned to civilian life and sought equal treatment under the law. Many restrictions prevailed, such as prohibition against inter-racial marriage, but none was more odious than legislative, judicial, and administrative restrictions of voting. Science, pseudo-science (such as phrenology and false correlation) provided what researchers interpreted as moral, intellectual, and physical limitations based on race (Jones, 2020; Wilder, 2013). Voting is the ultimate empowerment, or disempowerment, because it is the root of sociopolitical power, and African American voting rights were restricted severely due to perceived race-based inferiority.

The White supremacy movement revitalized in the 1870s as the White south reeled from the reality of the end to chattel slavery instantiated into law based on three constitutional amendments: 13, 14, and 15. Under Reconstruction overseen by the union government, former states' elections placed African Americans into positions of political power, such as lieutenant governors, U.S. senators and representatives as well as their state counterparts. Federal occupation and "negro rule" were sources of strain. White Leagues and citizens' councils (they have many names such as White Magnolia and the Ku Klux Klan) formed to mobilize and confront the change brought about by the end of the civil war. Riots occurred. Murdered African Americans were buried in anonymous graves; White activist militants killed in riots had monuments placed in their honor (Jones, 2020). Lynching became the most overt form of disempowerment, but thousands of others, including disenfranchisement and segregation (separate and unequal), prevailed from the 1870s well into the 20th century. Increased knowledge of lynching motivated W. E. B. DuBois to expand his scholarship to include analysis of, and action against social injustice. The overt oppression of poll taxes, voter preparedness tests, and simple denial of the right to vote have been eradicated in principle, but in practice covert "modern" forms of vote(r) suppression in the 21st century exist such as gerrymandering (Waymer & Heath, 2016) and voter ID laws amongst others (Ofer & Robinson, 2020). White supremacy is the textual strain that calls for mobilization and confrontation in the search for negotiation and resolution.

Thus, a new phase in the African American social movement started by focusing on gaining the universal franchise. The legislation following the civil

war had granted the vote, but its full social capital, advantages, access, and privileges were elusive. This began the modern social movement activist era made iconic by leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis. Lewis was a new generation member of Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights era; one of the "big six" speakers at the March on Washington (National Geographic, n.d.). A documentary based on his life named *John Lewis: Good Trouble* (Porter, 2020) details how he was born into poverty, in a family which told him to avoid trouble, but he began his life of service committed to "get in good trouble". The kind that produced good results (Meacham, 2020; Newkirk, 2018; Porter, 2020). He was introduced to the service of civil rights while in college by one of his instructors, Reverend James Lawson. He served as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee from 1963–1966. He served in the U.S. House of Representative for 16 terms and authored many bills relevant to civil rights, especially voter rights (Porter, 2020).

The making of this civil rights activist began in Troy, Alabama, when a young Lewis, aspiring to be a preacher, experienced overt and covert racism with his family (Meacham, 2020; Porter, 2020). They were willing to be patient, not to cause trouble, but Lewis became motivated to make trouble in the cause of social justice. Early in life, he recognized the strain of social injustice, such as the prevalence of separate public facilities such as drinking fountains, public bathrooms, and store entrances. He realized that as much as such strain can be expressed in generalized, value laden terms, it also needs to be expressed in specific, accomplishable and measurable achievement.

As a college student in Nashville, Tennessee, he was part of the Nashville Student Movement which focused, in part, on equal treatment at lunch counters in downtown Nashville following the trend started by students in Greensboro, North Carolina (Porter, 2020). As a member of the Nashville Student Movement (mobilization) in conjunction with the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (part of the Southern Christian Leadership Council), he participated in sit-in's at lunch counters asking only to be served at the same part of the counter and with the same dignity and respect as White customers. The call (strain, mobilization, and confrontation) was for direct action (specific and measurable). They were committed to the philosophy (as was Mahatma/Mohandas Gandhi) and confrontational strategy of nonviolence. The students targeted various stores, in teams, but the most visible (to photojournalism and video/TV) was lunch counters. Students would take advantage of several seats together at a counter. Take those seats. Place orders. They would be told they could not sit there or place orders. They refused to leave. They were willing to get in "good trouble". They knew they

would be abused by White onlookers. They might have cigarettes put into their hair, catsup put on their clothes, and such. Over 150 students were eventually arrested for disorderly conduct (although they had not been "disorderly"). They were ordered to move by police and then escorted to jail when they did not. The students who had been arrested were found guilty and fined.

Such confrontation led to negotiation and eventually resolution, when the mayor of Nashville said he favored desegregation, at least in part because nonviolence was giving way to and motivating violence, including the fire-bombing of the students' lawyer's home. Large numbers of marchers came to city hall demanding change. Out of the confrontation, came negotiation which led to six stores agreeing to serve African American customers at lunch counters. Only after, and because of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, did more desegregation occur (Porter, 2020).

The Nashville students were motivated by workshops conducted by a local pastor, Reverend James Lawson, who learned about and studied nonviolence when serving as a missionary in India in the 1950s. Lawson was influenced by other civil rights leaders who believed that White Americans would resist nonviolent tactics less than violent tactics (Bliss, 2020). Peaceful demonstration called attention to issues, strains, more clearly than violence did. Even then it had consequences. Lawson, who was enrolled in Vanderbilt University's Divinity School, was criticized in the local papers as a troublemaker, for inciting students to engage in disorderly conduct. Lawson was told to cease his involvement with the students, an order he refused to obey. Ultimately, he was expelled from Vanderbilt; many White American students protested his expulsion deeming such action unfair (Bliss, 2020). His firm stand for racial justice and social activism alongside his expulsion motivated many more ministers and religious groups to become involved (Bliss, 2020). Such new strain, motivated additional mobilization and confrontation. This issue had clearly become one of faith, religious, and church teaching, Jesus, Gandhi, and contemporaneously, Martin Luther King Jr.

In the full picture of the civil rights movement, it is imprecise to portray Reverend Lawson in a frame that is too large, but his alumni became leaders which spread out and built followings and legacies of their own (Vanderbilt University, 2019). He used the concept of "satyagraha" as a rationale for the power of nonviolence, as did Gandhi. Martin Luther King Jr. incorporated Gandhi's philosophy into his writings, research, and teachings and championed it as a morally efficacious concept in social protest, the

concept that nonviolence is a truth-force as a love-force (King, 1958). Satyagraha invites positive regard as reciprocation for positive regard. As the students were warned, violence breeds violence; so, when protesters' nonviolence provoked violence (especially in police officers) that demonstrated the higher moral ground of peaceful protest, and the willingness to suffer for doing and believing in moral righteousness. One can argue that negotiation and resolution are easier accommodation motives than the militant resistance provoked by violent protest.

In many respects the sit-ins are a classic case of strategic communication as social movement activism in context. However, to stop the case here would miss the contextuality of the larger issue of civil rights and the deadly challenges that were both central to the civil rights movement and John Lewis' life. To focus more on those details, we need to examine voting rights activism, which turned violent and even deadly. To demonstrate the strain of voting rights, to mobilize and confront, 600 people met in Selma, Alabama to begin a march to Montgomery to demonstrate the need for voter rights. The march was several months in the planning. Hosea Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Council and John Lewis of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee led the march (Porter, 2020). They were the first to confront, or to be confronted by some 150 Alabama state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge that would have to be crossed. It was a physical and symbolic barrier to the activists' mobilization. A trooper announced over a bull horn, "this march will not continue". Mr. Williams asked the lead trooper to engage in conversation. "Mr. Major, I would like to have a word, can we have a word?" "I've got nothing further to say to you", Cloud answered (Porter, 2020).

Major Cloud of the Alabama troopers ordered the troopers to move toward the marchers, who were beaten and knocked down. Mr. Lewis had his skull broken. He remembered being beaten. As those images, captured in photography, television, and words went public, that strategic communication gave legislators (and others) who supported voting rights the evidence of police violence and moral authority to pass legislation, making it a federal offense to deny the right to vote based on the color of a citizen. President Lyndon Johnson was able to leverage the bill, and then sign it (Porter, 2020).

As much as supporters would like 45 years later to believe that matter is settled, it is not. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that parts of the voter rights bill are no longer needed (Shelby County v. Holder, 2013). Twenty-five states have passed bills designed to restrict voting rights (Brennan Center

for Justice, 2019). A new and improved (given the Supreme Court ruling) bill passed the House of Representatives and in 2020 awaits action by the Senate and President (Human Rights Campaign, 2021). All of which demonstrates that after confrontation, through negotiation that if resolution fails, strain continues. As a fitting aside, the aforementioned bill has been reintroduced by senator Leahy as the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (S. 4263) to honor the late civil rights hero and voting rights champion (Human Rights Campaign, 2021).

Conclusion

Strategic communication is choice-driven communicative actions regarding types of influence relevant to individual, group, relational, community, and societal existentialism. The existentialism in this context focuses on the identity and identification of customers at lunch counters and at voter registration drives and at marches to combat voter restriction. What is the existential nature of lunch counter customers and voters? What texts, levels of terministic perspectives, define the identity, identification, and narratives needed for a fully functioning society? What ultimate terms define, guide, and elevate dialectical terms and positive terms?

More than an information theory, flow, paradigm of communication, strategic communication presumes that meaning and messaging are paramount factors in human association. If language is, therefore, the essence of strategic communication, flaws in language and meaning are both the rationale for strategic communication and its challenge. As Burke (1934) insightfully concluded: "if language is the fundamental instrument of human cooperation, and if there is an 'organic flaw' in the nature of language, we may well expect to find this organic flaw revealing itself though the texture of society" (p. 330). In context, and in this case social movement activism, terms are an incentive and a means of strategic communication. Communities are divided by language, by meaning. Social movement activists use strategic communication to create wounds (divisions in society) and heal them (unity and merger).

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Crisis Communication as Course Correction

Communicative Efforts Revive Goals

W. Timothy Coombs

Department of Communication, College of Liberal Arts, Texas A & M University, Texas,
United States of America
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3693-4388

Abstract

It is common to think of crisis communication as a reactive form of communication intending to protect an organization from a threat. Some research and media focus on crisis communication serve to create that interpretation. While the crisis response often is reactive, crisis communication also can be proactive and, more importantly, should be considered a valuable resource for pursuing strategic organizational outcomes (Coombs & Holladay, 2015). Crises posse threats to achieving organizational outcomes by pushing organizations off course. Crisis communication can be considered a means of correcting the course and reviving the pursuit of organizational goals/outcomes. Crises disrupt strategy by detracting from the pursuit of organizational outcomes (Bundy et al., 2016). A crisis demands management's attention and the application of organizational resources to that situation (Milburn et al., 1983). A crisis can create a "distraction" from the pursuit of organizational goals — can impeded strategy. Moreover, a crisis can erode critical organization goals such as maintaining positive social evaluations and the pursuit of revenue (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Coombs, 2007). This chapter considers how crisis communication can be used as a form of strategic communication designed to return managers to the pursuit of organizational goals.

Keywords

crisis communication, stealing thunder, behavioral economics, myopic loss aversion, situational crisis communication theory

Strategic Communication and Crises: Definitions and Intersections

It is instructive to begin the discussion of crisis communication as strategic communication by clarifying terms. Defining strategic communication, crisis, and crisis communication provides a clearer foundation for the intersection of these concepts.

Defining Strategic Communication

Experts in strategic communication have not reached a consensus of a definition of strategic communication (Zerfass et al., 2018) but they do provide solid grounds for identifying its key aspects of the concept. Strategic communication is broadly viewed as the purposeful use of communication to

achieve organizational goals (Hallahan et al., 2007). It is about the deliberate use of communication to achieve organizational goals (Holtzhausen, 2014). Managers within organizations develop and pursue strategies that outline what they hope to achieve. Strategic communication management involves the utilization of communication to help achieve the organizational goals. For instance, strategic communicators within an organization should demonstrate how the communicative efforts help to achieve organizational goals and not just the pursuit of their own goals (Wilcox et al., 2013). Zerfass and Huck (2007) consider how strategic communication should pursue the core drivers of organizational success. Strategic communication appears to be deliberate. That deliberation is focused on employing communication to further the success of an organization by helping to achieve the organization's goals derived from the overarching organizational strategy.

Defining Crisis and Crisis Communication

Similarly, crisis communication experts do not agree on one, precise definition of a crisis. Coombs (2019) defined a crisis as "the perceived violation of salient stakeholder expectations that can create negative outcomes for stakeholders and/or the organization" (p. 3). This definition recognizes the important role of stakeholders in establishing the existence of a crisis, the social construction element of a crisis. Managers may try to define a situation as a non-crisis but if stakeholders maintain the situation is a crisis, the organization is in a crisis. The negative outcomes refer to the harm a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholders. Stakeholders can suffer physical, psychological, and financial harm from a crisis while organizations can suffer financial and reputational losses from a crisis. The negative outcomes reflect the disruptive nature of crises. Crises do or might (if proper action is not taken) disrupt organizational operations. Actions, which are part of crisis communication, are taken to avoid or to mitigate the organizational disruption from a crisis. Organizational disruption refers to instances when the organization cannot produce or deliver goods and services the way it normal does. However, the mere enactment of a crisis communication is a form of organizational disruption. If managers are focused on the crisis, they are not focused on the organization's typical goals. Hence, crises can have a direct and indirect disruption to strategy — the pursuit of organizational goals. Crises do detract from financial and reputational goals an organization by reducing the ability to achieve each goal.

It is important to recognize that a crisis is a process. Crises can be viewed as having three stages: pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis. Pre-crisis involves mitigation and preparation. Managers carefully assess the risks that could become crises and, here possible, take action to mitigate the likelihood of a risk manifesting into a crisis (Heath & Palenchar, 2009). Preparation involves creating a crisis communication plan, creating a crisis team, and training the crisis team and the entire organization for responding to a crisis. The crisis response are the words and actions taken after a crisis occurs. The crisis response is a very public situation for an organization and the point is which the maximum harm from a crisis often is felt. The post-crisis phase is when operations are returning to normal. Post-crisis efforts can include providing follow-up information, learning from the crisis, and mourning when necessary (Coombs, 2019).

Crisis communication is the enactment of crisis management efforts. Crisis communication is manifest in a variety of ways including environment scanning to find crisis warning signs, efforts by the crisis team to collect and share information, and the words and actions taken after a crisis occurs (Coombs, 2010). For this chapter, the focus is on the last points, crisis communication as the words and actions taken in response to a crisis or the crisis response. The reasoning is that the crisis response is designed to lessen the harm a crisis inflicts on stakeholders and the organization by minimizing the disruption a crisis can create. Let us explore the disruptive force of crises upon strategy more fully.

The Intersection of Crisis and Strategy

Crises often result in reduced stock valuations for the organization in crisis (Barber & Darrough, 1996; King & Soule, 2007; Rao, 1996). The decline in stock value is understandable. The damage created by a crisis will cost the organization money. For instance, the release of a hazardous chemical creates costs associated with process disruption, waste disposal, fines, attorney's fees, clean up, equipment damage, insurance premiums, medical treatment, punitive damages, and fines. The organization suddenly has a drain on financial resources because of the crisis. The financial costs of a crisis precipitate the drop in the stock price (Marcus & Goodman, 1991).

Crises always result in decreased social approval of organizations by stakeholders (Bundy et al., 2016). Social evaluations are "an overarching construct to describe the more intuitive and affective perceptions inherent in

the social evaluation of an organization" (Bundy & Pfarrer, 2015, p. 348). The most common social evaluation studied in crisis communication research is reputation. Crises cause reputational damage for organizations (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). The reputational damage is logical. People perceive an organization (formulate a reputation) based upon an organization's action and words. A crisis is a negative action that can cause people to think less of an organization — result in reputational damage. While a person's identification level with an organization can limit the reputation harm from a crisis (Zavyalova et al., 2012), the negative nature of a crisis, especially those that harm stakeholders, typically damage organizational reputations (Barton, 2001).

Summary

Crises can have negative effects upon organizational strategy by disrupting the pursuit of organizational goals. Crisis disrupt strategy in three significant and related ways: (a) interrupt revenue generation, (b) damage social evaluations, and (c) distract managers. Some crisis experts define crises by the ability to disrupt operations (Barton, 2001). Operational disruptions create financial loses including a decline in stock valuation. Generating revenue is an important organization goal that is disrupted by crises. Favorable social evaluations are valued assets for organizations because they can enhance stock prices, attract top employees, and attract customers (e.g., Davies et al., 2003). A common organizational goal is to cultivate favorable social evaluations. Crises damage social evaluations, especially reputations, thereby disrupting another organizational goal. Finally, crises take attention away from other organizational goals — distract managers from other goals. The crises demand the attention of management, making it difficult to focus on and to pursue other organizational goals while a crisis is being managed. The next section ties these three goal disrupting features of crises directly through the crisis communication research.

Crisis Communication as Strategic Communication

As noted in the introduction, crisis communication is more than reaction, it is a strategic, communicative response to a threatening situation. Crisis communication is utilized to protect stakeholders and the organization from harm. The basic goal of crisis communication is to improve the situation for stakeholders and the organization in crisis. The primary focus in this chapter is on the harm a crisis can inflict on an organization as

it relates to strategy disruption. Coombs (2019) used the concept of the "crisis attention cycle" to capture the disruptive nature of crises. The crisis attention cycle denotes the time when external and internal stakeholders are focused on the crisis. It is the time period during which the crisis can negatively affect stakeholders and the organization. Think about a crisis clock that marks the crisis attention cycle. The crisis clock begins when the crisis generates negative outcomes and ends when people are no longer interested in the crisis. Internally a crisis "ends" when operations return to normal. Externally, a crisis "ends" when the media (traditional and social) no longer want to discuss the crisis. The crisis attention cycle reflects the issue attention cycle found in the media that demonstrates how topics rise and fall in the media (Downs, 1972; Wang & Guo, 2020).

A common goal of crisis communication is to shorten the crisis clock by moving attention away from a crisis (Coombs, 2019). Media coverage serves to illustrate the shortening of the crisis clock. Crises generate a large amount of negative media coverage. One goal of crisis communication is to reduce the amount of time the crisis clock runs. Some crisis managers even hope to change the media coverage from positive to negative. A drop in media coverage is an indicator that the crisis clock is ending because the crisis attention cycle is waning. Reducing the crisis clock connects directly with the organizational goals of social evaluation and revenue generation. Negative media coverage from a crisis damages both the organizational reputation and the stock valuation. When the negative media coverage stops, both the organizational reputation and stock valuation can recover. Internally, crisis communication facilitates a return to normal operations — helps to move a crisis from the response phase to the post-crisis phase. Returning to normal operations supports both the revenue generation goal of an organization and ends the distraction a crisis creates for managers. In this section, we explore how crisis communication helps to achieve these goals and, thus, support an organization's efforts to return to the pursuit of organizational goals.

The question becomes: how do we identify the crisis communication responses that allow managers to achieve both the crisis communication goals and the larger organizational goals? Theory-driven crisis communication does provide evidence about which crisis responses help to achieve these goals. This section explores results from two well-researched crisis communication theories, stealing thunder and situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). Both use experimental methods to establish a

cause-and-effect relationship between specific crisis responses and specific organizational outcomes.

Stealing Thunder

Stealing thunder is a concept borrowed from legal research. In law, a weakness in your case does less damage if you identify the weakness rather than having the weakness expose by your opponent (Williams et al., 1993). Crisis researchers found a similar effect when an organization is the first to disclose the existence of its crisis (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). An organization will suffer less reputation damage from a crisis when the organization itself is the first to disclose the existence of a crisis. With the exact same crisis, an organization will suffer less reputational damage if managers report the crisis compared to if the news media or some other source is the first to report the crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Claeys et al., 2016). In 2019, McDonald's removed Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Steve Easterbrook for having a relationship with another employee. McDonald's stole thunder by being the source for the crisis information. Stealing thunder suggests that the CEO removal would do less damage to McDonald's than if a news investigation had reported the crisis. Stealing thunder is a very robust effect meaning the result is found consistent among studies conducted in various countries (Claeys, 2017). Even organizations with very bad reputation seem to benefit from stealing thunder (Beldad et al., 2018). Stealing thunder does help with the larger organizational goals of seeking favorable social evaluations. Stealing thunder also lessens interest in the crisis and that should help to shorten the crisis clock (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). With a shorter crisis clock, the interruption of revenue and management distraction aspects of a crisis can be reduced. Stealing thunder can help to explain how crisis communication addresses the three strategy disruptions created by a crisis.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

SCCT posits that the crisis situation heavily influences the effectiveness of crisis responses. SCCT seeks to identify which crisis response strategies are optimal responses for different crisis types (Coombs, 1995, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Optimal crisis responses seek to maximize benefits for both stakeholders and the organization in crisis. Typical positive outcomes from the use of optimal responses include less reputational damage, smaller drop in purchase intentions, and less likelihood to engage in negative

word-of-mouth (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). SCCT uses attribution theory to develop a connection between crisis response strategies and different crisis types. Attribution theory holds that people try to make sense of events, especially negative events. People make sense of events by making attributions about the causes of events. People tend to attribute an event to their actions (internal) or the actions of others (external). Those attributions then influence the affective and behavioral reactions to the event (Weiner, 1986). A crisis is a negative event causing people to make attributions of crisis responsibility. A crisis inflicts more harm on an organization, including reputational damage, when attributions of crisis responsibility are higher. To be more precise, the harm from a crisis increases as people perceive an organization is more responsible for a crisis (the strength of perceived attributions of crisis responsibility intensify; Coombs, 2007).

SCCT research finds that crisis types (how a crisis is framed) produced predictable levels of crisis responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2002). Listed below are the crisis types in SCCT by perceptions of crisis responsibility. The crisis type provides a starting point for a manager to assess the potential perception of crisis responsibility held by most stakeholders. There also are contextual modifiers that can affect attributions of crisis responsibility. Both crisis history (attributions of crisis responsibility are enhanced when an organization has had a crisis before; Coombs, 2004; Eaddy & Jin, 2018) and prior reputation (attributions of crisis responsibility are enhanced by a negative prior reputation; Coombs & Holladay, 2006). By assessing the crisis type and the contextual modifiers, managers can estimate the perceived level of crisis responsibility the crisis will engender from most stakeholders.

Crisis types from situational crisis communication theory:

- Victim crisis cluster (minimal attributions for crisis responsibility):

  - Workplace violence;

  - Natural disasters;

  - Product tampering;

- Accidental crisis cluster (low attributions for crisis responsibility):

  - Technical-error accidents;

  - Technical-error product harm;

- Preventable crisis cluster (strong attributions for crisis responsibility):

  - Human-error accidents;

  - Human-error product harm;

  - Data breaches;

  - Management misconduct (managers knowingly do something wrong);

  - Scansis (when crisis is also a scandal).

The level of the estimated crisis responsibility shapes the optimal crisis response. Crisis response strategies vary from defensive (focus on organizational concerns) to accommodative (focus on victim concerns). Listed below are the crisis response strategies used in SCCT that have proved to be effective in experimental studies. As estimated perceptions of crisis responsibility increase, the crisis response must become more accommodative. SCCT holds that the initial response for any crisis should be the ethical base response (Coombs, 2017). The ethical base response informs stakeholders how they can protect themselves physically from the crisis and helps stakeholders to cope psychologically with the crisis. Warning people how to protect themselves physically from a crisis is known as instructing information (Sturges, 1994). Common instructing information includes warnings to shelter-in-place from a chemical release and product recall information, telling people to avoid using a particular product. Helping people to cope psychologically with a crisis is known as adjusting information (Holladay, 2009; Sturges, 1994). Common adjusting information includes expressions of sympathy/concern and curative information that tells people the steps the organization is taking to prevent a repeat of the crisis.

Crisis response strategies:

- Ethical base response:

  - Instructing information: tell people how to protect themselves physically;

  - Adjusting information: help people to cope psychologically;

- Denial cluster: claim no responsibility for the crisis;

  - Simple denial: claim no responsibility for the crisis;

- Scapegoating: blame others for the crisis;
  - Attack the accuser: challenges claiming a crisis exists;
- Bolstering;
  - Ingratiation: praise others involved with the crisis;
  - Reminder: note past good works by the organization;
- Diminish cluster;
  - Excuse: managers minimize organizational crisis responsibility;
  - Justification: managers minimize perceived damage from crisis;
- Deal cluster;
  - Compensation: offer victims money, services, or gifts;
  - Apology: accept responsibility for the crisis.

For crises that have an estimated crisis responsibility that is low to moderate, the ethical base response is the optimal response. A bolstering strategy can be added to the ethical base response but bolstering strategies do little to increase the positive effects from an optimal response (Ham & Kim, 2019; Ye & Ki, 2017). When estimated crisis responsibility is high, managers should add the apology and/or compensation strategies to the ethical base response. An apology is characterized by the organization accepting responsibility for the crisis. Compensation provides rewards or benefits to victims and is similar to the idea of punitive damages in law (Coombs, 2019). Compensation can be money, housing, or other services.

Recent crisis research has found moral outrage acts as boundary condition for the effects of the optimal responses from SCCT for high responsibility crises (Coombs & Tachkova, 2019). Moral outrage is a distinct, negative emotion created by perceptions of responsibility, injustice, and greed (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). Crises that generate strong moral outrage show no positive effects for accommodative crisis responses on reputation, purchase intention, and negative word-of-mouth. Management misconduct and scansis crises are the most likely to produce the moral outrage levels necessary to negate the expected benefits from using an ethical base response coupled with apology and/or compensation. Moral outrage can create value incongruence. This means stakeholders feel less similarities with the values

of the organization because of moral outrage. People no longer see their values being embodied by the organization. When moral outrage is high, the optimal crisis response is to acknowledge the moral violation and indicate actions being taken to strengthen moral behavior in the organization (Coombs, 2019).

The recommendations from SCCT have proven valuable in protecting social evaluations (reputation) and stock valuations. SCCT's optimal crisis responses do lessen reputational damage and triggers less intention to engage in negative word-of-mouth (a reputational threat) for all but management misconduct and scansis crises (Coombs & Tachkova, 2019; Ma & Zhan, 2016). Research finds that highly accommodative responses when crisis responsibility is high does mitigate loses of shareholder value (Racine et al., 2020). Research supports the view that the SCCT crisis communication recommendations do support the organizational goals of revenue generation and favorable social evaluation. Optimal crisis responses from SCCT also help to reduce the distraction of management by minimizing the crisis clock. Suboptimal crisis responses can create a double crisis. A double crisis is when a crisis response is so bad, it attracts additional negative attention (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010, 2017; Grebe, 2013). Volkswagen (VW) and the diesel car crisis illustrates the double crisis. The VW response was suboptimal because it was very defensive by trying to blame a few engineers within the company. Stakeholders rejected this response, arguing it was a systemic problem within VW and the company showed little concern for the customers affected by the crisis (the victims). The result was an extension of the crisis clock through continued negative media coverage of the crisis (Clemente & Gabbioneta, 2017). Not only did the diesel crisis continue to be a distraction for VW management, the continued media coverage also furthered the social evaluation and revenue generation damage to the firm. SCCT can help to address the three strategy disruptions created by a crisis.

Summary

The general idea behind crisis communication is to improve the situation for stakeholders and the organization. SCCT's ethical base response demonstrates improving the situation for stakeholders who are affected by the crisis (crisis victims) while stealing thunder highlights the organizational benefits. Concern for victims is an essential aspect of an optimal crisis response. An organization cannot hope to cope with its own problems before addressing those of the victims (Coombs, 2019; Sturges, 1994). An optimal

crisis response serves as a course correction to the strategy disruptions posed by crises. Optimal responses facilitate a return to normal operations by lessening the attention stakeholders place on the crisis. Moreover, less attention helps to reduce the negative social evaluation and revenue disruption effects of a crisis. Research from stealing thunder and SCCT has demonstrated the value of optimal crisis responses for achieving both the crisis communication goals and the larger organizational goals.

Explaining the Selection of Suboptimal Crisis Responses: Behavioral Economics and Crisis Decision–Making

Wells Fargo and VW are both large firms with a history of success. Yet, in a crisis, each chose suboptimal responses that extended the crisis clock and the strategic disruption caused by the crisis. Researchers have just begun to explore why managers make poor crisis communication choices beyond the simple answer that the managers did not understand crisis communication. Extant research indicates managers have an understanding for crisis communication principles, even if they do not know the theories behind those principles. However, that knowledge is often abandoned during crisis communication decision-making (Claeys & Opgenhaffen, 2016).

Dual-process theories have been applied to understanding decision-making. For instance, Evans and Stanovich (2013) discuss Type 1 and Type 2 decision-making. Type 1 is fast and relies upon intuitive decision-making, drawing upon experience and heuristics. Type 2 is slow and relies upon a deliberate, analytic approach to decision-making. These decision-making options reflect Kahneman's (2011) fast and slow thinking. During crises, the time pressure associated with crises push managers toward intuitive (Type 1) decision-making (van der Meer et al., 2017). There is nothing inherently wrong with intuitive decisions, especially those relying upon experience. However, the decision quality can be poor when heuristics are applied that lead decision makers in the wrong direction (Claeys & Coombs, 2020). Behavior economics provides a useful lens for understanding how heuristics can promote the selection of suboptimal crisis responses.

Behavioral economics is a combination of traditional economics and psychology. Behavioral economics moves away from relying completely on rational models to explain economic behavior. Traditional economics simply ignores behavioral anomalies, even if there are patterns in anomalies, by dismissing them as error. Thaler (2015) argues that behavior economics

instead seeks to explain the pattern of anomalies thereby creating "a more realistic description of how people behave" (p. 115). Behavioral economics is strongly influenced by bounded rationality (Simon, 1972) and prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Each of these ideas note the limits of rationality and the power of heuristics in decision-making. People often rely upon heuristic biases when making decisions. These heuristic biases help to explain why intuitive decisions can result in poor outcomes (Thaler, 2015). Behavioral economics provides explanations that are missed by the analytical focus of traditional economics.

Claeys and Coombs (2020) argued that both stealing thunder and SCCT are analytical approaches to crisis decision-making. Suboptimal responses are anomalies and patterns of these anomalies were emerging in crisis communication. Hence, a form of behavioral crisis communication is needed to explain more fully the use of suboptimal crisis responses. The behavioral crisis communication approach identified two heuristic biases that could lead managers to select suboptimal crisis response: myopic loss aversion and hyperbolic discounting.

The myopic loss aversion bias involves a desire to avoid loss coupled with a tendency to frequently evaluate outcomes (Thaler et al., 1997). People seek to avoid loss because they find loss more painful that the pleasure from gains, an idea central to prospect theory. Furthermore, people check quickly for results, taking a very short-term approach to outcomes. Both stealing thunder and SCCT involve initial losses as the first step toward eventual gains. Stealing thunder is the best example. By revealing a crisis exists, managers create loss for themselves. If managers do not disclose the crisis, perhaps no one ever learns about the crisis (loss is avoided). The downside of the suboptimal response is that when another source discloses the crisis, the loss will be greater. In SCCT, accommodative strategies accept responsibility. Accepting responsibility increases the immediate loss but provides a more effective route to recovery. Managers can focus on the immediate loss from accommodative strategies, not the long-term potential gains.

Hyperbolic discounting reflects a bias toward immediate rewards. Managers value current rewards far more than future rewards (Frederick et al., 2002). Again, stealing thunder and SCCT are about future rewards, not immediate rewards. Not disclosing a crisis can be an immediate reward if managers avoid having to deal with a crisis. This ignores the fact that the crisis is likely to emerge in the future, making the immediate disclosure a less damaging option. Even with stealing thunder, the benefits accrue more

in the future than in the present. Using defensive crisis responses in SCCT might lessen immediate damage from the crisis. However, the effects are limited as stakeholders eventually will expect and demand more accommodative responses. An accommodative response is a long-term investment but managers find a limited, immediate reward better than a larger reward that appears in the future. Stealing thunder and SCCT represent long-term investments and hyperbolic discounting works against such choices by favoring response that have some immediate rewards.

Summary

Stealing thunder and SCCT both provide an analytic approach to crisis communication decision-making. Even when managers are aware of the principles from these theories, heuristic biases identified in behavioral economics can push managers toward selecting suboptimal crisis response strategies. Myopic loss aversion and hyperbolic discounting provide behavior insights into why normally well-managed organizations choose suboptimal crisis responses. The suboptimal crisis responses favored by these heuristic biases are more likely to lengthen rather than to shorter a crisis clock and disruptive effects of a crisis. Future research hopes to explore ways to overcome those biases (Claeys & Coombs, 2020). Such insights will help to improve the ability of crisis communication to serve as a form of strategic communication and not simply be a reaction to an intense situation.

Conclusion

If strategic communication is about the pursuit of organizational goals and contributing to organizational success, crisis communication can be strategic communication. The word "can" reflects that there are times when crisis communication is more a simple defensive reaction that moves an organization farther away from its goals and success. Stealing thunder and SCCT are two theories that help managers to understand what crisis response strategies are optimal for their particular crisis. This chapter reviews the basics of the two theories and how crisis communication contributes to correcting the strategic disturbance created by crises. It also considers how heuristic biases can lead managers toward the selection of suboptimal crisis responses. The suboptimal crisis responses, I would argue, are more a defensive reaction with little thought about achieving goals than strategic communication. Suboptimal crisis responses are more likely to enable the strategic disruption of crises than to provide a course correction. Crisis

communication can and should be a form of strategic communication but that potential is not always realized when managers respond to a crisis.

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Mediated Strategic Communication

Meaning Disputes and Social Practice

https://doi.org/10.21814/uminho.ed.46.7

Ivone de Lourdes Oliveira[1], Fábia Pereira Lima[2] e Isaura Mourão Generoso[3]

[1,3] *Faculty of Communication and Arts, Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil;* [2] *School of Philosophy and Human Sciences, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil*

[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7365-0288;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7802-107X;* [3] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9565-5733*

Abstract

To problematise the reference models of communication and strategy adopted by organisations, especially in mediated society, requires outlining a new approach to strategic communication. A conceptual reflection is used for this purpose, beginning with a literature review of the scientific production of Brazilian authors in this field and Foucauldian ideas of discursive practices, to understand the enunciative function of the utterances present in organisational discourses. Considering the implications of mediatisation in organisational communication, the goal is to achieve strategy as a social practice, articulated to the socio-political-cultural context. In order to delimit its empirical scope and to highlight the strength of interactions in the mediatised space and symbolic confrontation, the chapter fosters comparison between the different conceptual notions developed in the face of empirical observations about the positioning of organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. The analysis shows that organisations need to understand, in an interactional and complex manner, communication processes in mediatisation and their relations with individual and collective subjects, which shape the meanings, discursive practices, and organisational strategies. If, in this scenario, the organisational discourses lie beyond the control of organisations, they should not be neglected, either as products of a context that shapes them, nor as modulating agents of patterns that disturb or strengthen the contemporary social structure.

Keywords

organisational communication, mediatisation, strategy, discursive practices, production of meanings

Introduction

This chapter aims to highlight the need to problematise the reference models of communication and strategy adopted by organisations, especially given the new configurations of mediated society. This context requires organisations to review existing communicative dynamics, to contemplate different actors which, in everyday life, claim new logics, formats, languages, and technologies in their relationships. At a theoretical level, it also requires a review of conceptual notions, in order to understand the strategic dimension of the communication. In this perspective, we should consider the interaction complexity in mediated society, the importance of the other

as a subject acting in communication processes and the need to establish a more profound articulation between the interactive processes of/in organisations and strategy as a social practice.

In mediated society, organisations, as complex collective subjects and part of a social structure that at the same time constitute and renew them, achieve various interferences on forms of life and coexistence in the space that they occupy and have been confronted by uncertainties and paradoxes. In this scenario, interactive and communicational processes acquire greater complexity, with more intense dispute of meanings. Through discourses, their repercussion and visibility, the actors, including organisations, seek to legitimise their performance in this naturally tensional environment, assuming increasing importance in the dialogue.

Hence, organisations need to recognise that they are increasingly charged and that interactive dynamics involve several different groups, with different demands and expectations. They must also assume that their relations with society involve discursive and non-discursive practices that reverberate far beyond their intentions. In this aspect, it is urgent to position themselves, on the basis of interactive processes, actions, and attitudes, in order to contribute to social, economic, and cultural development, especially with the actors with whom they interact more closely.

Such demands have been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced public, private, and civil society organisations to review their interactional strategies, considering the exceptionality and novelty of the entire worldwide public health situation, whose effects, duration, and depth are uncertain. Containing the pandemic has required governments to determine social distancing measures, placing restrictions on people's movements, thereby undermining the possibility of face-to-face interaction and conventional forms of communication between individuals and between individuals and organisations.

As a result, organisations have had to demonstrate their social relevance and overriding concern for the public interest, which often contrasts with their marketing and/or private objectives. They have therefore adopted policies and practices considered and recognised to be appropriate, in view of the new economic, political, and social situation, in order to give visibility to their initiatives, values, and brands. It is important to emphasise that this regime of visibility depends not only on what is seen, but also in making possible

that which is seen (Bruno et al., 2010), thus corroborating the complexity of communication, increasingly qualified as uncertain and uncontrolled, and the strategies adopted by different social actors, enhanced by the media.

There is a movement in which meanings are not assumed to exist (Pinto, 2008) and communication is increasingly perceived beyond the simple production, transmission, and reception of messages. From this perspective, the sharing of initiatives with a view to their visibility should place emphasis on the otherness and scope of circulation, since the interlocutors, the actors in the process, interfere and are affected by the organisation's policies and strategies. To the imposed reality, we add the cultural, political, and historical differences that intertwine, create, and substantiate tensions.

In the organisational framework, the context begins to be analysed not only based on the perspective of management, but according to parameters of the entire mediated society and interactional processes. It is important to observe that the context is not understood as an objective category, but as a subjective and intersubjective construct, that is updated through interaction (Oliveira & Paula, 2014). This means that the relations between the different social actors are publicised and enhanced in the media sphere, with leading organisations pursuing a mediatisation logic, expanding their communicative strategies. As Lima (2015) points out, "by mediating themselves, organisations transform the social context, reconfigure the cognitive stock of the subjects, their discourses and interactions" (p. 136).

This chapter offers a conceptual reflection based on the scientific literature review of various works by Brazilian authors, considering the implications of mediatisation in organisational communication and Foucauldian views of discursive practices to establish strategy as a social practice, articulating it to the contemporary context. Throughout this chapter we seek to outline a new approach to strategic communication, in order to delimit its empirical scope and highlight the strength of interactions in the mediated and symbolic confrontation space. This includes empirical observations of the behaviour of organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil.

Communication Within Organisations and the Phenomenon of Mediatisation

The concept of organisational communication is assumed beyond a utilitarian and technical perspective, based on contemporary studies produced

by Brazilian theorists, in particular Baldissera (2008, 2009), Oliveira (2008, 2009), Oliveira and Paula (2012, 2014) and Oliveira et al. (2006). Analysing the work of these authors, we consider the complexity of the communicative processes that are caused by the inherent dispute of meanings (Baldissera, 2009), providing symbolic exchanges between the different actors (Oliveira, 2009). This is understood "as a process of interaction and complex social practice, carried out through symbolic systems, in a mediated way, in a given context where the circulation of information occurs" (Mourão, 2018, p. 11) which provides the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of meanings (Baldissera, 2009). It is configured as an interactional process, consisting of individual and/or collective practices, discursive and non-discursive, with a view to achieving a collective structure of meanings (Oliveira, 2009). From this perspective,

> interaction with the other is a fundamental point: there is no social practice without reference to a social context that at the same time produces it and legitimizes it. This "social context", however, does not exist as an abstract entity, but materializes in the set of everyday relationships. Social practice implies, in this meaning, a communication relationship. (Martino, 2019, p. 26)

In mediated society, common aspects of social practices and communicative processes gain other contours, developments, and possibilities (Martino, 2019) and constitute privileged instances to found new interactional regimes. Hence, the articulation of a "double displacement occurs: (…) of the moment of intertwining of media with social practices. In addition, it is a moment of tension between actions, uses and meanings between social practices and media environment" (Martino, 2019, p. 27). From this perspective, Braga (2006) declares that the previous interaction logics and the logics of each social stage coexist in the mediatisation process. It is important to emphasise that the demarcation of space is not due to the mode of transmitting information and producing meanings, but, above all, by the way that the relationship is established at each moment in time and how interpretation occurs in circulation.

This concerns the logic that directs the gaze, the way of doing and the forms of social articulation. It is decisive to understand the interactions established between organisations and different actors, as well as the communicative strategies adopted. It expands the possibilities of production and renders the circulation of contents and meanings more complex. It is

emphasised that "one of the characteristics of mediatisation is the fact that its dynamics do not contemplate linear processes of cause and effect, in the relationships of its components" (Fausto Neto, 2018, p. 12). According to Fausto Neto (2018) the phenomenon of mediatisation must be understood in a complex perspective, beyond functionalist and transmissive models. A misaligned response to the instance of production does not mean a dysfunction or mismatch, but instead a dissociation that is inherent to the communication process, from the perspective of complexity and which becomes even more evident in the media logic. "Instead of ratifying the point of view of the actor (producer), the hypothesis of a complex point of view proposes that the communication process works openly, according to an asymmetric and non-deterministic interchangeability" (Fausto Neto, 2018, p. 14).

This leads to disarticulation in the context of information circulation and meanings, highlighting the exchanges between the different actors. In addition, "the production/reception dynamics would also be fuelled by collateral factors, which could emerge beyond the boundaries of this very dynamic" (Fausto Neto, 2018, p. 17). These factors include different beliefs, values, and experiences of the lived experiences, interests, and objectives of the subjects and the emergence of digital media that intensify the conflict between emotion and knowledge and interfere in the construction of meanings.

Articulating the phenomenon of the mediatisation of society to organisational communication, it can be said that interlinked organisations and actors are crossed by a dynamic of interfaces and reciprocal interactions and, at the same time, complex processes. New configurations of interaction are materialised and organisations face discursive realities that demand new conceptual constructs to support the strategic dimension of communication (Oliveira & Paula, 2014). As the authors point out, "it is no longer enough to deal with the idea of the strategic dimension of communication restricted to the perspective, interests and intentions of the organisation, which are often limited to ideas of planning and management" (Oliveira & Paula, 2014, p. 14). Paraphrasing Castells (2009/2019), it can be said that social actors, in the process of circulation, elaborate interpretations and meanings that can reflect their beliefs and values, not necessarily those of organisations, because they act on the basis of their feelings and convictions in relation to the situations experienced, seizing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the messages and meanings in circulation, in an unequal manner.

Hence, as a social practice, organisational communication comprises interactions with actors who represent the organisations, or with which they relate.

It is not limited to conceptual intentions as strategies, objectives, and goals, but is also comprised by the materiality present in strategic plans, communication products, and advertising texts, forming processes that place interlinked subjects in a specific contextual reality, in which all these instances mutually affect each other. It is, therefore, the globality of the process that affects and is affected by the interlocutors in relations.

For Baldissera (2009), organisational communication extends far beyond the processes developed and led by organisations and can be understood from three interdependent dimensions: the "communicated organisation", "communicating organisation", and "spoken organisation". The first refers to authorised discourses, that the "organisation selects from its identity and, through communication processes (strategic or not), gives visibility aiming at returns of concept image, legitimacy, symbolic capital" (Baldissera, 2009, p. 118). In this dimension, the discourse is materialised in texts that deal with the mission, vision, and values of organisations, in addition to what is produced in the institutional channels and from the communication area. The dimension of the "communicating organisation" extends beyond authorised discourse and includes the direct relationships between organisations and other social actors, whether formal or informal. The "spoken organisation" includes all communication processes about the organisation and indirectly, without its participation and outside the organisational environments.

Organisational communication can therefore be understood as being non-linear and uncertain. These characteristics are highlighted by the mediatisation phenomenon, especially when internet access is articulated with the functioning of society, through different channels and digital communication platforms. It is not a mere transposition of a certain type of relationship that is appropriate to another environment, the virtual one, but a logic that imbricates human and non-human subjects in new forms of sociability — or a new structuring interactional process (Braga, 2006; França, 2008). This logic "would be worth as much to describe the nature of interpersonal interaction as that mediated by technologies" (Fausto Neto, 2018, p. 14). The presence and interference of otherness in communicative processes were enhanced and gained more space by mediatisation, "involving intentions in constant construction and evidencing that communication strategies of organisations are constructed with strategies of the other actors" (Oliveira & Paula, 2014, pp. 3-4).

From this viewpoint, the meanings of strategy and strategic communication transcend management models that emphasise the need to control communication processes aiming at their effectiveness and efficiency and value communication actions/activities, therefore as management instruments/tools that present results (Mourão, 2018). Such constructs are created by discursive and non-discursive utterances in relations of strength and power, enhanced by mediatisation, which support the construction of truths and, consequently, shape the discursive practices of organisations and society.

Discursive Practices, Production, and Circulation of Meanings

Foucault's notion of discourse is assumed as a discursive practice that encompasses the relations between power, knowledge, and truth, constituted by rules that define a certain enunciative function and its conditions of exercise, agreed through specific relations between utterances. According to Foucault (1969/2012a), the utterance is not restricted to the phrase, proposition, or acts of speech, even though those can be configured as utterances, provided that in relationships and in articulations with other phrases and/or propositions. An utterance is configured as an enunciative function, that is, in relation with other discursive and/or non-discursive utterances, offering the possibility of existence for sentences, propositions, and acts of speech. As a result, an utterance also operates as an element that is capable of questioning the rules of a discourse that is composed on the basis of its bundle of relationships and articulations.

This means that a discursive practice only gains existence in discursive formations that are the result of confrontations, governed by principles of exclusion and choice, which culminate in meanings appropriated as truths. And such appropriation is related to cultural backgrounds, beliefs, values, and relationships between different social actors in a specific situation or context. Otherwise, from Castells (2009/2019), messages generated in the communication process are processed by the mind and are thereby selected and interpreted, above all, according to the individuals' emotional mechanisms, situations, and daily experiences.

According to Orlandi (2012), the place of discursive practices in the communicative dynamics of organisations is emphasised since they serve to both communicate and not communicate. "Language relationships are relations of actors and meanings and their effects are multiple and varied. Hence the

definition of discourse: discourse is an effect of meanings among announcers" (Orlandi, 2012, p. 21). Furthermore, based on Foucauldian ideas, signs, in any situation of interaction, only acquire meaning when they exercise an enunciative function, that is, when "language and thought, empirical experience and categories, the lived and ideal needs, the contingency of events and the game of formal coercions are at stake" (Foucault, 1969/2012a, p. 90).

In other words, when in relations of strength and power, signs structure discursive formations that are assumed as truths about something, thereby causing discursive practices to emerge. This perspective reveals the circularity of communication and the interdependence between those who initiate a process, what is shared and the circulation of meanings that takes place in contexts of interaction. It is important to emphasise the idea of circulation beyond the "place of passage and signs of another place" (Fausto Neto, 2018):

> as an instance that would try to give conformity so that social discursivity appeared (…) between two poles [the sender and the receiver]. It is within this complexity that the work of making senses would be done so far from balance and not having as horizon the functioning of the two poles according to perspectives of symmetries. (p. 20)

Circulation operates as a dimension that articulates the relations of forces and power between production and reception and ensures that utterances and enunciative functions, in combination with the historical and cultural context, are both complex and shaped by the nature of discursive practices, thus triggering interpretative processes based on ideas and feelings stored in the lived, shaping the discourses. There is a mutuality and interdependence between discourses and postures, as well as communicative strategies, which shows that organisations are spaces for construction and dispute of meanings (Baldissera, 2009). It can therefore be inferred that meaning does not exist in its own right. On the contrary, meaning is constructed in interactions marked by power relations and by the actors' positions in a given context. Its production takes place in a historically situated communicative dynamics and, thus, it is also a social practice, in that it assumes not only the use of language, but also endows new meanings to organisational and social practices (Oliveira et al., 2011).

Given that meaning is of the order of the symbolic and subjectivity, and communication is a joint construction, the difficulty or impossibility of its

control and its regulation is evident. In other words, meanings in the communicative process are constructed independently of the will and interest of the organisation, thereby questioning the idea that organisational intentions and strategies will occur as foreseen in the planning and management systems. The clash of forces, opinions, and meanings is part of the process. The organisational discourse therefore extrapolates the official positions and is constructed by all actors, in the processes of organisation interlocution, in a space marked by disputes, dispersion, and fluidity, considering the aforementioned three dimensions of organisational communication, proposed by Baldissera (2009).

From this perspective, thinking about discursive practices and the production of meanings as instituting communicative processes leads us to rethink the strategic dimension of organisational communication, recognising the sharing of different strategies adopted by the actors in relation to and interconnected by an event. In this articulation, the actors begin to be seen not only as receivers, but as subjects of communication and agents of interpretation, signification, and resignification of utterances that configure discursive practices. Whereas the possibility of controlling the meanings of organisational discourse from communication strategies was previously considered, organisations currently bear in mind the need to consider the unforeseen, tensions and ruptures in their strategies, both due to the context of mediatisation and that of the COVID-19 pandemic.

> There is intent in the producing instances of the messages, but there is also intent in the receiving bodies of those same messages, to the extent that we are victims of our own discourse, since my signs are part of a repertoire that I acquire throughout my life. (Pinto, 2008, p. 87)

This reality is even more evident in mediated society and, as an alternative of maintaining control, founded on the management model, organisations seek to understand and interpret the discourses and meanings related to them that circulate in the dimension of "spoken organisation" through the monitoring of discursive tracks, especially in the digital environment. On the basis of this monitoring, they aim to find subsidies so that the dimension of the "communicated organisation" is strategically elaborated, also influencing the dimension of the "communicating organisation" and the "spoken organisation", in a circular process. This leads to the expression "not enough to be, it must be, it must be reversed" because it becomes "necessary to think of some radicality for practices" (Schwaab, 2013, p. 109). In

this attempt to monitor situations, organisations generally assume a linear logic of cause and effect of the communicative process and do not always consider the utterances in their enunciative function, nor the strategy as a social practice developed by the different actors, which is discussed in the sequence.

Strategy as a Social and Communication Practice and Its Observation in the Empiricism

In organisational studies, the line to an interactional and complex conception of communication is the theoretical matrix of strategy as practice (Whittington, 1996), which contemplates the social practices of the actors involved, directing the gaze to the process of construction of the strategy. Whittington (2004) — one of the founding authors of this conceptual notion — shifts the understanding of organisational strategy as a practice of experts and instead positions practitioners to make strategies as those that constitute them. From this perspective, strategy is neither an abstraction nor an objective materiality that organisations have. On the contrary, it is established by the processes themselves, including communication, understood as a basic social process that places subjects in interaction. It is therefore advocated that strategy is achieved via communicative practices, according to a communicational approach (Lima, 2015). Thus,

> treating strategy as a social practice requires a sociological view on the theme, in the sense of seeking the social in the individual, of perceiving the imbrication between discourse, context and subjects that interact, of seeing the communicative act as a globality constituted of spheres that affect each other (and constitute each other). (Lima, 2015, p. 137)

From this perspective, organisational strategies are not watertight, permanent, and closed, but instead are constantly lived, created, and modified in the daily interactions of the subjects. At the same time that they impact society, they are conformed by political, cultural, and social issues and actions of the subjects who carry them out. In this sense, the organisational strategy is constructed and coordinates with the strategies of other actors. Moreover, the centrality of organisations and the power conferred on management processes as a presupposition for the postulates of the strategy studies, have become even more weakened in the perspective of the visibility regimes that the logic of mediatisation engenders.

> The practices of strategic management are validated in the day-to-day work of practitioners or, understanding otherwise, it is in the daily practice of organisational actors that their actions are recognized, sustained, and validated as strategic. The idea of strategy, in this perspective, is a process that happens. To the extent that actors construct their symbolic frameworks and guide their practices for them, strategy is established as such, existing so and only by acts of communication, in the action of the subjects. (Lima, 2015, p. 141).

As Oliveira and Paula (2014) point out, the strength of social media and digital platforms associated with citizens' interests and the formation of groups with ideological, religious, cultural, and social nuances as a dynamic of the functioning of the public network sphere, imposes on organisations the challenge of creating new forms of interaction and dialogue. This has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, because the organisations had to resignify themselves, as well as their communicative processes. In the context of mediated society and in the midst of a global pandemic, the dispute of forces and senses has emerged more clearly, explaining the interferences of the different actors in the communication strategies of organisations, which can be considered to be collateral factors (Fausto Neto, 2018).

This movement of organisations towards resignification of their positions and their regime of visibility can be observed, in Brazil, during the COVID-19 pandemic period, especially in two distinct initiatives: one introduced by Rede Globo de Televisão, Brazil's biggest television network and the fourth largest in the world, that has broad political force and social influence; and the other by Vale, a Brazilian mining company that is active in 30 countries and is considered to be the world's largest producer of iron ore, pellets, and nickel.

Empirical observation begins on the basis of the special section, "Solidariedade S.A.", inserted within the television news bulletin, created by Rede Globo's communication sector, which developed the strategy of establishing scheduling links with the editors of the *Jornal Nacional* (JN), the most popular primetime television news programme[1]. Due to the situation caused by the pandemic, the channel offered large companies a space to showcase the humanitarian actions that they were developing in favour of the groups

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[1] According to research data from Kantar Ibope, the audience of *Jornal Nacional* is always close to, or slightly above, 30 points, in prime time, reaching almost 40 points at the beginning of the pandemic, between the months of March and April, when Rede Globo de Televisão created "Solidariedade S.A.", a special section of the television news bulletin.

most affected by COVID-19. This constituted "an editorial initiative, without any link with the commercial area, and which was created by the importance of showing the mobilisation of people and companies to face this period" (Sacchitiello, 2020, para. 5). For this purpose, it changed its journalistic rules and began to disseminate the initiatives of companies, identifying them by name. This can be interpreted as an enunciative function towards a new discursive formation in Rede Globo's discourse[2].

In[3] 2-minute slots, different companies from different sectors presented their actions and initiatives which were considered to constitute humanitarian support, as commented by their spokespersons, reinforcing the meanings of those actions and the values and principles of solidarity assumed by the company with the different social groups. It should be emphasised that Rede Globo de Televisão's strategy can be perceived to have multiple meanings. At the same time that it gives visibility to itself, it also makes room for other large companies to circulate their institutions, values, and brands, demarcating their interferences on the forms of life and coexistence in the public space, seeking to enhance the social recognition, both of the broadcaster that offers its space, and of the company that disseminates its actions. In this process of circulation there is an intertwining of media with practices (Martino, 2019), causing repercussions across different platforms, generating increasingly stronger visibility, and highlighting the discourses and therefore, also propitiating a dispute of meanings.

One of the companies that participated in this special section of the television news bulletin, was JBS food[4], which, on May 21, 2020, presented its initiatives, that consisted of the donation of R$400,000,000 to build hospitals[5], expand beds, and buy medical equipment, in addition to the donation of another 200 tons of food, hygiene items, and protection.

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[2] Both *Jornal Nacional* and the other news programmes of Rede Globo de Televisão, as a rule did not mention of names of companies and brands in their news bulletins, under the argument of ethical and journalistic impartiality.

[3] It is important to mention that the "Solidariedade S.A.", the special section of the television news bulletin, until the date when this article was concluded, in September 2020, only presented private sector initiatives. It should also be noted that the cost for the delivery of a 30-second commercial, in the JN's commercial break is approximately €133,000, according to the broadcaster's price list.

[4] JBS is a multinational of Brazilian origin operating in the food industry, with its registered office in the city of São Paulo, and operating in 15 countries with about 230,000 employees.

[5] The equivalent of about $75,000,000.

However, almost a month later, on June 17, a story published on the website of Brasil de Fato[6] (Merlino, 2020), made direct reference to this special section of the television news bulletin, "Solidariedade SA", and suggested that the information disclosed by JBS was hypocritical since it argued that the donation of R$400,000,000 announced by the company was not representative, give its net income of R$6,060,000,000,000 in 2019. In other words, the donation represented only 6.5% of JBS's profit. This circulation of contradictory information portrays the dissociation of the complex and open communicative process (Fausto Neto, 2018). In line with the idea of this open and uncontrolled process, the publication also mentioned labour problems faced by the company, emphasising that creation of this special section of the television news bulletin merely offered praise for the actions of the participating companies, without any critical and journalistic perspective in relation to their attitudes and actions (Merlino, 2020).

The same article on the Brasil de Fato website (Merlino, 2020) criticised the positions of other organisations, in particular in the financial sector, such as Brazil's biggest bank, Itaú, which has given R$1,000,000,000,000 to combat the pandemic in Brazil, which represents 3.5% of the bank's profit of R$28,400,000,000,000 in 2019; and Santander Bank, which planned to lay off 20% of its employees in Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information, published on digital platforms, highlights what Fausto Neto (2018) called collateral factors, which did not necessarily reveal what became visible from the picture, but also what can be seen from it, even if this stands contrary to the strategies planned by the organisations.

On the basis of this brief exploratory analysis, we can perceive the mediatised movement of meanings beyond production, transmission, the reception of the message of organisations that sought to be seen and recognised by society. This does not mean, therefore, that this movement only became possible with mediatisation, but it is indisputable that it was enhanced by it, demonstrating the complexity, uncertainty, and lack of control of communication strategies and the construction of organisational discourses.

In addition to this situation, the multiple interests and strategies adopted by different interlinked actors and materialised in the set of daily relationships, resignified meanings in the context of circulation in an asymmetric and

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[6] The news site Brasil de Fato was created by popular movements in Brazil in 2003, calling itself an independent vehicle that aims to contribute to the discussion of ideas and the analysis of facts from the point of view of the need for social change in Brazil.

nondeterministic manner, reinforcing what Fausto Neto (2018) has called a "mismatch" in the relationship between production and reception of the message, in a dissociated and complex manner. It is important to say that those articulations of forces and meanings and those mismatches help define the positions that the individual and collective subjects can occupy in a specific utterance and in a discursive practice, causing something to be said and assumed as truth (Foucault, 1969/2012a, 1994/2012b, 1978/2012c).

In April 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mining company, Vale, launched a public consultation with the aim of seeking the participation of society in the process of reviewing its sustainability policy. It should be noted that the action occurred just over 1 year after the rupture of one of its tailings dams, in the municipality of Brumadinho, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, which resulted in almost 300 deaths and serious environmental and social consequences along the route impacted by the tailings mud in two Brazilian states — Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. According to a statement released by the mining company to the press, this was "the first time that the report brings this type of external evaluation, which reflects the company's commitment to expand the channels of listening and open dialogue with its different stakeholders" interest groups (Vale, 2020, para. 15). The initiative can be configured as an utterance that signals the adoption of strategy as a social practice, since it seeks the participation of different actors in the construction of its policy, in addition to an attempt to resignify the company, that exercised a strong position in economic and social development, as a partner of Brazilian society.

However, using the ideas propounded by Foucault (1969/2012a), the construction of a new utterance and its enunciative function takes place on the basis of discursive and non-discursive practices and their appropriation by different actors. The search for a joint construction of its sustainability policy, and, therefore, its visibility regime, is a way of thinking about strategy as a social practice. It is still necessary to understand the radicality of this practice in the light of Schwaab (2013), beyond what the initiative can make visible, because more than seeming to build a new utterance, the organisation must think about the enunciative function of this utterance. In other words, it is necessary to understand whether the relations between discursive and non-discursive statements can encompass construction of a discursive practice based on greater transparency and plurality in the processes of construction of this policy, as mentioned by the organisation, especially with its recent history (Vale, 2020).

Final Considerations

This chapter outlines an approach towards strategic communication as a social practice by promoting a reflection that shifts the emphasis towards the management and control processes of organisational communication and aims to shed light on the uncertainty of those processes that occur in interactions. In this context, it can be inferred that both the special section of the television news bulletin, "Solidariedade S.A.", created by Rede Globo de Televisão, as well as the public consultation carried out by the mining company, Vale, about its sustainability policy, in the midst of a scenario of global paralysis, highlighted the need for solidarity actions and the search for participation of different actors and empathy between individuals in the construction of communication and discursive strategies, thus reinforcing the notion of strategy as a social practice. Such initiatives can be configured as such, since they consider the interactions between different actors, and are not limited to the organisations' intentions. They also indicate that organisations began to incorporate certain roles in this event, in order to assume an objective sense of visibility and resignification of their positions and discursive practices.

However, in allusion to Berger and Luckmann (1985/2012), such actions seem to have been carried out in such a way that their meaning could be "apprehended apart from the individual performances of it [in this case, the actions of the organisations] and the variable subjective processes that associate them" to the senses (p. 98), in order to create an identification of the actors and society with the organisation. The organisations' initiatives emerge as communication strategies with a view to reaffirming their place in society.

It is emphasised that understanding strategy as a social practice means considering that the meanings of organisational actions are constructed from the organisation's interactions, as perceived by empirical observation, even if it is in accordance with the organisation's objectives. The communicative process, especially in mediated society, places individual and collective subjects in relation, thereby affecting each other. In this scenario, if it is not possible to speak about control of the organisational discourse, because the different actors participate in this discursive construction on the basis of their beliefs and their experience. It should not be forgotten that, in day-to-day life, organisations actively participate in the affirmation or denial of values through their institutional and discursive power. They thereby

contribute to perpetuating and deconstructing patterns that, as a whole, form the contemporary social structure. Still in mediated society what is perceived is a movement in which organisations construct discourses from a socially-shared symbolic framework, legitimising themselves as subjects in their discursively legitimised strategies. On the other hand, the appropriation of discourses in the circulation process, especially with mediatisation, provides greater participation and, therefore, a greater possibility of coping in the construction of utterances and discursive practices in a given context.

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Part II
Strategic Communication in
Context

Social Change

Bringing Allies to the Field.
An Interdisciplinary Model

Sara Balonas

Communication and Society Research Centre, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0885-1718

Abstract

This chapter discusses the proposition that development programmes may not place sufficient value on the use of strategic communication, and instead focus on information and awareness campaigns that offer no guarantee of effective change. The chapter seeks to emphasise the importance of strategic communication when applied to behavioural change and effective social change. To this end, certain fundamental concepts will be revisited, such as communication for development and social change and its capacity to embed strategic thinking. Furthermore, we will try to understand the essentials of participatory communication, social marketing, and behavioural sciences, as disciplines to be convened in communication strategies for social change. Assuming that any act of communication of development programmes aims to influence attitudes and behaviours that will foster better living conditions for communities or a more sustainable future, communication should be viewed less as an isolated task and more as a tool to promote effective change. It is not sufficient to launch information campaigns or create awareness about a specific topic. It is necessary to identify what kind of reaction is intended and set corresponding behavioural objectives. Setting concrete, delimited, and measurable objectives is one of the mandatory variables of strategic communication planning in many fields and must underpin social change strategies. Strategic communication is also characterised by the attention given to situation analysis, making it possible to obtain objective data and an overview of the context, in order to support strategic decisions. This is a traditional practice in activities that are pursued by private organisations and should always remain top of mind in contexts of societal development. Strategic communication must also increase interdisciplinarity, as has been pointed out by academic experts. Revisiting the associated arguments inspires us to create a strategic communication matrix for social change, based on a cross-disciplinary perspective. As an ultimate goal, this chapter defends the transposition, with the necessary adaptations, of consolidated practices in other field, to the arena of social change. On this basis, a working model will be proposed that articulates the contributions of the various aforementioned disciplines to be adopted, for instance, in the communication strategies of sustainable development goals.

Keywords

To Inform Is Not to Communicate

Strategic communication is the opposite of episodic, erratic or spontaneous communication. It is a field of knowledge and practices that values account-ability, since it is based on pre-defined objectives and follow-up procedures. In fact, setting objectives is one of the most powerful aspects of strategic communication, since this commits the communication plan to concrete and measurable results, wherever possible, responding to the anacronym for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) guidelines.

Many communication initiatives are created in an isolated manner, with-out framing a strategic logic in many areas. The field of development and social change is no exception. Development programmes are supported by awareness campaigns and communication materials, but the way that they are created may fail to deliver results unless they are well planned. Perhaps because communication practices do not always follow the principles of strategic communication.

As detailed throughout this chapter, communication implies the ability to influence a specific audience, within a specific social, political, and eco-nomic context, with the purpose of changing the audience's behaviour. This implies a capacity for persuasion and motivation. To be successful in these complex processes, it is not sufficient to consider that simply informing will deliver results from our communication.

On the other hand, there is a solid academic background in various critical fields, such as communication for development, communication for social change, and communication for behavioural change (Thomas, 2014; Wilkins et al., 2014). The fact is that there is no real effort to bring the contributions of these disciplines into the field of campaign design and, on most occa-sions, it is solely based on the production of information, education and communication materials, without reference to any specific behavioural objectives, as has been highlighted by Hosein (2014). Moreover, strategic communication foundations seem to be missing in the process.

Combining the idea of the potential of strategic communication applied to social change with an interdisciplinarity vision based on the aforemen-tioned areas and adding others, such as social marketing and participatory communication, is the main intended output of this work.

Strategic Communication Foundations and Current Challenges

Strategic communication is a recent but growing discipline, aligned with the need to develop communication activities in organisations. The most quoted definition refers to the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission, assuming that people will engage in deliberate communication practice on behalf of organisations, causes, and social movements (Hallahan et al., 2007). Furthermore, "it examines organizational communication from an integrated, multidisciplinary perspective by extending ideas and issues grounded in various traditional communications disciplines" (Hallahan et al., 2007, pp. 3–4). On the basis of this pioneering definition, two concepts seem to be relevant herein: the purposeful use of communication and the behavioural change that is implicit in communication practices. These two issues will be discussed later in this chapter.

Strategic communication was subsequently defined as the practice of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communication entity, in order to attain specific goals (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). Also, at a macro-level, it is considered to be an area that analyses communication in line with the company's overall strategy, in order to achieve its strategic positioning (Argenti et al., 2005), for which a holistic and integrated approach is required.

Taking sustainable development goals (SDG) as an example, it is clear that the challenges are immense. They are perhaps so vast that implementing strategic communication may seem to be an impossible mission, especially if we look at the SDG from an overly global perspective. It is necessary to work step-by-step to achieve precise, realistic goals, by analysing the context, setting priorities, identifying key stakeholders, finding the right messages for each one, defining communication tactics and channels, and programming the communication with a clear timeline, like a well-tuned orchestra. In other words, it is necessary to think strategically.

Trends in Strategic Communication

Proposing strategic communication as an ally of development programmes implies understanding its contributions. According to Falkheimer and Heide (2018), this is a multidisciplinary area, that has been influenced by three main approaches: mass communication theory, organisational theory, and humanities. This means that it combines the influence of the media, with the importance of communication management as part of the organisation

and, finally, with aspects of rhetoric and language as ways of capturing people's attention (Heide et al., 2018; O'Connor & Shumate, 2018; Werder et al., 2018).

In its operationalisation, this field uses several disciplines, ranging from public relations to advertising, branding or marketing, among others. Therefore, ever since its genesis, it appears as an area that has a major capacity of integration in relation to perspectives and tools.

However, as stressed by several authors, strategic communication has to become more interdisciplinary, in order to strengthen the field (Nothhaft et al., 2018; Werder et al., 2018). It is critical but not a recognised component (Smith, 2013, as cited in Werder et al., 2018). The interdisciplinary paradigm enables more predictable or more surprising disciplinary combinations, which seem to be the key to achieving greater confidence and consistency when applying strategic communication principles in a specific context, for example in a social environment.

The main question is: can we say that strategic thinking applied to social contexts is a current practice? It is more acceptable to believe that this practice is more well-established in competitive organisations, such as big enterprises. Therefore, it is time to widen the scope in depth, accepting that strategic communication plays a substantial contribution to the survival and sustained success of any entity, including all kind of organisations (e.g., corporations, governments, or non-profit organisations), as pointed by Zerfass et al. (2018).

Strategic Communication and Communication for Social Change

In line with the framework of expansion of the discipline, the aim of this chapter is to identify and articulate other fields of expertise with strategic communication, in the belief that this constitutes a sign of maturity for the area. Interdisciplinarity may bring more complete answers, in this case, applied to sustainable development and social change.

Ultimately, the objective is to understand whether strategic communication is a resource that is foreseen in communication for social development and change or, if not, what variables it should contain, in order to be adopted. According to Thomas (2014), social development and change is about understanding the role played by information, communication, and media, in directed and non-directed social change. Waisbord (2014) sees it as the

study and practice of communication for the promotion of human and social development. To overcome the specific epistemological struggles of the area (as occurs in other areas) we will adopt the expression "communication for social change", defended by Tufte and Obregon (2014, p. 179), based on the idea of moving beyond individual behaviour change towards a broader concept.

Thomas (2014) relates communication and social change with a wide variety of communicational and sociological disciplines as contributors to shaping the discipline, but he doesn't include strategic communication, even though this area seems to be determinant in the ability that communication can have to influence effective social change. Other researchers, such as Waisbord (2014) and Wilkins (2014a), pay attention to the critical role played by strategic communication for social change in development programmes, social movements, and community organisations. Yet, strategic communication applied to social change has not yet been sufficiently explored.

Beyond relevant theories and analysis about environments and struggles around social change, a pragmatic perspective is required. As stressed by Waisbord (2014), a key issue is to discuss how communication, strategy, and participation are interlinked, in order to achieve a strategic collective action.

Bringing the First Ally to the Field: Participatory Communication

Participation may be viewed as the exercise of the inalienable and indivisible rights of citizens, which results in the generation of societal happiness and respect for the positions of all citizens, even though participatory practices can be affected by the political-ideological, communicative-cultural, and communicative-structural context (Carpentier, 2011). Power, politics, inequalities, and other topics are key concepts of the participatory ecosystem. For Carpentier (2018), it is the equalisation of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors in informal and formal decision-making processes. But participation also has a sociological approach, including civic participation and empowerment. This perspective highlights the idea that citizens become citizens through the performance of participation (Ribeiro et al., 2019). In this sense, participation is important, since its performance produces citizens that are actively engaged in society (Oreg et al., 2011, as cited in Ribeiro et al., 2019). Jenkins' (2006) approach to participation is closer to the intersection line that we are seeking when we see strategic communication applied to social change.

The author is interested in identifying specific degrees of participation, by looking at different institutions, communities, practices, and infrastructures. In his book, *Convergence Culture* (2006), he sees participation related to the media as forms of audience engagement that are shaped by cultural and social protocols, rather than by the technology itself. Participatory culture occurs when fans and other consumers are invited to take an active part in the creation and circulation of new content.

According to Jenkins (2006), we are moving from an industry that is dominated by broadcast media and distribution to one that will be increasingly shaped by grassroots communication. However, the collective future will be shaped by a convergence culture, "where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways" (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 259–260).

Participation is a growing issue in the current era. The feeling is that we are evolving from a form of participation that did not build up genuine capacities in local populations "to a means for empowerment and the basis for engagement with reality in order to change it, in the twenty-first-century", according to Thomas (2014, p. 10).

Waisbord (2014) argues that strategic communication needs to be incorporated in a participatory perspective that links communication, collective action, and politics. It is hard to envision any possible, meaningful, and sustainable social change without addressing power, he says. Strategic communication "brings up issues that are critical in collective action: problem framing, objectives, local traditions, opportunities and obstacles, coalition building, and appropriate tactics and motivations" (Waisbord, 2014, p. 164). On the other hand, we believe that participatory insights can be incorporated in strategic communication programmes addressing social change mainly by diagnosing the contexts and degrees of participation, as well by identifying existing struggles between citizens and power, in a way that influences their adherence to change.

Participatory studies can also contribute to define the means to achieve participatory culture: grassroots participation, convergence media, community media, and so on.

Finally, when approaching participatory perspective to strategic plans it is relevant to stress that "it is more likely that participation does work in the context of small-scale projects" (Thomas, 2014, p. 10), an idea we totally subscribe to and which is aligned with the mantra of SMART objectives.

Perceiving Social Marketing as an Ally

It has not been easy to address the issue of social marketing in various academic forums, since it tends to be treated as a very distant relative, with a dubious reputation. Perhaps the fact that the term includes marketing creates a bad initial impression. This is somewhat unfair, if we accept that the connection with traditional marketing skills is merely procedural. In fact, social marketing is born from the transfer of successful techniques applied in the business field in favour of behavioural change. Therefore, social marketing should be considered from an interdisciplinary perspective, as a contribution for strategic communication for social change.

Social marketing has gained well-grounded experience in the field of public health. But it is still perceived with suspicion, associated with the policy agendas of powerful organisations that use the mass media and advertising techniques (Dagron & Tufte, 2006). Wilkins (2014b) is one of the few theorists who see the strategic benefit of social marketing for social change by targeting individual behaviour change, taking into account its success in health communication programmes that intend to encourage changes in behaviour that improve the chances of individuals to lead longer, healthier lives.

If we delve into social marketing studies, and also into practices, we might be surprised to encounter "touch points" with the foundations for communication for social change (CSC):

- CSC defends that "affected people understand their realities better than any 'experts' from outside their society, and they can become the drivers of their own change" (Dagron & Tufte, 2006, p. xix); in social marketing, strategies are developed in an ascending process, based on the target (Weinreich, 2011).

- CSC places importance on grassroots and alternative communication, paying attention to local knowledge and traditions; social marketing avoids the "on-size-fits-all" approach, and therefore seeks combined interventions and activities, or alternative media, seeing things through the audience's eyes (The National Social Marketing Center [NSMC], n.d.).

- CSC confronts individual behaviour towards collective actions, valuing cultural identity, trust, commitment, voice, community engagement, and empowerment; social marketing does not focus on people as isolated

individuals but considers them in their broader social and environmental context (NSCM, n.d.).

Although they have well-defined epistemological boundaries, communication for social change and social marketing share a certain common ground. Social marketing brings a pragmatic approach, given that it is based on systematic and planned processes when addressing social contexts. In this context, theory and tactics pay major attention to behavioural aspects. When planning, the first criteria is to set behavioural goals (clear, specific, measurable, and time-based), supported by behavioural theories. The ultimate goal is fulfilled only with a concrete action: behaviour change (Lee & Kotler, 2011; Weinreich, 2011).

Also, for social marketeers, when a specific behaviour is adopted by peers and is perceived to be popular, people are more predisposed to adopt the same behaviour (Weinreich, 2011), a perspective that is somehow aligned with citizens' engagement and collaborative action, mentioned in participatory theories.

Furthermore, social marketing criticises social programmes that aim to change behaviour designed by policymakers and forced upon communities using a top-down approach, given that they are not well informed about the behaviours and beliefs of the target group, which is considered to be irrelevant or misunderstood (French et al., 2011). According to French et al. (2011), the pursuit of protagonism in relation to issues of political agenda/media is another problem of such projects, which tend to be based on short term actions and the absence of baseline evidence or impact evaluation. On the contrary, social marketing proposes an approach that aims to develop effective social change programmes, based on sound evidence, user insights, and systematic planning.

The Hidden Issue: How to Change People's Behaviour?

Changing people's behaviour is, perhaps, the most formidable task in this context. If a communication planner isn't able to comprehend it, there are two possible outputs: (a) to design a communication programme based on the specialists' perceptions of the audience — a "sender"-based strategy; (b) to design a communication programme focused on informational and awareness messages (through pamphlets, websites, videos or social media campaigns) — an informational and educational based strategy.

In the first scenario, communication decisions are not the result of studies of the attitudes and behaviours of certain segments in relation to social

problems and their context, but of information provided by the institutions engaged in the social project. They are also conceived by the planners' professional expertise. But they often fail to see the problem through the eyes of the affected audiences. Therefore, they may miss the arguments that can lead to adherence and behavioural change, given that communication is not only about information but also about getting attention and being persuasive.

Following NSCM recommendations, starting from an understanding of an audience's attitudes, hopes, wishes, desires, and other motivations is generally more productive than trying to identify and overcome information gaps (NSCM, n.d.). Understanding people's emotional engagement is critical.

The second hypothesis — informational/awareness materials — is focused on raising literacy about the specific problem in the belief that, if the audience is informed about the respective risks, threats, opportunities, benefits, it will react to the message. This communicational approach is adopted by many institutions, but often without any evidence of success. Cecilia Lotse, regional director of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef) regional office for South Asia, says many communication initiatives have succeeded in enhancing public awareness, but have failed to move beyond awareness and stimulate positive changes in attitudes and practices and thereby create lasting social change (United Nations Children's Fund, 2005).

Social strategists must therefore go beyond mere perceptions or technical qualities. To understand why people do or do not react to positive messages or alerts is the starting point to attain effective results. To study the complex labyrinth of attitudes and behaviours should be mandatory in any strategic communication for social change. Behaviour is a pattern of actions over time, the action or reaction of something under specific circumstances (NSMC) and changes according to the context, culture, and time. It therefore cannot be viewed as a constant pattern across an entire group. For each situation that requires communication for social change, a specific plan needs to be developed. Even if the audiences are the same because, as mentioned above, human behaviour is dynamic.

In addition, attitude and behaviour are not always aligned. A positive attitude does not necessarily lead to a positive behaviour. Much of routine daily behaviour is about habits and does not necessarily involve conscious and active considerations. So, the challenges are immense for a communication strategist. The good news is that there is a considerable amount of consistent academic work around all these issues that needs to be incorporated into the strategies.

This belief is further reinforced when we consider some theories and models of behavioural sciences. Attitude is about conscious and can be influenced by three components — cognitive, affective, and behavioural —, that interact to structure the attitudinal model, according to the three-dimensional model of socio-cognitive attitude, proposed by Katz and Stotland (1959, as cited in Lima, 2000). The cognitive element encompasses all the information that the individual has about a specific object. The affective component contains the emotions and feelings of the individual. The behavioural component consists of the visible actions (physical or verbal) of the subject in relation to the object of the attitude. Each component or dimension is represented in a continuum that can extend from the extremely negative to the extremely positive, resulting in a three-dimensional representation of any attitude.

This theory reveals that communication actions cannot be merely informative and educational and must understand the inherent aspects that shape attitudes. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of an audience-centric perspective.

Psychology, social psychology, and, in general, the behavioural sciences, offer a range of theories and models, such as the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), stages of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) or social judgement (Brunswik, 1956), to name but a few.

For instance, social judgement theory is focused on cognitive processes, suggesting that people make value judgments about the content of messages based on their references or their positions on a specific message topic (Daiton & Zelley, 2005). Knowing people's attitudes about the theme can provide clues on how to approach it in a persuasive manner. Individual attitudes can be classified in function of three vectors:

- latitude of acceptance (ideas that are acceptable to them);

- latitude of rejection (ideas classified as unacceptable);

- latitude of noncommitment (ideas for which there is no opinion).

Therefore, a person's reaction to a persuasive message depends on his or her position on the communicated topic and also depends on the degree of their ego involvement (Daiton & Zelley, 2005). The greater the involvement of a person, or of their ego, the greater the latitude of rejection and the lesser the latitude of noncommitment. This can be a relevant insight to design more effective messages.

In fact, social judgement theory reinforces the need to segment and study the target audience of each social programme. As Daiton and Zelley (2005) point out, the pre-existing attitudes of the audience should be taken into account before the message is drawn up (p. 108).

Cognitive dissonance theory defends that influence is often an inner process, which occurs when the incongruence between our attitudes and behaviour generates a tension, which is resolved either by changing our beliefs or our behaviour, thereby leading to change (Festinger, 1957). This theory helps to explain why anti-smoking campaigns often fail. Daiton and Zelley (2005) argue that such campaigns often assume that the best way to get smokers to quit is to bombard them with information about mortality rates, health problems, and social stigmas associated with tobacco in order to change their attitude. "According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, this way of thinking may seem logical but potentially incorrect, explaining why so many smokers know the health and social risks and yet persist in such behaviour" (Daiton & Zelley, 2005, p. 114).

These theories can help shape the communicational intervention model. Schwartz's (1992) contribution can also be of great value to understand the social values that influence behaviours, proposing a theoretical framework on human values. The author has identified 10 different types of motivational values, which can be recognised within and among cultures and used as a reference for priority values: power, achievement, traditions, hedonism, independence, universalism, security, stimulus, benevolence, and conformism. His thoughts about patterns of conflict and congruence between values can bring important insights for communicational strategists, combined with participatory perspective, for instance.

Influencing behaviour is a precondition for social change. As has been shown, this is a complex process, but it is nevertheless clear that the study of audiences regarding their beliefs, values, expectations, and constraints is fundamental in order to take strategic decisions, which should not be based on stereotypes and assumptions. Attitudes and behaviours are dynamic and volatile, and therefore the knowledge of theories that study the complexity of people's decision-making processes can be a powerful ally in strategic design.

Time to Fine-Tune the Orchestra

Revisiting the essentials of the various knowledge areas brings a certain clarity about the intersection points with regard to the theme of social

change in a strategic perspective (Table 1). It is now necessary to advance and operationalise the principle of interdisciplinarity.

Table 1 Intersection points between disciplines.

Discipline	Intersection with strategic communication for social change
Strategic communication	The practice of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communication entity to reach set goals (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015)
Communication for development and social change	Helps to empower development stakeholders with awareness and understanding that can be applied to effective decision making, accountable management, social and political mobilisation, helpful behaviour change, or individual and collective growth (Mozammel & Schechter, 2005)
Participatory communication	A means for empowerment and the basis for engagement with reality in order to change it (Thomas, 2014)
Social marketing	To influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify or abandon behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole (Kotler et al., 2002)
Behavioural sciences	Theory that represents the accumulated knowledge of the mechanisms of action (mediators) and moderators of change as well as the a priori assumptions about what human behaviour is, and what the influences on it are (Davis et al., 2015)

To this end, we will begin by operationalising several possible key points of convergence, assuming strategic communication from an operative perspective. For that purpose, we will look at communication for behavioural impact (Combi) — a 10-step strategic communication planning methodology that is focused on behavioural results. This methodology was developed in 1994 by Hosein (2014) and was subsequently adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO), Unicef, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). We assume that this is a stable starting point to design an interdisciplinary model for strategic communication for social change given that the author's arguments are quite convergent with that which has been defended herein so far. In fact, he believes that random communication is dominant in social development programmes, due to: (a) limited understanding of communication and its role in achieving behavioural results; (b) aesthetic pleasure in producing nicely designed material; (c) a dearth of professionals who have the training and experience to develop a strategic communication plan (Hosein, 2014).

For the purpose of the present chapter, the 10-step Combi planning, designed in 1994, is blended with the seven-step Combi toolkit adopted by

World Health Organization (2012). The following steps were selected for the interdisciplinary framework, with adaptations: identify the expected behavioural goals; conduct situational "market" analysis vis-à-vis the current situation (market segmentation; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [SWOT] analysis; audience analysis); set communication goals; develop the communication plan; implementation; monitor and evaluate. Finally, positioning and key messages definitions have been included.

Thus, based on Combi models and on the strategic communication common process, the following interdisciplinary model is proposed (Table 2):

- Behavioural goals: as mentioned above, strategic communication values the persuasive nature of communication to achieve pre-defined objectives. These criteria can be supported by the valuable insights of behavioural sciences and may also benefit from experience in setting behavioural objectives proposed by social marketing practices.

- Situational analysis: consistent strategic communication programmes are designed after rigorous political, economic, social, and technological analysis — the political, economic, socio-cultural and technological (PEST) analysis — for which the contribution of participatory studies can assume significant value. Also, the epistemological background of communication for social change is of major interest. But it is fair to say that all the aforementioned disciplines can be called into play.

- Communication goals: which will need to be defined in order to achieve behavioural result(s). Guided by the SMART principle, the objectives are the basis for defining action plans, monitoring, and evaluation and may benefit from the expertise of communication for social change.

- Audience analysis: participatory angles propose community participation as an active process, whereby the beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than simply receiving a share of the benefits (Samuel, 1987). This therefore implies in-depth knowledge of communities' profiles. Social marketing criteria also reveals a citizen-centric perspective, based on the audience's beliefs, expectations, and blocks. In this respect, one of the greatest contributions is the effort to understand the behaviour that competes with the one to be induced, in order to propose a benefit for that change. Finally, communication for social change gathers relevant knowledge of groups and communities in quite different contexts. All these visions will help characterise the target audiences in a consistent and innovative manner.

Nonetheless, behavioural theories and models deserve specific attention that has not been given in the characterisation of audiences (Figure 1).

- Positioning and definition of key messages: rather than to inform, any communication act aims to motivate and persuade towards an effective change. Therefore, behavioural studies can bring new insights to positioning and the definition of messages.

- Communication plan: communication for social change (focus on the study and practice of communication for the promotion of human development) as well as participatory communication (considering the importance given to community media or to grassroots media and to the degree of engagement as part of the process) might be of great value for design of the strategic communication plan.

Table 2 Strategic communication for social change planning: an interdisciplinary model.

Strategic operational stages	Disciplinary contribution
1. Behavioural goals	Behavioural sciences
	Social marketing
2. Situational analysis	Communication for social change
	Participatory communication
	Behavioural sciences
3. Communication goals	Communication for social change
4. Audience analysis	Communication for social change
	Behavioural sciences
	Participatory communication
5. Positioning and key messages	Behavioural sciences
	Social marketing
6. Communication plan	Communication for social change
	Participatory communication
7. Implementation	
8. Monitoring	
9. Evaluation	Behavioural sciences

The model proposed herein illustrates how different disciplines can come together in a harmonious ensemble, even though each one plays specific instruments, just as in an orchestra. This interdisciplinary contribution can be achieved through teamwork that brings together specialists from each area, and offers the foundations of strategic communication, as the backbone of the entire process.

What kind of contributions can be expected? Communication for social change, present in stages 2, 3, 4, and 6 (Table 2), is, in fact, cross-cutting in the entire process, since it brings strong insights for situation analysis, audience involvement, and communicational strategies, such as entertainment education, social mobilisation, advocacy, and social networks, to name but a few.

Participatory approaches seem to be useful to understand the importance of grassroots participation and engagement, as well as the perspective offered by Jenkins (2006), about convergent media, community media and, in general, the importance of bottom-up communication flows (stages 2, 4, and 6).

The behavioural sciences predominate in the model proposed herein (Table 2) and this fact arises from the outcomes of theoretical revision of certain models and theories. Therefore, experts in the fields of psychology, social psychology, and behaviour should be integrated in any communicational programme for social change. The exercise presented in Figure 1 regarding the type of contributions in the various stages of the planning process is merely exploratory but gives an idea of the great potential of this disciplinary area.
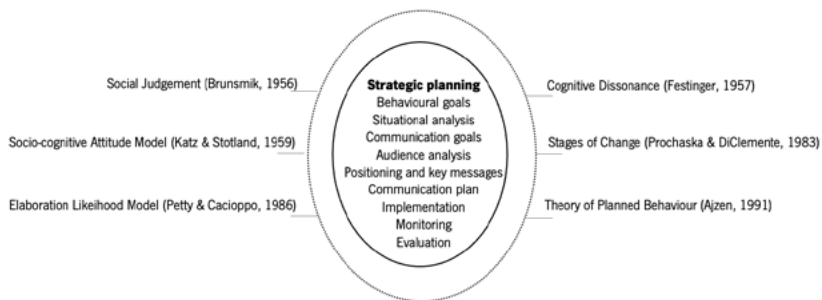

Figure 1 Behavioural sciences examples of inputs for strategic communication planning for social change

Far from being a finished proposal, this chapter proposes clues for new working models when it comes to thinking about communication in the framework of social change.

Conclusions

This chapter proposes a discussion of a range of possibilities. However, accepting the proposed working model is like taking a step on the moon. We still have to look at the steps taken on earth. As has been stated by several academics, strategic communication must broaden its scope. According to Werder et al. (2018) study about the evolution of the discipline (content analysis of 11 years of *International Journal of Strategic Communication*), strategic communication areas of study present significant interaction with the following areas: public relations/corporate communication; organisational communication; political communication; marketing; management and communication. Social change was absent from these studies. Using content analysis, the same article concluded that 25 topics have been studied over the last 11 years and social change was never referred, to although the authors considered reasonable to say that it may be implicit in several topics. Secondly, the arguments presented highlight the need to open strategic communication to an interdisciplinary approach.

The opportunities for the strategic communication area are very clear: the field of development and social change is anxiously searching for new and qualified responses to complex societal problems around the globe: sanitary crises, climate changes, migration movements, political extremisms, and also the long-term problems of inequality or lack of access to essential resources require more consistent and integrated solutions, starting with communication. Thinking about SDG is a good starting point for valuing strategic thinking and processes: how to involve the various stakeholders and make them increasingly part of the process, in order to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development? How can we design small-scale communication projects in each country with results? How can we measure and improve? Issues that are related to behavioural goals, such as SDG, benefits from the integration of specific knowledge in areas such as communication for development, participatory communication, and also social marketing or behavioural sciences. The element in common, in one way or another, is that these disciplines have a citizen-centric perspective, which is a precondition to promote effective social change. We therefore see them as powerful allies in the design of future communicational

strategies for social change, with strategic thinking as the main guideline across the entire process.

Acknowledgements

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Strategic Science Communication

The "Flatten the Curve" Metaphor in COVID-19 Public Risk Messaging

Teresa Ruão[1] and Sónia Silva[2]

[1,2] *Communication and Society Research Centre, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal*
[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9723-8044;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8166-9851*

Abstract

This chapter discusses the emergence of the "flatten the curve" metaphor in the context of COVID-19 science communication strategies and its role in public messaging efforts that sought to inform world populations and mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Faced with the unexpected arrival and spread of the new coronavirus, governments worldwide have responded with mitigation policies to contain the dissemination of the disease. Prevention behaviours, such as washing hands frequently and maintaining social distancing, were thoroughly communicated to the public. However, despite the quality of the communication campaigns implemented, it is always hard to change people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours, even more so in the short term, as is required in a global health crisis. In pandemics, the literature on risk and crisis communication suggests that messages sent by authorities should enable the understanding of complex information, avoid misinformation, and promote the adoption of adequate behaviours. This assertion presumes that, ideally, communication campaigns follow a set of strategic decisions on target audiences, communication objectives, key messages, adequate channels and message format. Although the emergence of the "flatten of the curve" metaphor did not follow a classical strategic approach, it seems to have incorporated a set of valuable communicational principles that explain why it has become the defining message of about COVID-19. This well-known chart grew into a science strategic communication device, conveying complex scientific information in an engaging but also clear way to the general public. It is, therefore, a good example to advogate for a strategic science communication approach.

Keywords

science communication, strategic communication, risk communication, crisis communication, flatten the curve, COVID-19

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic provides communication scholars with an excellent case study to observe the process of delivering scientific messaging to the general public. Following this lead, a research was conducted to examine the emergence of the "flatten the curve" metaphor as a strategic communication anchor to share the risk of viral spread, in order to discuss how the use of narratives — with a simplified language and visual elements

— can fit in science communication strategies, to promote the public understanding of science and enhance the wellbeing of communities.

Literature on risk/crisis communication has already shown that the use of metaphorical and visual narratives can be convenient to enable the understanding of complex information, encourage the public's adherence to appropriate behaviours and, combat misinformation (Bielenia-Grajewska, 2015; Lipkus & Hollands, 1999; Shanahan et al., 2019). To analyze the relevance of such uses, the chart entitled "flatten the curve", adopted by science, health and political agents from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, was defined as an object of study.

In January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a public health emergency of international concern in response to the global spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the emergence of the COVID-19 disease. Following, scientists and medical professionals worldwide start working diligently to identify the pathogen behind this outbreak, set in motion adequate measures to reduce its impact, and share research results with the global community. This was a remarkable effort to protect global health and wellbeing that has been admired in many ways (Calisher et al., 2020).

However, as the pandemic has developed, it became clear that the risks of misinformation were huge, considering how hard it was for the public to understand the topic and the multiplication of messages from unverified sources. The need to provide clear, honest and valid information to the public worldwide has become evident. In an editorial in February, *The Lancet* stated: "there may be no way to prevent a COVID-19 pandemic in this globalised time, but verified information is the most effective prevention against the disease of panic" (Finset et al., 2020, p. 873).

Scientists, health professionals, and political leaders had a special responsibility to provide us with accurate information and implement measures to stimulate behaviour change to fight the pandemic. Though, the scale of the crisis and governments' responses gave rise to an immense flow of information about COVID-19 in "televised press conferences provided by both political leaders and health authorities, prime time speeches to the people by kings, presidents, prime ministers and religious leaders, as well as news analyses, debates and social media posts" (Finset et al., 2020, p. 873). As these communication efforts became massive (and often inconsistent) information flows, citizens struggled to read and understand the new and dramatic environment they were enduring.

Most of this information was based on scientific data — that pointed out the causes of the pandemic, the consequences for public health, and the paths to mitigate the problem — which increased the communication challenges. In the face of a pandemic that has spread so far and fast, scientists across the globe realised they needed to be able to share their data as quickly as possible to keep pace. As a result, the urgency to spread the information about the COVID-19 lead to more intensive forms of science communication and to test new strategic resources, as the "flatten the curve" metaphor (Koerber, 2021).

That worldwide used expression was retrieved from scientific texts and generalised by scientific, health and political spokespeople and media to legitimise the introduction of social distancing measures in fighting COVID-19. This expression represents a complex combination of three components: the shape of the epidemic curve, social distancing measures, and the reproduction number R0. Presenting the control of the epidemic as "flattening the curve" was a way of flattening the comprehension of the pandemic's natural-social complexity (Boumans, 2020).

In an era where information spreads more widely and quickly than ever imagined, no one would think that the communication of scientific knowledge is separate from the production of that knowledge. The communication sciences abandoned this notion decades ago, mainly due to significant progress in science communication. Today, it is widely admitted that understanding communication is pivotal to understanding the COVID-19 pandemic and that effective science communication has to be part of the solution (Koerber, 2021). But in this context, science communication was challenged to make a strategic turn and become a "strategic science communication".

Strategic Science Communication

Since the 1980s, there have been systematic discussions about what "appears to be a gulf between science and society" (Bennett et al., 2019, p. 10). Moreover, research shows that modern scientists need more than good intentions to engage the public and make a difference in their communities. They need proper communication skills and professional help to design communication strategies. Scientists have access to remarkable knowledge, but engaging in fruitful conversations with the public, namely in risk environments, requires more accessible messages and strategic decisions.

The fundamental decisions for strategic communication are finding a target audience, defining communication objectives, determining the critical message, and choosing the tactics to reach the goals. This model is standard in corporate communication but not that evident in science communication. Science communication is a term frequently used "as a synonym for public awareness of science (PAS), public understanding of science (PUS), scientific culture (S.C.), or scientific literacy (S.L.)" and often these terms are used interchangeably (Burns et al., 2003, p. 183). So definitions able to provide more operational guidelines are scarce, and conceptual discussions prevail. The proposal presented by Burns et al. (2003) is an exception. They advocate that science communication includes all activities that promote a set of responses to science, grouped under the label AEIOU (the vowel analogy): "awareness of science; enjoyment or other affective responses to science; interest in science; the forming, reforming or confirming of science-related opinions (or attitudes); and understanding of science" (p. 190). However, the technical skills needed to produce these responses are frequently unclear in the literature and professional practice (Bennett et al., 2019). A significant paradigm shift is then necessary within the scientific community involving an approach to strategic communication thinking.

As supported by Torp (2015), "the strategic turn" (p. 34) is a new understanding of communication that advocates the need to master it strategically and in a targeted way, including a design and linguistic shift. This strategic turn has roots in Plato and Aristotle writings but asserted itself in the corporate world after the Second World War and following the experiments carried out with propaganda techniques. Since then, the strategic approach has been applied to many other communication sectors, such as public or governmental, non-governmental, health, financial or cultural. This perspective sees communication as a permanent strategic effort, following communication theories advocating that all communication is strategic in nature.

As so, a vibrant theoretical and professional field has emerged in recent decades, which sees strategic communication as the "purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 3). In this approach, communication is primarily perceived as intentional, persuasive, influential, and carried out with a specific objective. As a consequence, strategy became a relevant descriptor of communication practices. As stated by Kristensen (2010), the concept:

> is not merely equal to a set of supporting communication tactics, but to strategically intended, planned and purposeful mechanisms aimed

at changing the attitudes or actions of specific target groups and with a potential value and mandate in relation to the communicating organization as such and in relation to its surroundings. (p. 137)

As so Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2013) pointed out that "strategic communication is the practice of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals" (p. 74).

The strategic communication field then highlights the importance of identifiying strategies to improve communication performance. Strategic communication thus integrates communication strategies, which are two deeply interconnected but distinct concepts. However, the literature on the concept of communication strategy is scarce. It can be conceptualised as a functional approach that focuses and directs the communication function (Steyn, 2003). It is the critical piece bridging the situation analysis and the implementation of communication programs. Furthermore, it emerges as "the outcome of a strategic thinking process by senior communication practitioners and top managers taking strategic decisions with regard to the identification and management of, and communication with, strategic stakeholders" (Steyn, 2003, p. 168). In fact, the effectiveness of communication campaigns depends on numerous factors, determinants, and conditions, but one of the most relevant requirements to enable effective campaigns is the strategic development process (Rossmann, 2015). As so, it is something that could be worth being prioritised by science communicators.

The Public Understanding of Science in Risk Scenarios

Over the past decades, the perspective of science communication as one type of interaction controlled by a group of "scientific communicators", such as researchers, universities, laboratories, research centres or other public institutions, has given way to a renewed vision that understands scientific communication as a broader phenomenon and in which several actors are involved (Schäfer & Fähnrich, 2020). Gradually, the field recognised that the scientific process is no longer accessible only to small restricted groups — composed of scientists and their host or funding entities — and started to advocate the relevance of public participation (Schäfer et al., 2015). To this end, the acknowledgement that the results of scientific activity are crucial for dealing with individual and social challenges (such as a pandemic) has had a significant contribution, and this enhanced the value of

the "public understanding of science" — a construct endorsed by the Council of the Royal Society of London in 1985[1]: "but our most direct and urgent message must be to the scientists themselves: Learn to communicate with the public, be willing to do so and consider it your duty to do so" (Council of the Royal Society, 1985, p. 36).

Miller, writing in 1983, already advocated for the importance of developing scientific literacy that seems to be dependent on three conditions, namely: the understanding of words and basic scientific facts, the general understanding of the scientific process, and the recognition of political issues related to science. In this regard, Simis et al. (2016) remind us that science communication, as a discipline, assumes that ignorance or scarcity of knowledge is the basis for the lack of support and interest that society demonstrates to science and technology issues.

It is therefore not surprising that, particularly in the last two decades, science communication efforts have turned to non-specialised audiences, aiming to promote the involvement of the general public, which is affected by the results of scientific activity (Bucchi, 2013). This public participation is especially relevant when it comes to risk and health communication, two disciplines dependent on the information produced by science and whose success rests on quick and effective responses from the public (Lewenstein, 2003).

> We also said, as had Bernal and others before us, that "Understanding the nature of risk and uncertainty is an important part of the scientific understanding needed both for many public policy issues and for everyday decisions in our personal lives." There is no such thing as "absolute safety" or "zero risk". (Bodmer, 2010, p. S155)

As a field of study, risk communication emerged in the health field (Ruão et al., 2012) to describe all activities of production and exchange of messages related to the nature, meaning and control of risk situations (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). In the specific case of a pandemic, such as that due to the worldwide spread of SARS-CoV-2, risk communication fundamentally seeks to educate citizens on the prevention policies the authorities should

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[1] In 1985, the British Royal Society published a historical report advocating "the need for scientists to learn how to communicate with the general public in all its shapes, and to consider it a duty to do so" (Bodmer, 2010, p. S151). The basic thesis of the report was that a better public understanding of science could be a crucial element in promoting national prosperity, raising the quality of public and private decision-making, and enriching the lives of the individual. This report initiated a movement for scientific organisations to take engagement between scientists and the public seriously (Council of the Royal Society, 1985).

implement and on individual behaviours (such as respiratory hygiene, frequent washing of hands and surfaces, voluntary quarantine, social distancing, and contact with health authorities in case of symptoms) and organisational actions (as temporary closure or hygiene measures of facilities) that must be adopted to prevent the spread of the disease (Reynolds & Quinn, 2008; Vos & Buckner, 2016).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic created a widespread demand for information that went far beyond prevention and containment practices. Audiences looked for quick and effective responses on dissemination, spread, and vaccination (Kearns & Kearns, 2020), and this urgency has incited misinformation originated in false news and conspiracy theories (like the one that guaranteed that the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 was a biological weapon created by China) that have been published since the beginning of the pandemic (Bavel et al., 2020). In this context, the public has had difficulty distinguishing scientific evidence from unconfirmed facts or reliable sources of information from false news (Bavel et al., 2020; Saitz & Schwitzer, 2020).

The new coronavirus has therefore created a very challenging moment for science communication, unprecedented in recent history, as it became urgent to find answers to complex questions about the virus, to announce discoveries to fellow scientists and healthcare professionals, and to report these findings to a confused and concerned global audience, seeking to ensure their participation through prevention and containment behaviours (Saitz & Schwitzer, 2020). In this new and complex environment, science and risk communicators were expected to coordinate their efforts to clarify scientific facts and transmit the right messages to inform and motivate appropriate behaviours, to update risk information, to create feelings of security and trust, and to dispel rumours (Vaughan & Tinker, 2009).

Then, the communication of science and risk, in the COVID-19 scenario, to be effective demanded the promotion of public participation, which was decisive to contain the spread of the disease. Therefore, the communication strategies implemented should maximise the public's ability to act as an effective partner in prevention, containment, and recovery (Vaughan & Tinker, 2009). That implied, however, that the communication strategies adopted recognise that individuals do not receive information passively and that they process messages according to social and psychological schemes that their previous experiences, personal circumstances, and cultural background have shaped (Bavel et al., 2020; Lewenstein, 2003).

Encouraging public participation in the scientific process and avoiding risky behaviour means designing communication strategies that answer some questions: Whom will we talk to? What is the context (economic, social, and cultural) of our public? Through which channels do we reach these audiences? What is the most appropriate message? And so forth. The quality of society's response to science always depends on the quality of communication itself. Furthermore, given the urgent need to contain adverse effects during the pandemic, the complete and transparent conveyance of research findings is even more critical than in ordinary times to promote trust and behaviour compliance (Saitz & Schwitzer, 2020).

Risk Communication During COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, risk communication became prominent (Amidon et al., 2021). When the WHO declared the COVID-19 as a world pandemic (in March 2020), two of its guides stood out: *Risk Communication and Community Engagement Readiness and Response to Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)* (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020d) and *Managing Epidemics: Key Facts About Major Deadly Diseases* (WHO, 2018). The last one, developed using lessons learned during past major public health events, emphasises that "risk communication and community engagement is integral to the success of responses to health emergencies (...). Failure to communicate will lead to a loss of trust and reputation, economic impacts, and - in the worst-case - loss of lives" (WHO, 2020d, p. 1).

According to risk communication literature, messages should be clear, consistent, and concise because their purpose is to persuade the public to adopt preventive behaviours in the face of a health issue (Shen et al., 2015). These messages can be delivered in the form of advertisements, brochures, pamphlets and others. In this regard, much has been studied and published on how to structure communication strategies in times of a pandemic and many recipes combine science communication with risk communication to promote behaviours in society. Bavel et al. (2020) listed a set of principles to consider when contacting the public, namely: using reliable sources of information and spokespersons; cooperating with the media to disseminate the messages; using messages in line with the recipients' moral values; appealing to individual and public benefits brought by preventive measures; or preparing society for misinformation, providing credible sources of information.

As explained before, in today's risk context, public involvement with science is crucial. The misinformation and adoption of behaviours that do not comply with the containment measures represent a real threat to human life since there is still no treatment for the disease, and group immunity is not guaranteed. Kearns and Kearns (2020) stated that mass cooperation is vital in a pandemic because it is up to people to implement urgent isolation and social distance measures. However, promoting these cooperation depends on the ability to communicate information effectively, harnessing the power of scientific data and digital technology. According to Miller and Jarvis (2020), the events of the past few months have shown that the right information provided in the right way can encourage people to change their behaviours and save many lives.

Narrative Science Messages

One of the science and risk communication strategies tested in other health crises (as is the case of H1N1 and H5N1, for example) is storytelling in scientific messaging (Delp & Jones, 1996; Houts et al., 2006; Kearns & Kearns, 2020). Storytelling refers to the process of developing a plot that gives rise to a narrative (Moezzi et al., 2017). According to Shen et al. (2015), a narrative "is an umbrella term for personal stories, exemplars, testimonials, and entertainment - educational contents" (p. 105). When used in scientific contexts, these narratives seem to facilitate the visualisation of data in the form of stories that simplify complex information, such as the one that needed to be communicated about COVID-19 (Kearns & Kearns, 2020). However, this reworking is not always easy for scientists when in risk communication. As stated by Shanahan et al. (2019), "scientists depend on the language of probability to relay information about hazards", but "risk communication may be more effective when embedding scientific information in narratives" (p. 1).

The power of narratives has been theorised mainly in social sciences and humanities as a mechanism to induce persuasion. Narratology (Herman, 2009) conceptualises narratives as having the power to transport individuals to an alternative world by developing a story whose structure includes several key elements: characters, plot, and setting. According to this literature, the narrative structure in storytelling is universal, and this provides the ability to use narratives across time and space for different issues.

It is possible to identify narrative mechanisms in risk communication that serve as anchors to produce persuasive effects. Scholars already identified

some of these mechanisms, such as language, metaphors, frames or compelling visualisations. They act as rhetorical communication devices that express the imagery or story to evoke an affective and effective response (Shanahan et al., 2019).

Regarding language, some studies on risk communication show that using narrative language is more effective than using strictly scientific language when seeking to change perceptions of risk and promote behavioural changes (Houts et al., 2006; Shanahan et al., 2019). However, science communication is full of rules and jargon. Jargon has positive effects and serves essential functions as well. By definition, it conveys information in the most precise and efficient way possible. Nevertheless, much research has revealed that using jargon can be alienating, undermine comprehension, reduce engagement, and create barriers to enter specific fields (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Even under normal circumstances, communicating with technical, idiosyncratic words is viewed negatively by non-expert audiences (Rakedzon et al., 2017; Shulman & Bullock, 2020).

During the current pandemic this issue has often come up for debate. A critical aspect of science communication efforts to draw public opinion's attention around coronavirus has been the careful use of language to promote understanding of the phenomenon without losing accuracy when presenting data. As a matter of fact, the popular strategy in science communication to avoid scientific language, or jargon, when communicating with the general public has been highly quoted. Research in science communication and beyond concluded that using jargon damages persuasive efforts and can have a disengaging effect on audiences. Moreover, when precision and timing are paramount, such as during a crisis, communicating most accurately can mitigate costly miscommunications. For these reasons, science communicators are encouraged to keep it simple (Bullock et al., 2019; Shulman & Bullock, 2020).

To assist in this simplification process, a common linguistic resource in narratives is the use of metaphors. Metaphors are figurative comparisons with different concepts, often strategically used as discursive instruments to construct particular views, ideas, and ways of seeing the world, thereby creating social reality (Cammaerts, 2012). According to Cornelissen et al. (2011), "metaphors – that is, verbally referring to other cases and domains of experience – can guide thinking and can create understanding and social acceptance" (p. 1706). Thereby, the authors argue that metaphorical

language can be a powerful inductor of strategic change. Comparisons with other cases and familiar experiences seem to reduce uncertainty and support acceptance and apply to several domains such as business, warfare, sports or arts. Metaphors are considered valuable in the context of change because they facilitate the construction of meaning by the person or group experiencing them; provide structure, allowing audiences to comprehend changing or unfamiliar situations; produce links to action by evoking attitudes; and legitimise decisions and actions (Cornelissen et al., 2011; Gioia et al., 1994; Weick, 1995). In sum, the power of the metaphor lies foremost in its subliminal character, in its ability to express complex issues in an easily digestible language and through what can stimulate strategic change by activating stakeholders' judgments that a particular change is desirable, proper or appropriate (Cammaerts, 2012).

Metaphors also have a visual expression. Visual metaphors are, actually, common resources in strategic communication (e.g., advertising), namely in the health field (Lazard et al., 2016). Research shows that using narratives with visual elements is beneficial for communicating complex situations in health (Delp & Jones, 1996; Houts et al., 2006; Kearns & Kearns, 2020). Furthermore, risk literature confirms that visual communication offers creative solutions to bridge health literacy gaps, empowers communities through evidence-based information, and facilitates public health advocacy during a pandemic. Visual aids and graphics are, in fact, a powerful medium with a long history in the broader field of education research, which suggests that the combination of words and simple images into a unified model enhances learning and information retention (Hamaguchi et al., 2020).

> During the current COVID-19 pandemic, visuals have emerged as a particularly powerful vehicle of information dissemination. Perhaps, the best-known example is the "#flattenthecurve" graphic, a widely circulated image showing the anticipated effects of social distancing efforts. However, there remains a need for simple illustrated resources that consolidate key public health messages and validated clinical evidence into compact visual aids—especially those that can be seamlessly disseminated through social media outlets to reach diverse patient communities (Hamaguchi et al., 2020, p. 483).

Nonetheless, the study of narratives in risk and science communication is recent, and the deconstruction of narratives in such studies has not yet been deepened. Scholars found out that narratives influence risk perceptions and reported decisions, but the mechanisms involved in narrative persuasion

are neither clearly identified nor understood. "Greater precision in examining narrative mechanisms is then necessary if we wish to more accurately understand the narrative effects of communicating scientific information" (Shanahan et al., 2019, p. 4).

On the other hand, even if research has argued that visual representations are inherently strategic, strategic communication research lacks a visual perspective. Visual studies and strategic communication seem not to intersect, given their independent growth in humanities and social sciences. However, as communication through strategic campaigning is an essential part of todays' communicative universe, scholars argue that one should pay more attention to the intersection of those disciplines. Strategic communication is about creating expressiveness through communication practice, so it is vital to examine visuality roles. Besides, it is known that strategic visual communication can generate more participation and empowerment of stakeholders. Therefore, a multimodal approach to this field could enrich the strategic communication profession and conceptualisation (Goransson & Fagerholm, 2018).

That being the case, this chapter seeks to contribute to a deeper comprehension of how narratives, with their linguistic and visual devices, can strategically stimulate the imagination and help create a sense of community, exploring the mechanism of information simplification. Moreover, the "flatten the curve" metaphor was identified as a concept to be studied (Oerther & Watson, 2020), as it is a narrative responsible for encouraging people worldwide to collaborate in curbing the spread of COVID-19. As so, let us now look at this example more closely.

The "Flatten the Curve" Metaphor

Using narratives as resources for increasing comprehension or conveying negative realities through positive images has been common in COVID-19 public messaging (Elías & Catalan-Matamoros, 2020). Metaphors, such as "war", "front-line workers", "Chinese flu", or the already aforementioned "flatten the curve" are some examples of narrative devices used (Craig, 2020; James, 2020).

Looking to perceive how the "flatten the curve" metaphorical narrative emerged, and how it went from pure scientific information (based on the epidemic curve graphic) to the defining public message about the new coronavirus, this study gathered data on the origins of the chart, the transformation

process it underwent until it became a prominent visual story, the main actors on this path, and its strategic format. The following section presents data gathered for the first two months of this public health emergency and discusses the results found in the context of a strategic science communication approach. Considering that the WHO director-general declared that the outbreak constituted a "public health emergency of international concern" on January 30 (WHO, 2020a), February and March 2020 were assumed to be key moments in the emergence of the pandemic, which ended up confirmed on March 11 (WHO, 2020c).

The Beginning of Flatten the Curve Story

In February 2020, the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, had spread from the People's Republic of China to 20 other countries, and the international community was mobilising to find ways to accelerate the development of a global strategy and preparedness plan to fight this unsettling outbreak (WHO, 2020a). Soon national and international authorities realised that the risks surrounding the epidemic communication to the general public were high and the WHO (2020b) recommended: "rapidly assess the general population's understanding of COVID-19, adjust national health promotion materials and activities accordingly, and engage clinical champions to communicate with the media" (p. 22).

Within this context, the use of visual communication was strongly endorsed by the most important international health organisation through the concept "make it visual", already presented in the WHO strategic communication framework of 2017 (WHO, 2017). As stated in the WHO's website (WHO, n.d.): "communicators increasingly share health information through visual means, such as YouTube videos, photographs, infographics, charts and illustrations. Visual messages make WHO information easier to understand and can reach people of all literacy and education levels" (para. 1).

Many visualisations then came up as communication anchors for COVID-19 public messages (as those developed by the Johns Hopkins github[2] or the tableau COVID-10 data hub[3]), but the "flatten the curve" chart was the most successful one. As Miller and Jarvis (2020) describe:

> the iconic "Flatten the Curve" graph, which encouraged people everywhere to help contain the spread of COVID-19, is a case in point.

[2] https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19

[3] https://www.tableau.com/covid-19-coronavirus-data-resources

> It shows how measures such as hand-washing and social distancing can squash the expected peak of the pandemic, and keep infection numbers low enough for healthcare systems to manage. This simple public health chart, which originated in specialist journals and reports, was widely shared by traditional newspapers and magazines, then refined to clarify the message even further, translated into many languages, and creatively reworked into animations, cartoons and even cat videos. (p. 2)

This first figure of an epidemic curve came from new developments in epidemiology at the beginning of the 20th century, namely from advances in mathematical compartmental models. As stated by Boumans (2020), "the curve of an epidemic was presented for the first time (…) in an article 'A contribution to the mathematical theory of epidemics,' published in 1927 and written by William Ogilvy Kermack and Anderson Gray McKendrick" (p. 2). According to the authors, Ronald Ross inspired this work. He applied mathematical reasoning to infectious disease dynamics, looking to understand malaria transmission and control. The authors refer that Ross was the first to develop a general theory of epidemic phenomena (the theory of happenings) of infectious disease dynamics. He did not tailor his theory to explain the expansion of a particular pathogen or public health problem, but he used prior assumptions on the spread of infections (Boumans, 2020).

Since then, the mathematics of epidemiology developed to search for ways to understand and represent the transmission of infectious diseases, anticipating future outbreaks. However, it took the SARS epidemic of 2002–2003 and the concern of a possible H5N1 influenza epidemic in 2005 to draw the attention of scientists to the urgency of deepening the understanding of how an infectious disease epidemic could be controllable, even when effective vaccines or treatments were not available, given the growing probability of its occurrence. Their equation also discussed social factors that make containment feasible, namely political decisions and citizens' behaviour (Fraser et al., 2004).

By the early years of the 21st century, scientists and policymakers' concerns were high with the fear that the world may soon face a pandemic in which neither vaccines nor sufficient antivirals would be available to protect the public. Epidemiologists' evaluations suggested that efforts should be concentrated in surveillance and case reporting, rapid viral diagnosis, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette in reducing virus transmission in the event

of a pandemic. Evidence also suggested contact tracing, voluntary sheltering, and quarantine (Boumans, 2020).

Following the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in 2020, all evidence was summoned up and transmitted to the populations, but the difficulties were obvious. How could we convince the world population to restrict their movements, despite the severe economic and social consequences that would result? How could we change deeply rooted social and cultural habits? How could we easily transmit highly complex information? At this moment, the epidemic curve is recovered, redesigned and becomes a critical component of the communication of scientists, health professionals, journalists, and authorities. The new epidemic graph emerged accompanied by a narrative, summed up in the expression "flattening the curve", as a strategic element in simplifying information to build an effective global public health response to the crisis.

Actually, the "flatten the curve" chart of the COVID-19 pandemic had three different origins —institutional, journalistic, and academic — and soon became a hallmark of science communication about the new coronavirus. As Makulec described in March 2020, we all wanted to help, but we didn't know how:

> the stakes are high around how we communicate about this epidemic to the wider public. Visualisations are powerful for communicating information but can also mislead, misinform, and — in the worst cases — incite panic. We are in the middle of complete information overload, with hourly case updates and endless streams of information. We want to help flatten the curve to minimise strain on our health system. (Makulec, 2020, para. 2)

According to Amidon et al. (2021), Giannella and Velho (2020) or Boumans (2020), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the United States first depicted a "flatten the curve" visual as we know in 2007 (Figure 1), to compare two generalised outcomes for a pandemic: an unmitigated outbreak with a high peak number of cases and a managed event in which cases disperse over time. After being updated in 2017, the "flatten the curve" chart was retrieved from CDC literature, in 2020, by scientists, journalists, and bloggers as a new anchoring metaphor for the need to implement social measures to control the pandemic, with encouraging minimalist visual properties, communicating relationality and mapping real-world cases.
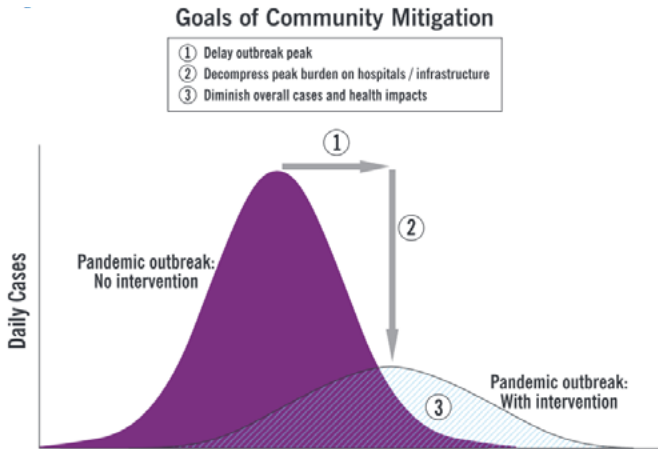
Figure 1 First illustration of the "flatten the curve" visual by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Source*. From *Interim Pre-Pandemic Planning Guidance: Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States* (p. 18), by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.), 2007.

> On page 18, a graphic appears called Goals of Community Mitigation. No one I've talked to at the CDC can remember who made it, but the image is the root of Flatten the Curve as it appears today. Rendered in purple, it presents those two familiar curves with three numbered goals: 1. Delay outbreak peak 2. Decompress peak burden on hospitals/infrastructure 3. Diminish overall cases and health impacts. These curves don't appear to be rooted in hard, literal data. Rather, they are illustrative of the exponential spread of pandemics and how we might impact their speed of growth. (Wilson, 2020, para. 9)

However, as suggested by Boumans (2020), it was after the publication of the article "Flattening the Curve" in *The Economist* in February 2020 ("COVID-19 Is Now in 50 Countries, and Things Will Get Worse", 2020) that "flatten the curve" visibility has exploded. The article had a "viral effect", and political leaders worldwide started using this expression to legitimise the introduction of social distancing measures in fighting COVID-19. The article reported:

> the course of an epidemic is shaped by a variable called the reproductive rate, or *R*. It represents, in effect, the number of further cases each new case will give rise to. If *R* is high, the number of newly infected people climbs quickly to a peak before, for want of new

people to infect, starting to fall back again (see chart 2). If R is low the curve rises and falls more slowly, never reaching the same heights. With sars-cov-2 now spread around the world, the aim of public-health policy, whether at the city, national or global scale, is to flatten the curve, spreading the infections out over time. ("COVID-19 Is Now in 50 Countries, and Things Will Get Worse", 2020, para. 9)

Rosamund Pearce, a data visualisation journalist at *The Economist*, was responsible for updating the CDC graphic "Goals of Community Mitigation" (presented above and assigned to Qualls et al., 2017) to illustrate the text (Figure 2).
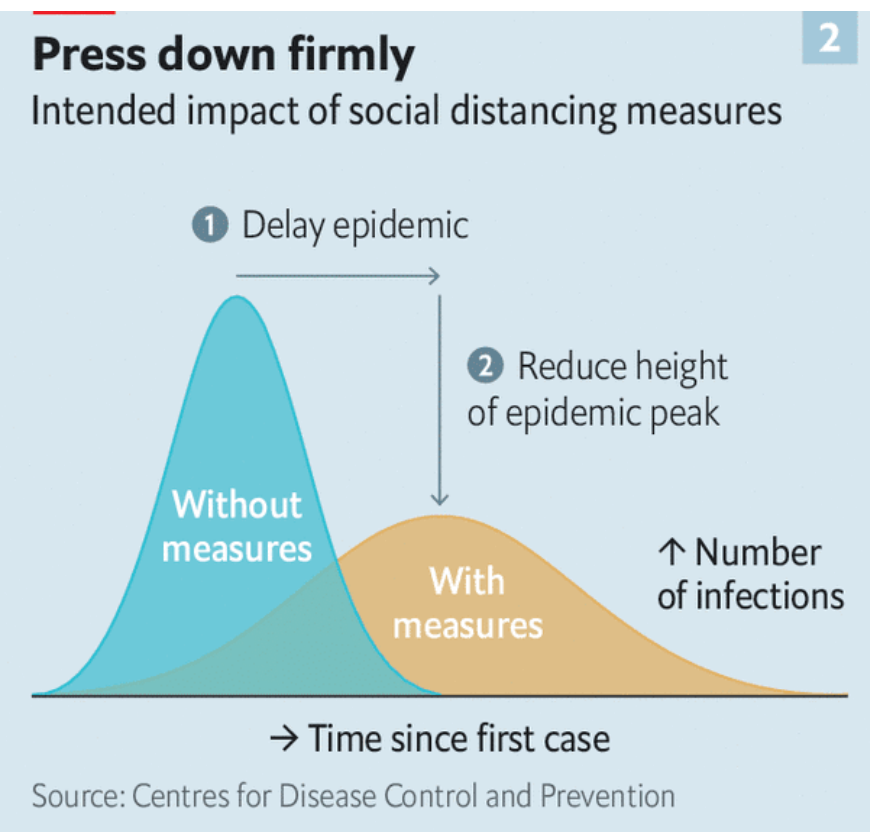
"With sars-cov-2 now spread around the world, the aim of public-health (…) is to flatten the curve".

"Covid-19 Is Now in 50 Countries, and Things Will Get Worse", 2020

Figure 2 "Flatten the curve" illustration in *The Economist*, February 29 2020.
Source. From "Covid-19 Is Now in 50 Countries, and Things Will Get Worse", 2020, *The Economist*. Copyright 2020 by *The Economist*. Reprinted with permission.

She changed the labelling scheme to assist colourblind readers but kept the graphic as close as she could to the original in terms of shape, "because as a journalist, she didn't want to editorialise the work of scientists" (Wilson, 2020, para. 11).

> I thought it was a beautifully clear and simple illustration of an important concept, but I had no idea that it would end up causing such a stir on Twitter and elsewhere," says Rosamund Pearce, a data visualisation journalist at The Economist. Pearce first heard about the graphic from her colleague Slavea Chankova, and she decided to rebuild it for a piece the pair was working on about COVID-19 for *The Economist*. (Wilson, 2020, para. 10)

It was also in February that the author of the CDC representation was known. Drew Harris, an assistant professor at the Thomas Jefferson University College of Population Health and a CDC consultant, came across the graphic in *The Economist* and immediately felt it was a familiar image. He had designed a similar representation years ago for a pandemic preparedness training program. During the training course, Harris struggled to explain the concept of reducing the epidemic curve, so he added a dotted line

Harris' chart explained why slowing the spread of the infection was as important as stopping it.
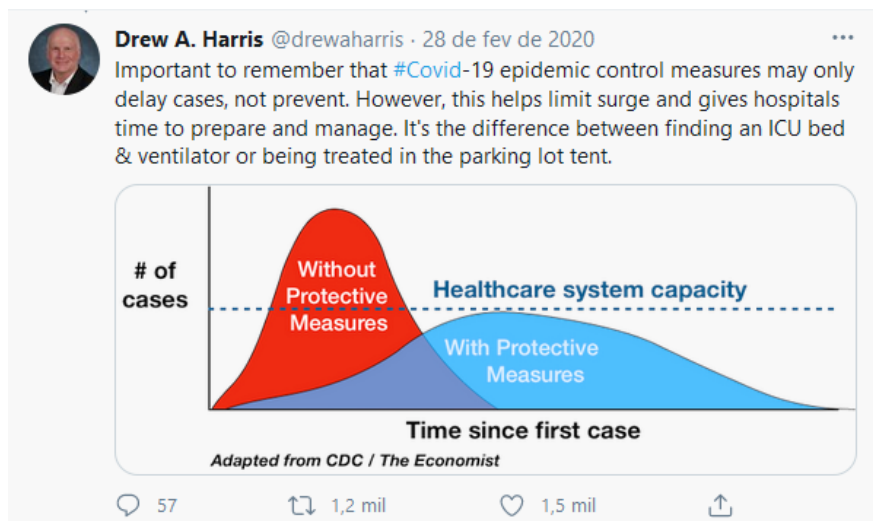*Ruão & Silva*

Figure 3 Harris first tweet about his "flatten the curve" chart.
Source. From *Important to remember that #Covid-19 epidemic control measures may only delay cases, not prevent,* by D. A. Harris [@drewaharris], 2020, Twitter.

indicating hospital capacity: "to make clear what was at stake", he stated later (Roberts, 2020, para. 4). After reading *The Economist*, he recreated his graphic and posted it on Twitter and LinkedIn, and the reactions were enthusiastic (Figure 3). Since then, he often referenced the original CDC pandemic graphic, which he had remade more simply (Barclay & Scott, 2020; Callaghan, 2020; Wilson, 2020).

In sum, *The Economist* article gave a new life into the CDC graphic, and Harris added an anchor, a single line that articulated its significance. However, Siouxsie Wiles, a New Zealander microbiologist, went further by proving that it was possible to reach the entire population through an even more simplified chart, demonstrating that individuals could make a meaningful difference in slowing the spread of COVID-19 (Barclay & Scott, 2020; Makulec, 2020; Wilson, 2020). In fact, in the academic field, Wiles is referred to as the first to use the chart outside scientific papers or books in a text published at the online magazine *The SpinOff* that described Wuhan's outbreak in March 2020 (Wiles, 2020a). Wiles (2020a) uses the "flatten the curve" graphic as a reference to a paper by Anderson et al. (2020), published in *The Lancet*, about the importance of keeping contamination as low as possible as the highest priority for individuals to avoid hospital crash (Figure 4). The graphic was then worked on visually by the illustrator Toby Morris that looked to simplify the representation of Anderson et al. (2020), giving the "flatten the curve" chart a new and more engaging shape ("COVID-19: Comunicação de Ciência", 2020).
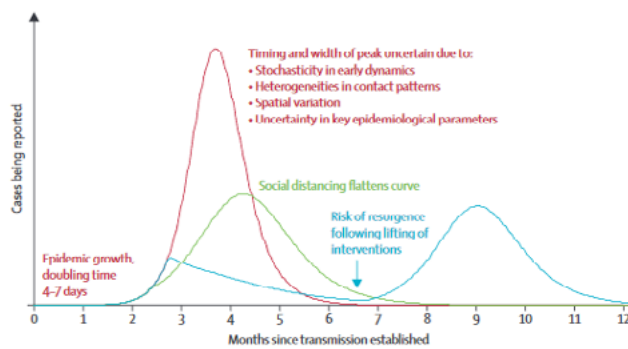

Figure 4 Illustrative simulations of a transmission model of COVID-19.
Source. From "How Will Country-Based Mitigation Measures Influence the Course of the Covid-19 Epidemic?", by R. Anderson et al., 2020, *The Lancet, 395*, p. 933 (https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30567-5). Copyright 2020 by Elsevier Ltd.
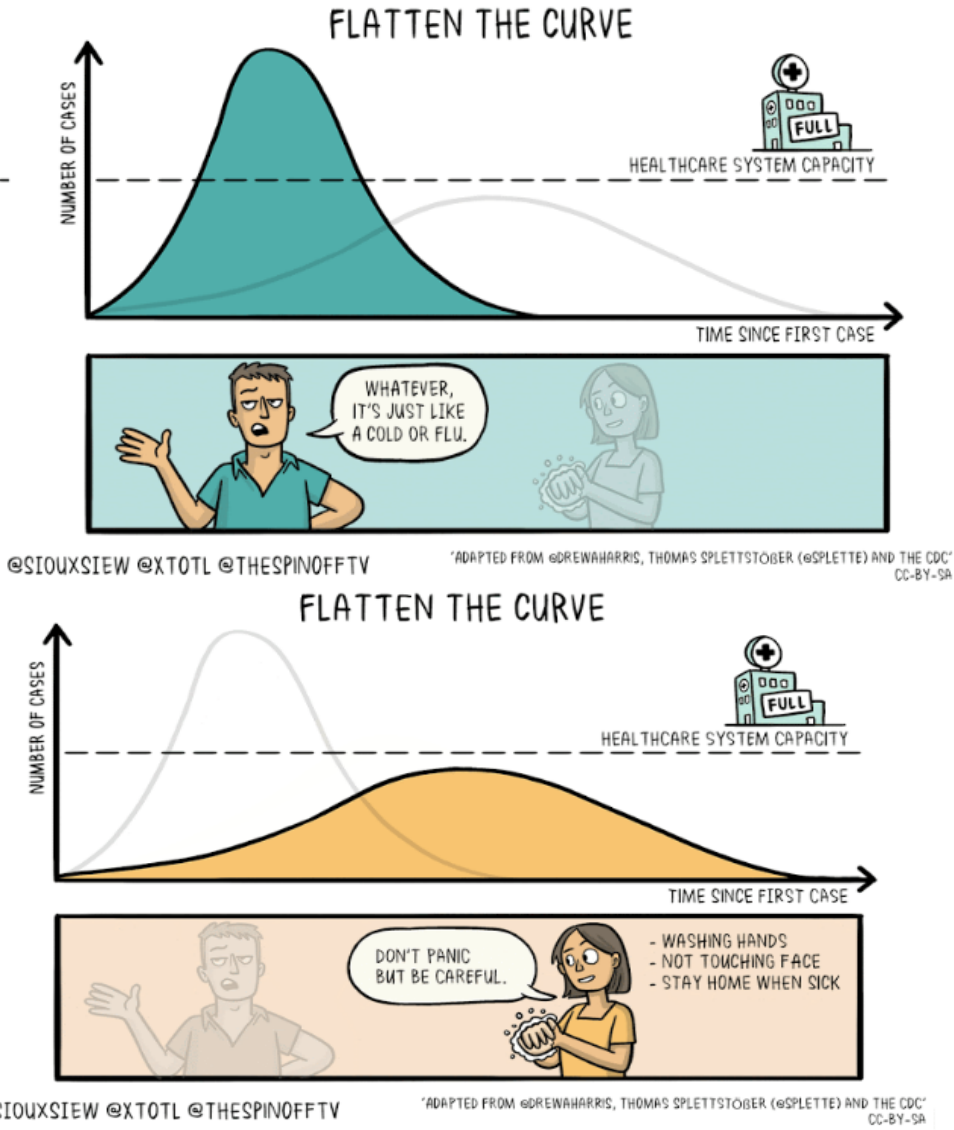
**Figure 5** "Flatten the curve" by Wiles and Morris.
Source. From "The Three Phases of Covid-19 – and How We Can Make It Manageable", by S. Wiles, 2020a, *The Spinoff.* CC-BY-SA.

Figure 6 "Flatten the curve" by Wiles and Morris.
Source. From "The Three Phases of Covid-19 – and How We Can Make It Manageable", by S. Wiles, 2020a, *The Spinoff.* CC-BY-SA.

Morris applied his cartoon style to the illustration of hard math (Figure 5 and Figure 6), capturing the COVID-19 epidemic conceptualisation and giving it a shape that makes it more appealing and easier to understand. He represented two possible futures, subject to individual behaviour — to ignore the risks or take precautions — that polarised the nature of COVID-19 across social media.

After Wiles decided to share the chart on Twitter (Figure 7), the image went viral. "Flatten the curve" became a gif, a meme, and a hashtag, widely shared on websites and social media (Barclay & Scott, 2020; Wilson, 2020). It was an appealingly packaged message, easy to share, quick to understand, and giving people a sense of ownership of the situation: if we take basic precautions, like washing our hands, we can help slow the growth rate so that it doesn't overwhelm our health services. That was a very powerful and important message to send (Callaghan, 2020).
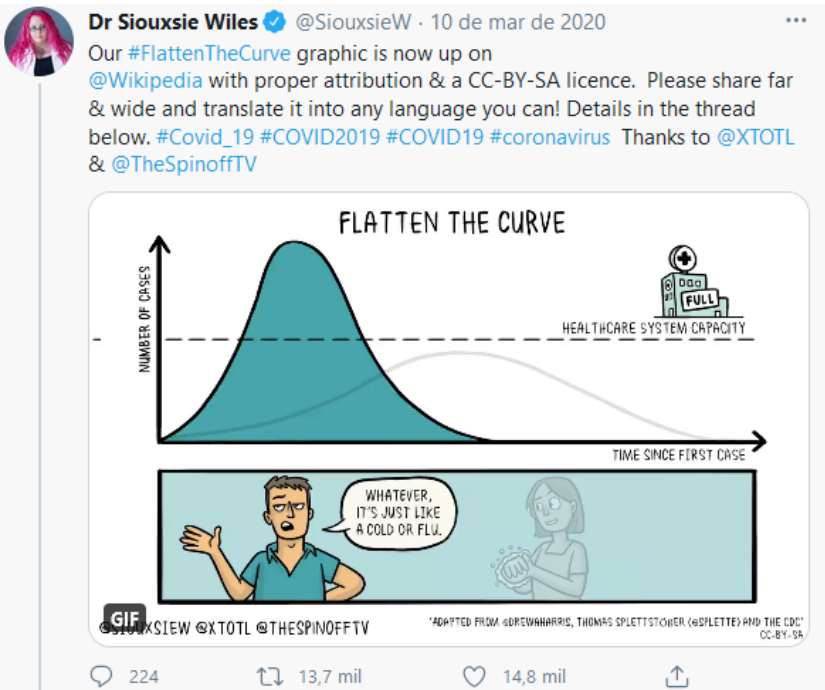
Siouxsie and Toby produced a set of graphics to help the general public understand science.

Ruão & Silva

Figure 7 Wiles first tweeter about the "flatten the curve" chart.
Source. From *Our #FlattenTheCurve graphic is now up on*, by S. Wiles [@SiouxsieW], 2020b, Twitter.

Since first being shared on March 8, the gif has made 4.5 million impressions on Twitter and been shared across broadcast media. And after being translated into Czech, Italian, Spanish, and Welsh by volunteers, a coder developed an automated system to translate the comic into any language. (Wilson, 2020, para. 5)

Besides social networks, traditional media were also important replicators of the "flatten the curve" chart. After its first publication in the mass media, throught *The Economist* pages, it has been adapted countless times, within and outside the journalistic context worldwide. *Vox* (Barclay & Scott, 2020), *The New York Times* (Roberts, 2020), in the USA, and, in Portugal, *Público* (Freitas, 2020; Figure 8) and *Expresso* (Albuquerque & Santos, 2020) are some of the media that (in March) adjusted the graph to show non-expert audiences what was really at stake between one curve and another: the capacity of health systems (the availability of professionals, number of hospital beds, respirators, among others) to provide service to those in need.

"Very quickly the graphics began to be used by businesses, schools, universities and public organisations".
International News Media Association, 2021
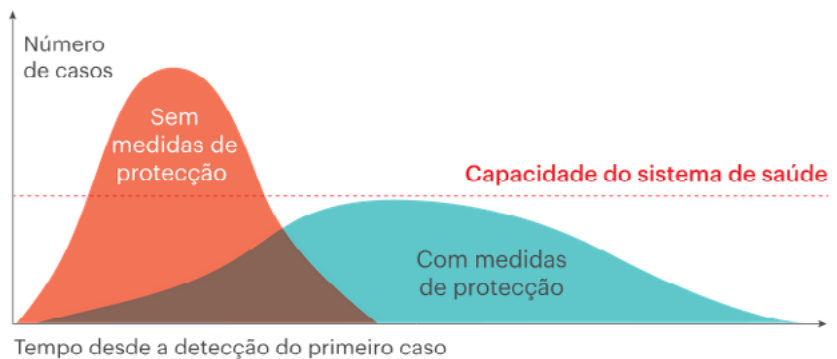
Figure 8 The "flatten the curve" chart translated to Portuguese by the newspaper *Público*
Source. "'Achatar a Curva' Pode Salvar Vidas", by A. Freitas, 2020, *Público*. Copyright 2020 by *Público*. Reprinted with permission.

At the same time as it was widely used on television and social networks, the metaphor was also incorporated in local, national, and global authorities's speeches. Here are some examples:

> "what we need to do is flatten that down," said Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, during the coronavirus task force briefing at the White House on a Tuesday evening in early March. "You do that with trying to interfere with the natural flow of the outbreak". (Roberts, 2020, para. 3)

> Chancellor Angela Merkel says Germany has made significant progress in fighting the coronavirus, but the situation remains fragile, and "caution should be the order of the day." She said, "the curve is flatter," meaning infection rates are down but added that models show those rates could easily go either way. The chancellor said if the right protections are in place, that will allow some restrictions to be eased. (*Merkel Says Germany's 'Curve Is Flatter' But Remains Cautious*, 2020, para. 1)

> Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern revealed in an interview (…), "I remember my chief science adviser bringing me a graph that showed me what flattening the curve would look like for New Zealand. And where our hospital and health capacity was. And the curve wasn't sitting under that line. So we knew that flattening the curve wasn't sufficient for us. ("Jacinda Ardern Says Flattening the Curve Was 'Not Sufficient' for New Zealand", 2020, para. 12)

> Instead, the WHO has repeatedly emphasised the importance of "flattening the curve" in order to tackle the pandemic. The idea of flattening the curve is to stagger the number of new cases over a longer period so that people have better access to medical care. (Meredith, 2020)

As stated by Panetta (2020), "up until a few months ago, the words flatten the curve didn't mean anything to people outside of the medical field. Now, it's an oft-repeated social media rallying cry to encourage people to practice social distancing and stay home" (para. 2). The "flatten the curve" chart, as a simplified visual representation of the COVID-19 transmission model, proposed a metaphor that showed to non-specialists how individual behaviour could influence dangerous "peaks" — representing high contamination and mortality rates —, or advisable "plateaus" — representing more manageable public health situations. Moreover, the rhetorical malleability

of this metaphor has enabled public and health authorities to communicate both empirical and conceptual representations of risk and scientific data, which has been immensely important in the different phases of the pandemic (Amidon et al., 2021).

This well-known visualisation allowed the development of a compelling narrative about the COVID-19 pandemic, built on storytelling that appealed to visual metaphors functions: generative heuristics, clarify complexity, and provide frameworks for future actions (Giles, 2008). The plot created by authorities all over the world was: it is not known, for sure, the number of cases of COVID-19 that can overload health systems, but science has proven that the position of the line tangent to the curve flattened visually determines the only scenario that can tackle the epidemic without significant risks to the population — the containment measures through social distance (Giannella & Velho, 2020).

Discussing the "Flatten the Curve" Metaphor

After the cases of COVID-19 exploded, showing that it was no longer possible to contain the spread of the disease, governments of many countries launched mitigation strategies, trying to slow the spread of the epidemic. Keeping contamination as low as possible and avoiding hospitalisations became the highest priorities for governments. However, authorities soon realise that they would not be able to minimise deaths if the health systems were not protected.

The need to contain the rapid spread of COVID-19 and proceed with community mitigation measures was then exhaustively communicated to the public. In order to enhance the public comprehension of infectious diseases' transmission models, the "flatten the curve" metaphor was widely used, communicating an important message: the greater the reduction in transmission, the longer and flatter the epidemic curve would be, and this would reduce hospitalisations and mortality. As shown in our data, the "flatten the curve" metaphor enabled scientists, health professionals, and politics to show the consequences of unmitigated spread and appeal to community action.

Epidemiologists and public health agencies create complex models to understand how diseases may progress, but when communicating this information to the general public, it is indispensable to think strategically, especially in the context of risk communication. To be effective, the strategic communication model supports that communication must consider a series

of strategic decisions that include identifying target publics and communication objectives, finding the right key messages to be sent through the appropriate channels/means, and developing the message format according to the selected publics, channels, and goals. After all these decisions have been made, the communication program will be ready to be implemented. Likewise, the "flatten the curve" example seems to have fulfilled all these requirements, as explained below.

The Strategic Communication Model in the "Flatten the Curve" Metaphor

Publics — With Whom Do We Intend to Communicate?

The "flatten the curve" chart dissemination followed scientific evidence on the usefulness of keeping populations informed during epidemic outbreaks. These populations were targeted in different countries and regions, according to their community groups, using geographic, cultural and administrative criteria. That explains why the chart was recreated and translated into different languages.

Objectives — What Are the Purposes of Communication?

The "flatten the curve" chart has been used for risk messaging purposes: to inform about the risks of a rapid viral spread and to show the need for community involvement in mitigation measures.

Key-Messages — What Should Be Communicated?

When used in popular texts, the "flatten the curve" chart communicates that COVID-19 is not a death sentence if the populations adopt appropriate behaviours. It communicates the seriousness of the situation, but also the possibility of control.

Channels — By What Means Should We Share the Message?

Scientists and authorities soon realised that it was necessary to use widespread media such as traditional mass media and social networks, which would have television and the internet as the most relevant platforms in the face of a pandemic. The "flatten the curve" chart was widely disseminated by these channels, as shown in this study.

Format and Concept in Use — How Should the Message Be Built to Be Effective?

The Visual Narrative

The first level of risk communication is to draw the public's attention without promoting panic. The complex language of science makes this challenging. The "flatten the curve" chart redesign followed scientific evidence on the usefulness of simplifying complex data through visual narratives when communicating to non-expert audiences. The use of illustrated data to transmit health information seems to increase message recall and favours adopting the communicated measures.

The Metaphor Attached

Building a narrative based on a metaphor of universal understanding is also an important mechanism to message recall and facilitates connecting ideas with similar previous experiences regarding large audiences. The "flatten the curve" sentence became a short and incisive message — the curve must be flattened to reduce mortality rates — with an associated strategic concept — we must all contribute to this effort.

The Emotional Link

The "flatten the curve" metaphor was also able to provoke an emotional stimulus. Research shows that images and storytelling tend to stimulate people's emotional sides. This visual narrative was able to identify, frame, and point to appropriate behaviours, creating a sense of action. By telling the story, data and analytics leaders sought to take audiences to action.

The Simplification Process

The story of the "flatten the curve" chart design is the story of a simplification process to facilitate understanding a phenomenon: the functioning of an epidemic curve combined with mitigation measures. Then, the graphic message was condensed into a visual narrative, synthesising the most relevant ideas, increasing understanding, and creating acceptance of pandemic conditions.

The Relevance of the Content

The "flatten the curve" chart is an engaging narrative but supported in very accurate information. Scientific visualisations must not lose accuracy in the

simplification process. Incorporating numbers into a mass visual narrative during an epidemic can be problematic, as they account for the diseases' conditions, human behaviour, and environmental factors, and these numbers can change rapidly. The use of well-known models (as those from the WHO, CDC, and other public health experts) is advisable (as they go through peer-review verification processes), such as replacing the numbers with colour nuances.

The Impact of the Narrative

Visualisations have the potential to incite panic just as much as they have the potential to inform, so it takes a lot of care and message testing to avoid adverse effects. The "flatten the curve" message was one of social responsibility regarding citizens' and organisational behaviours, more than a scientific data message. The expected impact was to produce attention, generate interest, create a desire to help and enhance action.

The Communication Risks

Visual narratives utility also comes at the cost of simplification. The "flatten the curve" narrative reduces various forms and degrees of intervention to a single best-case scenario, disregarding the increased risk of resurgence and collapsing local subpopulation dynamics into a single broad curve. The "flatten the curve" graphic can also cause global-local tensions by presenting a unique and standardised solution. It can also promote the stigmatising of people from countries and regions with many cases by endorsing that they were not socially responsible. Furthermore, visualisations can also incite fear and alarm if not anchored in a positive verbal or written narrative.

Therefore, using visual narratives requires considering all the risks associated with them and searching for the best solutions to reach target groups and achieve communication purposes. However, the "flatten the curve" case also shows that using the strategic communication model in risk scenarios can favour science communication activities, with countless benefits for the community.

Conclusions

The "flatten the curve" metaphor was created almost accidentally (as it did not come from a structured strategic communication thinking process), but it became the defining graphic of the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea is simple: taking steps, like washing hands or staying

home, can slow down new cases of illness so that the finite resources of our healthcare system can handle a more steady flow of sick patients rather than a sudden deluge. This metaphor has become a synthesis of a strategic message, rooted in the scientific understanding of epidemics and disseminated by politics and health agents.

The challenge of communicating scientific data about COVID-19 was enormous. No matter how well a communication campaign is developed and implemented, it will always be difficult to change perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours in the population, not only in the science or health domains but also in other areas of strategic communication (as corporate communication or advertising). People are surrounded by many influences and messages in their everyday life. Behaviours are not easy to change due to ingrained habits and fear of the new. Moreover, campaigns convey several messages simultaneously, often accompanied by a series of unintended effects. As such, scientific messages forwarded to to society need to be well prepared and adequately disseminated to target publics, to increase performance and avoid unintended effects. Science communication and the quest for the *public understanding of science* can be more effective by embracing a strategic dimension.

At the same time, science also needs to open up to a holistic view besides the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics model. Arts, humanities and social sciences can serve as a bridge to connect the individual and the society with science purposes, methods, and discoveries. They offer a creative medium to the unconventional integration of seemingly disparate factors of advanced research and daily life. They implement several tools to reimagine critical issues and engage in the responsible stewardship of graphic data within a modern social media landscape that is increasingly uncensored, rapid, and visual.

Therefore, the "flatten the curve" metaphor is an excellent example of a strategic communication device used by hard scientists, politics, journalists, bloggers, social media influencers, and cartoonists to increase public comprehension and confidence in science. It also represents an interdisciplinary work that literature evokes for science and strategic communication. The result was a valuable and creative message sent to a worldwide audience and an impeccable case to advocate for a strategic science communication approach.

Acknowledgements

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Strategic Communications and the Toms Case

Aligning Business Strategy With Strategic Communication

María-Victoria Carrillo[1] and Ana Castillo[2]

[1] *Department of Information and Communication, Faculty of Library and Communication Science, University of Extremadura, Extremadura, Spain;* [2] *Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising, Faculty of Communication Science, University of Malaga, Malaga, Spain*

[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1256-8870;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3650-2964*

Abstract

This work analyses the principles of strategic communication, taking the case of the Toms firm as an example in which business strategy aligns with strategic communication. It explains this company's management style on how strategic communication is to be understood. Fundamentally, the Toms strategy focuses more on exploiting its potential to fulfil its mission in the long term (to sell and be an organisation standing for solidarity) than on applying resources or making partial, short-term communication decisions. Thus, the entire business model and all long-term business decisions can in themselves be regarded as strategic communication decisions since the business objective becomes a communication objective. In this way, each tactic and action put into play in the firm's evolution provides it with social value and confers a constantly changing communicative dimension, which is only possible in nonlinear organisations whose business design is hyper-textual or bidirectional.

Keywords

Toms, strategic communications, social value, strategy, tactics

Strategy and Its Link With Communications

According to Nothhaft et al. (2018), strategic communication became successfully established as an academic discipline despite (or perhaps due to) focusing on an unclear and ill-defined concept. These authors explain how the area of strategic communication is currently trapped in a cycle of constant reinvention. Although the discipline is unarguably becoming more sophisticated, it is debatable that there has been any apparent progress. A more transparent conceptualization and a more realistic understanding are prerequisites for its consolidation in the organisational communication field.

In this line, Lock et al. (2020) state that the field of strategic communication has above all been criticized for its lack of any coherent theoretical synthesis. Those authors analysed all the articles published in 10 journals related to strategic communication over 20 years and found a great diversity of approaches. They propose strengthening the concept by explaining it using the same terms used in communication science, which are sometimes called the "underrated pillar on which strategic communication rests" (van Ruler, 2018, p. 367).

Therefore, with strategic communication accepted as a sub-discipline of communication science, and one which is still being defined, the premise is to describe the meaning of strategic communication by returning to the origin, beginning with the term strategy and complementing it with the concepts of tactics and actions.

The concept of strategy emerged simultaneously during the 5th century B.C. in two regions as distant as Greece and China. However, the concept differed significantly between these two regions. In Greece, a strategy was resolving conflicts through force, while in China and the east, intelligence prevailed over force in resolving conflicts (Matilla, 2007).

Since 1954, the term has been part of business vocabulary associated with the idea of "strategic decision" (Puyol, 2001, p. 117). Frandsen and Johansen (2017) insist on the idea of connecting the concept of strategic communication with that of business strategy in the field of management, in which, very generically, a firm's strategy is the approach it needs to take to attain its objectives. For this task to be successful, it is crucial to set out all the elements in detail in a program, explaining what to do, how to do it, who will develop it, and how to evaluate it.

A strategy must also consider the possible reactions of individuals that may influence the process when trying to fulfil their objectives and the effects of other factors connected to the environment, such as chance.

For a strategy to be effective, it is necessary to coordinate the available and opportune actions and resources to gain an advantageous position over the competitor.

The next concept, closely related to strategy, is that of tactics. The strategy consists of tactics that will help achieve the objective. Tactics are, therefore, operational decisions, which involve changes, are planned, and may need to be reformulated over time.

Here, it is essential to refer to the temporality concept and definition of strategy in the study. One must considerstrategy over the long term. There would be no point in establishing a short-term strategy since there would be no time to develop the tactics. Argenti et al. (2005) argue that firms that only make tactical communication decisions for the short term, without a strategy, will find it hard to compete.

Finally, tactics are materialized in much more concrete actions, and established in an even more precise time frame. A single tactic might lead to the development of one or more plans of action. These may be consecutive or simultaneous but always directed towards the same long-term objective. Each action may have different partial objectives, possibly attained in the short term.

In synthesis, in strategic communication, the approach described distinguishes strategy from tactics and actions, following the line laid out by Scheinsohn and Saroka (2000). According to those authors, strategic communication includes four levels of action: strategic, logistic, tactical, and technical.

The logistic level is directly related to the strategic level. It consists of guiding the maintenance of all the resources necessary to achieve the strategic objectives. The tactical level refers to everything that has to do with partial decisions. Finally, the technical level refers to all the operational decisions that the tactics will lead to and apply through actions of business, corporate, and internal communications.

For Heath et al. (2018), there are other approaches to strategic communication apart from those described above (for instance, strategic communication in which the entities use communication functions with a clear objective and to fulfil their mission): public relations and corporate communication, a structure to integrate purpose-driven communication functions within the organisation, or as a way for the organisation to serve the public interest.

There is another approach to strategic communication, which is closer to public relations. For Marston (1963), in his book *The Nature of Public Relations*, the strategic decision-making process in public relations appears to be divided into four stages to which he gave the acronym RACE: research, action, communication, evaluation.

Interestingly, both points of view, that of business and that of public relations, have the same origin. The process of management by objectives (MBO) also inspired the design of the RACE model (Marston, 1963). It consists of a compilation of prior information that is subsequently analysed to attain, after applying an action plan, specific pre-established objectives. In sum, it comes down to designing and implementing a strategy to achieve the objectives set by an organisation (Simmons, 1990).

The Concept of Strategic Communications

According to Pérez González (2001), a pioneer in defining strategy in communication, strategic communication is crucial for organisations. Hallahan et al. (2007) introduced the notion of strategic communication as an organisation's planned use of communication to achieve its mission. Nevertheless, this concept appeared before this. Scheinsohn and Saroka (2000) place the beginning of what afterwards represented a "strategic communication" movement in the late 1980s. This movement postulated that the function of communication went beyond the limits of marketing and proposed to placed it in the realm of management.

Indeed, any form of business communication had for a long time been a synonym for advertising. However, this reductionist association has subsequently been overturned. Authors such as Schultz et al. (1993) warn of the need to integrate different communication techniques to achieve the set objectives and not to use them isolated from each other.

To a large extent today, strategic communication is not limited to products and brands, which are extensions of products. "Communication must be articulated intelligently through global management (…) with the application of an eminently strategic logic, carrying it out from the only territory that enables it, the territory of Top Management" (Scheinsohn & Saroka, 2000, p. 154).

However, despite this open focus, there is no commonly accepted meaning of the concept (Nothhaft et al., 2018; Pérez González, 2001). Over time, different meanings for strategic communication have overlapped.

According to Lock et al. (2020), strategic communications is a general term to comprehensively address and include the different fields of public relations, corporate communication, organisational communication, and management communication. Thus, the term has on occasions functioned as a synonym for integrated communication, which itself is an umbrella term for all types of communication initiated by an organisation to reach its stakeholders. Comprehensive or integral communication and strategic communication differ in that the explanation of the former stems from the inclusion of all the communication actions, both internal and external, necessary to achieve the proposed objectives. The latter, strategic communication, is defined:

> from the angle of objectives to achieve and the decisions to be taken accordingly, rather than from the actions required. Of course, these decisions entail comprehensive or global communications actions, and this is the link between the two. (Carrillo, 2014, p. 34).

Thus, the term public relations has been replaced by strategic communication in this 2nd decade of the 21st century (Zerfass et al., 2018).

Despite all this, most researchers tend to use the term strategic communication as a concept encompassing any communication serving any recipient's interests (Zerfass et al., 2018), understood as a target audience for the organisation.

Hallahan et al. (2007) identified six areas that articulate the concept of strategic organisational communication: business management, marketing, public relations, communication technologies, communication policies, and social or information marketing campaigns.

In line with the above, the inclusion of social marketing as an area of strategic communication marked recognition of the vital link between it and the environment of intangible assets. Islas (2005) notes that two of the main areas of intervention in strategic communication are identity and organisational culture. The author also highlights the relationship between strategic communication and the management of intangible resources: "today the prestige and reputation of any brand or organisation depend less on advertising efforts and more on the comprehensive approach involved in strategic communications" (Islas, 2005, p. 3).

In a similar vein, Tironi and Carvallo (2011) argue that, in the corporate context, opportunities are found today in the fields of image, corporate social responsibility, brand, and reputation, and not in the field of production. Which further strengthens the link of strategic communication with the management of intangible assets.

In line with the above definitions, it is possible to conclude that, on the one hand, strategic communication cannot be reduced merely to something at the service of the firm's marketing, and, on the other, it allows the organisation to manage its intangible resources. organisations need to manage all of their resources in an integrated way. These include intangible resources such as image, reputation, brand, corporate social responsibility, among others. This management will involve the application of communication of

whatever type — commercial, corporate, or internal — not as isolated tools in themselves but at the service of the strategy set out for the fulfilment of the organisation's objectives, and it is this which gives rise to strategic communication (Carrillo, 2014, p. 35).

In any case, according the above, strategic communication plays a highly relevant role in the business management environment, moving away from the field of communicators and communications agencies (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018), so that now some necessary clarifications can be made.

Firstly, it is crucial to understand that communication cannot be strategic unless managedunless there is intervention both in and with them to solve a problem or achieve a long-term objective.

Secondly, strategic communications is not the same as communication strategies. Strategic communication needs all available forms of communication to be put into play to attain the objectives. Tactics and action plans will delimit them, and on many occasions, this is called partial communication strategies, hence the confusion.

Thirdly, strategic communication relates to the organisation itself: the term strategic communication has no meaning outside the context of organisations. The term organisation is considered a firm or a public or private institution that works in an organised manner in the same direction to achieve an objective, to fulfil a mission, and to make its corporate vision a reality in the environment of which it forms a part. Thus, Hallahan et al. (2007) define strategic communication as the communication deliberately carried out by an organisation to complete its mission.

In the same line as the present study, Zerfass et al. (2018), based on a decade of research in strategic communication, propose that "strategic communication encompasses all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity" (p. 493). Specifically, strategic communication is an entity's intentional use of communication to engage in strategically important conversations with its stakeholders, so as to achieve its objectives. Communication can play a distinctive role in the formulation, review, presentation, execution, implementation, and operational capacity of strategies. Strategic communication thus takes the perspective of the organisation to achieve specific objectives with the aid of communication, in particular conditions.

Finally, taking into account all the above concepts and ideas, and following the same line as that described in Carrillo (2014), strategic communication in an organisation is the communication management effort that needs to be made in the long term for its stakeholders to add value, and for the pre-defined objectives to be aligned with the organisation's vision and mission.

Strategic Communications in Toms

Creation of Toms and Statement of Its Strategy

This chapter describes the case of the firm Toms as an example of management aligning the company's strategic management with strategic communication. Toms was created by American Blake Myckosie in 2006 in Venice, California (USA) to sell espadrilles. Myckosie was an entrepreneur who had tried his luck in different businesses, which would lead him after a time to create a business model based on corporate social responsibility. Toms stemmed from a trip to Argentina where Myckosie decided to create a private, for-profit firm that would base its business strategy on a different vision (selling shoes and helping those most in need). So his mission focused on donating a pair of shoes to disadvantaged persons for each pair that his firm sold. To undertake this task, the firm has an extensive network of partners who help evaluate the needs in each zone and provide support to ensure that the donations reach the planned recipients[1].

Toms has put together a healthy network of stakeholders such as clients and institutions or organisations with experience in humanitarian aid in the zones of action: Shoe Giving Partners, Sight Giving Partners, Safe Water Giving Partners, Bully Prevention & Response Giving Partners, Solar Light Giving Partners, Impact Grant Giving Partners. This network of partners and the work developed with them provide Toms' identity excellent visibility, functioning as a tool for building corporate image and reputation. In addition, it generates reciprocal benefits for the partners who claim that they too obtain visibility and credibility through their tasks in different countries.

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[1] https://www.TomsToms.com/us/about-TomsToms.html

Evolution of Toms' Business Model and Strategic Communications

According to Macnamara (2018), strategic communication requires more open, dynamic, and expanded approaches to facilitate two-way communication. They need to show the vital role communication plays in improving organisational strategy and transforming strategic communication. Toms' case is, in this regards, considered of because the firm aligns its business strategy with strategic communications bi-directionally, where both sides receive feedback from the origin, such as described in the following paragraphs.

The entire Toms business model, all of its business decisions, can be regarded as strategic communication decisions since they focus more on exploiting the business's potential strength than on making partial decisions to achieve small isolated objectives. Toms defines its business model, its vision, has an ultimate objective: its social responsibility towards the most disadvantaged. The company develops all its infrastructure and logistics to attain this objective rather a purely commercial one. That does not mean, however, that Toms does not obtain benefits and neglects its results. Indeed, it has stated several times that it is willing to give as much as possible without compromising its survival.

1. Toms has developed its management conforming with the definition of strategic communication from a bidirectional, innovative, business perspective and symbiosis with each organisation's business model depending on its characteristics following five points. Strategic communication pre-establishes some long-term objectives in line with the business objectives and, more importantly, with the vision and mission of the organisation.

At Toms, its business model translates into a sequence of (long-term) strategic decisions that turn the firm's activity into visibility. These communications align with the firm's business strategy since the development of the activities, which are part of it, promotes disseminating the firm's identity and building the image of a responsible company committed to social causes.

2. In its strategic communication, the firm coordinates the actions and resources to be ahead of its competitors.

As noted, Toms' work accomplished through its carefully selected and assessed network of partners provides it with a solid position when developing its activity in the market. In 2009, Toms created The Giving Team, an international non-profit cooperation team of professionals. Working with these organisations helped Toms, acting locally, understand the needs of the communities they all served, integrating Toms' resources into existing programs.

3. The strategy consists of tactics that help define how to achieve the objective.

Since its formation, Toms has made a series of tactical decisions that evolved from its roots. Beyond being a solely espadrille-type shoe firm, according to Toms timeline, its main tactical decisions have been the following:

In 2011, they launched the Toms easy wear line through which, for each pair of glasses purchased, Toms helped a person who had eye care needs. Through its collaborating partners, the firm provides medical ocular treatment to those in need by creating integral eye care service centres. Moreover, beyond providing aid, these centres also create stable employment, thus supporting economic development in those communities.

In 2014, Toms opened its first two coffee shops in Austin, Texas (USA). They sell a high-quality brand of coffees purchased from disadvantaged countries, such as Guatemala, Malawi, Honduras, and Peru (Toms, 2019). For every cup of coffee purchased, Toms provides one day of drinking water to a disadvantaged area. This new project contributes to the firm's mission and the expansion of its model, although this time, the product donated has nothing to do with the product sold, unlike the initial case of the shoes. At this stage of the Toms business model, it is clear that the firm had expanded from its classic model to a new line, in which it reached out to highly experienced non-profit organisations for help. That translated into savings in logistics, and mitigated its lack of knowledge on applying its model to acquiring a basic need such as water. This diversification of activities is part of the planning that strengthens Toms' image, which is not limited to simple donations, but rather about fighting problems (poverty and other causes) at their roots.

In 2019, Toms officially announced that it was adopting a more flexible model. Although the firm continues to distribute shoes, glasses, and water, it has evolved, and its new model focuses on creating a donation fund. Its

operation aims at donating a third of the net profits. For every $3 the firm makes, $1 is set aside for the fund. To manage the fund, Toms gathered a donation team. Its members identify new areas for donation and organisations for collaboration. In this sense, Toms launched, among other projects, aid to the prevention of armed violence, the empowerment of women, the improvement of mental health, and, more recently, since April 2020, it has also been lending part of its fund to COVID-19 related aid (COVID-19 Global Giving Funds). From a strategic viewpoint, this shift in the model has allowed the firm to move away from the image of an organisation limited to making specific donations, which ultimately were insufficient to solve the root of the problems it was trying to mitigate.

Strategically, the firm used the knowledge it had about its clients to ensure that the issues it supported aligned with the areas of interest or concern of their buyers, without disregarding that it is a for-profit firm that must sustain its value in satisfying its clients, without whom this business model would not be possible.

According to Haksever et al. (2004), value is the "capacity of goods, services or activity to satisfy a need or provide a benefit to a person or legal entity" (p. 292). The creation, communication, and provision of the said value represent a differential element for organisations. Over the last decades, one has been witnessing a particular protagonism of the clients in the co-creation of the said value (Roncha & Radclyffe-Thomas, 2016; Zwass, 2010). In this line, Toms has offered its clients this possibility of co-creation without losing the essence of its business approach.

4. However, although the buyers are the central target public, strategic communication requires a new dimension in how the organisation's stakeholders should be understood, far from reductionist visions limited to clients.

In Toms, the stakeholder map is a complicated train of interacting gears involving a mix of clients, employees, and organisations. The firm does not neglect its clients, but neither does it limit itself to satisfying just the closest sections of its public. Instead, it keeps very much in mind the more distant ones and tends to plan a series of actions that involve each of its stakeholders to attain its long-term objectives. These, in turn, reach other indirect stakeholders who become true protagonists of the firm's business mission because they are the ones who benefit from its activity. The firm does not neglect its clients, but neither does it limit itself to satisfying just

the closest sections of its public. Instead, it keeps very much in mind the more distant ones, and tends to plan a series of actions that involve each of its stakeholders so as to attain its long-term objectives.

In this line, through the 2019 "Choose your style, choose your position" initiative, the firm invited its clients to make decisions about the destination of long-term donations. Buyers could select a specific cause to which they would like to allocate a percentage of their purchase. A survey identified three areas for work: physical safety, mental health, and equal access to opportunities (Toms, 2019). This type of approach goes beyond the simple co-creation of a message or a product. Instead, participation affects the business model itself.

The firm has also developed these participatory actions internally. Thus, its Tomorrow's Project program covered creating a platform that allowed its full-time employees to intervene as defenders of causes they supported. Each month, employees are invited to submit an idea in support of a project. All the proposals are submitted to vote, and the project or organisation with the most votes receives a $10,000 fund. This initiative is undoubtedly in the line of strategic communication, allowing the firm to have staff involved with the causes the firm is aiding, even going as far as giving them the chance to make decisions regarding the orientation of that aid.

Furthermore, Toms has an extensive network of partners who help its mission and become relevant strategic stakeholders. To guarantee the proper functioning of these partnerships, Toms establishes a comprehensive protocol to accept members that includes an in-depth investigation, complemented with visits and interviews. This process helps them ensure the adherence of:

- local experts with deep roots in the communities they serve, as long as they do not rely on volunteers to maintain their programs;

- partners who address local needs to enable the community to evolve in the future;

- organisations and institutions that are capable of integrating Toms' resources into their care and aid programs.

5. Strategic communication should not be confused with communication strategies but may entail carrying out short-term communicative actions.

In this line, Toms has developed specific actions that give it notoriety, reputation, or brand personality depending on the specific case and following the tactical decisions the firm has made throughout its existence. These actions have not been an end in themselves, but one can understand them as responses to a specific need or, in some cases, as *coups de théâtre* supporting their tactical decisions.

It is worth noting that from the communication point of view, the firm had not openly informed its clients that it was migrating from its traditional model of donating items based on sales towards the creation of a donation fund (dedicating to this fund $1 out of every $3 made). To fill this information gap, the firm published a detailed impact report that explained the change and its objectives and outlined the projects underway, for which it used neither the media nor advertising.

Other even more renowned actions have been its institutionalisation of "One day without shoes" through creating an annual solidarity march that brings together thousands of people who walk barefoot to raise awareness of the need for footwear. Anyone can donate a pair of shoes within this action without making any purchase just by sharing a barefoot photo on social media with a hashtag. That generates a significant impact in the media.

In many cases, Toms also uses its association with celebrities, first in developing its solidarity march, and since 2019, by linking up with some change-makers to boost its investments in projects related to homelessness and other social problems affecting Europe. The first of these projects featured Joshua Coombes leading an art tour in various cities to take on the growing problem of homeless people in European cities. He participated in collaboration with Light & Noise and homelessness organisations. Furthermore, Ella Grace Denton organised some women's circles in London and Manchester to address safe spaces for women. These are actions perfectly aligned with Toms' business model and strategic communication approach.

Conclusion

In this work, we have accepted that strategic communication is a communication sub-discipline that should follow today's new business models, not traditional ones. The business design of organisations that apply strategic communication cannot be linear but somewhat circular or hypertextual. The strategic objective is not to sell products but to acquire value as a firm (hopefully social value) for its image and reputation.

The Toms case can help present and define the approach needed for strategic communication, a perfect symbiosis of communication and management from the outset, with one becoming synonymous with the other. This new management will be impossible without the involvement of all the stakeholders in attaining objectives. These objectives will have to be reached less through financial decisions than based on achieving intangible values. That genuinely differentiates one firm from another and makes it stand out from its adversaries or competitors.

Toms' strategic model aims to reach as much of the world as possible, rather than being the model that sells the most (without neglecting profitability). This approach is visible to its clients and the causes supported are in line with the interests of its stakeholders. That is, without doubt, a strategic approach whose tactics and action plans are in perfect balance with the firm's ultimate objectives and symbiosis with its vision and business mission.

English revision: Anabela Delgado

Acknowledgements

JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

Consejería de Economía, Ciencia y Agenda Digital

Unión Europea

European Regional Development Fund

A way of doing Europe

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Text-Mining Approach to Political Communication on Twitter

The Analysis of the Discourse of Spain's Principal Political Parties During the European Parliament Elections in 2019

Emilia Smolak Lozano[1] and Atsuho Nakayama[2]

[1] *Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising, Faculty of Communication Sciences, University of Malaga, Malaga, Spain;* [2] *Department of Business Administration, Graduate School of Management, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan*

[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8193-8786;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9220-5059*

Abstract

Twitter has become a powerful tool of political communication, that now plays a significant role during elections, especially in countries such as Spain, where use of digital media is extended widely throughout society. Digital democracy is based to a significant extent on the quality of public discourse and persuasion implemented in the digital messages contained in tweets. Text mining methods applied to tweets during the 2019 European elections made it possible to examine content, frequently used keywords and expressions, sentiment and tone of the political discourse of the main Spanish political parties. The objective of the analysis is to determine the scope and thematic focus of the political discourse on Twitter and make an inter-party comparison. The results reveal that Spanish politics were a much bigger focus than the European perspective and the social outlook pursued by the left wing turned out to be more visible than other proposals. Fragmentised discourse in the case of the populist parties focused on concrete problems to be resolved, whereas the main approach of Twitter politics was the fight against right-wing rivals. It is possible to conclude rather low maturity in terms of democratic public discourse with the high persuasive components integrated within tweets and a self-appraising attitude.

Keywords

social media, Twitter, text mining, discourse analysis, political communication, political public relations

Introduction

Democracy in general is the political and institutional framework for political communication. The development of new forms of communication based on online technologies has established the foundations for cyberdemocracy within the wider background of the information and knowledge society. As such, the phenomenon of electronic democracy has brought new forms of political communication to the digital ecosystems, described as the digital infrastructure in contemporary politics or as hybrid politics (combined with traditional mass media). The internet is considered to be an effective channel of political communication, especially when aimed at reaching key digital audiences, disseminated across digital platforms and ecosystems.

Political organisation-public relationships together with political public relations role in political communication constitute the useful framework to approach the use of social media in the strategies of political campaigns (Browning & Sweetser, 2020; Froehlich & Rüdiger, 2006; Hong, 2013). Applying online political public relations to campaigns (Painter, 2015) can contribute to agenda setting (Kiousis & Shields, 2008) and message framing or help increase the participation of young voters (Dong & Ji, 2018). In general, public relationship (PR) practice seems to be essential in digital political communication (Erzikova & Bowen, 2019) and use of social media in public oriented strategies can be effective, as has been shown in some research (Allagui & Breslow, 2016). As such, online political public relations, or in a more general manner, social media must now work in synergy with traditional media, in order to maximise digital influence in hybrid political communication (Rune & Enjolras, 2016).

Social Media in Political Campaigns

Social media not only offers a means of achieving more dialogical and bidirectional communication (Plowman et al., 2015) but can also become useful tools for political campaigns (Housholder & LaMarre, 2015). When applied for the purposes of political branding (disseminating the desired image of political parties to certain segments of society), they can position themselves effectively among the target voter groups (Baines, 1999; Cwalina & Falkowski, 2015). In these terms, Obama's campaign during the 2008 election brought a revolution to political communication (Macnamara, 2012) similar to Trump's political campaign, where 44% of budget was allocated to digital media. As such, social media has become the commonly-used strategy in modern political campaigns but with limited investment to date (7% of all spending in political campaigns in the USA in 2018), however with promising forecasts for increase from 2018 onwards, especially in U.S. politics. Online channels play a significant role in political discourses in the networked society (Campbell & Kwak, 2011) whereas candidates' rhetoric is a key element in political strategies (Sisco et al., 2017).

Macnamara (2012) has analysed implementation of web 2.0 in political elections and identifies the need to work more on stimulating and seeding online political discussions, elaboration of tools to improve development of the arguments and correct implementation and analysis of user's data and big data. Practitioners need to learn new skills to be effective in social media, including informal "conversational" styles of writing online,

new techniques of media relations (e.g., bloggers do not come to news conferences and most don't accept press releases) and online community management techniques (Macnamara, 2012).

Nevertheless, social media is used in political campaigns not only to create and disseminate the image of political candidates or parties (Kelm et al., 2019; Rune & Enjolras, 2016) but also for framing the message and discourse in social networks, especially on Twitter or Facebook (Stetka et al., 2019; Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012). This application as the tool of agenda setting (Lee & Xu, 2018) takes place due to its discursive power and media effects (Bulovsky, 2019; Sahly et al., 2019).

As such, Twitter and its public sphere provides a scenario that makes it possible to observe the extension and effects of the stories and discourses within political communication (Guo et al., 2019). Fontecilla Camps (1988) identifies four main elements of political discourse; as a result, electoral discourse will be mainly focused on persuasion, ideology, and pro-receptor. For instance, analysis of digital political advertising indicates three main issues that frame the federal political discourse disseminated by ads on Facebook or Google in the USA in 2018: health, taxes, and Medicare. Roper and Hurst (2019) claim that correct PR practice can be helpful to establish a useful and dialogue-based discourse — "political talk" — even in the case of complicated issues. It is therefore important to examine the political discourse as shaped during political campaigns on online media (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009): their contents, topics, key issues, framing, and agenda in order to introduce any improvements strategically. The textual data that are generated during the campaigns constitute the useful field for research, for content and textual analysis based on text mining and a big data approach in modern PR management strategies. It can therefore be a helpful tool to examine, as Deligiaouri (2018) points out, the phenomenon of discursive construction of ideology and post-truth narratives in the contemporary political communication that primarily takes place in the digital ecosystem (Speakman, 2015).

Similar studies on the implementation of social media in campaigns, in particular social networks, have studied its role as a public relations strategy (Frame & Brachotte, 2015; LaMarre & Suzuki-Lambrecht, 2013). Enli and Skogerbø (2013) examined Facebook and Twitter as the arenas of political communication. Xiong et al. (2019) have examined Twitter by means of semantic analysis of message framing, using hashtags and topics. As far as text analysis methods are concerned, Xu and Xiong (2020) apply text analysis to approach a polarised discourse on Twitter regarding social

and political issues preceded by Adams' and McCorkindale's (2013) content analysis of Twitter usage in presidential campaigns or Pressgrove's and Kim's (2018) content analysis of the 2016 elections. Studies of the use of tweets and retweets in campaigns were performed by Lee and Lim (2016) or Lee and Xu (2018). Rune and Enjolras (2016) analysed campaigning styles on Twitter, differentiating the personalised strategies of candidates versus parties' reputation and narratives. Casero-Ripollés et al. (2017) examined the populist discourse of the Unidos Podemos party on Twitter during the 2016 Spanish elections. This is one of the few studies focused on Twitter discourse analysis in the Spanish context. In these terms, Wang (2016) points out the new principles for political agenda and political discourse analysis, focusing on language processing and computational linguistics as key techniques for critical studies of political narrative in social media.

Text Mining and Analysis of Political Discourse

Text mining can be broadly defined as a knowledge-intensive process in which a user interacts with a document collection over time by using a suite of analysis tools (e.g., Feldman & Sanger, 2006). Text mining extracts useful and important information from texts by identifying and exploring significant rules. Any text from a paper, essay, book, newsletter, email, or post of social networking service may be used, in function of the researcher's goals. These document collections are not the formalised database records but the unstructured textual data. However, we must find interesting patterns from them. Feldman and Sanger (2006) pointed out that text mining is very similar to data mining and derives much of its inspiration and direction from seminal research on data mining. It is therefore not surprising to find that text mining and data mining systems have many high-level architectural similarities. Much of their pre-processing focus falls on scrubbing and normalising data and creating extensive numbers of table joins, because data mining assumes that the data has already been stored in a structured format. In contrast, for text mining systems, pre-processing operations centre on the identification and extraction of representative features for natural language documents. These pre-processing operations are responsible for transforming unstructured data stored in document collections into a more explicitly structured intermediate format, which is a concern that is not relevant for most data mining systems. Netzer et al. (2012) introduced the idea that business fields have been expanding the opportunities of use of text mining approaches to collect competitive intelligence, to analyse the wealth of information that consumers are posting online, and to

analyse the infinite stream of financial report data, to search for patterns or irregularities. The expansion of these opportunities is based on the fact that the availability of digital text data is increasing. Similar approaches can be found in the studies of Nicholls and Bright (2019) in which content analysis and cluster analysis were applied, in the qualitative analysis (critical thematic analysis) of Lawless and Chen (2019). Further foundations regarding the political communication research via textual analysis can be established by critical discourse analysis (Reynolds, 2019) or textual and contextual analysis (Trimithiotis, 2018). However, the present study also focuses on using a text-mining approach by applying the computational techniques of language processing in order to assess the sentiment and contents from tweets related to populism discourse in social media in the European elections in 2019.

The Origins and Outline of the Study

Inspired by the comparative study by Jansen et al. (2019) on the European Parliament elections, the present chapter examines the political agenda and discourse performed by Spanish political parties in social media during the European Parliament elections in Spain in 2019, using text mining techniques applied to tweets published by the political parties during the campaign. As such, the study attempts to evaluate the degree of populist discourse in European modern politics: from Euroscepticism to pro-European positions in Spain, given the increasing popularity of extreme or populist parties in Spain, on both the left and right wing. While the media-based or journalistic discourse on politics is found in scientific research (Reynolds, 2019; Tameryan et al., 2018, to name the most recent examples), the social media narrative of political parties has yet to be explored. Echeverría (2017) notices that media frames and discourse during elections focuses on the infotainment dimension rather than the proposals and themes of the candidates' campaigns. Therefore, it is extremely important to examine the sentiments and proposals present in political discourse directed to the European level of politics.

Following the attempts made by Deligiaouri (2018), the research therefore employs advanced text mining techniques to analyse the discursive construction of the narrative in contemporary politics on Twitter by political parties running for European Parliament. In this way, multi-dimensional and cluster analysis techniques will make it possible to identify the main frames, sentiments, themes, and focuses that dominated the political discourse in

the Spanish political arena during the elections, as a reflection of the interests existing within the political parties. Similar research on political discourse during the European elections was performed by Trimithiotis (2018), using the textual and contextual perspective, but focused on Europe as a main topic. This analysis aims to determine whether the narrative of different political parties in Spain presents any similarities or variations and to what extent. Moreover, it will help discover the degree of the communication flow in political discourse in Spain in relation to populism, Euroscepticism, polarisation, and progressive narration within the digital political discourse in Spain. Using Twitter as the main tool for discursive expression and the construction of dialogue (Watkins, 2017) between political actors and citizens (Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2018) in cyber-politics can possibly help overcome the bias between political representation and public opinion (Druckman, 2014). For this reason, it is first important to determine the sentiment and linguistic framework of the discourse.

Methodology

The study focuses on the European Parliament elections held between May 23–26, 2019, in all European Union (EU) member states (27 countries). The campaign period in Spain was from May 9–23, 2019, together with the election process. The campaign focused on political parties and their programmes. The importance of political campaigns during the EU Parliament elections is supported by the turnout data. According to the European Parliament (2019) on average, the turnout was 51% in the EU and 61% on average in Spain. Spain indicates widely pro-European attitudes (75% of population), but with an increasingly growing populist discourse. As such, we have obtained a vast representation of dominant perceptions and attitudes in political communication in Spain in relation to the EU, represented by parties and their voters with more recent attention to populism and its discourse as a dominating ideology.

The study analysed the tweets published by the selected political parties during the EU Parliament election campaign (from May 9–23, 2019). The tweets were downloaded from Twitter using a special programme and the most relevant terms were then sub-weighted after using specially designed algorithms to remove the punctuation symbols, signs and prepositions for each language. The study's main objective is two-fold:

1. to determine the scope and thematic focus of the political discourse on Twitter during the EU elections in Spain;

2. to perform a comparative analysis of the discourse of the main Spanish parties contained in the tweets published during the EU campaign in 2019.

The Twitter database consisted of 2,052 tweets in the case of Spain. The numbers per party were distributed as follows (Table 1).

Table 1 Tweets data distribution.

1 ciudadanos_automony_may.csv	591 tweets
2 psoe_automony_may.csv	587 tweets
3 populares_automony_may.csv	404 tweets
4 ahorapodemos_automony_may.csv	294 tweets
5 vox_automony_may.csv	176 tweets
Total	**2,052 tweets**

In this study, we perform analysis of post tagging, lemmatisation, and co-occurrences. In this vignette, we will show some basic frequency statistics that can be extracted once we have annotated our text. We use the UDPipe R package, which provides language-agnostic tokenisation, tagging, lemmatisation, and dependency parsing of raw text, which is an essential part in natural language processing. Furthermore, the logic accounts for all languages and is language-agnostic[1]. Co-occurrences make it possible to see how words are used either in the same sentence or next to each other. The UDPipe package makes it possible to create co-occurrence graphs using the relevant parts of speech tags. We look at how many times nouns and adjectives are implemented in the same sentence. We visualised the result by using the ggraph R package, that can visualise the word network[2]. Once we get these co-occurrences, we can perform the same plotting using the ggraph R package.

Firstly, we started by annotating some text in English. The annotated data frame can then be used for basic text analytics. A data frame is a table or a two-dimensional array-like structure, in which each column contains values of one variable, such as numerical vectors and character vectors, and each row contains one set of values from each column. Although it looks like a two-dimensional array, like a matrix, it differs from a matrix in that each

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[1] For more details, please see the reference manual of UDPipe (Wijffels, 2021) or site of basic analytical use cases of UDPipe (BNOSAC, n.d.).

[2] For more details, please see the reference manual of ggraph (Pedersen, 2021).

row and column of the data frame must have a label and can be manipulated by labels.

The resulting data frame is one row per "doc_id" and "term_id", containing all the tokens in the data, the lemma, the part of speech tags, the morphological features, the dependency relationship along the tokens, and the location where the token is found in the original text. A field called "upos", which is the universal parts of speech tag, and a field called "lemma" which is the root form of each token in the text, give us a broad range of analytical possibilities.

Frequency statistics of words brings good results, but we need to identify words that make sense in combination with other words. We must therefore confirm keywords that are a combination of words. In the UDPipe package, we can identify keywords in the text by following three methods: rapid automatic keyword extraction (RAKE; Rose et al., 2010), collocation ordering using pointwise mutual information (PMI; Church & Hanks, 1990), and parts of speech phrase sequence detection. Therefore, we used these three methods to identify keywords in the text. RAKE algorithm is one of the most popular (unsupervised) algorithms of machine learning for extracting keywords during information retrieval. It is a domain independent keyword extraction algorithm, which tries to determine key phrases in a body of text by analysing the frequency of word appearance and its co-occurrence with other words in the text.

Collocations are a sequence of words or terms that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance. Common collocations are adjectives + nouns, nouns followed by nouns, verbs and nouns, adverbs and adjectives, verbs and prepositional phrases or verbs and adverbs. By computing PMI which are indicators of how likely two terms are collocated compared to being independent, we can extract relevant collocations. The PMI of a pair of outcomes "x" and "y" belonging to variables x and y quantifies the discrepancy between the probability of their coincidence given their joint distribution and their individual distributions, assuming independence. The PMI formula is:

$$PMI = \log \frac{p(x, y)}{p(x)p(y)}.$$

In this way, we analysed the content, the most frequently used keywords and expressions, sentiment and tone of the 2,052 tweets published by the principal Spanish parties (Partido Popular [PP], Partido Socialista Obrero Español [PSOE], Ciudadanos, Vox, Unidos Podemos) during the EU Parliament election campaign in May 2019.

The Results

The analysis is divided into two parts. Firstly, the general political discourse in Spain will be examined. Secondly, there will be a comparative study of the discourse of political parties in Spain during the European elections, primarily using keywords and co-occurrences techniques.

Spanish Political Discourse in the European Elections

In most languages, nouns are the most common types of words, next to verbs and these are the most relevant for analytical purposes, next to adjectives and proper nouns. Figure 1 shows the frequency of occurrence of universal parts of speech (UPOS). The nouns are the most frequent, next to adpositions.
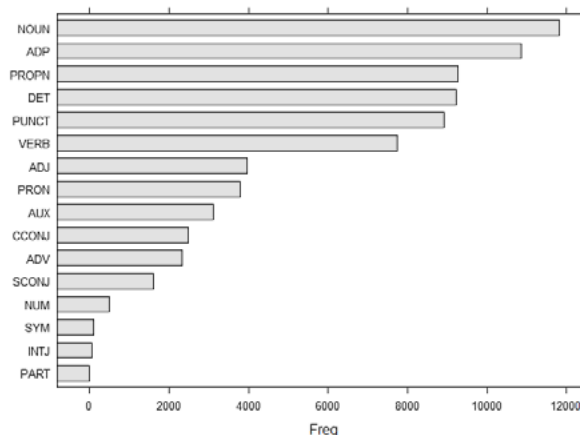

Figure 1 The frequency of occurrence of UPOS in Spanish tweets.

We can therefore confirm that the most common words were nouns, because we obtained the text annotated with parts of speech. The language is oriented by the objects and concepts, rather than actions or expression of will to take an action.

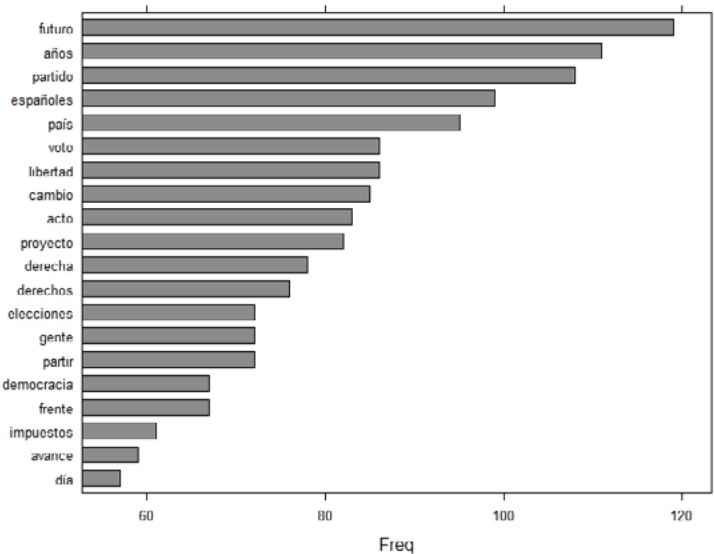Figure 1 shows the top 20 occurring nouns. It indicates that these nouns are frequently used in tweets.

Figure 2 The top 20 occurring nouns.

The most frequently used words are "future", "years", "party", "Spanish citizens", and "country", followed by "vote", "freedom", "change", "act", and "project". "Law", "rights", and "democracy" are far less present in the discourse. They were used fewer than 80 times. The frequency analysis does not indicate any main topics that guide the discourse or does not focus on any urgent issues that are important for citizens. Instead, the frequency of words indicates the persuasive tone of the messages and its framework points to general political discussion: party, country, future, and Spanish citizens.

Human speech often tends to exaggerate the object with an adjective, and therefore it is necessary to look at the most frequently occurring adjectives. Figure 3 shows the top 20 occurring adjectives. It indicates that these adjectives are frequently used in tweets.
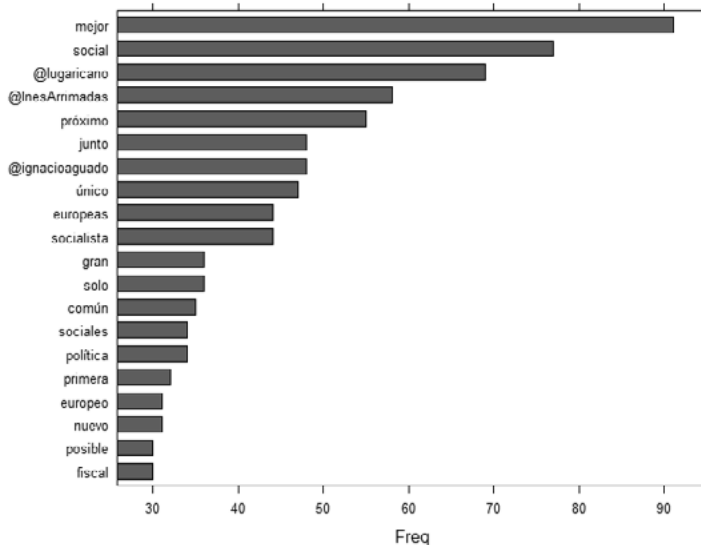

Figure 3 Top 20 occurring adjectives.

Spanish language applies adjectives quite frequently. The most frequently used adjectives are "better" or "social". The words "next", "together" (jointly), "unique", and "European" are also popular. This indicates the orientation towards progressive ideas denoting a better and more social future, in which the community perspective dominates.

We can reveal the nature of the tweeting by checking the usage of verbs. The usage of verbs indicates whether there is any sign of optimism or simply infuse pessimism. Figure 4 shows the top 20 occurring verbs. It indicates that these adjectives are frequently used in tweets.
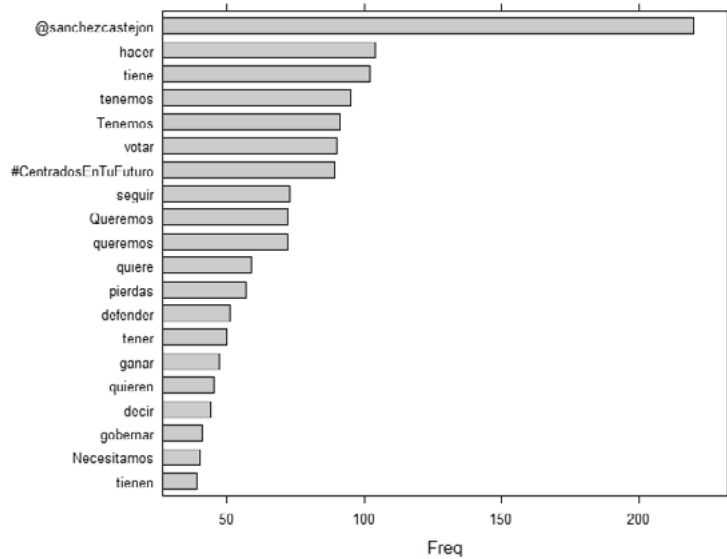
Figure 4 The top 20 occurring verbs.

As we can see, similar to Figure 3, the programme is not yet ideal in recognising the parts of the speech in different linguistic context within the tweets. The Twitter replies beginning with @ and including a person to whom the message is directed, as can be observed on both graphs, is processed by the linguistic computer techniques as verbs or adjectives. It also detects hashtags as verbs.

"To do" and "to have" are the two most frequently used verbs in this case. This is followed by "to have to", followed by "to vote", "to follow", and "to want". The declarative aspect of the language framework of the discourse is dominant however, pointing to some action or offer/things in common as well as the sense of obligation imposed on the social group. Clearly, the voting intention is marked, as well.

Figure 5 shows the top 20 key phrases identified by RAKE. The key phrases were extracted on the basis of the condition that the frequency was higher than three. It indicates that these key phrases are frequently used in the body of tweets.
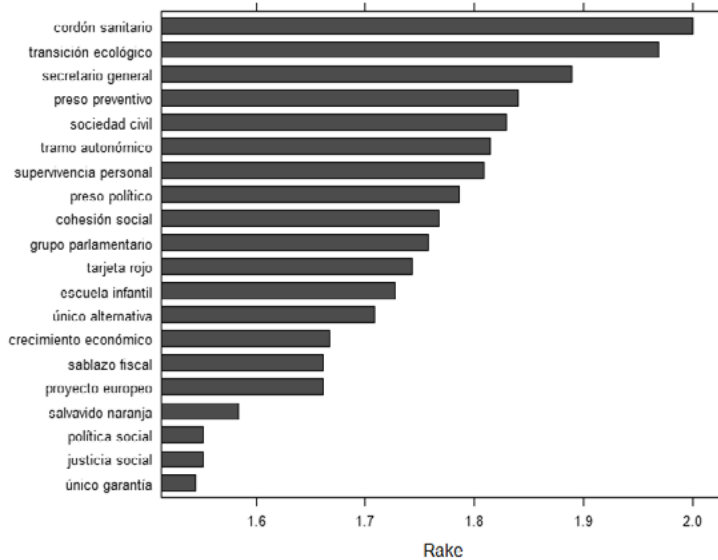
Figure 5 The top 20 key phrases identified by rapid automatic keyword extraction.

Key phrases detected by linguistic computational techniques in Spain reflects the political debate between the political parties. The first key phrase to appear is "sanitary cordon" as the reference to isolate the populist parties (in this case the right-wing Vox party). Furthermore, we can detect the key phrase of the political programme that is "ecological transition". The discourse mentions the Catalan situation ("preventive prisoners" and "political prisoners") as well as issues related to the democratic order in Spain and its structure: "civil society", "autonomies", "social cohesion". The following expressions are related to the political tension present in Spain in 2019. First, the clear party-centred discourse with the elevated use of the phrase "parliamentary group". Secondly, the expression "red card" — a famous gesture by the president of Spanish government, Pedro Sanchez, towards three right-wing parties — to encourage left-wing voters to prevent the right wing from winning the election and form a coalition due to the danger to social rights. A clear trend is also observed. The key issues of the political programme that shall form the foundation of the political discourse in elections are those that are far less frequently used — "economic growth", "taxes reform", "European project", "social policy", and "social justice". The discourse

is centred on the political issues, conflict and rivalry between the Spanish political parties running for European Parliament without barely denoting the most important topics of interest for citizens.

Figure 6 shows the top 20 keywords identified by PMI collocations. The key phrases were extracted under the condition that the frequency was greater than three. We could extract relevant collocations. These keywords show the sequence of words or terms that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance.
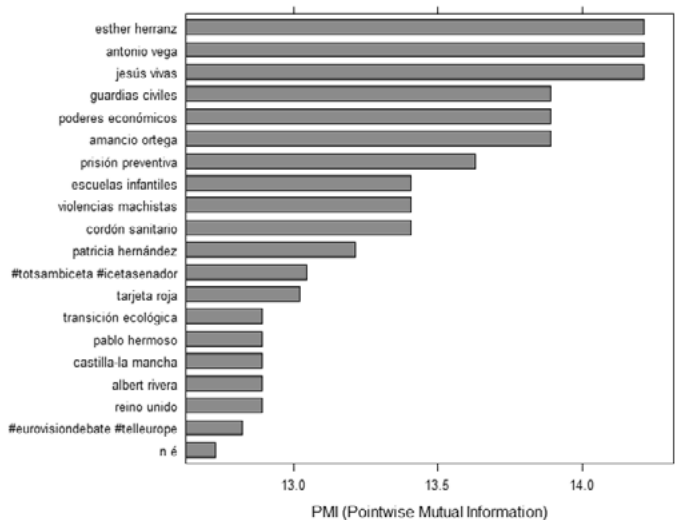

Figure 6 The top 20 keywords identified by PMI collocations.

The keywords detected by applying PMI collocation mainly indicate the names of politicians (the former European parliament member Esther Herranz), artists (Antonio Vega, 10th anniversary of the death of this musician, who wrote the song *Giant's Battle*, used as an election metaphor). The keywords that appear include the military police corps (the Guardia Civil), economic powers, Amancio Ortega (Spain's richest entrepreneur, the founder of Zara), preventive prison (reform of the penal code in Spain), kindergarten (social project to help families), gender violence, and sanitary cordon (towards populist parties). The political discourse is personalised

and oriented towards certain politicians or celebrities. Its fragmentation reveals multiple issues that are being talked about with a clear degree of polarisation and personalisation (economic powers and Amancio Ortega) versus progressive social reforms. Some urgent issues of Spanish politics are recorded (penal code reform). There is no clear reference to European issues or problems – except for the United Kingdom which is almost the least mentioned item.

Probably, in many languages, a simple noun and a verb form a phrase. We understand the context of the sentence by a phrase such as "go voting" that consists of the verb "to go" and the noun "voting". We can highlight top phrases by reverse engineering using the tweets data. Figure 7 shows the top 20 keywords of simple noun phrases. Figure 8 shows the top 20 keywords of simple verb phrases. The key phrases were extracted under the condition that the n-gram was greater than one and the frequency was greater than three. The n-gram shows a contiguous sequence of n items from a given text in natural language processing.
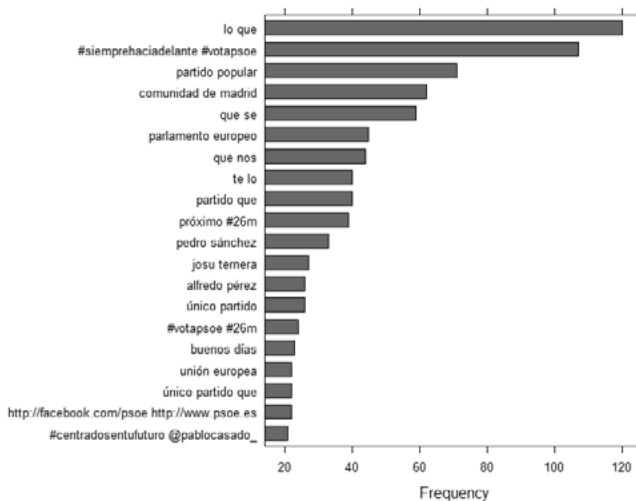

Figure 7 The top 20 keywords of simple noun phrases.

Firstly, it is necessary to adjust the technique for each language given its specific nature, as can be observed in the above graphic. Otherwise, the programme will detect semantic structures that, for example, are used in Spanish to put together sentences. Given these constraints, the analysis will ignore those structures and focus only on the properly detected items. First, the more popular noun phrases were the hashtags of PSOE´s campaign — "#foreverforward" and "#votePSOE": main campaign's message combined with persuasive sentence. Then, we observe the phrases that denominate the right-wing "Partido Popular", the "Madrid Region", "European Parliament", "political party", and the names of the political leaders. Apart from persuasive messages regarding the socialist party, most of the noun structures are the institutional actors of the political campaign — the people responsible for the political messages — who point to themselves.
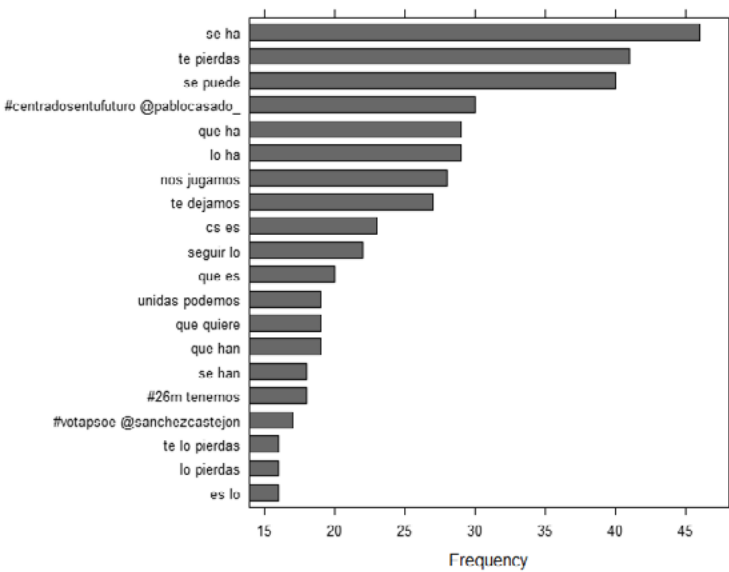

Figure 8 The top 20 keywords of simple verb phrases.

Figure 9 shows the top 20 co-occurrences within sentence. The edge (pass or link) width indicates the degree of co-occurrence between words. For

example, the results show the use of the following as the main framework of the discourse among the Spanish tweets: "European elections", "social justice", "the only party", and "future progress". "European elections" was the phrase most frequently used. We can also see that "extreme right", "autonomous region", "populism, nationalism", "candidate", and "debate" were other key phrases. Phrases such as "climate change", "coexistence" also appear, but to lesser degree. The co-occurrences most frequently used in the discourse is "populism" together with "nationalism" in different structures. As a result, these two concepts become equal to each other.

Figure 9 Top 20 co-occurrences within sentence.

If we are interested in visualising which words follow one another, this can be done by calculating word co-occurrences of a specific parts of speech type, which follow one another where we can specify how far the researcher wants to look, in terms of "following one another". Figure 10 shows the top 20 nouns and adjectives which follow one another. In this analysis, we look how many times the nouns and adjectives are used in the same sentence. We set skipgram at one. It means looking to the next word and the word after that. Edge (pass or link) width indicates the degree of co-occurrence of nouns and adjectives which follow one another.

Figure 10 Top 20 nouns and adjectives that follow one another.

Keyword correlations indicate how terms are placed together in the same document/sentence. While co-occurrences focus on frequency, correlation measures between two terms can also be high, even if two terms occur only a small number of times, but always appear together. Figure 11 shows the top 20 correlations between words within each sentence. We used the ggraph R package to get the same plotting as above. In this analysis, we reveal how nouns and adjectives are correlated within each sentence of a document. The edge (pass or link) width indicates the degree of correlation between words. The words most commonly following others are "social" related to "justice" or "rights", "European" referring to elections, "climate" in regard to "change", "extreme" for the right-wing parties or "autonomous" for regions or government (the basic political structure in Spain).
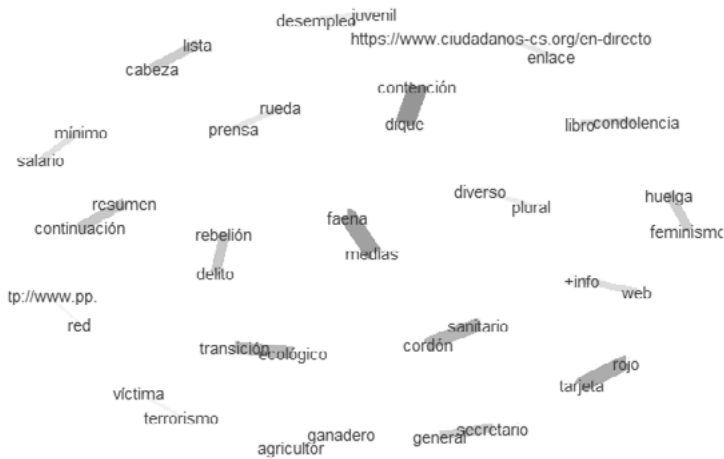
Figure 11 Top 20 correlation between words within a sentence.

The results show the use of words regarding the political elections "European elections", "social justice", "autonomous region", and "the only party". In particular, the other the most frequently used expressions are the following: "climate change", "the best team", and "extreme right wing". These results confirm the most popular noun-adjective combination, revealing the real degree of appearance. Thanks to this technique, we can also see that more expressions are included within the discourse: public service, terrorism victims, parliamentary groups, autonomic government, and coherent vote. We can then understand that some words are the key phrase. For instance, these phrases are "European project and European elections", "social rights and social justice". However, the discourse is mainly oriented to political actors and processes themselves, pointing out the winners, persuading votes and lacks political and social topics to guide and frame the political debate. Only "social issues" seem to be firmly stated across the tweets, as well as the "extreme right". In this sense, there is a clear indication for polarisation of the political narrative.

Spanish Political Parties´ Discourses During the European Elections

In the second stage of the study, we compared the discourse of the main Spanish parties running for EU parliament: PSOE (socialists), PP (Christian democratic), Ciudadanos (liberal), Unidos Podemos (extreme-leftists), and finally Vox (extreme-right).
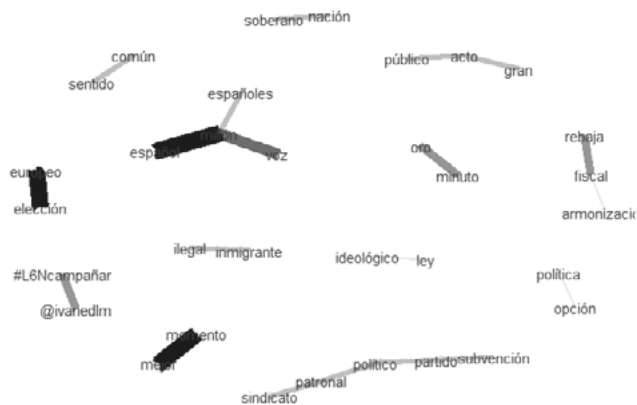
Vox

Figure 12 Nouns and adjectives combination in Vox' discourse.

Analysis of noun and adjectives combinations and their frequency (words following one another) in the case of Vox reveals the main axes of the discourse: the voice of the Spanish people, common sense, sovereignty, Vox as the only political option and the best moment for change (European elections), tax reform (lower taxes). These are main persuasive messages which suggest Vox as the political option for reasonable citizens to protect the sovereignty of the country in the EU and suggesting economic reforms. Part of the discourse is directed towards its rivals, calling them the parties that are subsidised by public funds, against trade unions, pointing out the law constructed on the ideological foundations or illegal emigrants.
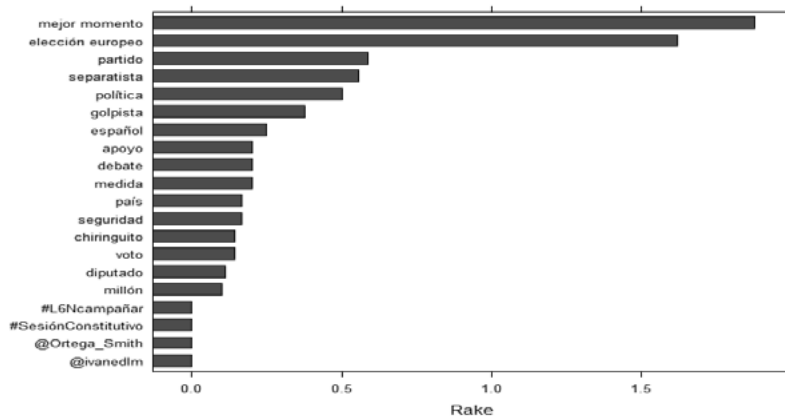
Figure 13 Top keywords in Vox's Twitter discourse.

The keywords analysis of RAKE demonstrates that Vox considers that the European elections is the best moment of change and talks primarily about the parties as the political actors. The fourth most frequent word is "separatist" politics, which is the main concern for right-wing populists in terms of the country's integrity. The frequently used adjective "Spanish" reflects nationalism. Moreover, it talks about security of the country and its citizens and the legally-dubious companies that have been created by the adversaries of the Vox party.

The analysis of co-occurrences within the sentence of nouns and adjectives emphasises the institutional orientation of discourse, focused on political parties, candidates and the electoral process ("debate", "party", "candidate", "European elections", "votes"). Nevertheless, the main persuasive message was shaped by the common denominator of reasonable thinking and sense of community that can fight back against impositions: common front, sovereignty or common sense.

Keywords correlations between nouns and adjectives additionally reveals the most frequently appearing topics, such as Vox as the party that leads the country, nation, the May elections, the voice of a million Spanish citizens by choosing Vox, nation (part of the nationalistic and patriotic narrative), and crisis (stressing the current political and economic situation in Spain). It also mentions the party's leader, Ortega Smith.

In summary, Vox points out the country's current political and systemic problems, presenting itself as the rescue for people who care for their country and think reasonably about the possible solutions. In these terms, the EU elections and the choice of Vox is presented as the hope for Spain to solve its sovereignty problems.

Unidos Podemos

Unidos Podemos' political discourse, as shaped by the party during the EU elections (analysis of words following one another) is focused mainly on social issues and problems: social justice and social rights. It presents itself in a persuasive manner as part of the progressive coalition: the only choice for the majority that cares for social equality, progress, and change. Hence, the campaign is the opportunity for change that lies in the hands of voters (inspired by Obama's hashtag slogan: #YouCanChangeEverything). Apart from the institutional dimension (institution, European, elections) the message includes social issues, such as gender violence, climate change, public service, and (public) healthcare. This is quite different from the general political discourse in the Spanish EU elections of all parties altogether that lacked such mentions. The narrative is clearly pointed against the extreme or populistic right (*extrema derecha*) as the main rival to Podemos, part of the discourse is directed against this party. Keywords identified by RAKE confirmed that the main recipient of the discourse of the "social majority" (those who cares for social progress and right) was the main voters of Podemos. "Extreme right-wing adversary" is the fifth most frequently mentioned keyword. As a result, Vox constitutes a significant part of Podemos' narrative. The main political issues are social justice, climate change, and public healthcare, whereas gender violence and public service are less frequently used in Twitter messages.

Furthermore, keywords correlations indicates more dimensions of the Unidos Podemos' main electoral narrative: Unidos Podemos is the unique horizon for politics as the party of common force and progressive coalition that returns dignity into the democracy. It also includes the feminists' strike, criticises austerity as the model to combat the crisis and blaming economic powers (including the energy companies in Spain). The basic rights are understood as also those related to consumption of water or energy as the basic goods.

Figure 14 Keyword correlations in Unidos Podemos' tweets.

The co-occurrence analysis within the sentences of Podemos' tweets makes it possible to distinguish the following dimension of political persuasion: social and public, common or community's force, political (life or vote) and feminist (fight) with the institutional and European reference.

Figure 15 Co-occurrences in Unidos Podemos' tweets.

Both of the populist parties mention social and political issues in proximity to their own party concerns (party's programme) and in correspondence to the profile of their voters. They mention a variety of the issues that form a flagship for their persuasive message while Unidos Podemos clearly tends to primarily shape its narrative against and around its main political rival, Vox. The values characteristic for both parties are present in their electoral narrative however there is a limited reference to the EU: programme, roles of the party in the EU parliament, ideas, and policies. The EU merely constitutes an institutional framework for the narrative of each party.

PSOE

When analysing the PSOE's discourse on Twitter in the EU elections it can be observed that the discourse is not as distinguished as in the case of the populist parties. First, the combinations of nouns and adjectives (the words that are following) reveals one main thematic orientation: "social justice", however without any specific proposals. The aim of the political messages is clearly persuasive as the second most prominent expression: appealing for a coherent vote. The socialist party makes a reference to the political and European project which is primarily a democratic cleaning process (understood as the elimination from the political processes or debates of right-wing populist parties such as Vox – "sanitary cordon") and pointing out the importance of the governments of the autonomous regions.

Figure 16 Nouns and adjectives combination in PSOE's discourse.

The figure also demonstrates the combination of rights and liberties associated to the party, pointing out to future advancements, for which the main protagonist referred to is the PSOE. Similarly, to Podemos, the socialists frame a discourse around the main enemy — the extreme right-wing party, portraying themselves as the only party that guarantees the future and progress of the European project.

The keywords identified by RAKE in this sense, reveals the contents of the discourse. The PSOE includes the "European project" as the mostly frequently mentioned keyword and focuses its discourse on the adversary (Vox), using words such as "sanitary cordon", "red card", "extreme right". Among the most popular political issues, the most frequently used expressions in tweets include "public housing" and "ecological transition", followed by "social cohesion" or "justice".
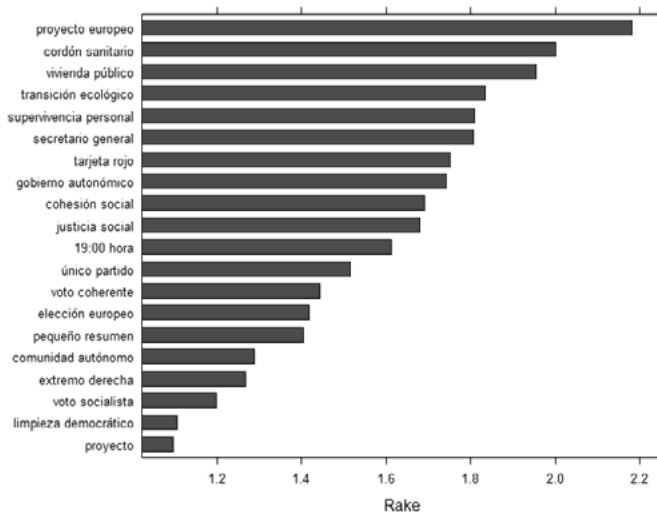

Figure 17 Most used hashtags in PSOE´s discourse.

Compared to the populist rivals, the discourse is more European-centred, but at the same time is more general, without a specific programme and is mainly built around social and progressive ideas (ecological transition), and

focused on attacks on the right-wing opponents attempting to ignore them in the political race. Keywords correlations confirm these results, adding security and unemployment as the correlating issues within the discourse and mainly institutional elements (the list, leader of the party list, general secretary, etc.). The focus is to persuade others in order to obtain a coherent vote (those supporting social progress and against the extreme right) and focused on social justice, cleaning the democratic process (from extreme right populists) and establishing social co-existence for future progress. The right wing is the main recipient of the messages, as the way to differentiate the PSOE.

PP

The PP's discourse reveals the party's programme regarding the European elections as the main topic in their tweets: job creation, concern for rural areas, and tax reform. Institutional elements of the electoral process are also advertised: campaign, rally, websites, among others. It mainly orients itself against the socialist party, as the main rival associating it with the current government. Less frequent combinations of words include: "small and medium enterprise", "new technologies", "public transport", or "concerted education", among others.
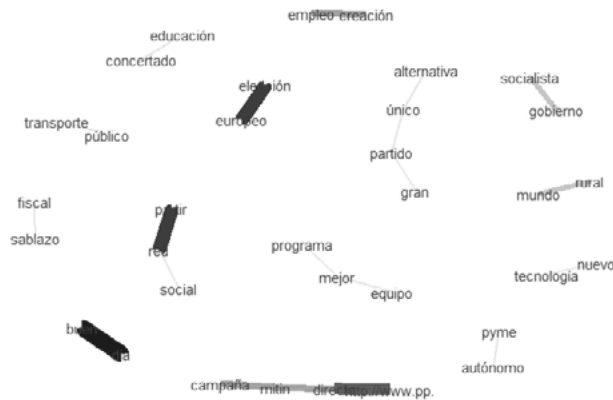

Figure 18 Words following one another in the PP's discourse on Twitter.

As a political party, the PP frames itself in a persuasive, self-affirming manner as the best programme and team, as a great party and the only alternative to its socialist counterpart in the EU elections.

RAKE analysis of the most common keywords reveals "rural areas" as the main concern shown in the messages, with the over-present reference to the "socialistic government" (the third mainly mentioned keyword). The analysis shows that it is important to consider language concerns — "good morning" is simply overused in the political message of this party and does not bring any positioning, neither help in its political branding. "European" is the third topic of the tweets, followed by a self-praising discourse. Education, women, or independentism are the issues that are far less frequently mentioned. Persuasive expressions such as "change" or "project" are those least used.
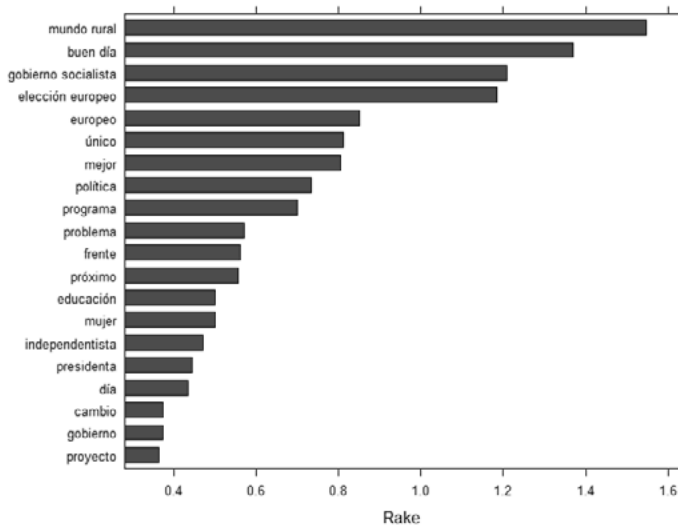

Figure 19 Most popular keywords used by PP.

The correlations of keywords bring new dimension to the discourse: above all the focus on small companies and self-employed people, together with nationalism and populism as the main threat. Therefore, on the one hand

there is a clear orientation towards economic issues and on the other a concern with populist and nationalist parties as the main opponents in the political race. Additionally, the correlations show that job creation is framed in terms of opportunities and equality.
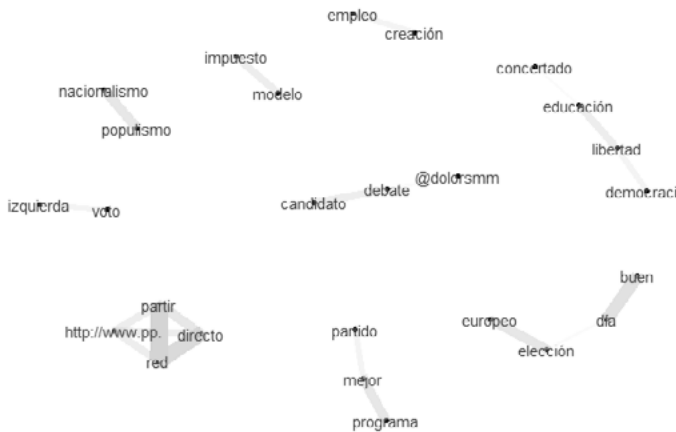
Figure 20 Co-occurrences analysis of sentences in PP's tweets.

Analysis of co-occurrences within the sentence confirms the self-praising attitude with persuasive focus on the political process (presenting candidates, talking about debates and votes). Although the discourse refers to the European elections, it mainly emphasises the democratic and liberty-based values of the party and its economic programme (taxes). References to opponents ("left-wing", "votes for leftists") and nationalisms and populism form a significant part of the PP's narrative. Populism and nationalism are framed as equal threats and both as the principal adversaries of the PP.

Ciudadanos

Ciudadanos is the liberal party situated in the centre of the Spanish political spectrum. Ciudadanos' main discursive strategy was a strong self-appraisal as the party that is the best and only choice to fix Spanish politics in the

EU and it presented itself as such in the EU elections. First, there is a strong focus on the autonomous regions and terrorism. The party directs itself to Spanish citizens, mentions "justice" and "dignity", talks about public money and large families as the points of the programme that distinguishes it from other parties. The messages mention the political situation and the media narrative. Nationalism and populism are other two topics that can be identified among the words that follow each other.

Figure 21 Nouns and adjectives combination in the tweets of Ciudadanos.

Analysis of keywords confirms the tendency to present itself as "orange res-cue" (orange is the party's colour and "orange rescue" refers to lifejackets) choosing a persuasive tone that primarily promises good management. So-cial and economic issues as mentioned above, plus lower taxes, are less mentioned among the published messages. Correlations of keywords re-veal a use of ironic and simple, easy to understand language regarding the PSOE's management and government, that Ciudadanos considers to be deficient ("hands in the pockets", "legal trickery").

Figure 22 Co-occurrences within the sentences in the tweets of Ciudadanos.

Both analyses — co-occurrences and correlations of keywords — observe a growing dominance and presence of populism and nationalism in the party's political discourse. The overall discourse reflects a libertarian orientation towards the economy, some differentiation in terms of political positioning regarding the programme (large families, terrorism). The main focus is placed on persuasion, presenting the party as the best political choice that is the only option to rescue the country, with no clear reference to its tasks within the EU parliament.

Conclusions

The study of the 2,052 tweets published throughout the EU Parliamentary elections in Spain confirms the utility of applying text mining analysis based on computational techniques to studies of political discourse. The detailed linguistic and semantic analysis helps to reveal the focus of the political message, as well as its sentiment and tone. The frequency research is helpful to determine the dominating dimensions and to re-frame certain narratives or modify the message in order to include a more meaningful content. It is not only useful to determine the main framework of the political discourse in general during the elections or between the political rivals in order to evaluate the quality of the political debate and public opinion.

It also helps determine the scope and sentiment of the discourse and the degree of openness and freedom of political debate: its limits, main topics, malfunctions, and so forth. The computational analysis of textual data is not error-free and can be subject to further improvements. It must take into the consideration the specific features of each language and it is clear that multiple studies must be conducted in order to eliminate a random linguistics structure and to train algorithms. Furthermore, the algorithms must be adjusted to the specificity of each language. It is also of great importance to run multi-angle analysis, using different techniques and approaches: frequency, keywords, co-occurrences, words following, semantic combinations, among others. Only in this manner can the analysis fully reflect the content and dimensions of the discourse. Using a big data approach, through analysis via computational linguistic techniques of a large set of Twitter textual data, it is possible to formulate valid recommendations concerning agenda setting and framing. It also can be used to identify better linguistic expressions, more effective hashtags or keywords, and richer and better structured content.

As such, on the one hand text mining methods have made it possible to determine that the dominant issues in the Spanish electoral discourse were social questions, anti-right-wing rhetoric, and focus on Spanish political problems. On the other hand, the comparative study demonstrated that while the big parties (PSOE, PP) kept their traditional rhetoric, the messages of populists indicated several specific issues to be resolved. However, the EU approach was almost absent in the campaign.

As was observed in the case of the PP's discourse, it can be used to improve the choice of the content and to frame messages with more effective expressions. Similarly, as noticed in the case of Ciudadanos, it may be effective in modifying the persuasive messages, for example diminishing self-appraisal, in favour of more project-oriented affirmations. In the case of the PP or Ciudadanos, it can be observed that formal expressions such as "good morning" dominate the content and has no further semantic use and therefore this can be eliminated in order to benefit more meaningful expressions or keywords.

In general, the analysis revealed polarisation and fragmentation of the discourse: there is a prevailing discourse against political rivals among almost all the political parties, especially in the case of the PSOE. The PSOE's narrative is especially significant since it calls for substantial changes in the political debates, includes isolating right-wing adversaries. Additionally,

the discourse focuses primarily on Spanish politics and presents almost no reference to the EU as the political framework: projects, initiatives or ideas. While both populist parties are able to mark their political positioning in regard to their programme and values (Unidos Podemos and Vox), others apply a persuasive tone with strong auto-appraisal and branding as the only political choice, with no clear political positioning. Vox is the party with the most specific content, presenting messages that reflect the party's programme and with no references to other political rivals. Unidos Podemos, on the other hand, is rather focused on the discourse against its rival on the right wing of the political spectrum. The PSOE is the only party that presents a clear dimension of its political narrative: social justice and rights, which runs throughout the messages.

In general, the discourse of the parties during the EU elections is richer in content and more focused on the issues that dominate current politics. The general discourse of Spanish politics in the EU is rather flat, with no significant differentiation or focus. Nevertheless, the focus is placed on Spanish politics without any clear reference to EU politics, the role of the political parties in EU parliament, legislative projects, and so forth. This is probably due to the fact that the campaign for EU elections was conducted simultaneously with local authority elections in Spain.

The overall sentiment of the campaign's discourse in Spain is on the one hand very social and on the other oriented towards the future and progress, focused on polarisation and conflict with political opponents. Nationalism and populism are two notable tendencies that frequently appear throughout the tweets, constituting clear concerns among the political parties running in the EU elections. The main focus is placed on domestic politics rather than the EU itself. The dominant tone of the discourse is persuasive, encouraging voting and presenting the parties in the best possible way. There is only one slogan-hashtag of the campaign that has been captured in the frequency analysis within the analysed tweets: that of Podemos — the voter as the promoter of change.

The persuasive, general messages prevail over specific programmes during the Spanish political campaign for the EU elections. The populist parties managed to create a different positioning and the PSOE shaped its branding as the party oriented to the European project (although without clarifying it) and social progress.

Analysis of the parts of the speech that were mainly used shows that the discourse was focused on concepts and not actions, since the application

of nouns prevails. Among the most frequently used nouns the narrative points towards the future, the party as the political actors, directing towards Spanish citizens and framing the discourse around the country, freedom and change with a strong persuasive component ("change", "vote", "party"). There is no mention of the EU. "Right-wing" is one of the most frequently mentioned nouns and it is therefore possible to conclude that it dominated the general political discourse during the EU parliamentary elections. The self-appraisal attitude dominates since "better" or "the best" is the most frequently used adjective. "Social" as the adjective appears as the second most frequently use, indicating a clear social dimension of the discourse, oriented towards the near future and emphasising community ("together"). "Doing", "having" or "must be doing something" are the verbs most frequently used in the tweets, although this does not indicate any concrete or more specific action. Another verb frequently used indicates the persuasive tone — "to vote". Keywords analysis confirms the concern about right-wing popularity and participation in the elections (the most frequently used keyword is "sanitary cordon", in reference to the right-wing populist party, Vox). Among the keywords the most visible narrative is that of the socialist and left-wing Unid@s Unidos Podemos, dominated by the ecological transition, civil society or institutional issues, apart from the Catalan case ("preventive prisoner"). The latter seems to have little relation to EU issues. In general, the keywords used by the PSOE and Unidos Podemos were the most prevailing issues in the overall political discourse in Spain during the EU elections (social issues important for the left-wing in general, discourse against the right-wing party, and so forth). PMI analysis moreover reveals the personalisation of the campaign, based on the candidates and using the names of the politicians or businessmen to emphasise the narrative. Whereas the populist parties based their narrative on communicating their political proposals, the PSOE and the PP, which until now have been the biggest parties in Spain, decided to choose political positioning or, to be more precise, a persuasive strategy based on basic rhetorical devices. On the one hand there is a focus on the polemical dispute with the right-wing rival (the PSOE against Vox above all). On the other hand, the PP and Ciudadanos choose to use a persuasive style to present their parties in the best possible manner, using a self-appraisal rhetoric. Simple noun phrases reveal the popularity of the PSOE's hashtags as the only ones apart from those of Unidos Podemos that were reflected in the Spanish electoral discourse in general, and were very persuasive in their tone: vote, you can change. Some elements of self-branding and institutional branding are also present: the PSOE's "always moving forward" hashtag and the name of Partido Popular

party as the third most frequently mentioned noun combination. In this case, the reference to the EU is more clearly present. In general, the PSOE and then Unidos Podemos were stronger in the general discourse and more effective in pursuing the social agenda of their political communication, including persuasive hashtags and keywords. However, the general discourse lacks an EU orientation and is mainly focused on Spanish issues and polemical questions involving the right-wing parties. Centrist and right-wing parties did not manage an extensive presence in the general discourse and chose a rhetorical persuasive tone (PP, Ciudadanos). Populist parties (Unidos Podemos) were those which communicated their political programme and Vox was precisely, and against the assumptions, the party whose communication was primarily focused on the party's values and vision without positioning itself in the narrative against its political rivals. By contrast, Ciudadanos decided to point out the failures of their opponents and use everyday language and expressions to reach wider audiences. Nevertheless, the discourse is fragmented in terms of issues and topics in general and in the case of each party. Persuasive tone and polarisation tendency does not help enrich the contents of the general political discourse or discuss the possible solutions among the candidates and political parties. As such, the Twitter discourse of the political parties in Spain can be the subject of further improvements in terms of content and tone.

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Improvisation Takes a Lot of Planification

Strategic Communication and Sociopolitical Contemporary Activism

Naíde Müller

Research Center for Communication and Culture, Faculty of Human Sciences, Catholic University, Lisbon, Portugal
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2708-1731

Abstract

Activists are producers of strategic communication for social change and play a mediating role regarding (re)producing and challenging established cultural meanings. In a global context of high volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, contemporary activism needs to introduce significant innovations in current mass mobilizations. Otherwise, it falls into the risk of becoming irrelevant. Within this context, new forms of creative activism are arousing, which are linked to the contextual strategic approach to the *repertoire* of disruptive tactics and techniques. Strategic communication, or the intentional use of communication by organizations to promote their mission, is inevitably associated with the exercise of power in negotiations among different social actors. In this essay, we argue that the strategical communication approaches that have successfully established mass consumption as a way of life can be used to give public voice to sociopolitical contemporary activists and to increase shared global views for social change, such as the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. We do it so through a literature review on this topic, followed by a description of practical examples. Strategic communication plays a crucial role when it comes to inducing social change. Its applicability in an organizational context is relevant for activist movements as it facilitates the organization of collective action, the call for civic participation and interaction with other social and political institutions. The use of strategic approaches to communication in an organizational context, such as the management of identity, image and reputation, and the approach to political power through *citizen lobby*, can be ways for contemporary activist groups to better mobilize, communicate with their supporters, and seek to influence political decisions. Reflecting and planning before acting or reacting can contribute to the achievement of a voice and legitimacy to operate in the public sphere.

Keywords

Introduction

The environmental crisis, human rights challenges across the world, and the spread of COVID-19 and its social and economic consequences are leading to pessimistic predictions about the future in a global context of high volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Krugman, 2020;

Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Democracies are shrinking worldwide, restrictions on freedom of expression are increasing with the growth of autocratization and populist movements, giving rise to the emergency of pro-democratic protest movements, such as the Hong Kong protests, also known as "Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement" (Lührmann et al., 2020). Periods of crisis are opportunities for change. Though industries are aware of this fact, activists of the future still need to know about it (Lisi, 2019).

Contemporary social movements have spread by contagion in a world virtually connected and characterized by the fast and viral dissemination of images and ideas. This multifaceted rebellion is not only caused due to poverty, the economic crisis, corruption, and a lack of democracy. At its origin lays the "humiliation caused by the cynicism and arrogance of people in power" (political, financial or cultural) that unite "those who transformed fear into indignation, and indignation into hope for a better humanity" (Castells, 2013, pp. 10–11). The new powers of the media, the culture of networks, and fluidity and horizontality are increasingly influencing the constitution and functioning of social movements (Castells, 1997/2007).

Several authors have researched the impact of strategic communication on social mobilization, which is a determining factor in achieving legitimacy and democratic participation (Kunsch & Kunsch, 2007; Negri & Hardt, 2005; Norris, 2002; Toro & Werneck, 2004). Evidence indicates that activist networks are getting involved transnationally due to a growing coordination of communication and action based on the proliferation of the internet and digital cultures (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001; Gerlach, 2001; Rheingold, 2002).

In this essay, we argue that the strategical communication approaches that have successfully established mass consumption as a way of life can be used to give public voice to sociopolitical activists (Tafra-Vlahović, 2012) and to increase shared global views for social change, such as the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. I do it so through a literature review on this topic and the presentation of practical examples.

Activism and Social Change: New Circumstances and Old Dilemmas

The establishment of firm boundaries between cultural/social and political activism is complex. These two forms of civic engagement share social change objectives and groups can act differently at different times (Baptista et al., 2006; Pointer et al., 2016).

Political activism is usually associated with party-driven politics, that is, with civil society groups aligned with political parties or political causes, such as challenging government policies. On the other hand, cultural or social activism focuses on supporting a variety of specific causes (Yang, 2009). Their most prominent distinction is commonly based on the target of activism: while political activism is theorized as political reform and a state-oriented activity (Yang, 2009), cultural or social activism seeks to transform society through art, education and other ways of influencing public opinion (Pointer et al., 2016).

The definition of activism in the *Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice*[1] tells us that "activism is an action in the name of a cause, an action that goes beyond what is conventional or routine" (Martin, 2007, p. 19). From a historical point of view, activism played an important role in ending slavery, challenging dictatorships, protecting workers from exploitation, protecting the environment, promoting equality for women, opposing racism, and many other important issues. Activism, however, can also be used for other purposes, such as attacking minorities or promoting war. Activism is thus not necessarily a good or bad thing. It depends on the cause, actions, and the reflection of each individual on what is "worth" defending (Martin, 2007).

Activists are the main actors in social movements. Despite the different theoretical perspectives explaining the development of social movements, the analytical construction of the concept allows the identification of converging elements. The concept represents a specific social dynamic that produces meanings through informal interaction networks between different actors who share a collective identity (beliefs and orientations) and get involved in cultural and/or political conflicts (Millward & Takhar, 2019).

In the history of liberal democracy and, therefore, of the democratic state, social movements have been considered as the fundamental channels for civic participation. In European history, they are directly related to the emergence of an open and active public sphere[2]. It has been under pressure from social movements of various kinds that the representation system has been constituted. Free association, such as freedom of conscience, speech,

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[1] Social justice is based on values that aim to minimize social inequality and create an environment of equal opportunities for all, allowing all human beings to live with dignity (Rawls, 1971).

[2] Concept that encompasses several extensions of definition and analysis and that refers to the dimension where public affairs are debated by public and private actors, representing, in contemporary democratic societies, an intermediate structure that mediates between the state and civil society (Habermas et al., 1974).

industry, religious belief, and the press, have emerged as an invention that, between continuities and discontinuities with the previous order, began to build institutions and practices for the recognition of collective identity actions (Della Porta & Diani, 2015).

The concept of social movement presupposes an explicit identification of opponents and an uninterrupted collective action process that seeks to achieve political consequences for a certain period. For this to happen, social movements resort to the combination of several actions that distinguish them from occasional protests: (a) "sustained campaigns of demands"; (b) "a set of public performances that include demonstrations, rallies, creation of specialized associations, public meetings, petitions, propaganda and lobbying"; (c) "concerted public representations of respectability, unity, number and commitment" (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007, p. 45). There are considerable differences between the approach of some third sector[3] organizations and social movements in terms of how to achieve social change. But there are also several contextual conditions that lead to the emergence of hybrid multifunctional voluntary organizations with the capacity to mobilize resources and obtain commitments (Hasenfeld & Gidron, 2005).

Based on the "Occupy Wall Street" movement experience, "the strongest, most sophisticated and broadest" in the past 50 years in the USA, White (2016, p. 35) says that activism is in crisis. The author characterizes this movement as a constructive failure that made it possible to draw deep learning. The defeat of "Occupy Wall Street" has made it clear, in a democratic context, that governments currently use military equipment to suppress non-violent democratic protests. It served to demonstrate that the protests of millions of citizens, even with wide international media coverage, have no political consequences and that current activism that seeks to replicate successful formulas of the past, are merely an illusion (White, 2016).

Crowd psychology, this is, the study of how individual behavior is impacted when large crowds group together, is a "blind force" that can be amplified to create incredible forces of power through the media (new and old) and innovative communication approaches. The challenge is how to target this "explosive potential" for positive purposes (White, 2016, p. 57). White (2016) assumes that strategic techniques of collective thinking, which do not yet exist, are needed to transform activism and achieve effective social changes.

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[3] The third sector is a field of study that is difficult to define. The term refers to very different types of organizations that are designated as non-profit, voluntary, intermediary, non-governmental, social economy, civil society, and so forth, and that do not fall under the first sector (public/state) or in the second sector (private/market; Corry, 2010).

Strategic Communication and Creative Activism

Most protests remain "an unconscious collective response, an act of collective anger, rather than a strategy rationally designed to transform political reality, (…) which tend to dissipate as soon as the moment of anger passes" (White, 2016, pp. 63–64). As White (2016) argues, the "future of activism is a struggle to capture the imagination of humanity" (p. 173).

Since strategic communication is the intentional use of communication by organizations to promote their mission, the contribution of this field of research and practice to the mobilization and participation of citizens is essential (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017; Hallahan et al., 2007; Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014).

The focus of strategic communication is on analyzing how the organization presents itself and promotes itself through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees, and communication professionals. The organization is broadly understood here as referring to associations, activist groups, (non-) profit and (non-)governmental organizations, and those that promote various forms of social change, political parties or movements (Hallahan et al., 2007).

The notion of strategic communication presents communication as deliberate, planned, goal-oriented, and performed by a specialized professional. It also emphasizes that, although strategy and planning take place behind the scenes, the ultimate goal is to communicate in the public sphere (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). Strategic communication is inevitably associated with the exercise of power in negotiations between different social actors and the influence of this power in "contemporary society is an indisputable reality" (Kunsch, 2018, p. 14). In this regard, it is worth recalling the perspective of Bloom (1991) that the appeal of communication, when compared to strength, is in the "lethality and sophistication of weapons" (p. 708).

Within the scope of communicative efforts involving organizations, there is no comprehensive conceptual framework on the work of the various disciplines related to the area of strategic communication. Instead, the focus of the various communication activities has been on specific management problems, such as improving performance, selling more products, motivating donors or building relationships (Hallahan et al., 2007). Strategic communication has aggregated all types of communication that are used to pursue predetermined objectives with the most diverse audiences, introducing multifaceted concepts related to different areas and activities such

as marketing, public relations, advertising, political communication, and information/social marketing campaigns (Zerfass et al., 2018).

In the last 10 years, much has been discussed about the need to create a rigorous and unifying body of knowledge oriented towards specificities that go beyond the use of communication to serve the interests of an organization (Hallahan et al., 2007; Nothhaft, 2016; Nothhaft et al., 2018; Seiffert-Brockmann, 2018; van Ruler, 2018; Zerfass et al., 2018). However, it continues to coexist within the scope of the investigation and practice different understandings about strategic communication. One of the causes of the problem surrounding the term "strategic" is that it has been strongly associated with a modernist approach to management, commonly used as a synonym for a "successful" tactical or operational action plan, or even as something of high importance (Hallahan et al., 2007; van Ruler, 2018; Zerfass et al., 2018).

In the transition from conservative and rational views (which are focused on results) to complex interactive perspectives (which consider uncertainties), it is argued that strategic communication is likely to be more successful if fundamental human psychological motivations and mechanisms are taken into account (Seiffert-Brockmann, 2018). The call for consistency in the field of strategic communication aims at a vertical integration of interdisciplinarity (Nothhaft, 2016) that can pass through the reconciliation of the understanding of the human mind and values with theories of strategic communication (Fawkes, 2015; Seiffert-Brockmann & Thummes, 2017; Trayner, 2017). In order to achieve predetermined and planned goals, strategic communication appeals to human nature, triggering fundamental motives that are linked to certain modules in the brain, which can, in turn, trigger different modes of communication, stimulating, for example, "dialogue or a bunker [closed] mentality" (Seiffert-Brockmann, 2018, p. 429).

These considerations become particularly relevant when analyzing activist strategic communication for social change as social roles, which imply status and power, influence subjective well-being (Yu & Blader, 2019). Theory and preliminary evidence suggest that the stress associated with the identity of minorities results in negative emotions and attempts to suppression that can contribute to the depletion of the capacities of executive functions (McGarrity et al., 2019). In addition, the dynamics of construction and deconstruction of meanings related to strategic communication impact the increase or decrease in the activation of stereotypes influencing judgments and social perception in different ways (Rivers et al., 2019).

Since strategic communication is fundamental to influencing social change, its applicability in an organizational context is relevant for activist movements as it facilitates the organization of collective action, the call for civic participation, and interaction with other social institutions (Ciszek, 2017). Ciszek (2017) analyzed a transnational activist network for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights in 15 countries/regions, concluding that activists are producers of strategic communication for social change. Likewise, she concluded that activism and public relations, for instance, are not antagonistic, but occupy a fluid space which is influenced by cultural and economic forces. The research demonstrates how activists' function as cultural intermediaries, playing a mediating role in regard to (re)producing and challenging established cultural meanings.

Harrebye's (2016) work deals with the new forms of non-violent activism that have emerged in recent decades, which is defined by the author as "creative activism". It is a form of activism that creates and explores spaces for a "revitalization of the political imagination" and does that by using innovative tactics (Harrebye, 2016, p. 14).

Rather than being results-oriented, creative activism focuses on the process. It merges provocative artistic performances with utopian elements using flash mobs, human sculptures, interactive virtual games about the climate, documentaries, thematic festivals, and so forth. Through artistic and creative provocation, creative activists stretch the limits of civil disobedience. The case of North American activists Yes Men is an example that takes advantage of moments of political opportunity through caricatures and the practice of what they call "identity correction" when posing as powerful people and spokespersons for prominent organizations. Another example of this form of activism happened in February 2012 when five members of the Russian feminist punk rock collective Pussy Riot enacted a guerilla performance of "Punk Prayer — Mother of God, Chase Putin Away!" in Moscow's biggest Orthodox Church. Three of them were arrested and charged with hooliganism. This was a protest action against the Russian Orthodox Church's support for the regime of the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who had just been re-elected. They also contested the passivity and retrograde view of the Russian people about the role of women in society. They became the center of attention in their country and in the world, gaining the support of several celebrities like Madonna, Bjork, Paul McCartney, and Sting (Harrebye, 2016, pp. 97–100).

Creative activism can also rely on mirror techniques to create alternative reflections on a given reality through immanent criticism and utopian

imagery. One of the tactics used by students during the 1996–97 protests against Milošević's regime in Serbia, for instance, was to hold huge mirrors in front of police chains blocking their passage. The police were thus confronted with themselves and not with the students. Innovation on the margins of containment repertoires can break vicious cycles in cultures of power (Harrebye, 2016, p. 119).

This type of activism is concerned with the contextual strategic approach to the *repertoire* of disruptive tactics and techniques. The attribution of subversive meanings to pre-existing messages, the use of humor to highlight the absurdities opposed by activists, and the use of parables and narratives to capture public attention are some examples of these tactics. In Portugal, an instance of this approach occurred in April 2019 with the intervention of young environmentalists from the movement "Extinction Rebellion". They protested against the potential location of a new airport in Lisbon. They entered the Socialist Party's birthday dinner and interrupted Prime Minister António Costa's speech by taking the microphone he was using away as to convey their message while trying to escape security. They got wide media coverage with this action.

Twenty-first century activism seems determined not only to stand against the status quo, but also to demonstrate how the world can be different, using the "power of intelligent action" (Harrebye, 2016, p. 217). These connections reinforce the idea that a strategic approach to activist communication dynamics presupposes coordination between organizational communication strategies aimed at different audiences and communication strategies aimed at communicating and establishing relationships with other social structures, such as political and/or economic power.

Strategic Does Not Mean Artificial – Managing Identity, Image, and Reputation

Since activism is a relational process focused on making connections between economic and cultural components (Ciszek, 2017), the strategic approach to communication in an organizational context is an asset for how activists can refine their social relationships and interactions in order to achieve their goals of social change. In a very critical view of the transfer of social activism to digital environments, White (2016) states that current mass mobilizations are failing to change society, putting contemporary activism at a crossroads: either significant innovations are introduced, or it becomes irrelevant. In his

view, we are in a new era of social change. In this sense, movements will have to become increasingly sophisticated, reaching critical mass to challenge elections, govern cities, and reorient the way we live.

Even though levels of complexity and sophistication can vary widely between a 20-year-old organization that earns billions and an initiative to raise awareness among the population of 6 months, the strategic process at each level can be analytically separated into three distinct phases, according to Zerfass et al. (2018):

1. The *formulation and revision of the strategy* must be understood in the double sense, that is, a strategy is not only a silent allocation of resources, but also a communicative intervention that gives meaning to actions. Its subjective dimension is the most relevant, since, if most people, in a given context, seriously discuss a subject, that subject becomes of strategic significance, creating its own objective meaning.

2. The *strategy presentation* is the stage in which the actors involved become aware of the strategy, its requirements, and opportunities.

3. *Execution, implementation and operationalization of the strategy* implies the decisions to allocate resources to operational processes or tactical dispositions.

In order to convince others to adopt a specific understanding of various "social scenes", in Goffman's (1959) sense, certain tools have to be used. A great collaborative effort is needed to achieve a convincing performance with assigned roles, scripts, costumes, and a stage. Only when all these elements are used to create a coherent scenario about reality in time and space can teamwork be considered successful (Goffman, 1959). Goffman's vision can be applied to strategic communication planning processes, in which it is necessary to learn to "play the game" (Volk et al., 2017). Planning processes are useful to minimize the discrepancies between appearances and reality or between the ideal mission of an organization (and the individuals that integrate it), and the real mission and its results, as perceived by the various publics.

As a creator of symbolic narratives that facilitate interaction between organizations and society, the strategic approach to communication will look at the need for understanding who the organization is, its essential aspects (identity study), what is its relationship with others over time,

and how others see the organization and relate to it (study of publics, including the study of image and reputation; Spínola, 2014). A social group has distinct characteristics from those of an organization. In certain contexts, however, it is possible to find similarities in processes, behaviors, and actions between a group called organization or company and social groups or movements such as those formed by activists. Issues related to collective identity refer to the new social movements that emerged in the 80s of the 20th century in Europe (Spínola, 2014). Empirical studies, in a corporate or organizational functionalist approach, have identified a relationship between better organizational performance and intangible factors such as identity, culture, image and brand (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1990).

Based on the literature analysis, Ruão (2015) defines organizational identity as:

> the set of central, distinctive and relatively long-lasting attributes of an institution/company, which emerge from the vestiges of a historical heritage, such as myths and traditions; a shared culture, its beliefs and values; personality traits, expressed in philosophy, mission and business vision; a distinctive name, visual symbols and other forms of communication; but that also arise from the patterns of organizational behavior. (p. 119)

Organizational culture is defined as "tacit organizational understandings (e.g. assumptions, beliefs and values) that contextualize efforts to create meaning, including internal self-definition" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 996). The organizational image is the "set of views on the organization held by those who act like the 'others' in the organization" (Hatch & Schultz, 2002, p. 996).

Participation in a particular activist group is a rational attempt to obtain the benefits from those who share a collective identity (Friedman & McAdam, 1992; Pizzorno, 1986). The management of the collective identities of activist groups needs to articulate the framework of social injustices and the structures of action in order to clearly distinguish "us" from opponents, using several strategic and tactical decisions (Horowitz, 2017; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). This happens within a "multi-organizational field" that includes organizations, authorities, media, allied financiers, competitors and opposition (Bernstein, 2008).

Activists can define their identities in very different ways depending on each situation and their strategic objectives, whereas the activist identity and collective identity are not the same. The better they define and structure their identities, the greater the capacity of groups to impact strategically the recruitment of members and supporters, obtain public support, form alliances with other groups, and weaken opposition (Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

Collective identities are in constant interaction with personal identities but are never simply the aggregate of individuals' identities. Culture has an independent role in the constitution of collective identities around which people are mobilized. Collective identity is not the same as common ideological commitment. People can participate in a movement because they share goals without identifying with their colleagues (they can even despise them). The collective identity describes "imagined and concrete communities, involves an act of perception and construction, as well as the discovery of pre-existing bonds, interests and limits" (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 298).

In turn, reputation results from the coherence between identity and image, from the alignment between what is communicated/said and effective actions. As an intangible management asset that is built over time, reputation is conditioned to a context and includes an evaluative dimension, of outside judgment. In a global, competitive world with limited resources, identity and reputation can represent the "only distinctive element of the organization that determines the public's choices" (Raposo, 2010, p. 70). This asset is so valuable for a profit-oriented organization as well as for an activist group that seeks to implement social change. In the case of activist groups, they want to be perceived, most of the time, as agents of concrete social changes.

The creative approach to contemporary activism uses temporal interventions, such as strategic events, transformative actions, and production of spectacles with content characterized by a cynical approach, an ironic attitude and/or an intentional imaginary questioning, with the aim of provoking the reflection of the individual viewer and the public sphere. In this case, the identity of activist groups and individuals is not only created based on opposition, but also seeks possible gaps for consensus and dialogue (Harrebye, 2016).

In contemporary life, with an excess of stimuli and noise that make it difficult to perceive what is true or false, "authenticity", this is, when the public appearances reflect the real self, has gained prominence as a new model

of communication (Hardt, 1993; Molleda & Roberts, 2008). The wave of protests against the controversial re-election of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko in August 2020 during the COVID-19 global pandemic is an example of how an authentic public stance, which does not attempt to imitate conventional political speeches, based on new alliances and online criticism can cause the turmoil needed for political change to happen. The re-election of the one that is considered the last dictator in Europe (Lukashenko was in power for 26 years) was considered fraudulent, bringing thousands of people to the streets in protests. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, a 37-year-old Belarusian who challenged the authoritarian leader at the polls, had no political experience and claimed publicly that she did not like politics. The reason for her to apply for elections was "love", according to her own statements to the press. When her husband, an influential blogger who denounced abuses of power on social media, was imprisoned by the authorities indefinitely, she partnered with other women in a coordinated challenge (using peaceful protests) against the oppressive and patriarchal culture that still prevails in Belarus. This unprecedented wave of social protest has attracted the attention of the international community and the interest of the United Nations Security Council (Lévy, 2020).

Strategic Communication and Power Dynamics

The basis of the concept of power is defined by the ability to influence others to do what certain groups or individuals want. The notion of "soft power" originally arises in the context of international relations and refers to the ability to get what you want through attraction, rather than coercion or payments. In other words, there is an increase in "soft power" when the ideas or policies of a country, group or person are perceived as legitimate in the eyes of others (Nye & Myers, 2004, as cited in Verčič, 2008).

Social systems are communication systems and the main forms of communication are money in the economic field, power in the political field, influence in the domain of the social community, and attraction in the cultural domain. Despite their differences and specificities, the various areas of knowledge of strategic and applied communication share a common idea: the combination of knowledge of the social sciences and the development of experience through training can generate better results in inducing influence, attraction or commitment. Put it another way, communication management exceeds spontaneous communication (Verčič, 2008).

The power of influence, attraction or commitment within the scope of strategic communication is achieved through symbolic communicative and discursive logics. Power is thus disposed of in the public arena through structures of meaning. Meaning results from the discursive ability and influences the following: (a) mentality, or how the construction of language and vocabulary shapes what and how we think, which in turn shapes the way we speak and act on a subject; (b) the self (identity and identification); and (c) society, which consists of culturally represented relationships based on narratives (Heath et al., 2009).

Access to the political agenda is the most effective way for activists to ensure significant public and media attention to their demands. It is often believed the contrary, that media visibility is the best way to pressure and influence the political agenda, but the temptation to positively equate media attention and power of influence, without deepening the other mechanisms involved, can become a trap (Mongiello, 2016). Media attention generally focuses on activism related to issues that are already on the agenda of major political institutions (Mongiello, 2016).

Using public performances that can give rise to media attention, activists exercise their power by encouraging audiences that probably already sympathize and support the causes they defend. In addition, the protest as a performative rebellious act has been increasingly institutionalized as a commonplace and an orderly form of expression, which is why radical and aggressive protests are increasingly seen by the public as illegitimate (Mongiello, 2016).

Although there is evidence that public attention and the framing of issues are the main drivers of political change, policymaking is generally confined to closed bureaucratic networks that resist changes based on interests and ideologies from outsiders (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009). For this reason, it is important to activate other mechanisms of influence, which often occur behind the scenes of power, and which can impact the ability of activist organizations to influence political processes.

Activist groups often represent "public interest lobbyists". These groups constitute a specific category that seeks to win some public good or resource, whose benefits will impact all citizens, whether or not they are members of that group or organization. Human rights associations, organizations around environmental protection or peace are some examples of such groups (Coroado, 2016; Lisi, 2019). In the perspective of these groups

and causes, lobbying[4] is not only legitimate but necessary for effective participation in the intricacies, often "insidious and oligarchic" of conventional politics (Alemanno, 2017). Bearing in mind that only groups with greater resources have had access to lobbying, the concept of "citizen lobby" seems an oxymoron. However, by providing a counterweight to certain interests, this type of lobby can significantly improve the quality of political decision-making and simultaneously increase citizen participation, improving their perception of the power they have (beyond the vote) to achieve social changes.

Unlike other forms of traditional activism, the citizen lobby reconciles protests and proposals. That is, the participation process does not start from the conflict, but from a legitimate interest presented in a reasoned way to the political power (Alemanno, 2017, p. 69). In addition, the quality and depth with which citizen lobbyists or lobbyists from public interest groups substantiate their arguments will determine how seriously policy makers, the media, and other audiences will publicly welcome and promote their views and proposals (Alemanno, 2017).

The tactics that integrate a lobby strategy presuppose direct contacts with policy makers, elaboration of studies and creation of partnerships and coalitions between interest groups with similar objectives. A first fundamental task is to obtain the maximum amount of information (Coroado, 2016) about: (a) the subject in question: what has already been said and done and by whom and the existence of published scientific studies on the topic; (b) the constitutional and institutional framework, which are the competent entities to act and what national and international laws and recommendations already exist; and (c) who are the interest groups that will win or lose (possible allies or opponents) according to the results of the claims, as well as their degree of influence (Alemanno, 2017).

Democratic tools such as petitions, public consultations and others can also be strategically activated. Public interest groups are increasingly turning to social media to convince public opinion of a particular position and to "pressure the political decision-maker, who in turn seeks to maintain positive approval levels to guarantee votes" (Coroado, 2016, p. 58). To increase their potential for participation in the democratic process, public interest groups can also seek to improve their civic competences such as speaking at public meetings, networking, and teamwork to develop advocacy strategies (Alemanno, 2017). It is

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[4] The definitions of "lobby" tend to converge as to its main objective, which is to influence legislative decisions through legitimate means (Coroado, 2016; Lampreia, 2005).

necessary to choose the battles (to invest in the strategic planning of each subject or topic) and to manage the subjects based on a balance between passion and strategy.

One of the main challenges activist groups face has to do with the limited financial resources available. Unlike the professional lobby, the public interest lobby is dependent on voluntary actions and low-cost solutions. In this context, the strategy requires the detailed identification of costs so that the objectives of fundraising are clear. Maintaining costs may involve identifying *pro-bono* advice. The rapid expansion of this form of collaboration, makes it increasingly easy to identify specialized professionals, namely lawyers and communication consultants, who are available to give their opinion and counselling on various circumstances and procedures (Alemanno, 2017).

The financing of the actions also uses fundraising campaigns online and/or offline through the appeal to philanthropists (on an individual or organizational basis). Communication strategies in this area are essential either for the identification of these potential partners or for the articulation of discourses and arguments based on transparency. They work as a tool to convince them to donate (time and/or money) and advocate for a specific cause. The attraction of financial support depends on being able to transmit a strategic and competent approach to the issues based on evidence and oriented towards the concrete social benefits that the action can achieve. Donors should see their participation as a good investment with a clear social return (Alemanno, 2017).

Conclusion

Although they may demonstrate the need for deep reforms, the waves of protest alone do not produce significant transformations. They instead need the presence and entrepreneurship of reformers and specialized professionals who can transform the momentum for change into concrete proposals and pilot projects that advance by within the political process. Contentious actors, like activists, are neither outside nor completely within politics — they occupy an uncertain territory between total opposition and integration into politics (Harrebye, 2016, p. 216; Tarrow, 2012, p. 158).

As Hallahan et al. (2007) state, alternative perspectives and new directions are emerging to study the role of communication in the formulation and execution of strategies. The notion of practice as part of the strategic process that influences society while being influenced by it allows researchers,

"instead of studying the practice of communication as a function, to analyze how communication practices transform organizations and societies" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 14). In line with Holtzhausen (2012), Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) and Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2014), we have argued that although various areas related to the strategic use of communication can create, maintain, and reproduce powerful dominant discourses, they can also resist and deconstruct such discourses.

In Europe, the current situation in Hungary and Belarus is an example. Academics and students who seek democratic change have been intimidated by governments, generating an ongoing climate of fear that limits the academic freedoms (European Communication Research and Education Association, n.d.). This shows the need to deepen the analysis of the theoretical and practical contributions of strategic communication in the context of sociopolitical contemporary activist challenges.

The use of strategic approaches to communication in an organizational context, such as the management of identity, image, and reputation and the approach to political power through citizen lobby can be ways for contemporary activist groups to better mobilize, communicate with their supporters, and influence political decisions. The strategic communication planning of activist actions (reflect and plan before acting or reacting) can also contribute to the achievement of a voice and legitimacy to operate in the public sphere.

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Communication Strategy for COVID-19 in Uruguay

https://doi.org/10.21814/uminho.ed.46.13

Patricia Schroeder[1] and Belén Amadeo[2]

[1] *Faculty of Communication, Center for Biomedical Sciences, Instituto de Estudios Empresariales de Montevideo, University of Montevideo, Montevideo, Uruguay;*
[2] *Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina*
[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8911-7699;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1190-6997*

Abstract

The whole world has used the term "the Uruguayan case" to describe the way that this country is dealing with COVID-19. By September 2020, Uruguay managed to minimise the negative effects that the pandemic has caused to other Latin American countries through very precise health and communication strategies, based on transparency and real time information. The chapter summarises the main communication decisions taken by the Uruguayan Government, and in particular by the Ministry of Public Health. It explains how it implemented its communication strategy, illustrated with references to news and communication materials that were developed. The chapter is written from the perspective of health communication, combined with application of conceptual models taken from strategic communication, political communication, and crisis management.

Keywords

Introduction

On March 2, 2020, a new administration was appointed for the office of communication and health of the Ministry of Public Health of Uruguay. The new management is led by a team of professionals, that has been partially renewed by the new administration.

This case presents interesting aspects both from the management and theoretical perspectives, because it shows the combined application of different conceptual frameworks that are generally considered separately. The new communicational approach is eminently technical and draws on a recent discipline: Health communication. Integrated with other professional perspectives, such as political communication, strategic communication, and crisis communication, it presents a novel approach to the informative and pedagogical treatment that the Uruguayan government has given to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to contextualise the information, some data on Uruguay's territory and population density is provided below (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1 National territory. Total area: 176,215 km².
Source. From *Uruguay en Cifras 2014* (p. 13), by Instituto Nacional de Estadística Uruguay, 2014.
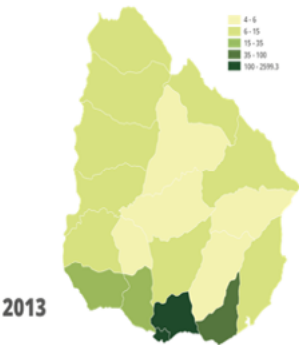

Figure 2 Total population (per 100,000 inhabitants). Total population: 3,440,157.
Source. From *Uruguay en Cifras 2014* (p. 17), by Instituto Nacional de Estadística Uruguay, 2014.

The Starting Point: A Race Against Time

The new national government took office on Sunday, March 1 (Figure 4). The public health minister and his team took office in a ceremony held on March 2, at noon. A meeting was convened with all the actors of the health system the following morning, in order to analyse the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world and its potential repercussions in Uruguay. Early in the afternoon on the same day, March 3, the notification of the first case was received in Argentina, a neighbouring country that has a very intense relationship with Uruguay. The pandemic was very close, which required an immediate and transparent statement from the new government (Ministerio de Salud Pública, 2020a; MSP - Uruguay, 2020a).

That afternoon, and transmitted by all the television channels, the population was notified about the first positive case in the neighbouring country and the government explained that Uruguay was prepared to carry out diagnostic tests locally.

Based on that press release, public opinion and journalists raised numerous questions about the Uruguayan health system. The questions focused on how many intensive care unit beds were available, whether it was possible to increase them, if there was capacity to purchase ventilators and monitors for critical patients, if there were sufficient flu vaccine doses available, if there was capacity to manage contingency hospitals, the real capacity for testing, and the diagnostic methodology, among others.

This first announcement generated a state of alert in the population, greater anxiety for information and a race against time in decision-making processes. In this context, it was decided that government communication should develop real-time response mechanisms, giving certainty to society in a time of crisis and uncertainty. In the face of an unknown enemy, it was necessary to report what could really be verified in those circumstances. Less than 24 hours after taking office, the Ministry of Public Health faced an unprecedented communication challenge.

From the perspective of communication management, there was a need to design a communication strategy with a team that was just getting to know each other, who had no experience in using their own official channels (website and social networks) and also didn't have time to establish a professional relationship with journalists, that is vitally necessary to forge bonds of trust. In this context, the response through official

networks involved risks, but was finally considered to be the most appropriate and efficient way to build consensus amongst strategic audiences.

The general reaction was positive. The first statement and the speed of the response were taken as a sign of transparency and the intention to report in real time what a few days later became the fight against a virus, a type of pandemic that, according to the history of medicine, occurs once every 100 years.

The days that followed, from March 3 to 13, were focused on getting to know the characteristics of the virus, how it spreads, the recommendations of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and sharing that information with the main actors of the system. Among other aspects, brochures and posters were designed and made available to the population (Ministerio de Salud Pública, 2020b, 2020g, 2020h).

On March 10, the Ministry of Public Health and its technical team held a first briefing with journalists to share the technical vision of the pandemic. This action was framed against the context of the WHO's recommendations to maintain a close link with the press and provide relevant information, so that they may be aware of the virus and the disease. A few weeks later, a second briefing was held with two scientific advisers to the minister, and later there was a third briefing to share good practices in the treatment of news related to COVID-19.

A crisis committee was constituted during the 1st week of government, comprised by expert scientists who would advise the minister of public health and recommend the measures to be taken. This independent non-partisan group of experts began to gain relevance as an "external safeguard" that validated government decisions and was held in great respect by the population. Over the ensuing weeks, the group of experts expanded through the inclusion of over 50 doctors and experts in different areas and became known as the Honorary Scientific Advisory Group (GACH). This group still advises the president of the republic on the evolution of the pandemic and makes recommendations on the conditions in which social, cultural, and economic activities in the country should be resumed.

In the early afternoon of March 13, the first four positive cases in Uruguay were confirmed, which increased the immediate demand for a nationwide campaign that would inform people about the symptoms of the disease

and the way that it spreads in the clearest possible manner. This campaign also consisted of the creation of a website containing all the relevant information and new means of contact to serve the population, including a call centre with the capacity to handle 3,000 calls per hour. Between March 12 and 13, proposals were received from three advertising agencies in response to the public tender.
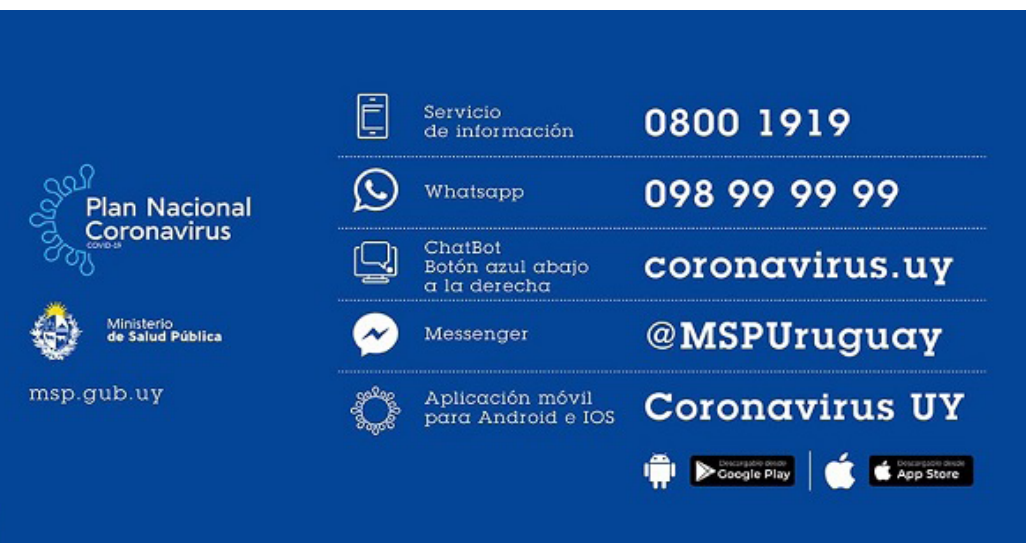
March 13 was a new milestone in the communication of COVID-19. The signing of the sanitary emergency decree introduced a package of measures that, over time, proved to be effective in controlling the spread of the virus. Performances, public gatherings, and classes at all levels were suspended. Shopping centres were also closed, and the national borders were partially closed.

On the same day, the Ministry of Public Health developed new communication channels in conjunction with the Electronic Government and Information and Knowledge Society Agency (Agesic):

- a chatbot was activated on all government websites;

- Facebook Messenger;

- free call centre with the capacity to answer 3,000 inquiries per hour (this was possible thanks to collaboration with the state-owned telephone company Administración Nacional de Telecomunicaciones [Antel]);

- a landing page with all available information on COVID-19;

- a dashboard with information on infected, recovered and deceased patients;

- a mobile app that, in its latest version, has an alert system which notifies users if they have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

These new communication channels also required coordination of specialists in different areas: communication professionals, software developers, and medical professionals to review content and provide training.

Crisis communication tests the communication policy in general, the analysis of audiences, the increase in communication channels, and an adjustment in the frequency of information. The first decision is to take the initiative and become a source of information as soon as possible (de la Cierva, 2010).

Figure 3 Communication channels developed for COVID-19.
Source. From *Compartimos las vías de comunicación para responder dudas sobre el #Coronavirus #CO-VID-19*, by MSP - Uruguay [@MSPUruguay], 2020b, Twitter.

The development of new channels and the consolidation of official chan-nels constituted a clear crisis communication strategy, implemented for correct management of the pandemic. Figure 3 shows the development of new communication channels that became active in the first days of government.

Unlike other countries, where a coercive policy was implemented, in Uru-guay a recommendation was made to the population not to leave their homes and a call was made for "responsible freedom", appealing to the sol-idarity of the population (Uruguay Presidencia, 2020b; "Quiénes Son y Cómo Trabajan los Expertos que Asesoran al Gobierno", 2020). During 1 month, the movement of people notably decreased and there was a high level of compliance.
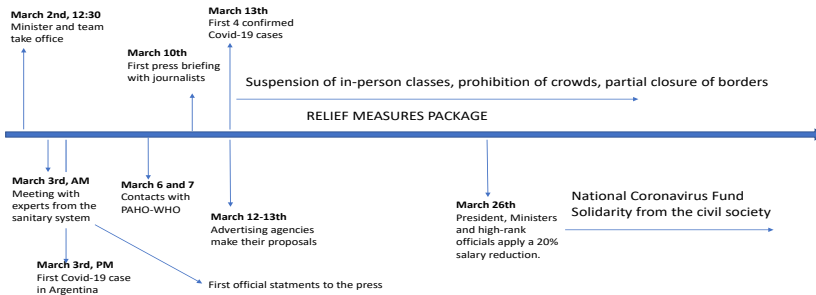
Figure 4 Timeline: 1st month of government.

March 6 and 7: Contacts with PAHO-WHO agencies

On March 27, at the end of the 1st month of government, President Luis Lacalle Pou sought to put his own personal mark on his mandate and announced that all public officials who earned above a certain salary level would incur a 20% salary cut, in order to contribute to a fund that would be used for the extraordinary expenses caused by the pandemic. The National Coronavirus Fund was thereby created, which received donations from public and private organisations (Uruguay Presidencia, 2020c).

This government measure was exemplary and generated a strong wave of solidarity from the general public. On that date, the two advertising agencies that had been hired (Notable Publicidad and Cardinal) decided to donate their work, which included implementation of the campaign and the creative idea for the national coronavirus plan.

Strategic Communication Applied to the COVID-19 Campaign

Principles of Health Strategic Communication

We are facing an unprecedented communication situation, the number of issuers and messages about COVID-19 is such that the WHO has defined it as an "infodemic" (Organizácion Panamericana de la Salud, 2020).

An infodemic is an excessive amount of information about a problem, that makes it difficult to find a solution. During a health emergency, infodemics can spread errors, misinformation, and rumours. They can also hamper an effective response and create confusion and mistrust in people regarding solutions or advice to prevent the disease (Organizácion Panamericana de la Salud, 2020).

The latter aspect is what renders communication about COVID-19 more complex. The scientific sphere and countries' health authorities have learned a lot about this disease since it appeared in January 2020. However, this constitutes a relatively short period of time for science to have irrefutable certainties regarding its diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. Scientific materials that help people understand the behaviour and treatment of the virus are published every day. Nonetheless, there is a permanent sense of uncertainty.

Another unprecedented aspect of this virus is its high level of contagiousness and rapid spread throughout the world. This has had a radical impact on the mobility of people and has caused a global economic crisis that also generates anxiety in the population.

COVID-19 affects all aspects of life. Countries have experienced situations of greater or lesser social isolation according to the measures introduced by their respective governments. As a result of the pandemic, deep-rooted customs and everyday gestures, such as handshaking or gestures of affection, such as hugs, are now discouraged, because they are possible routes of contagion.

In view of the above, the communication strategies related to this pandemic must address a variety of topics that consider health, in its biological, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects. It must also consider all sectors of the population, broken down by age groups, communities, and population groups, according to their health conditions (patients at higher risk, persons with disabilities and their families, among others).

This is all contemplated in the strategic communication model proposed by WHO, that considers six basic principles for communication (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Principles of strategic communication, according to the WHO.
Source. From *WHO Strategic Communications Framework for Effective Communications* (p. 3), by World Health Organization, 2017.

The framework of each of the principles identified in Figure 5 is explained in Table 1.

Table 1 Framework of the communication principles of the World Health Organization.
Source. World Health Organization, 2017.

Accessible	Analysis of communication channels suitable for each audience
Actionable	Study of the action and execution capacities of each of the communication proposals defined in the plan.
Credible	Refers to the trust given to the WHO and other health authorities involved in executing the communication strategy.
Relevant	Linked to the audience expectations: It has to be relevant to the needs of the recipient.
Timely	Messages must be timely because they are closely linked to the specific needs of the recipient.
Understandable	Refers to the content of the message, health issues must be understandable to the general public. Messages should not be addressed to expert groups.

The identification of these communication principles proposed by the WHO are remarkable because they apply to all campaigns and all health actions and come after years of communication work in the health industry.

According to the WHO model, the effort to define the general parameters of strategic communication of the sector also defines its audiences (Table 2).

Table 2 Audiences defined by the World Health Organization.
Source. World Health Organization, 2017.

Individuals	First recipients of messages and personal decision makers with collective impact.
Communities	Social groups that are part of the cultural changes necessary to increase health levels.
Assistance teams	Responsible for the implementation of actions.
Decision makers	Political actors who must define and implement health policies.
WHO staff	Involved in the design, implementation and evolution of campaigns.
International organisations	Those who intervene in the diagnosis, research and other stages of the communication process.

The Uruguayan communication campaign was developed after taking these principles into consideration and was disseminated using a multi-media and multiplatform system that was first supported by two items, for radio and television, with wide coverage. The first item highlighted three symptoms of COVID-19 and the second identified seven actions to prevent it from spreading[1].

The content of the items was based on the set of general recommendations issued by the WHO, the PAHO, and the experts who advise the Ministry of Public Health. The recommendation to wear face masks generated a specific point of discussion: it was made public after further investigation of experiences in other countries despite the fact that, until that moment, the indication countered the recommendation made by the international organisation.

This is only one example of the type of communication challenges faced by the health authority: it must determine a way forward; it must be certain and

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[1] All communication materials for audiovisual channels can be found on the Ministry of Public Health's YouTube channel. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQWe5fq1_Q5DY92xf4aWQDw

promote a change in the habits of the population. The recommendation to wear face masks was made on April 23, but a percentage of the population had already begun to do so (Ministerio de Salud Pública, 2020i; Ministerio de Salud Pública- Uruguay, 2020a, 2020b; MSP - Uruguay, 2020c, 2020d).

Although the total numbers may be limited, Uruguayan parameters of the media dissemination of both items of communication showed that it was very extensive and covered all the country's television channels and radio stations (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3 Campaign coverage in the initial phase (seven actions to take care of yourself and three COVID-19 symptoms).
Source. Presidencia de la República Oriental del Uruguay (internal information).

Communication channel	Coverage
TV Montevideo/C4/10, 12, Televisión Nacional de Uruguay, TV Ciudad, VTV, Red TV, Nuevo Siglo TV	891
Radio (Montevideo)	3,024
Radio (Interior – rest of the country)	3,248
Total mentions	7,163

Table 4 Campaign coverage in the initial phase (protocol for entering and leaving home, communication channels, care for the elderly).
Source. Presidencia de la República Oriental del Uruguay (internal information).

Communication channel	13 to 19 (March)	20 to 26 (March)
TV Montevideo/C4/10, 12, Televisión Nacional de Uruguay, TV Ciudad, VTV, Red TV, Nuevo Siglo TV	662	743
Radio (Montevideo)	2,322	2,487
Radio (Interior – rest of the country)	2,800	2,760
Total mentions	5,784	5,990

Communication Goals for COVID-19

The main communication goal in the health area is to improve the health of individuals and social groups. In this sense, it is pertinent to remember the importance of the development of the health communication area from the 1990s to this date.

In the academic sphere, the Emerson University School of Communication, together with the Tufts School of Medicine define this discipline in their study programme as:

> the art and technique of informing, influencing and motivating individuals, institutions and the general public on important health topics. Among those topics are disease prevention, health promotion, health policies, financing and the improvement of the quality of life and the health of community members. (Alcalay, 1999, p. 192)

The COVID-19 pandemic raises several specific secondary communication goals:

- reporting the symptoms of a disease that was unknown to this date;

- inducing new habits to prevent spreading the virus;

- make the routes of contagion known, as well as its associated risks;

- providing recommendations on what to do if a person has symptoms or has contracted COVID-19;

- providing information to key sectors of the health system: healthcare teams.

Target Audiences

In a first phase the advertisements had to reach the population as a whole and in a second phase it was necessary to address specific relevant audiences that required a custom communication adapted to their circumstances. From this segmentation, the following groups are highlighted.

People at higher risk of contracting the virus. Adults over 65 years of age, patients with type 1 diabetes, respiratory failure, other sensitive pathologies, and immunosuppressed patients were identified as population at risk and were immediately exempted from physically attending their workplace. This measure helped protect those who could contract the virus with more critical consequences.

Recommendations on the best way to stay at home, how to stay physically active, and how to take proper care of themselves were disseminated for this group. Sensitive aspects, such as elder abuse, were also addressed

(Ministerio de Salud Pública, 2020d, 2020e; Ministerio de Salud Pública Uruguay, 2020c).

People with disabilities. In the first instance, special attention was paid to children with social and intellectual disabilities (children with Down syndrome and children with autism spectrum disorders). Secondly, efforts were placed on reaching the deaf or hearing-impaired population, and in a third phase, items were prepared with recommendations for all disability groups (Ministerio de Salud Pública, 2020c).

The material was made available through the official sites of the Ministry of Public Health with the exception of the material translated in sign language and the recommendations for people over 65 years of age. These communication items were distributed though all television channels.

Journalists. The definition of the target audiences also took into consideration the need to inform journalists about the pandemic and all medical aspects related to the virus: symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and routes of infection. For this, two briefings were held: one by the highest-ranking authorities, at the Ministry of Public Health, and another in the executive tower, home of the presidency, by doctors specialising in the subject and members of the expert committee (Uruguay Presidencia, 2020a). There was also a third remote briefing held by the public health department to discuss with journalists how to treat COVID-19 at the informational level and what personal care measures should be taken by media workers when covering news stories. This last aspect was presented by a doctor, an occupational health specialist who works for the Ministry of Public Health (MSP - Uruguay, 2020e).

Youth. Another aspect considered was that the information should reach young people, between 15 and 25 years old. They had to receive information through specific channels and with an adapted language. To achieve this, a group of 30 influencers was contacted in social networks to develop a campaign for this audience, through two specific channels: TikTok and Instagram. The use of TikTok was an innovation for the Ministry of Public Health, which had never carried out a campaign of this nature before.

Healthcare workers. Finally, communication also had to have a chapter especially dedicated to healthcare workers at all levels. The Ministry of Public Health made an important effort to keep health institutions informed through official channels of the National Board of Health. This information

was transmitted simultaneously through social networks so that it had a greater reach for both healthcare workers and the general public.

The Ministry of Public Health also established a training plan for nurses, which reached 485 nursing assistants and graduates (Ministerio de Salud Pública, 2020f). Additionally, a video was made to thank healthcare workers for their commitment (Ministerio de Salud Pública Uruguay, 2020d).

The Style of Government Communication

Transparency as a Communication Principle

Even before the inauguration on March 1, 2020, of President-Elect Luis Lacalle Pou, he had already declared on multiple occasions that he viewed management transparency as a fundamental value. His government's communication was developed on the basis of that value, with the aim of generating trust amongst Uruguayans.

From the first day of the new administration, the Ministry of Public Health carried out its communication with this premise as its guiding principle. WHO's communication principles were applied to content developed for all communication channels. In this sense, when transmitting the information, each item of communication should reflect the following characteristics:

- *Clarity.* There could be no doubts about the concepts related to COVID-19.

- *Simplicity.* All contents had to be understandable for the entire population.

- *Didactic.* Communication had to give place to a change in habits.

- *Certainty.* Institutional certainty had to convey security and serenity.

The Content of Messages

A few days after the start of the new administration, the national coronavirus plan, with its own logo, was created (Figures 7 and 8). The ministry had to reassure people that all communication was aligned with an action plan that was beginning to be implemented. With the same goal, a landing page was designed, which consolidated the relevant information and made

it easily accessible. The concept of a national plan was designed with the purpose of providing certainty that a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach was being carried out.

The creation of a national storyline implies a systemic analysis, where actions, messages, and symbols make up a comprehensive communication strategy (Figure 6). To analyse this aspect, the EVAS (context, version, action and symbols) matrix, proposed by Luciano Elizalde (2017), is used.
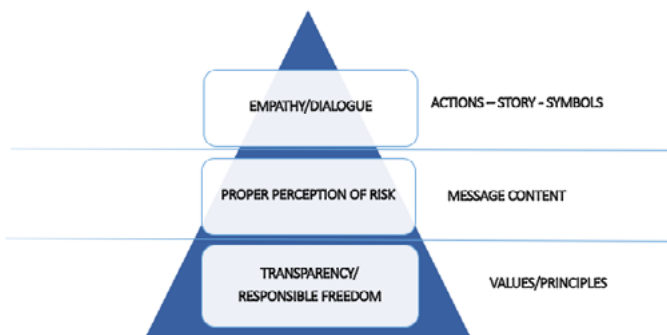
Figure 6 Communication model for construction of the storyline.

C*ontext*. The communicational context in which the topic takes place. In the case of COVID-19 this is particularly relevant because the whole world is analysing the pandemic from all possible perspectives. The virus has affected all aspects of our lives: personal relationships, the way we greet each other, the way we study, work, and even celebrate a birthday or say goodbye to a loved one at a funeral. Everything is permeated by COVID-19. It is a context with very high levels of conversation, with innumerable messages and enunciators.

Approach. This aspect refers to the general strategy to be implemented. In Uruguay, the strategy was based on the values of transparency and responsible freedom. During the first 30 days of the pandemic, the population was urged to stay at home. This was not enforced coercively. Instead, citizens were asked to stay at home and essential services were maintained. There was an announcement of the intention to keep the main driving forces of the economy active.

Figura 7 National coronavirus plan I.
Source. From *MSP Síntomas* (00:00:03), by Ministerio de Salud Pública Uruguay, 2020b, YouTube.

Figura 8 National coronavirus plan II.
Source. From *MSP Coronavirus* (00:00:09), by Ministerio de Salud Pública Uruguay, 2020a, YouTube.

Version. This element is the strategy put into practice through a discourse, the choice of the right words. At this level, the goal was to give simple messages that were understood by the entire population.

Symbols. These details have a strong impact on communication and are represented in concrete and material aspects. In the communication of the new government, the national symbols were recovered and, although this seems an aspect that exceeds the COVID-19 communication strategy, there was an appeal to the patriotic sentiment that Uruguay is a small country that achieves unexpected results. This aspect was consolidated over the following weeks, when it was possible to observe success in the health strategy that maintains low death rates and a low level of contagion. There was worldwide recognition in international media and resulted in a positive reputation for "the Uruguayan case".

Actions. The actions that strengthen this institutional message are specified in the presence of high authorities in different parts of the country, for example, the presence of the president and the minister of public health at the border and in places that became high-risk sources. These actions in the territory gave strong support to health policy.

From the perspective of risk communication, a specific bibliography on COVID-19 communication (Moreno & Peres, 2020) highlights several aspects that contribute to successful communication:

- The source responsible for the transmission of information must have credibility. In the case of Uruguay, the most important announcements were made by the president of the republic, the secretary of the presidency and the minister of public health. All three have high acceptance in public opinion.

- Honesty. What is not known must be clearly reported and clarified.

- Meaningful actions that help to understand the message. In Uruguay, the use of a face mask has been installed as a protection measure along with hand washing and social distancing of 2 m. In this regard, the example set by political leaders was very important.

- Participation of experts regarding medical issues and risk communication. In Uruguay, the work of an honorary scientific advisory group made

up of more than 50 professionals stands out. In addition, intense work has been carried out in the professionalisation of communication.

- Consistency in messages. The credibility and the change in behaviour of the population is given on a non-contradictory basis. It is necessary to show a coherent story, without second versions, where it is possible to correct mistakes because messages are being issued in a context of scientific uncertainty.

Transversal Health Communication

The COVID-19 crisis leaves important lessons, one of them is the realisation of how sensitive health is for every activity in a country, continent, and the entire world. The pandemic has forced everybody around the world to minimise all social, economic, cultural, educational, or other types of activity. People have only been able to resume these activities under certain conditions that guarantee the health of the population.

In Uruguay, several sectors of the economy and education were gradually reopened, and the consequences of greater mobility were measured. Communication played an important role in that process. Activity can be resumed only with fulfilment of certain conditions, that are stipulated in protocols.

The 4 weeks in which activity was kept to a minimum and mobility was reduced to 30% were key for the population to become aware, adjust to a change in habits and incorporate the responsibility of caring for themselves and caring for others. As mentioned above, the goal of the communication was to communicate risk adequately and, above all, induce changes in daily habits.

Communication in the initial information and prevention phase of a health policy is relevant, but it is also relevant during the subsequent stages (Figure 9).
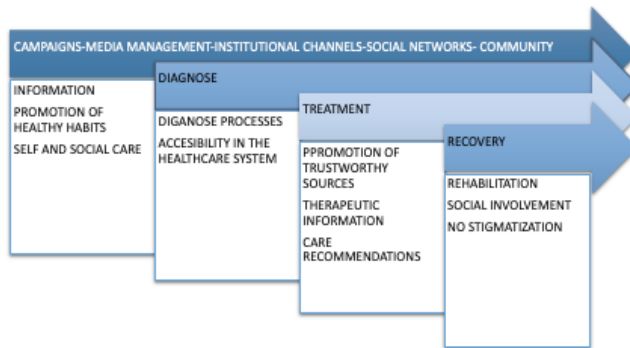
Figure 9 Transversality of communication in a health policy.

Prevention Phase

During the first stage, information about COVID-19 was transmitted, including its symptoms, forms of infection, and how to take preventive measures. At this stage, it was important to build trust and credibility to ensure a quick response from the population. Mass outreach campaigns (on traditional and social media) were important but not sufficient. As explained above, it was necessary to reach all segments of society and pay special attention to the most vulnerable. COVID-19 has the characteristic of being a pandemic that lasted over time and this aspect implies an important communication challenge.

At this stage, where the response of the population must be achieved quickly, real-time messages on the health status and the veracity of the information played an important role in Uruguay. The presence of the president of the republic, the secretary of the presidency and the ministers of state at press conferences also played a fundamental role.

Diagnostic Phase

Communication in this phase focused, firstly, on explaining the surveillance strategy and secondly on case testing. A testing methodology was established exclusively by the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, with monitoring of the epidemiological contacts and isolation of positive and potential patients. This work method was installed from the beginning, however, in the first weeks the test was carried out with an epidemiological

criterion and afterwards (from April 2) a clinical criterion was established. It was important to inform the population how and under what circumstances the diagnoses were made, to bring certainties, reassurance and, at the same time, promote behaviours that help contain the virus. People considered "potential cases" after being in contact with a positive case or having symptoms, remained isolated until their diagnoses had been confirmed. For people to adopt this behaviour, it was necessary to report risks and benefits.

Treatment Phase

The treatment of the disease depends on the severity of the symptoms, which can range from a cold and muscle pain to lack of oxygen, requiring mechanical ventilation. The health system was prepared to attend the most serious cases and the number of beds in intensive care units increased by more than 30%. The need to lower the risk of collapse of intensive care units was also foreseen, avoiding other acute respiratory infections. In this sense, the H1N1 flu vaccination campaign played a fundamental role, reducing serious respiratory infections and reducing deaths caused by this.

There were some debates going on about the efficacy of alternative treatments with hydroxychloroquine or chlorine dioxide, but since there is insufficient scientific evidence, the ministry of public health did not recommend them. Due to the fact that the fatality and mortality rate in Uruguay has been very low, the discussion about the treatment did not have great importance.

Recovery Phase

We can consider that the recovery phase at the social level consists of the opening of social activities with "protocols" that seek to minimise contagion. At this stage it is necessary to maintain the level of awareness of the ongoing risk of spread. To date (mid-September 2020), the pandemic has not been overcome and therefore we must prepare for the stage of recovery of what has been called a "new normal". A social and work life with behaviours that limit interactions and promote a sustained physical distancing of 2 m.

Communication cuts across all phases of a health policy and is a key factor for its success. In the case of COVID-19, it seeks to minimise the negative effects of the pandemic and maintain the country's economic activity to the greatest possible extent.

The following figure (Figure 10) shows the main measures adopted in the different phases of the pandemic.

Figure 10 COVID-19 health policy.
Source. From *En el marco de la #transparencia y con el objetivo primordial de poner en conocimiento a la población en general*, by MSP - Uruguay [@MSPUruguay], 2020f, Twitter.

Management of Transmedia Communication

The current complexity of the media system requires government communication offices to work on different platforms and adapt the message to the communication styles appropriate for each platform (Figure 11).
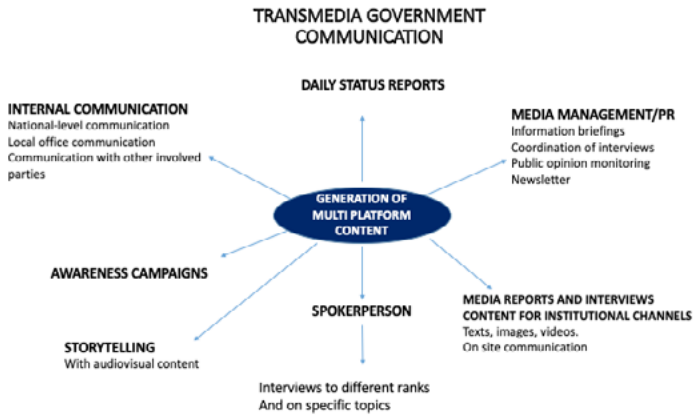
Figure 11 Generation of transmedia contents.

Nowadays, social media and traditional media coexist in a very complex media system, traditional media also have their own social network channels, journalists broadcast news on their own networks, opinion leaders have their audiences on social media and all actors coexist in a media system that has the following characteristics:

- The media system currently has the potential to provide high visibility, and this visibility empowers whoever receives it. Hence, visibility makes it possible to influence different groups of people, set up debates on the public agenda, and obtain resources for specific actions, among other benefits.

- This visibility is also two-fold. While it empowers, it also creates a risk of exposure that sometimes works against the institution's goals. It can also potentially harm people's privacy. The fine line that divides the public from the private spheres is often moved in detriment of the latter.

- We are facing an era of information overload: multiple messages that reach us through an infinity of channels (WhatsApp, email, Messenger, private messages on social networks, websites, etc.).

- It is a closed system: the information enters the media system and it is no longer possible to "recover" it and return it to the private sphere.

- The dynamics of this system are defined by a "blind logic", it is not possible to predict the path that an event can follow when it becomes news.

- The system is governed by a principle of ubiquity: all issues related to people's lives can become a news item.

- The system also thrives on a principle of interdependence: social actors are part of this media system in a double role. On the one hand they are consumers of information and on the other they are potential sources of information.

A government communication plan is developed on the basis of this conceptual approach, seeking to generate content in all information channels and with content adapted to the logic of each channel. Communication channels complement each other, since they develop different aspects of the same institutional message.

Spokesperson

As an example, some campaigns carried out within the framework of the COVID-19 communication strategy can be mentioned, such as the vaccination campaign and the campaign for the Noche de la nostalgia (night of nostalgia)[2]. In both campaigns, communication pieces developed were advertised both in traditional and social media and, at the same time, were accompanied by news articles in the media, training of spokespeople, generation of news contents, press releases and an appropriate internal communication plan.

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[2] On August 24, the night before Independence Day, a national holiday, it is traditional to organise parties where the protagonists are hits from other decades, *oldies*. Parties are organised for all ages throughout the country. Due to the pandemic a campaign was carried out to prevent the organisation of clandestine parties that could generate COVID-19 outbreaks.

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Strategic Communication in Cultural Organizations, the Landscape Museum

Maria João Centeno

School of Communication and Media Studies, Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon and Nova Institute of Communication, Lisbon, Portugal
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4963-3119

Abstract

This chapter intends to explore the role of strategic communication in cultural organizations, presenting the Landscape Museum. Since the field of strategic communication does not have a unifying conceptual framework (Hallahan et al., 2007), this work intends to explore one of the various communication pursuits: building and maintaining relationships or networks through dialogue. The Landscape Museum's mission is to contribute to the development of a landscape citizenship, awakening a critical and participatory sense in citizens. The museum has been trying to achieve it by building and maintaining strong and permanent relationships through dialogue. Since "strategic communication also includes examining how an organization presents itself in society as a social actor in the creation of public culture and in the discussion of public issues" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 27) and considering Self's (2015) proposal for dialogue, it "is not just about achieving consensus, but facilitates debate and advocacy in public policy formation" (p. 74), this chapter presents how the Landscape Museum specifically through its educational service has been promoting the acceptance, through dialogue, of ideas related to landscape's protection and valorization and thus contributing to landscape citizenship.

Keywords

Landscape Museum, strategic communication, stakeholders, mediation, citizenship

Strategic Communication, an Introduction

Originally used in the context of national governments and the military, strategic communication is now a popular expression in different fields, including communication sciences. The term illustrates the ways in which organizations[1] intentionally communicate in the public sphere. "The emphasis is on the strategic application of communication and how an organization functions as a social actor to advance its mission" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 7).

The organization as a social actor purposefully influences others on behalf of organizations, causes or social movements and the scope of strategic

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[1] "The term organization is here understood as a public or private firm or institution working in an organized way in the same direction to achieve some goal or mission, and to realize its corporate vision in the context of which it forms a part" (Carrillo, 2014, p. 86).

communication is the different ways in which organizations communicate engaging people in different deliberative communication practices. "Strategic communication is about informational, persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication when used in a context of the achievement of an organization's mission" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 17). Persuasion is considered by Hallahan et al. (2007) as the essence of strategic communication, since it implies the use of communication to promote the acceptance of ideas.

It's common to relate strategic communication with audiences and the organizations' public. Instead, we consider stakeholders; they are those who are connected to the organization through their own specific interests and share some meaning with it.

> They may come into contact with it through different channels and media, and at any time if they wish (...). Similarly, stakeholders may also at any time reject active participation if they so wish. Moreover, different stakeholder groups can link up and create synergies that may affect the organization positively or negatively. (Carrillo, 2014, p. 87)

Stakeholders are influenced by organizations but they also influence them; the focus is on their acts. As John Dewey (1927/1991) suggested, publics[2] are networks of acts and they emerge in discourse.

> Their purpose is sharing experience, solving problems and assessing the consequences. Communicators who facilitate that ongoing process, linking participants across networks as publics, and promoting their discourse across the organization, also facilitate the continuous inquiry into problems, the discovery of solutions, and the shared assessment of outcomes. (Self, 2015, p. 88)

In the developing digital world we live in, strategic communication heightens opportunities for citizens and less visible or powerful publics to participate in the creation and spreading of information nurturing a multiple-way flow of information. This available information can be used, spread through different networks and promote change, which illustrates the fact that strategic communication is a matter of communication capital and must be conceptualize in the realms of dialogic flows of communication. It is vital that organizations allocate adequate resources to respond to various stakeholders and enter into dialogue.

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[2] John Dewey (1859–1952) uses the term "public" but the emphasis is on its acts. Before, Gabriel Tarde (1901/1991) defined as one of the original features of public its symbolic character, its cohesion around themes/subjects that mobilize the attention and interests of its members.

New technologies have created new opportunities for organizations beyond the established players. "Digital media and social networks make it possible for institutions to rebuild sustained flexible discourse partnerships of shared experience among individuals and groups" (Self, 2015, p. 88). These partnerships are understood in the context of a convergent and participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006).

Henry Jenkins (2006) pointed out three characteristics of this new structure of communication: the 21st century can be considered a convergent media culture, where old and new media interact and new forms of communication arise[3]; the emergence of participatory culture ("in future, strategic communication between organizations and stakeholders will be less relevant to how common meaning is created and will be comparable with the communication that takes place between stakeholders, that is, between participant to participant"; Falkheimer & Heide, 2015, p. 340); the creation of collective intelligence: problems are resolved through communication with various partners who differently contribute to a whole.

Strategic communication reinforces stakeholders' participation on causes and has an active role in the development of full citizenship.

Strategic Communication in Cultural Organizations

Cultural organizations encourage participation when they break instrumental relationships between themselves and their stakeholders, relationships directed only according to the interests of one of the parts. Cultural organizations also encourage participation when they consider themselves as promoters of networks of relationships whose cooperative activity is intended to be recurrent (notion of "art worlds" from Howard Becker, 1982). But how can cultural organizations promote participation?

Jürgen Habermas (1929-), one of the most important European philosophers of the second half of the 20th century, has highlighted the role of dialogue, of communicative action[4] in the struggle for the decolonization

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[3] "Welcome to convergence culture, where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways. Convergence culture is the future, but it is taking shape now. Consumers will be more powerful within convergence culture – but only if they recognize and use that power as both consumers and citizens, as full participants in our culture" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 270).

[4] "Those symbolic manifestations (linguistic and non-linguistic) with which subjects capable of language and action establish relationships with the intention of understanding each other and thus coordinating their activities" (Habermas, 1982/1996, p. 453).

of the "lifeworld"[5], in the fight against the supremacy of the media power and money (symbolically generalized media of communication of the political and economic systems). Those media can only be controlled involving individuals in processes of enlightenment through debate, through an argumentative use of language.

Due to the role of dialogical practices in building and maintaining relationships, it's more or less simple to understand the active role cultural organizations play in the articulation between the lifeworld and the political and economic systems, contributing to recover the traditional critical and emancipatory functions of a public sphere.

Cultural organizations cannot, and it is not desirable that they want to, contain the meanings that a public sphere might generate in its users, what they truly can and should is to enhance access, to promote the use of that space in the most universal way possible, so that space can mediate the subsequent social production of conflicts and negotiations and become a social and public sphere, democratic and inclusive by promoting access, construction, and debate of knowledge.

If individuals expand their critical sense and argumentative competence by participating in acts of publicity, it is cultural organizations' duty to promote meeting spaces, to stimulate the argumentative confrontation of ideas. By doing so, they fulfill the function of satisfying the requirements of leisure and enjoyment fundamental to the construction of communities' representations and identities. In this sense, the function of mediating relationships between the organization and stakeholders is crucial to the construction of knowledge and the establishment of a lasting and demanding bond.

At this point it is essential to highlight the contribution of strategic communication in building and maintaining relationships. The programmatic practices of cultural organizations affect, but are also affected by, a set of actors, who become stakeholders when they become aware and active because they recognize a situation, they get involved in it, and they feel they are able to act, to intervene in it. Stakeholders are defined according

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[5] Habermas recovered the concept of "lifeworld" from Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), for whom indicated the land of the immediately familiar" and the "unquestionably certain. Habermas (1996/2002) inserts the communicative action in this lifeworld that "provides a protective cover from risks in the form of an immense background consensus" (p. 127), implicit and pre-reflectively present. Hence, most of the daily communication practices are not problematic, insofar as they resort of the certainties of the lifeworld.

to levels of interest on subjects. What unites and holds them together is the communion of shared ideas and, above all, the awareness of that communion.

Strategic communication is concerned with the ways organizations intentionally communicate, with the ways of building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders that are aware of situations since the organization considers them as partners in a relationship, as subjects capable of language and action who coordinate their activities, as Habermas proposes, capable of a communicative action.

Cultural organizations must have the capacity to afford situations based on artistic proposals and

> it must conceive a parallel pedagogical action that favors this public contact with contemporary and innovative proposals, making them share the interest that this time of cultural and artistic uncertainties may have, transforming them into better, more critical and more competent spectators. (Costa, 2008, p. 324)

It is the responsibility of cultural organizations to provide a critical fruition in the sense of offering not only artistic creations but also ways of approaching the backstage of creation and the conditions, for instance, of the events' conception. The scenario of interaction thus set up is favorable to a dialogical practice that enriches the ability to choose, by advocating actions oriented towards understanding, communicative actions that correspond to reciprocity between the parts. Those dialogical practices make clear the role of cultural organizations in contributing to the problematization of established forms and the renewal of the imaginary; encouraging a dialogical practice enriches others ability to choose inasmuch as participating in events leads to an accumulated experience, stimulating skills that allow individuals to have a better relationship with themselves and with others.

What happened in bourgeois cafes and salons (Habermas, 1962/2012), where different artists, writers, philosophers, and other authors were subjected to critical evaluation and public judgment (which derived from a rational and reasoned argumentation), can happen again in the forums promoted by cultural organizations, with the difference that the meeting does not take place on the initiative of private people who come together to exchange experiences, but on the proposal of one of the parts that, to contribute to the dynamization of new public spheres, has to consider

the coordination of the action plans of both parts. Therefore, consensus is reached, not because one of the parts forces the other but because the individuals, who meet in that space (physical or virtual), invoke reasons and through the strength of the best argument feel free to make their choices regarding understanding. These forums contribute to the reconquest of colonized areas, by purposefully influencing individuals to participate in communicative actions.

The question that can be asked is: is it enough for a cultural organization to propose forums to guarantee interactions guided by the coordination of the action plans of the parts involved? The answer is no! The existence of specific proposals, being essential, is not a condition for guaranteeing the promotion of *public spheres of action and dispute*, nor does it guarantee the participation of the local community and partners (groups of patrons, central and local administration bodies, media, school audiences, and other stakeholders). This practice is also dependent on other factors, such as the existence of a programmer/artistic director with autonomy to perform his duties; an active educational service; a team and their continuous formation; artists willing to dialogue and to demystify the *aura* supposedly inaccessible of the creation; regular and qualified programming; financial autonomy of the project; evaluation of the measures taken and how the participation of different stakeholders/partners in the activities proposed by the equipment is promoted. Basically, and not wanting to simplify, what is at stake is the organization not limiting itself to presenting cultural manifestations, but promoting action and argumentative dispute, that is, increasing the public sphere in the intersubjective sense (Centeno, 2012).

Cultural organizations, by promoting a repeated experience of usufruct and circulation through the intentionally built spaces, generate a dynamic of meanings. "Insisting on this dynamic of social construction of space allows politicizing the presence" of the new space, because "it confers representativeness, transformative capacity and entity of subject (and not only of object) to the local community, in the face of the hegemonic significant force (...) of those who design, finance and manage urban spaces for public use" (Balibrea, 2003, p. 50).

The organization's proposal has to be seen as a fluid bind, which has to be constructed spatially and discursively with the local community, making it the protagonist of the identity meaning that is associated with those spaces. "It is possible to conceive spaces where the works of worship take place and by which a particular community identifies, recognizes and revitalizes itself. After all, programming is this!" (Ribeiro, 2000, p. 15).

From what has been said, we can affirm that the cultural organizations' mission is to restore the collective experience of the public sphere, taking into account that afterwards each one must define objectives and strategies according to the specificities of the region it serves.

Strategic Communication Through Educational Services

Within the activity of cultural organizations, we would like to highlight educational services.

The importance of working on the educational level has been reaffirmed in Portugal since the 50s of the 20th century when the then director of the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (National Museum of Ancient Art), João Couto, created the educational service at the museum consecrating the link between plastic arts and museographic practices.

If the access to cultural goods by individuals had been one of the achievements of modernity, we know that these goods are not harmoniously adapted to all. So, this is what shapes the action/communication of cultural organizations and concretely the possibility of constituting them as platforms for educational performance, rather than providing such a service.

Fundamental to mediation between organizations and publics/communities/partners, the educational services should provide a dialogical relationship, in which the action plans of the parts involved are coordinated, "a type of long-term work, aimed at the formation of taste, linked to the principle that from the awakening of appetites and habits of living with cultural goods and organizations since childhood fixes the future consolidation of cultivated publics" (Centeno, 2012, p. 145).

The interaction scenario in which different forms of discovery and appropriation are proposed is envisaged to enrich each one's ability to choose.

> In this desire to bring together publics and works, intersect activities related to production-diffusion and reproduction-training, with the aim of renewing the production process itself. (...) Animation can contribute to break, using an expression of Giddens, with the 'space-time fixity', subverting routines that have long been institutionalized. In other cases, it allows loyalty, enlargement and the formation of publics; contributing, more or less decisively, to overcome the mere effect of cultural marketing, indispensable, no doubt, but of a too ephemeral nature. (Santos, 1998, pp. 249–250)

Within the scope of the formation of publics or raising awareness to the arts of the general population, as Maria de Lourdes Lima dos Santos[6] calls it, we can identify four groups of activities:

> activities that have been designated as *Contemplatives*, as they group a set of practices more aimed at observation/hearing, including guided Visits, Exhibitions, Publications and dissemination Actions; (...) *Formation* activities imply actions related to the attendance of courses of general Formation or vocational Formation, but also with the organization of festivals and conferences and debates. (...) The third pattern - *Creative/Playful* activities - consists mainly of actions that involve experience and participation. Workshops/ateliers, Animation on academic holidays and Contests/hobbies are the activities that stand out the most, being, as a rule, aimed at a child/youth public. Lastly, actions referring *To Stage* activities should be mentioned. This set, including marginally conferences and debates, is much more expressive for activities related to entertainment and animation. (Gomes & Lourenço, 2009, pp. 122–123)

Through this range of activities, it is easy to understand that promoting the approximation of cultural goods to individuals is a herculean task, since these goods are not harmoniously adapted to all, mainly when it comes to sensitize others to landscape citizenship. Therefore, any educational service must think of this awareness in terms of age group, but also as a possibility to carry out innovative mediation practices.

The Landscape Museum

The Landscape Museum is a digital platform devoted to landscape and it is a scientific and cultural association since April 12, 2019. It stands up in the context of raising awareness and education towards landscape citizenship, which, like the landscape itself, must result from a continuous and collective process. This process is intended to be plural and not ensured by a single voice, since it is the responsibility of all protagonists in the public sphere. It is in this context that this proposal for museological mediation emerges as an axis of valorization, protection, and construction of sustainable landscapes.

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[6] Maria de Lourdes Lima dos Santos was the former president of the Observatory of Cultural Activities (from 1996 to 2007), the Portuguese public organism responsible for providing information to support cultural policy options.

The Landscape Museum then starts from a concept of territory-museum, which the visitor will have to go through and read, aided by several mediation practices present throughout the visit. Thus, for this model of landscape musealization, it is necessary, at first, to ensure the presence and recognition of the museum's mediator who presents himself as the one who intentionally communicates with the other, an interlocutor between the public and the landscape.

Towards the idea of a diffuse museum, without a building, dealing with complex, sometimes abstract and intangible issues associated with the landscape, the program for creating the online headquarters of the Landscape Museum was based on the use of a very concrete language, easily associated to the traditional museum concept. The starting point was a common language code, usually used by museums, that allows visitors to recognize the online space as a museum space. This space is the main interface for the recognition of the museum as a mediating entity; it is the anchor that guarantees a permanent link between the museum and its public. Communication issues assume another relevance here in the museological context, in the sense that, in addition to understanding a museum based in its collection or a museum based in its building, as usual, it is now possible to assume the idea of a museum based on communication.

Thus, seeking to translate the language of the architectural space of traditional museums into digital media, the website of the Landscape Museum (https://museudapaisagem.pt) appears on its home page as a wide frontage with horizontal screens that announce the main exhibitions and activities of the museum's programming. The visitor can enter the exhibitions and other highlights directly through these screens or scroll and move to the area corresponding to the museum's atrium. Here the visitor will find suggestions of programming, agenda, and more detailed information about the exhibitions on display. At the top of the page there is a menu, the building's signage system, which shows the visitor the way to the different spaces of the museum. In this menu there is also a map, which allows the spatial location of the visit points within the Portuguese territory.

From the museum's lobby (entrance page), the visitor can proceed to one of the exhibition rooms, to the museum's services — "educational service", "media library" and "library" — or to more functional areas, to which correspond the file (menu "landscapes" > "explore"), the auditorium (menu "landscapes" > "film the landscape") or the research laboratories (menu "the museum" > "research"). The museum also promotes a network of partners, volunteers, and associations with whom it collaborates in different projects.

The contents that can be found in the digital platform are meant to be complementary to the visit. It was not intended to provide only a set of facts and technical information to support visits, but also to be a mediator, to accompany the visitor along a route, on a journey, in which landscape experiences, sensations, thoughts, readings, and interpretations are shared. The digital headquarters functions as a pocket-museum, accessible from a mobile phone, tablet or computer screen, in which the fundamental characteristic is allowing a meeting point between the museum's contents, its public and the landscape (Abreu & Pina, 2019).

Strategic Communication in the Landscape Museum

The Landscape Museum tries to get the best out of digital culture.

> There has been a change from a push culture, with traditional analogue mass media where publics had little influence on the content, to a pull culture, where publics are expected to search for and collect the information they are interested in. (Falkheimer & Heide, 2015, p. 344)

The museum as a digital museological platform can play an active role in the articulation between the lifeworld and the political and economic systems, by guaranteeing free spaces for dialogical communicative experiences that concretize the idea of a shared symbolic space. On the other hand, its online existence can also increase the number of people participating in its activities and develop complex mediation networks, as well as collective work. "Mobile technologies provide an opportunity for a situated and informal learning experience that encourages interaction and a sense of community among learners" (Lewis & Nichols, 2015, p. 555).

Contrary to the work of art, which is inserted in a hermetic enclosure and protected from degradation, it is seen but not used, the digital museological platforms are intended to be marked by the visitor who will not have the role of passive observer, but rather an actor who leaves his marks and a track. The digitization of museum collections and other cultural collections has in recent years reached an unprecedented scale, which has brought changes and opportunities to the way visitors and users can interact with these collections. Museum's social media are being used "to extend the authenticity provided by museums by enabling a museum to maintain a cultural dialogue with its audiences in real time" (Lewis & Nichols, 2015, p. 550).

The action/communication of a digital museological platform includes: to disseminate works; to resize the other's reference system, namely by promoting an argumentative confrontation when questioning the various dimensions of the work; to propose the interaction scenario in which the apprehension occurs and which is responsible for encouraging a dialogical practice that enriches the ability to choose. "Relationships are bonds based on trust, a trust that is not predetermined but built, and in which the construction involved means a mutual process of self-disclosure" (Giddens, 1992/1995, p. 94).

However, to achieve a critical appropriation of the territory is something that can't be done just online. That is why the Landscape Museum, despite having its headquarters online, is not a virtual-museum, but rather a territory-museum that the visitor is invited to visit. So, it has been trying, through innovative forms of mediation, to stimulate creative/playful activities (from the list previously presented) that enhance landscape citizenship, participation through the experience of the territory and living together.

> The Landscape theme and its "reading" is not only an instructive concern but also an educational one in that it enhances a more comprehensive formation of students and people in general so that they can more consciously intervene civically - in their reading, in their defense, in its use, in its ecological preservation. (Martinha, 2013, p. 109)

The educational service of the Landscape Museum (Museu da Paisagem, n.d.) has been developing programs with the communities of the Portuguese territory. By promoting the encounter between these communities and the landscapes they inhabit, the museum has been seeking to challenge ways of seeing, interpreting and feeling.

The educational service of the museum knows that to apprehend, with all the senses, the landscape and its various layers implies exploration and a varied picture of readings. In fact, the landscape is not external to individuals who inhabit it and must be perceived from within, in a situation of immersion, simultaneously mobilizing the senses and the intellect.

The educational service of the museum does not develop only exhibition methods or even the contemplation of the gaze. It has been trying to promote streamlines activities that involve experience and participation, as developing an emotional connection to landscapes leads to deeper cognitive involvement. There are several studies that show how productive

pedagogies of experience-based learning, which provide engagement, are a vital part of environmental learning processes, a fundamental catalyst for expanding knowledge, changing behaviors (Ballantyne & Packer, 2008) and increasing satisfaction in the acquisition of knowledge (Morag et al., 2013).

Lave and Wenger (1991) created the term "community of practice" in the context of situated learning theory, the theory that advocates knowledge is best learned and retained in an authentic context.

> Communities of Practice (CoP) are informal, pervasive, and an integral part of our daily lives. Knowledge and skills are obtained by participation in activities that expert members of the community would perform. Learners become involved in a CoP, which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired through legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998). (...) bring organizations together through social ties that lead to strong relationships, trust and exchange of knowledge. (Lewis & Nichols, 2015, p. 556)

Lave and Wenger were talking about "groups of people who interact on an ongoing basis to further develop their expertise around a shared concern, problems, interests, and passions" (Annabi & McGann, 2013, p. 58).

The activities proposed by the Landscape Museum can be seen as *communities of practice* since the members of a community learn through interaction during the activities, and eventually become contributing members and full participants.

Thus, in environmental matters, activities, which use active learning methods and techniques in an educational performance context, have proven to be more effective in increasing landscape awareness than traditional pedagogical methodologies (Uzun & Keles, 2012) and field visits with immersive activities offer learning opportunities that develop both the knowledge and skills of individuals in a way that adds value to formal acquired knowledge in other contexts (Dillon et al., 2006).

It is a question, returning to Habermas, of providing dialogical communicative experiences responsible for building and maintaining relationships on behalf of the Landscape Museum's mission, to contribute to the formation of a landscape citizenship.

This is how the Landscape Museum is being influencing the individuals who inhabit the Portuguese territory on behalf of a cause, the landscape citizenship. Through strategic communication it has been possible to promote the acceptance of ideas related to landscape's protection and valorization.

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Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Brand Advocacy

A Reflection in a Time of Crisis

Ivone Ferreira[1], Luís Eusébio[2], Antonio Raúl Fernández Rincón[3] and Pedro Antonio Hellín Ortuño[4]

[1] *ICNOVA Research Unit/Communication Sciences Department, NOVA University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal;* [2] *NOVA University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal;* [3,4] *TrendenLab/Department of Communication, Murcia University, Murcia, Spain*

[1] *https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3283-2373;* [2] *https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3245-6814;* [3] *https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7143-2175;* [4] *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1331-5103*

Abstract

Web 2.0 offers users the unprecedented possibility of taking part in an uninterrupted flow of global communication that encompasses a growing number of people within its network and connection points (Ferreira, 2002). Users/consumers find here a space governed by a logic of connectivity, openness, conversation, and participation. These dimensions are exponentially enhanced by the growing ubiquity of social networks, whose interactive and collaborative architecture has shifted power to user communities (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). This renewed communicational context creates several challenges for organizations, converted into brands whose value depends on the rankings that measure their reputation with the public, who have become avid consumers and producers of information (Kotler et al., 2017). Thus, the process of stakeholder empowerment and the consequent loss of control by companies over the dissemination and circulation of information that concerns them have reinforced the vital need for companies to build and maintain close relationships with their audiences, in which concern for the opinions, needs, and concerns of the latter is clear (Antunes & Rita, 2008). Therefore, communities are increasingly demanding of the perceived contribution of business to the sustained and sustainable development of society, "in the face of the worsening of a wide range of economic, social and environmental problems on a global scale, and the governments' inability to address them" (Serpa & Fourneau, 2007, p. 97). That said, it is imperative for organizations to adopt an ethical and transparent conduct, which will enable them to gain customer confidence and support over the longer term (Pérez & Bosque, 2015). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies can be seen, then, as important drivers of the desired consumer loyalty to brand and further online advocacy.

Keywords

corporate social responsibility, web 2.0, prosumer, consumer loyalty

Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Engagement

The exacerbated economic growth of the last century has brought with it an unprecedented destruction of social and environmental capital, giving birth to the view that the repercussions of the activity of companies as substantial centres of power are not restricted to the economic sphere: "governments, activists, and the media have become adept at holding companies to account for the social consequences of their activities" (Porter & Kramer,

2011, p. 62). That said, the disappointment of citizens with the divorce between organizations and social needs is imposing (Gonçalves, 2005), and there is a demand for companies to take on a political role that extends beyond a mere conformity with legal standards (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

Presently, when reviewing similar products, consumers show a growing tendency to consider social and environmental criteria, requiring more from companies than just quality products at inviting prices (He & Lai, 2014; Pérez, 2009). The measure of success for an organization is no longer financial performance alone (Holzweber et al., 2012); the quality of its contribution to the well-being of society is emerging as an increasingly decisive assessment factor: "CSR is well established in today's business world. It is part of its reality. Doing good is now widely accepted as being part of doing well as a firm" (Kesavan et al., 2013, p. 60).

To combat the social legitimacy deficit they face, companies must incorporate into the core of their strategic options CSR policies that take into consideration the undeniable impact of the corporate world in areas such as human rights, the environment, sustainable development or the quality of life of the communities (Moure, 2010). As such, Mohr et al. (2001) maintain that a socially responsible stance is materialized in the efforts of companies to minimize or eliminate any negative impact of their activity, seeking simultaneously to maximize their long-term positive impact on society.

For Carroll (2000), the exercise of corporate citizenship must concomitantly comprise the goal of generating profit and maintaining profitability, a rigorous compliance with the laws and regulations adopted by the legislative authorities, the guidance of business according to ethical principles and a commitment to contributing in a constructive manner to the harmonious development of society. Elkington (1997), in turn, bringing together the dimensions "profit", "planet", "people", reiterates that organizational sustainability must stand on three central pillars: first, the company's financial security and stability; second, the minimization of the negative environmental impact it generates; and last, a conduct that conforms to the needs and expectations of the community.

An organization that, in pursuing its goals, is detrimental to the society in which it is inserted will conclude that any success achieved in this way will turn out to be nothing but illusory and ephemeral (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Therefore, companies must seek to develop routines that respond to the emerging expectations of consumers, which are increasingly directed towards social and environmental subjects (Bertels & Peloza, 2008).

For that reason, individuals tend to infer from the incorporation of CSR practices certain desirable attributes that they associate with corporate identity: "a company's character as revealed by its CSR actions is not only fundamental and relatively enduring but also often more distinctive by virtue of its disparate and idiosyncratic base" (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001, p. 228). Thus, associations that refer to corporate social responsibility will result in an increase in the company's perceived trustworthiness and credibility, which will, in turn, have an impact on the increase of its reputational capital (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990).

In a market characterized by an intense proliferation of products, profuse communication, and consumer disenchantment, the possibility of differentiation has been decreasing. However, by making the corporate agenda gravitate towards ethical and moral priorities, corporate social responsibility policies show an unparalleled capacity to singularize and humanize the organization, by reflecting the guiding values and idiosyncratic features of its corporate profile (Du et al., 2007; Holme & Watts, 2000).

Subsequently, the proactive exercise of corporate citizenship emerges as a prolific tool to encourage customer loyalty towards the organization (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), by providing a chance to increase the value of its intangible assets, creating an image of prestige and good repute:

> customers are more likely to believe that responsible companies operate honestly in their activities and reflect interests of both parties in the relationship when making decisions, which contribute to the trustworthiness and honesty of these companies and the satisfaction of customers. (Martínez & Bosque, 2013, p. 97)

However, it is important to consider that consumer trust in the organization could be severely shaken by the detection of an incongruence between the ethical or sustainable speech that companies disseminate and their actual everyday conduct. In that context, to minimize the scepticism of the public, it is vital for companies to carefully consider how their CSR practices are conveyed, ensuring that their stance is not correlated with extrinsic motivations, monetary in nature, but stems from a genuine concern over the social needs and the goal of producing shared value — an asset for society that shows itself to be equally beneficial to the organization (Ellen et al., 2006).

Traditionally, companies make use of conventional advertising and public relations channels to communicate their corporate citizenship policies. Thus, the messages relating to the socially responsible conducts of companies

have been put across through official documents (such as social responsibility reports), press releases, television commercials, ads in the press, product design or the organization's website, for example (Du et al., 2010). However, this type of communication tends to be seen as self-promotional and, as such, as having little credibility; there is an inversely proportional relationship between the controllability and the credibility of the communication of CSR activities (Kesavan et al., 2013).

As previously explained, the online sharing of experiences and opinions holds much higher credibility than that bestowed upon commercial communication (Huang & Chen, 2006). In this context, it is paramount for companies to take into consideration in their communication strategies relating to corporate social responsibility this particular power of influence inherent to the conversations taking place within digital social networks (Kesavan et al., 2013).

A consolidated stance regarding a social responsibility strategy, as a notable tool for corporate branding, stems from a *sui generis* ability to promote positive word-of-mouth from consumers, by fostering the establishment of lasting and robust relationships based on the development of feelings of identification, trust, affection, and loyalty.

Aiming to illustrate this view, Du et al. (2010) use the paradigmatic case of the Ben & Jerry's brand, whose stance is chiefly based on an active, even interventive, exercise of corporate citizenship.

Their well-established stance regarding CSR has led to an increased ability to strengthen consumer loyalty and identification with the brand. This idea is evident, for example, in the comment shared by a web user with regard to one of the organization's products, in which the importance accorded to the company's social responsibility efforts is clear: "besides the great flavour that the Ben & Jerry's Butter Pecan Ice Cream offers you, a portion of the proceeds go to the Tom Joyner Foundation... [that] provides financial support to students attending historically black colleges and universities" (Associated Content, 2008, as cited in Du et al., 2010, p. 14).

In summary, a strong investment in consolidating an irreproachable and responsible conduct, since it enriches corporate identity, making it more attractive, distinctive, and trustworthy, will prompt the development of a deep-seated sense of consumer loyalty towards the organization. As such, we may conclude that companies, in guiding their strategic decisions according to CSR ethical guidelines, will be able to convert their customers

into an army of loyal ambassadors, whose advocacy in the interactive context of web 2.0 emerges today as a dominant sales force.

A Portrait of Corporate Discourse on Television During Emergency and Contingency State in Portugal and Spain. Is it CSR?

In July 2020, we were rapidly approaching 10,000,000 infections and 500,000 deaths worldwide, making it impossible to establish a pattern of development of the situation globally. In Portugal, the first COVID-19 case was reported at the beginning of March (2 months later than Spain) and on the 18th March the state of emergency was declared. In May, it was passed to the state of calamity. Since then, the situation has continued to evolve differently in the two countries.

During this initial period, March to May, when observing how organizations tried to improvise communication solutions that would allow them to maintain contact with their audiences, Hellin Ortuño et al. (2021) analyzed the commercials on public television to understand what type of content and promises the corporations were offering in the midst of a situation of absolute bewilderment.

The authors analyzed all commercials broadcasted in primetime at the public television in Portugal and Spain (85) during the emergency state and contingency state, from March to May 2020. Although the different they stated in the funds spend in advertising during their period, the researchers saw a mutation in the corporate discourse that we refer here, such as:

- The decrease in the dissemination of advertising messages, evidenced in the duration of the ad units, which was substantially reduced. However, the production and premiere activity of new campaigns was very intense, since 55 advertisements appeared in Spain with a COVID-19 theme and 30 in Portugal. In Spain, there is a higher percentage of advertisements of corporate nature (69%). In Portugal, the distribution is more homogeneous, although the highest percentage corresponds to corporate advertisements, the high number of institutional advertisements (23%) stands out compared to Spain (2%).

- Technical and practical information on health maintenance expressed clearly and concisely, without artifice or rhetoric, if possible, from reputable voices or at least from credible, media, and socially well-accepted people, a clear call to general and particular responsibility.

This information may come from public institutions: "one advise of DGS [Direção-Geral da Saúde]" (Direção-Geral da Saúde [DGS], 2020), "be a public health agent" (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal [RTP], 2020); or private: "is good to stay at home" (Skip Portugal, 2020), "can you please go home?" (Santander Portugal, 2020).

- Being united in the face of COVID-19 is one of the keys to overcoming it: "together we will overcome the difficulties" (Lidl Portugal, 2020); "together to what is more important" (Intermarché Portugal, 2020); "only together we can make a difference" (El Publicista, 2020); "we are going to be linked" (NOS, 2020).

Suddenly, most companies suppressed the commercial discourse by one more emotional, disinterested, and aligned with the needs of consumers and society: ensuring the health of all, complying with public health standards, such as the duty of confinement.

Clients can stay safe, because there are companies and professionals that also take care of the population: "we continue to provide service, let's keep hope"; "attentive to the needs of the clients" (Banco BPI, 2020); "we are open for you. Now safer" (Burger King Portugal, 2020).

In general, the authors concluded that the situation of social alarm corresponded to a situation of communication crisis for which the corporations did not have response plans.

Most of the companies present in both countries decided to suspend their advertising campaigns and only a few maintained their presence on television, achieving great visibility and acquiring social notoriety. The messages focused on the social themes present in social networks, related to the need for consolation in the face of uncertainty and with companies and institutions as protagonists, as consolation providers.

On the other hand, when the alarm or emergency situation has disappeared, these messages also disappeared, without others that have given continuity to the open lines of communication, evidencing the lack of prior planning and the desire to return to the situations (market, positioning, consumption) prior to the pandemic. For this reason, unfortunately, we cannot speak of a versatile corporate social responsibility or a mission of the brands that is expressed over time, adapting to the circumstances. Perhaps we should just call it tailoring the speech to the opportunity, while expecting for a better business opportunity.

Is There Still Hope for CSR? "Nike: Play Inside, Play for the World"

A large number of campaigns on social networks launched a message of support to society in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. Some of them have managed to establish that connection with the audience, so longed for brands, and that takes on a greater significance at a time when people have had to stay at home to stop the coronavirus.

"Play for the world", the campaign with which Nike encourages those who continue to practice sports in different areas of their home, has triumphed in the United States during the month of April, with more than 25,000,000 views (Ads of Brands, 2020; *Nike: Play for the World | An Ode to the Athletic Spirit in the Wake of a Pandemic*, 2020; see also *Nike: Play Inside, Play for the World*, 2020). This is revealed by the AcuityAds report, which collects a ranking of the brands and spots on COVID-19 that have managed to capture the attention of consumers in the last month.

The campaigns that appear in the top 10 of AcuityAds seek to send a positive message to help people who remain in their homes, and most of them use musical themes that refer to overcoming, such as the song of "Under Pressure" by Queen and David Bowie that accompanies the Facebook spot — in ninth position. We also find leading sports figures such as Paul Pogba, a Premier League player, or Patrick Mahomes, of the American National Football League, present in the Adidas ad.

The Nike campaign made specially for the web gives visibility and voice to athletes who are unable to leave home to train due to COVID-19, transforming athletes (and brand clients) into prosumers, but also seeking to increase the engagement within this special type of client (most of them rich and famous).

The smart slogan Nike makes a call to action ("Play with us" that seems "the pray for" used frequently during crisis or terrorist attacks) brings at least a double sense: the responsibility of staying at home (for the security of all, "the world"), although the need for training; the opportunity of being an example for the world, doing sports inside small houses.

The place used by everyone (basements, kitchens, courtyard) is used as scenario to approach the athletes to the normal ones, that play sport at home during quarantine.

The outside is rarely presented (just appear in two frames) but states the situation that the world is now living, empty outside, without public.

In this specific time, Nike does a call for the world: playing (praying).

In a future article, it would be interesting to compare the values expressed in this campaign with the brand's statement of principles. A content analysis of the feedback given by brand followers would provide a better understanding of the real engagement and loyalty of consumers.

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What's in a Place?

The Contribution of
Strategic Communication to
Placemaking and Territorial
Communication

Ana Duarte Melo

Communication and Society Research Centre, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4598-7174

Abstract

Set in the field of territorial communication, the aim of this chapter is to summon the various contributions of strategic communication to place-making and promotion, approaching them both through a mind frame path, as a multi-layered concept, and through an operational approach, as a pragmatic tool. Going through a number of examples we will reflect on several experiences to illustrate the potential of strategic communication to add value to places in different sets and scales, from building a place almost from scratch to nation branding strategies, from positioning and re-positioning objectives to building up notoriety or developing communities' sense of belonging to a territory. We also set an evolutionary frame of the territorial communication in the light of its strategic dimension, drawing on key concepts and trends, influences and achievements. The performative value of strategic communication as a constructive tool of territorial development is discussed in addition to the communicational added value of territorial brands, namely by pointing emerging issues such as storytelling or participatory place communication. Furthermore, we summon ethical and pragmatic challenges to the debate as inspiration for future research.

Keywords

territorial strategic communication, placemaking, place branding, place storytelling, participatory communication, communication for sustainable development

What's in a Place?

> My place is not your place. (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013, p. 6)

What a place is and how it is built based on strategic communication is the question that any territorial decision maker, planner, manager, practitioner, stakeholder or student should ask to begin to reflect on this theme, so complex and involving. Answers should be diverse, according to different perspectives, perceptions, and expectations. And all of them could be relevant, meaningful, and legitimate.

This multi-layered approach to territorial reality results in a conceptual-pragmatic conundrum. This emerges already from the definition of place, or landscape, or territory, according to different fields of knowledge, from

geography to politics, from ecology to law or communication (Bueno, 2004; Champollion, 2006; Domingues, 2001).

> Territory and space are not equivalent notions. The territory with precise contours and limits is a historical construction, the product of human action. A seemingly universal, falsely natural category, the territory is anything but spontaneous. Beyond the natural borders, the political border is always an abstract line and agreed upon by some. (Bueno, 2004, p. 229)

More recently, other authors consider "'place' is conceived as a service system and in building competitive identity to obtain reputation through value co-creation processes" (Bassano et al., 2019, p. 11).

The marketing perspective (Kotler et al., 1999; Kotler & Gertner, 2002), on the other hand, indicates a business-driven approach to the idea of place:

> nation state, a geopolitical physical space; a region or state; a cultural, historical or ethic bounded location; a central city and its surrounding populations; a market with various definable attributes; an industry's home base and a clustering of like industries and their supplier; a psychological attribute of relations between people internally and their external view of those outside. (Kotler, 2002, p. 4)

This point of view is highly embedded with a corporation management insight translated to territories, emerging from the observation of declining cities or "places in trouble":

> there is now a consensus about the suitability of marketing for places, and that places, indeed, should be marketed as efficiently as firm's market products or services (…) every community has to transform itself into a seller of goods and services, a proactive marketer of its products and its place value. Places are, indeed, products, whose identities and values must be designed and marketed. Places that fail to market themselves successfully face the risk of economic stagnation and decline. (Rein et al., 1993, p. 10)

But even the father of marketing recognizes that "unlike purely business or commercial product marketing, place marketing requires the active support of public and private agencies, interest groups, and citizens" (Rein et al., 1993, p. 20).

The need for a shared vision and a shared meaning is also central in the operational performance of the notion of territory in communication.

> The great challenge here will certainly be to find an identity and a vision of meaning shared by all. This is a continuous and repeated competition, the struggle for positioning, a founding concept of marketing (Ries & Trout, 2003) also very relevant in territorial marketing and often the object of its communication strategies, as it is here, in these symbolic borders, that negotiation and legitimization of contemporary territories are at stake. (Melo, 2019b, p. 245)

Despite the viewpoints' diversity there is a general consensus on the idea of "territory" being a human, organisational, social, and cultural construct, involving both spatial and symbolic dimensions and even an existential one, since the territories are lived upon and experienced (Govers & Go, 2016).

The Convergence of Territory and Communication

From a communication perspective, territory might be approached as an organization and a network of places, institutions, and stakeholders that need to be taken into account both as content (the place identity, culture, and personality) and as publics and channels in the communication process.

Bassano et al. (2019) use a system design approach to preconize the need to establish communication systems, as well as collaborative socioeconomic ones, to strengthening the competitiveness of a place through smart multi-level governance. By connecting the dots of several settled places through a smart local service system, territorial chaos is transformed in territorial cosmos with and added value. Not only will it "provide the structural conditions for the definition and sharing of a value proposition (place identity and location branding) that is recognizable and consistent with the internal local characteristics and externally aligned with the expectations of stakeholders" (Bassano et al., 2019, p. 13), but it will also promote the systematic engagement of stakeholders in the definition and in the co-creation of the system itself, in a consonance logic to provide a solid proposition.

The meeting between territory and communication emerges from the need to identify, classify, categorize, and even name places. To communicate a place, it is necessary to recognise it as an entity and attribute it an identity. Cartography or geolocation, photography or travel literature, tourist promotion or territorial development projects exert in practise the need to

communicate a place, representing it — and interpreting it (Bassano et al., 2019) — through more or less complex or semiotically rich communication symbols or codes. Hence, to a certain extent, as a communication insight, one could argue that a place is a territory that needs to be communicated. A place is a territory that becomes meaningful through communication. Therefore, territories are permanently under construction; they are built upon and through communication; communication makes places, whether by branding, promotion or public diplomacy action.

Notwithstanding, placemaking involves more than communication, it results from the contributions and interactions of territorial management and territorial communication.

There are several concepts and expressions frequently used to refer to territorial communication: place branding, territorial marketing, city branding, destination promotion. They are the visible encounter between territorial management and the communication of those territories.

Nevertheless, as words can become meaningless if used indistinctly to convey similar but different meanings, and the interaction between territorial strategic communication and place branding or marketing is probably one of the most illustrative examples, it is important to engage into further definition.

Communication is not (only) marketing. Territorial strategic communication is not territorial marketing or place branding. It is one of the tools that practitioners — territorial governors and managers, territorial marketing strategists and planners, managers of natural parks or territorial networks, mayors, presidents of parish councils, community leaders —, have at their disposal. Therefore, integrated strategic communication must always be guided by a more comprehensive strategic axis, frequently emerging from territorial management that, in turn, has in marketing one, only one, of multiple tools and components.

This particular idiosyncrasy places territorial communication in a permanent state of dependence on a set of circumstances, decisions and measures that are prior to it. And this is one of the biggest challenges of territorial communication: consistently responding to communication challenges despite of imposed constraints. This immediately implies demystifying a common assumption: communication aims to solve communication problems, not territorial problems, which in turn implies a correct and relevant

definition of communication strategy problems and objectives within the territorial management scope.

As much as this observation may sound as a disclaimer, we find it relevant. The process of questioning and reflecting on the what a place is, means or dreams to become — small "cities should be seen in terms not just of what they have, but also of what they can become" (Richards & Duif, 2019, pp. 24–25) — should be prior to the definition of a territorial strategic communication problem and to the design of the respective strategy to find a solution, but frequently the whole process only begins when the thinking about communication starts.

This happens for a number of reasons, namely the overrating of communication as panacea for territorial management problems. But looking at communication as a tactical, rapid, and spectacular response to a strategic structural problem in a territory will necessarily result in a superficial and frustrating response in the long term. Therefore, there is a need for an integrated strategic mindset to tackle territories and, subsequently, territorial communication set to stimulate, develop, and integrate different territorial dimensions, in a quest for co-intelligent (Atlee, 2017) and smart territories (Giovannella, 2014).

On the other hand, the process of thinking a territory from a communication perspective often entails participatory (Melo, 2019b) and reflective approaches that contribute to the co-creation of meaning, consensus building and negotiation, stakeholders' engagement, and the strengthening of the community' sense of place.

Theoretical Approaches and Models

Perspectives on territorial communication mirror the complexity of this field, deriving from concepts and approaches as diverse as the ones the definition of territory can entail (Fan, 2006). And they also may vary according to the dimension and type of territory — nation branding, city branding or networked territories grouped by specific criteria (geographic localization or cultural identity, for example) – as well as according to its use — destination branding, tourist promotion, residential quality of living (Insh, 2013), population increase or investment attraction (Middleton, 2011) — most certainly should be approached differently and should result in diverse communication strategies.

As strategic communication is focused on solving communication problems or on strategically using communication opportunities, territorial communication must adapt its potential to its specific needs. But how does it build its founding concepts and its functional tools?

For operational purposes we would consider the contributions of several communication conceptual universes to territorial strategic communication, namely, organizational, political, and marketing communication. All of them contribute to the construction of meaning of territories and therefore semiotic, rhetoric, persuasion, and critical discourse are interwoven in all possible approaches as transversal and powerful communication tools.

The approach of territories as organizations, embedding a structural communicative system that integrates the territory itself in a constitutive and organic way, according to the communicative constitution of organizations theory (McPhee & Zaug, 2009; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009; Taylor, 2009). It entails internal and external communication, formal and informal communication, communication fluxes and a network of constant interactions that compare with the nervous system of living bodies. At the corporation management level, communication is also recognized as a management dimension and as a tool which matches perfectly the performative output of territorial communication.

The political communication approach deals with the territory as an entity of power and inherits the long tradition of public diplomacy in a constant competition for political supremacy, resources, and reputation in the geo-political arena, involving permanent processes of repositioning and negotiations in which communication proves to be crucial (Dolea, 2015, 2018; Gilboa, 2015; Ingenhoff et al., 2018).

And the marketing approach tackles the territory as a mix of product, service, and experience to be consumed, used, and lived by the respective target, public or stakeholder. The communication role within this perspective is frequently how to make the territory tangible, recognised and desirable.

Branding is the visible encounter between territorial management and territorial marketing, thus territorial communication. Therefore, we would consider place branding and promotion a relevant field of work to assess the contributes of strategic communication to the management and development of territories.

"In its interaction with the territory, strategic communication plays a role in promoting, building brand, image and reputation where it constantly reinvents itself" (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015, p. 1369). Present across all levels of city marketing (Azevedo, 2017), for example, "communication adds immaterial value to the territory, materialized in its attractiveness, as a driver of notoriety, action and the desire to visit, invest or reside" (Melo, 2019b, p. 245).

Since the 70s a series of models have been developed with the intention of tackling territorial branding and communication. Although the basics of branding (Aaker, 1996) apply to territories, some specificities have been found and developed, centred on different components of a territorial brand. Their relevance varies with the purpose of their use, whether they have a marketing promotion emphasis as tourist destination branding, for example, or a more managerial or strategic mind frame, as repositioning a territory in the mind of political decision makers, residents or investors.

Pobirchenko et al. (2019) list a number of territorial branding models, high-lighting for instance the strategic territorial brand management model (Hanna & Rowley, 2013, 2015). Hanna and Rowley (2015), developed an integration attempt of existing models, directed to practitioners, taking into account tangible (e.g., infrastructures, landscape) and intangible (e.g., services, infrastructure) territorial features that result into functional and experienced attributes. They also focus on the construction of the brand taking into account the relationship between leadership and stakeholders and the need to a permanent assessment of the brand, articulating the brand architecture and identity with the brand communication in order to achieve a desired brand perception (Hanna & Rowley, 2013).

The territorial brand as an expression of a country's competitive identity (Anholt, 2007, 2012) is set in the classic Anholt's hexagon model (Anholt 2010), considering six structural features:

1. domestic and foreign policy;

2. business and investment;

3. export brands;

4. culture and heritage;

5. tourism;

6. people.

Other models built on a relational network perspective (Hankinson, 2004, 2015). Graham Hankinson (2004) developed a tourist destination brand model centred on the brand's core (personality, positioning, and reality) and developed through four relationships axes: infrastructures, services, consumers, and media. Communication wise this model is quite specific: on media relationships the author distinguishes between organic communications and induced or marketing communication, including publicity, public relations, and advertising (Hankinson, 2004).

Territorial image is the frame of Kavaratzis' model (Kavaratzis, 2005) as well as the 4D model of the country image (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015) that is frequently applied on comparative studies.

Trends and Inspirations

From themed park territories to authentic cultural identity rescue examples, the achievements of territorial communication (and its failures) are as multiple and diverse as one can imagine. Over the years strategic communication applied to the territory has been following trends in other areas of communication, namely, organizational or tourism communication; shifting towards a more integrated (Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015) and critical perspective of communication: "it is time to go beyond the prescription of 'how to' promote the country, to address instead the hard 'why' questions, thus problematizing and contextualizing the phenomenon, its implications and, above all, its impact at social level" (Dolea, 2015, p. 275). Current trends in territorial communication embed a multidirectional and multiplatform mix, less imposing and more involving, more dynamic, and more participatory communication (Kavaratzis, 2017; Kavaratzis, & Kalandides, 2015).

The Less Walked Track

Small is meaningful, exotic is attractive, thus they have a communicative power. Revisiting small or unknown places and putting strategic communication attention to them seems to be a trend (Hendrychová, 2015; Kotkin, 2012; Richards & Duif, 2019) driven both by worn out subjects and models and by emerging possibilities (Bell, 2017), such as a focus on the creative and circular economy or on smart cities (Melo, 2019a). Moreover,

a consistent wave of "back to basics" trending lifestyles, a shift on the definitions of quality of living and an overall quest for authenticity and reconnection through community building and territorial co-intelligence (Melo, 2019b) helps to build the right setting.

The challenge is, again, to distillate creatively the differentiating traces of territories, and keep them that way in the longer term, after the campaign, action or communication program is over.

Storytelling and the Search for Territorial Consonance

Storytelling is a powerful territorial strategic communication tool. Defined as intrinsically human, it performs as a way to make sense of a place. Whether through origin myths or through experiential narratives, storytelling is used to provide shared meaning, to fuel coherence and unity to a territory.

> Territorial consonance can be observed from the internal and external point of view. The harmony/consonance between the internal components of the system refers to the ability to share resources to achieve the common goal of sustainable and participatory development. This potential depends on the structural compatibility between the components of equipment (which already exist) and systemic components (which can be attracted and connected to the local system), or from collaborative participation. The latter characterizes the external consonance with indigenous systems and it is not necessarily derived from structural compatibility of the territorial system with the expectations and needs of stakeholders (investors, funders, users, etc.). In this perspective, the consonance ensures a shared understanding of the context, which is an essential prerequisite for realizing synergy of relational vocation and identity. (Bassano et al., 2019, pp. 12-13)

Strategic communication wise, storytelling is also a reflexive activity with an impact on territories. White et al. (2018) refer to self-representations as a constitutive part of country brands.

In order to produce a story, place stakeholders have to go through an "autobiographic analysis" (Bassano et al., 2019; Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2015) on what a place is, on how it defines itself in terms of culture and personality, as well as how it wants to be recognized and understood, therefore setting crucial strategic communication axes such as positioning and desired image.

"Place storytelling enables strategic communication that supports sustainable competitive advantage" (Bassano et al., 2019, p. 10) and it comprises a value co-creation process that needs to follow specifications, namely: a service systems perspectives make storytelling more effective; governance is crucial to manage storytelling if it mediates stakeholder expectations; managing storytelling in a local service system to enhance brand competitiveness (Bassano et al., 2019).

Place stories should be based on unique and distinctive factors conveying the essence of a place to its stakeholders, to strengthen the ties that bind people to the place, to successfully position a place against competitors (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2003, as cited in Bassano et al., 2019, p. 12).

Furthermore, storytelling is a functional communication tool for territories for it has potential to make communication more appealing and engaging.

> People like to tell stories, and people enjoy listening to them even though there may be scepticism surrounding the truth of what is being said. People who live in a place have considerable experience to share with others and through digital media they can be encouraged to share their stories. (Bassano et al., 2019, p. 18)

Participatory Territorial Communication

Because both visitors, residents, commuters, investors or governors must have an empathic interaction with the territorial brand and with the place' communication strategies, they have to recognize its value and feel involved. Therefore, setting and promoting inclusive communication approaches are in order, from Berlin (Colomb & Kalandides, 2010) to Bogotá (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015) or Seoul (Joo & Seo, 2018).

Stakeholders based branding (Azevedo, 2017; García et al., 2012; Houghton & Stevens, 2011) is a sign of that trend. Kavaratzis (2012) concludes that there has been a shift on the role of stakeholders in territorial communication and that effective place brands are rooted in their involvement. The interactions dynamics of the mental associations to places has been identified as participatory and co-constructive dimension of place brands (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015).

Zenker and Erfgen (2014) offer a conceptual approach for place managers to include residents in an operational perspective and Joo and Seo (2018) take

a step further introducing a "'transformative-enhancing' dimension to the existing 'external–internal' city-branding framework" (p. 239) and highlight the political dimension of strategic communication of places as "city branding is no longer solely a neoliberal marketing exercise, but a political project of policy change" (p. 239). In the same line, Kavaratzis (2017) identifies a participatory model with five interrelated stages, that moves away "from the emphasis on 'signs and logos'" to develop co-created, "inclusive and participatory type of place brands and a place branding process that considers, embraces, facilitates and encourages interaction and fluidity leading to stakeholder engagement" (Kavaratzis, 2017, p. 102) towards place branding that plays a functional role as a place development tool with pragmatic communication implications:

> coordination is necessary (…) although frequently lacking. This is also crucial because the link between locals and visitors means that all activities (even promotion) are addressing both audiences simultaneously, so separation is neither effective nor desirable. Even if there are activities with a clear orientation towards outsiders, such as an advertising campaign, the locals are the ones who will have to 'enact' and realise whatever promise is made by the campaign. (Kavaratzis, 2017, p. 104)

Advantages of participatory processes of brand building involve direct benefit to stakeholders and a perception of proximity.

> The place brand 'comes closer' to the residents because it is not seen as imposed from above (the authorities) or from the outside (some highly paid consultant) but based on the reality of the place as this is lived by the place's residents and experienced by its visitors. This is very important as it leads to the feeling of brand ownership by locals and tourists. A brand developed through the participatory process has significantly higher chances than a traditionally developed brand to be 'owned' by its end users. Locals and visitors are much more likely to share the feeling of ownership and participation. (Kavaratzis, 2017, pp. 104-105)

After all "an effective city brand has to be both intelligible and credible to local people, effectively the owners if not the managers of the brand, who should be engaged at each stage of the branding process" (Houghton & Stevens, 2011, p. 46). Nevertheless, this may seem a too idealistic proposal

to practitioners in the field who have to deal with short time decisions, non-inclusive leaderships, political turnarounds, and endless limitations of budget and resources (Hankinson, 2015).

In the same category we could include strategies for community empowerment and for strengthening the sense of belonging to a place. Houghton and Stevens (2011) claim:

> there is growing evidence that the most effective city branding initiatives involve and energize a wide range of local players to craft and convey the new message about the place. Equally, there is a weight of evidence that initiatives that do not engage, and in some cases alienate, local stakeholders are almost destined to fail. (...) effective stakeholder engagement is crucial for the acceptance of city branding as an important and respected discipline within urban development and management. The more people are engaged in effective and productive city branding strategies, the more the scepticism and suspicion that surrounds it can be countered. (p. 46)

Ethical implications need also to be addressed — effective participation, representation (Melo, 2019a; Rodkin, 2018) and ownership of territorial brands being some of the issues (Aitken & Campelo, 2011; Melo, 2019b; Melo & Balonas, 2019).

In recent years there is a growing shift in research that indicates the preoccupation with the communities that inhabit territories, taking them into consideration in the making of places through communication, whether enhancing the need to engage them in the process — "the failure to engage is particularly problematic given the emphasis that so many areas now place on nurturing local creativity as the source of their new identity" (Houghton & Stevens, 2011, p. 46) — or identifying it as a key success factor of territorial development:

> placemaking has become an important tool for driving urban development that is sensitive to the needs of communities. (...) the development of creative placemaking practices that can help to link small cities to external networks, stimulate collaboration and help them make the most of the opportunities presented by the knowledge economy. (Richards & Duif, 2019, p. II)

The same authors draw from a series of small cities examples and argue that the adoption of more strategic, holistic placemaking strategies that

engage all stakeholders can be a more successful alternative than copying bigger places, as it is from the shared resources, expectations and meaning of territories that a relevant vision can emerge:

> Small Cities should be seen in terms not just of what they have, but also of what they can become (…) this requires ambition, having a big dream to follow, and also making effective use of the resources that the city can muster on its own, or obtain through partnership and networking. This strategy should be consistent with the DNA of the city, which can give meaning to its programs for locals and outsiders (Richards & Duif, 2019, pp. 24 – 25).

Furthermore, community-based ownership and co-creation of place brands proves to be an asset in brand equity. Aitken and Campelo (2011) propose a four R's model — rights, roles, relationships, and responsibilities — to establish ownership and a sense of place with promising outputs: "generating a model that reflects the social ontology of a place (…) will lead to authenticity (brand essence), commitment from stakeholders, and brand sustainability in the context of place branding" (Aitken & Campelo, 2011, p. 930).

Innovative Cases

Territorial communication is a territorial management tool whose effectiveness is fundamental. In the struggle for differentiation, for the never seen before, innovative strategies can be truly inspiring. We leave here some exemplary cases in which, in one way or another, the creativity and the innovative factor was remarkable.

The Village Where Nothing Ever Happens

Miravete de la Sierra, "el pueblo en el que nunca pasa nada" (the village where nothing ever happens; Tomás Fuster, 2018), is a paradigmatic case that demonstrates the potential of strategic communication in placemaking.

A curious aspect of this example is that the initial objective had nothing to do with territories or places, but with the need to demonstrate the communicative potential of thematic television channels in promoting a product and reaching audiences. That was the challenge that Shackleton agency took on, starting by looking for an unknown location in Spain, and designing a strategy to make that place well known. The village had only 12 inhabitants and they became the protagonists of the entire campaign

(and even merchandising figures): "in this way, its twelve inhabitants were converted into objects of worship, to the point that Internet users can buy souvenirs of these 'grandparents' turned into characters. Replicas of the inhabitants are sold" (Miravete de la Sierra, 2021, Section Curiosidades).

The strategy focused on storytelling and integrated communication mix that included four TV spots aired exclusively on thematic cable channels, and a site where visitors could take a digital tour to the village, make reservations, make a donation to the recovery of the old church, and play games related with the lifestyle of the place including the possibility to participate in the supposed "I International Open of Goat Milking". This generated more than 50,000 visits to the site in the first 3 days of the campaign, a wave of publicity, and massive earned media (Cuende Infometrics, 2008).

Since the main objective was to demonstrate the potential of thematic television channels to reach an audience it worked well, but place branding wise, it was more a coincidence or a side effect. Nevertheless, the impact it had in the media, there was an actual impact in the village, that can be observed years after, both in the demographic evolution — from 12 residents in 2008 (Ramirez, 2008) to 31 in 2019 (Miravete de la Sierra, 2021) — and through the user generated content of visitors in the digital world in a never-ending storytelling of the place (Nuria Garcia, 2013), one of the place branding dimensions of the contemporary (Burmann, 2010).

The Swedish Landmark

Sweden's nation branding has been scoring points for the pioneering initiatives to promote the country and what emerge as core values for the country: democracy, freedom of expression, and a number of *typically* Sweden stereotypes. Not only the key messages but also the communicational attitude help to build a country image.

Since the case of the Swedish embassy in second life (Bengtsson, 2011), followed by "the world's most democratic Twitter account" (Christensen, 2013), Sweden has been setting a pattern — "heritage of Swedish nation branding initiatives" (Pamment & Cassinger, 2018, p. 561) — (and expectations) when it comes to bold country branding (Christensen, 2013; Pamment & Cassinger, 2018).

Transferring the nation communicative drive to common citizens seems to be a democratic practice that entails one of the core values of the brand.

> Sweden is the first country in the world to hand over its official Twitter account to its citizens. Ordinary Swedes are @Sweden one week at a time. Tweet by tweet, the image of Sweden is built: dynamic, innovative and deeply human. No censorship, no limits. (Christensen, 2013, p. 34)

The project "Curators of Sweden", an initiative of the Swedish Institute and Visit Sweden, handed over the country's official Twitter account to citizens, transforming them in communications managers and actors at a time. "As the project website states (…) aims to present the country of Sweden through the mix of skills, experiences and opinions it actually consists of. By means of the various curators' narrations, not one Sweden is conveyed, but several" (Christensen, 2013, p. 34).

More recently, "The Swedish number", 2016 (Pamment & Cassinger, 2018) sets on the idea of freedom of expression, another core value of the brand. Sweden became the first country to have its own phone number, that could be answered by average Swedes (and even the prime minister), who would participate in the action. "Brand Sweden has established a set of national identity resources that may be leveraged through public participation, vast publicity drives via media technologies and through mimicry of the national interest (…) nation brands influence identity politics via media technologies" (Pamment & Cassinger, 2018, p. 561).

Sweden is an example of communicational success, with several efficiency and creative prizes, including Cannes Lions, that comes in line with stereotyping and representational fitting of nation brands. Furthermore, some of the communication actions counterpart previous criticism to nation branding, as "while the brand should speak with the voice of the people, and the people with the voice of the brand, nation branding does not allow for citizens to play a significant role in the branding process" (Widler, 2007, p. 144).

Tactical Opportunity Insights

Why and when to communicate? Like in many other fields being on the right time in the right place is often the key for success. The next examples highlight the vision of place communication practitioners who saw the opportunity to communicate and managed to take it, even if it emerged from or due to a crisis.

"The best job in the world", 2009, is a classic example of innovation and creativity (Govers, 2015). Set by the Queensland Tourism to boost worldwide

notoriety to its territory it innovated through the insight, by transforming what could another paradise island destination campaign into an irrefusable job opportunity: Caretaker for the islands of the Great Barrier Reef.

It was rightfully promoted as a job ad in the classified sections and sites, and became an extremely successful communication action: "more than 35,000 applications were received from over 200 countries. The campaign generated more than $430 million in estimated global public relations value, with approximately 8.6 million website visits and garnered international news coverage" (Tourism & Events Queensland, n.d.). Fully prized with several Cannes awards, it ranked "8th on the international list for the world's top 50 PR [public relations] stunts of all time by international PR company, Taylor Herring" (Tourism & Events Queensland, n.d.).

"Portugal will never leave you — #Brelcome" is the name of a campaign promoted by Visit Portugal — Turismo de Portugal, the Portuguese tourist authority, in 2019, coinciding with the political moment of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.

It was an opportunity to reinforce the positioning of Portugal as a destination for the very significant British market — 17% (Santos, 2019) and part of a tourism contingency plan. With an emotional appeal, starring beautiful views of Portugal, reminding that both countries endure the oldest alliance in the world and playing with the words "brexit" and "welcome", the campaign states: "dear Britons, life is about uncertainty. (…) Brexit may be the word of the day, but from us you will always be hearing Become. Portugal will never leave you" (Visit Portugal, 2019, 00:00:01).

In the Spring of 2020, when the pandemic emergency locked down countries, closed borders throughout Europe, and prevented tourists to travel, the Portuguese tourism authority repositioned its communication to the inner market. In the Summer, emergency measures were alleviated, but the possibility of traveling between countries remained limited. Matching governmental appeals to consumers to boost the local economy and a public eager for freedom after the sanitary lockdown, the campaign "#TuPodes" (#YouCan) brought in an insight of privilege and empowerment to the Portuguese: "now that you can, go. (…) go through all that is ours. Visit Portugal" (Visit Portugal, 2020). But the message goes further, highlighting that — unlike anybody else —, they could travel through the "best destination in the world". This is consistent with the fact that the country was voted as the best world destination for 3 years and a candidate for 2020 (Santos, 2020),

as has been systematically awarded as the "European leading destination" in the last 4 years (World Travel Awards, n.d.).

Both campaigns result from a fruitful partnership between the Portuguese tourist board and the Portuguese creative agency, Partners, that produced already the first QR code in the typical Portuguese stone sidewalks (Filipe, 2012) and put a 30 m wave in New York's Times Square to promote Portugal as a unique surf destination and reached to the Creative Cannes Festival (Durães, 2019).

Final Notes

Strategic communication applied to territories has been evolving in parallel with other trends in communication, from unidirectional top-down to multi-direction horizontal and bottom-up communication, from a structural mindset to a more organic and holistic approach, from a marketing operational tool to a management asset with an inclusive drive.

Throughout the years, different theories, concepts, and models have been established with the aim to solve territorial communication problems and eventually finding solutions to many other afflictions: economic growth, tourism attraction, community integration, ecological behaviour change, citizen driven causes.

Strategic communication has proved to be a powerful tool of territorial management as well as a political, economic and social driver, with contributions from other communication fields such as development, behaviour change, community, and participatory communication as well as marketing, branding, in what could be assumed as the art and techniques of placemaking.

Due to its pragmatic nature and widespread consequences, frequently evaluable only in the long run, territorial strategic communication should be used constructively and consciously. As it frequently deals with communities and with very complex implications, it should always have the public interest in mind. It has proved its potential and efficiency, so it is a powerful an integrative mean to build stronger, more resilient, and more sustainable territories. And, last but not the least, strategic communication application to territories can be a resourceful and motivating driver to discover very powerful territorial visions.

Acknowledgements

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Conveyed Religion
A Strategic Communication Proposal for Religious Institutions

José Gabriel Andrade

Communication and Society Research Centre, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9778-5865

Abstract

Contemporary society has fostered a period of transformation in religious communication. Globalisation propels a communicated religion that forges a dialogue with its followers and with society as a whole. In this chapter, we aim to describe the existing situation, analysing religions as a social fact in a global society that is shaped by the movement of people and the proliferation of (traditional and new) media channels. From this perspective, religious institutions are viewed as living organisations that must accept the current context and need to develop a strategic communication plan. The chapter begins with a review of a theoretical corpus on religion, communication, and society, intersecting various reflections with theories of strategic communication and crisis communication. It aims to respond to the following question: how can religious institutions use strategic communication in the contemporary world? This is a qualitative investigation, empirically supported by interviews with two prominent figures from the Catholic Church, as a case study. The principal results of this research, based on the observation of contemporary society, include the importance of correct use of new media for strategic communication, and continuous training in order to improve strategic communication plans, that should operate on a continuous basis.

Keywords

religion, strategic communication, crisis communication, Church, Catholic Church, media, social media

Religion and Contemporaneity: The Media and the Movement of People

One of the main characteristics of organised religion is that it fosters social integration. For Émile Durkheim (1912/1989), social facts exist regardless of what each individual thinks and does. He identified three differentiating characteristics of social facts: coercivity, exteriority, and generality. On this basis, he considered religion to be a social fact, that is external to the individual, universal, and coercive.

> Religion is a solidary system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is, separate, interdicted; beliefs and practices that unite in the same moral community, called the Church, all those who adhere

> to them. The second element that occupies a place in our definition is that it is no less essential than the first is the fact that the idea of religion is inseparable from the idea of Church, this means that religion must be an eminently collective form. (Durkheim, 1912/1989, p. 37)

In this context, ritual can be viewed as a mechanism that reinforces social integration. Durkheim (1912/1989) concluded that the substantial function of religion is the creation, reinforcement, and maintenance of social bonds. As long as society exists, religion will persist, and will effectively reinforce social bonds (Miklos, 2012).

By contrast, Vilém Flusser (1967) claims that contemporary, modernising thinking, which results from the technological era, deforms the fertile religious soil, by suppressing the latent desire for mythical realisation.

> Times and religiously poor society, such as the time to end and the technological society, repress and stifle individual capacity for religiosity. (...) Another consequence of this repression is the deviation of the religious ardour from the sacred dimension to the boring profanity of the world that results in pseudo-religibilities such as the deification of money and the State. (Flusser, 1967, p. 13)

Flusser (1967) suggested that analysis of the strategic communication of religion in the contemporary era reveals that:

> the present moment can therefore be characterised by the attempt, conscious or not, to give new horizons to our religiosity. As individuals and as a society we are looking for a new vehicle to replace traditional religions and open up our latent religiosity. (p. 20)

On the other hand, Arjun Appadurai (1996) discusses global cultural processes, on the basis of two key aspects — social media and global migrations — which, when mutually articulated, impel the imagination as the force that shapes modern subjectivity. Inspired by Benedict Anderson (1991), for whom the emergence of mass print communication had a decisive role in shaping the imagination of the modern nation, spreading it beyond the west, Appadurai proposes that electronic media is achieving the same for the formation of a post-national political imaginary. Its dynamics are characterised by a type of circulation of images and of people that is not confined by local, national or regional borders. Articulated through global communication networks, these media are based on a wide repertoire of

oral, visual, and aural communication, as well as a varied set of audiovisual genres and languages that connect and allude to one another.

Global migration shapes what Appadurai (1996) calls "the public spheres of the diaspora", or vast and highly diverse, irregularly transnational spaces that have become the crucibles of a post-national political order (Ilharco, 2014). The formation of large imagined communities is driven by electronic media and the images of the world that they project, configuring what Appadurai (1996) called "media landscapes". These help to constitute narratives of the other and proto-narratives of possible lives (Appadurai, 1996). The fluidity and breadth of the circulation of texts in these media foster a cascade effect, which engenders unexpected ethnic implosions in different parts of the world (Appadurai, 1996). How this occurs depends radically on the context in which they take place. For this reason, the repercussions of paedophile abuse in the Catholic Church, anti-Semitic speeches and even the 9/11 attacks have led to varied effects, depending on the places where they have reverberated.

In this context, the principal objective of strategic communication of religious institutions may be the promotion and expansion of dialogue with the world, seeking to preserve their public image in contemporary society. In this way it should be possible to create a differential, which leads society to identify with the institution that forms part of it, while also enabling the latter to attract new "audiences". This type of communication, through the media, must offer a privileged channel between religion and society.

Considering the contributions of Émile Durkheim (1912/1989) on religion, Vilém Flusser (1967) on the media, and Arjun Appadurai (1996) on the movement of people, we realise that contemporary media outlets constitute a "new vehicle", to which Flusser (1967) refers. We propose strategic communication for religious institutions in this dialogue between them and the media. This could be an important tool for sharing knowledge and affirming the democratic space in which we live.

In 2016, a report was presented in the United Kingdom about the place of religion in public life, which revealed a non-positive picture of the relationship between the media and religion. Although misrepresentations in the media generally concern muslims, the biggest complaints are actually presented by christians. Abby Day (2016) argues that the reason for these complaints may be related to fundamental, ancient, and even ontological issues: "recent attention to the mainstream media reveals that the relationship between

religion and the media seems to be breaking up" (para. 2). In a 2-year inves-
tigation into the role of religion in public life, it was reported that virtually
everyone involved expressed concern about how religion and belief are
portrayed by the media.

> There are a number of failings with how religion is represented in the
> mainstream media, many well documented. The media needs to be
> held to account, for example, for incorrect stories about particular re-
> ligious groups. The Independent Press Standards Organisation needs
> to be tougher and make sure that corrections and retractions are giv-
> en weight equal to the original erroneous article. (Day, 2016, para. 4)

The strategic communication of religion should reflect a solid knowledge of
contemporaneity on the part of those who produce it, given that audiences
are no longer passive agents and have become active elements in building
communities. As a result, strategic communication must contribute to the
creation of its own identity. This identity must include principles that help
the faithful and also the entire globalised society to (re)learn the values of
a specific religion. In the digital space, will there be a virtual community
that can help society?

Anita Day and Guy Golan (2010) have identified increased tension between
the faithful and media outlets:

> media and religion are two concepts that can be challenging to part-
> ner: religion is frequently misrepresented in media for a wide variety
> of reasons, whether as a result of mistakenly held beliefs or by drama-
> tizing religion to sell newspapers or attract viewers. (p. 120)

According to Draper and Park (2010):

> religious stereotypes pervade all forms of media and all types of reli-
> gions, from the portrayals of Eastern religions seen in Kung Fu Panda
> and Avatar, which conflate diverse faiths such as Buddhism, Taoism,
> and Confucianism into one 'mystical' tradition, to the action-packed
> portrayals of Christianity seen in The Da Vinci Code. At the same time,
> many religious groups see media as inherently secular and view new
> media as a threat to traditional religion. (p. 433)

Because of this complex relationship, it is important to be aware of how
media outlets often stereotype religion, as well as the most common reli-
gious issues covered in contemporary media.

Bearing in mind that Judaism, Islamism, and, especially, Christianism are the three most prominent religions in European media, the following subchapters will explore issues related to how Christianism, especially the Catholic Church, uses communication strategy. However, since many of these issues are relevant to all religions, these subchapters can also help individuals of other religious backgrounds to better understand the complex ways in which religion is addressed in the media. Thus, we propose to analyse the difference between the strategic communication of religious institutions and not only to deal with informative or persuasive communication.

> The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young. Social networks are the result of human interaction, but for their part they also reshape the dynamics of communication which builds relationships. (Benedictus XVI, 2013, para. 5)

Strategic Communication of Religion

After analysing the role of religion in contemporary society and exploring the dialogue between the media and religion, we will explore the strategic communication of religious institutions, with the aim of identifying possible ways forward. In this context, it is essential to understand the attitudes of religious institutions as well as their positions in relation to media communication. One of the biggest user groups of new media are young people who are also viewed by different religious institutions as a source of hope and, at the same time, a major future challenge. The communication strategy of an institution is essential to determine its success in the transmission of a message, which must promote the values that govern and often inspire people's lives. Currently, there are several ways to communicate and capture society's attention. However, to outline a communication strategy, it is essential to observe the attitudes that individuals demonstrate towards the institution and its communication. We can highlight, as an example, the orientation that the Catholic Church presented in 2013:

> at times the gentle voice of reason can be overwhelmed by the din of excessive information and it fails to attract attention which is given instead to those who express themselves in a more persuasive manner. The social media thus need the commitment of all who are conscious of the value of dialogue, reasoned debate and logical argumentation; of people who strive to cultivate forms of discourse and

expression which appeal to the noblest aspirations of those engaged in the communication process. (Benedictus XVI, 2013, para. 4)

The use of different communicative models has evolved in tandem with the way that communication has been viewed by religious institutions. Until relatively recently, there was what could be identified as an asymmetric one-way model. Communication between the Church and its followers took place during religious services and celebrations or through the publication of documents (letters, commemorative messages, among others) and speeches that expressed the position of the religious institution on a subject and thereby sought to give guidelines to the faithful or celebrate a particular religious event. This enabled us to watch the management of crisis communication in the religious space. But crisis communication is now managed differently. With the development of new information and communication technologies and in the wake of changes introduced by the internet, new forms of participation in public opinion have emerged. Through social networks, which are increasingly popular, such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube, individuals can analyse facts, exchange information, and give opinions or criticise a specific comment, news item or event. "The development of social networks calls for commitment: people are engaged in building relationships and making friends, in looking for answers to their questions and being entertained, but also in finding intellectual stimulation and sharing knowledge and know-how" (Benedictus XVI, 2013, para. 3).

Crisis management in communication currently involves paying attention to all the information that circulates about a specific organisation or institution. An institution can experience an unsettled situation and, consequently, have a damaged reputation if it fails to identify and analyse the main news and opinions about itself on the internet. It also needs to know how to monitor and control its pages on social networks, deal with its online audiences, and measure the impact of new technologies on the management of institutional crises. Thus, it is necessary to identify communicative models and schemes used to establish the various types of communication, according to the type of relationship created between the interlocutors.

Is it currently important to observe and identify the type of professions or services that respond to crisis communication management in religion? The importance of this profession is related to the fact that it gives institutions the chance to reposition their image and strengthen it with the public. It is important to understand what structures exist in these institutions and their respective complexity. What is the significance of these

communication structures within religious institutions? Who is in charge? Which strategies, influences and objectives do they manage? Are there "no answers"? As stated in *A Igreja e as Outras Religiões – Diálogo e Missão* (The Church and Other Religions – Dialogue and Mission; Arinze & Zago, 1984):

> in interpersonal dialogue, man experiences his limits, but also the possibility of overcoming them, he discovers that he does not have the truth perfectly and totally, but that he can confidently walk towards him, together with other (...). The religious experiences and divisions themselves can be enriched in this process of confrontation. (para. 27)

In this manner we will be able to analyse religious institutions as organisations:

> organizations are the dominant social units of complex societies, whether industrial or information. Today, we are born in hospitals, we eat in restaurants, we work in companies, public departments, non-profit institutions and, when we die, we turn to the church and the funeral home, all organizations, that penetrate all aspects of contemporary life. (Bilhim, 2009 , p. 19)

According to João Bilhim (2009), "organizational communication covers all forms of communication used by the organization to relate and interact with its audiences" (p. 361). He suggests that communication in organisations fulfils four main functions:

- controls, formally and informally, the behaviour of the members of an organisation;

- motivates employees by informing them about what they should do and by giving them feedback regarding their accomplishment;

- meets the needs of affiliation that every human being has;

- provides the necessary information for decision-making.

Organisations are responsible for their respective environments and all those affected by them. They must therefore take into account that a problem that appears in their midst can lead to unpleasant and risky situations, not only internally but externally. The possibility of a crisis arising in an

institution is sometimes ignored by it. However, no institution, regardless of its sector of activity, size, reputation, or market share, can be oblivious to possible crises. There are certain organisations which, due to their sector of activity, are prone to potential crisis, for example, oil, chemical, pharmaceutical, nuclear or transport industries. This is also true for the Church as an institution. These organisations, when faced with a crisis, cannot manage it poorly or deny the most susceptible facts, which may highlight their vulnerability. On the other hand, there are organisations that, while not being so vulnerable, seek to be prepared to face and reduce the chances of having to confront major crises. The emergence of crises in organisations is associated with social evolution, which leads to the institutionalisation of organisations from modernity to the contemporary era.

To face a crisis, an organisation must have a balanced working group, including top management and those responsible for different areas, depending on the type of institution, normally including the legal department, production, finance, logistics, resources, and, obviously, communication. This response to crises shows why a company should invest in a crisis management plan, conceptualise the word crisis and divide it into several types (Andrade, 2008).

The image is an important factor in the contemporary era, where information arises and is mixed with entertainment and networked connections, which reduce the organisation's hierarchical levels and foster greater proximity to audiences. In this context of cyberspace, technology is established as a form of demassification, that brings us new possibilities in terms of segmentation, productivity issues, cost and structure reductions, and change of the dissemination processes motivated by the possibility of simultaneous sending information, overcoming geographical and time constraints and new communication processes. The internet is the supreme example of these new capabilities and allows us to identify and systematise some of the new characteristics of this reality. The arrival of new technologies has delivered constant access to all types of information, anywhere in the world. This access has advantages and disadvantages when managing a crisis. Information technologies and new media outlets have accelerated this process. If we used to have very little time to do things, today we have even less. Crisis management was therefore easier 20 or 30 years ago than it is now.

The situational theory of crisis communication, by Coombs and Holladay (2002), is a useful starting point to understand this evolutionary framework and is based on analysis of the organisation's responsibility for the event

that has generated a crisis. Through the development and occurrences of new events throughout the crisis, the public collects information that they interpret from their point of view and form their own opinions about the organisation. Coombs's (2007) situational crisis communication theory is based on attribution theory which studies how people attribute causes to events and behaviour, that is, how audiences or individuals grant certain and different degrees of blame for the negative events that happen, thereby creating a love or hate relationship with the presumed perpetrator. Situational theory of crisis communication advocates the use of crisis communication strategies to safeguard an organisation's reputation (Coombs, 2007).

In the case of the Catholic Church, Santiago de la Cierva (2008), in his study on crisis management, summarises the concept of crisis:

> a crisis is an unstable and uncertain situation, which rises in intensity and causes serious damage to the material and immaterial assets of the organization, and especially to the relationship with its primary public, because they consider the organization in any way responsible for the event. (p. 40)

The same author classifies crises into six main types: natural, technological, and confrontational crises, and crises caused by malevolence, bad management, and illegal conduct. Each type of crisis has its own specificities that the author corroborates with some examples.

> Natural crises: they do not have causes attributable to man, consequently the institutional responsibilities are limited to the degree of prudence in foreseeing them and preparing for their arrival. b) Technological crises, caused by the non-use of an industrial technique: a leak of toxic material, collective food contamination, etc. They are more serious because the public attribute them to human errors and because the emotional component is strong: public opinion does not evaluate risk with the same parameters that experts use. c) Crisis of confrontation: caused by a person or a collective that opposes the institution in a public way, and which claims to mobilize the population to prevent the activities of the institution or reduce its operational scope. d) Crisis of malevolence: caused by illegal or external criminal interventions, such as kidnapping, robbery, theft of developing projects, etc. e) Crises resulting from incorrect values in the organization: they occur when executives seek a high short-term return at the cost of social benefit and the expense of the other

> public in the organization: for example, when the board of directors of a company decides to disproportionately high fees. f) Crisis due to illicit conduct by its managers: for example, the violence of a teacher against minors in his charge. In journalistic terms: "scandals", illegal behavior that provokes outrage and reproach in public opinion. (Cierva, 2008, pp. 41–42)

Santiago de la Cierva (2008) considers that it is necessary to have a crisis preparation process within the Church, in other words, a well-structured crisis plan, identical to that of a company. This plan must then be followed literally by the Church before, during, and after the crisis: "the crisis plan can be defined as the operational program that an institution must follow during and after a crisis to avoid or mitigate its negative effects" (Cierva, 2008, p. 144). Indeed, the Church seems to be already taking its first steps in the field of crisis management. A "Church Response" space is already available on the Vatican website , where the Church responds in the first person to sensitive issues that may harm the Church's reputation, in particular the question of child abuse. Santiago de la Cierva (2008) stresses the importance of the website for crisis management: "the website is institutional is certainly useful, with a curable use: badly set up, instead of helping to solve problems it could do - for its instant diffusion and worldwide scope - more harm than good" (p. 196).

Perspectives of Strategic Religious Communication: The Catholic Church

Participation in the project "Organizational communication media training for church institutions" developed at the Portuguese Catholic University between 2012 and 2013, made it possible to collect the interviews that we present herein as empirical material for this analysis. The observation of these interviews originated a master's dissertation in the field of communication sciences at the Portuguese Catholic University entitled: *Gestão e Comunicação de Crise na Igreja Católica: Uma Reflexão no Contexto da Sociedade de Informação* (Crisis Management and Communication in the Catholic Church: A Reflection in the Context of the Information Society; Pereira, 2014). From the set of interviews that were carried out on the Portuguese reality in the strategic communication of the Catholic Church, we selected the material of the empirical investigation those provided by two senior figures responsible for communication of the Catholic Church, in Portugal. They are Pedro Gil, spokesman for Opus Dei, the international leader in the

Catholic Church's Communication, and Father Nuno Rosário, director of the *Voz da Verdade* newspaper of the patriarchate of Lisbon, both of whom are profoundly aware of the Portuguese context (Pereira, 2014).

In 2005, José Marques de Melo (2005) highlighted the relations between the Catholic Church and the field of communication. In this sense, it is important to identify, in a synthetic manner, the three phases, defined in the path of the Church's relationship with communication. These phases are located in the context of the new instruments of symbolic reproduction, that began with the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, whereby new means of transmitting knowledge have been absorbed, used, and instrumentalised according to the communication paradigm that prevailed at the time. These phases observe the historical changes that have forced transformations in the organisational structure, both in society and in the Church, highlighting the institution's confrontation with the media (Melo, 2005).

The first phase is characterised by the Church's behaviour oriented towards the exercise of censorship and repression. It corresponds to an extensive and intense period, implicitly related to the Inquisition. During this period, the Church was the intermediary between the production of knowledge (not just the theological) and its diffusion in society.

The second phase is related to profound changes determined by the acceptance, albeit somewhat reluctantly, of new media. Control over the press, surveillance over cinema, and radio marked the Church's trajectory during this period. However, society, which was changing rapidly, impelled the Church to "adapt to the new times", forcing ecclesial behaviour to change, and beginning to accept electronic media, while maintaining its misgivings (Melo, 2005). The Church began to use the media to spread its messages.

Finally, there is the third phase, that is developing at a fast pace, associated with the speed of social and technological changes. During this period, it has become imperative for the church "not to fall behind" and with an urgent need to adapt to the contemporary world, that emerges from Vatican II (Melo, 2005). Concerning communication, there has been a sudden change in direction, when compared to the second phase. The Church assumes that it is necessary to evangelise and use modern means of communication. It admits that the technology of electronic reproduction can increase the penetration of the ecclesial message. The strategic communication of religion must be able to create a differential, which leads followers to identify with

the institution of which they are part and attract new audiences. This type of communication must be a privileged channel between the Church and society, through the media. The Church has shown its concern towards the ambivalent role of the media, since it can be used for good or evil. This perception has been maintained over the years and is expressed in several texts produced by the Church. Is the main change the way that this issue is now being addressed? In the past, the Church used methods, which today are unacceptable, such as censorship. However, today's discourse takes the form of advice, trying to raise awareness in society without imposing values. Recent documents, related to problems in the communication field, reiterate the need for society to be at the centre of all activities in the area of communication, and all technological advances are emphasised, with their due dignity. The Church, whenever it deems this to be necessary, has acknowledged criticisms and denunciations of errors and abuses, enticing society to foster a debate on the role of the media and its influence in the different areas of human life. It is believed that the reflections that the Church has developed can enrich the field of communication, constituting documents that deserve to be known and discussed by society in general.

For Pedro Gil, the role of communication in the Church is broadly identical to that of a company, it must have a well-defined communication structure, based on values (Pereira, 2014). He also highlights several forms of communication that are evident in the daily life of the Catholic Church.

> The role of Communication within the Church is very similar to the performance in any other organization. The priority task is that all members are in tune with what the Church is and represents. The Church has to make its message public, having external communication and it must develop the same type of actions, as any other organization does. I emphasize that there are organizations that understand communication as advertising, but there are many other organizations that propose values and ideas, where advertising can appear, but in a more conscientious manner. (Pereira, 2014, p. 59)

This representative of Opus Dei uses the structure of the Church to explain how communication is established; he also stresses the lack of unification of the organization and the responsibility that each part plays in relation to communication.

According to Pedro Gil:

> the communication of the Church depends on how the Church is con-
> stituted, although it is one, the Catholic Church is far from being a
> unified organization, the Church is a set of small constituencies, small
> units like a Diocese (...) which means that there must be about 4,000
> units in the entire Church, each one with maximum responsibility
> within its constituency. Communication depends on the policy of each
> of these units. Therefore, the Church is (not organised) in communi-
> cation, the Dioceses are very unequal, some have no one exclusively
> connected to communication, but there are also Dioceses such as the
> Diocese of Chicago that has 30 people working in the communica-
> tion department. In Rome, the government of the Church is merely
> of coordination, it does not even establish guidelines for the various
> Dioceses. There is a spokesman for the Pope and a press room that
> declares to journalists. (Pereira, 2014, p. 60)

In the opinion of Pedro Gil, communication does not occupy a place of rel-
evance within the Church, and should be a more organised area and with
strong support for the external world:

> in the various Dioceses, communication still does not occupy a pri-
> ority position, communication ends up happening because it is in-
> evitable, whenever things happen that we need to take a stand for,
> there is always a spokesman, there are always journalists who, when
> doing their job, end up being able to talk to someone. Communica-
> tion, as the Church's response to external requests exists, but it is not
> a priority tool for proactive actions. What exists is an awareness that
> communication takes place mainly through the means of information
> that the Church itself has. I question this view. I believe that the me-
> dia are intermediaries between social agents and the public and have
> an autonomy that must be respected. (Pereira, 2014, p. 60)

About the evolution of communication, Pedro Gil considers that there
are many points to be explored. Once again, communication pursues new
trends, but without a strategy defined by the different dioceses:

> the trend of evolution of the Church that is verified is once again
> driven by the force of reality rather than by a strategy. It is trying to
> make the most of these new technological and digital realities of
> the relationship between people, but I would say that while it is true
> that this is an emerging reality, it is also necessary to find proper lan-
> guages, the most important role of communication is to ensure that

> Church officials have a personal relationship with the main players in the surroundings of the cultural world, including the media. There is a whole field of institutional communicative relationship to be explored, I would even say that it is like an unspoiled desert. (Pereira, 2014, p. 61)

Father Nuno Rosário considers that the role of communication is very important: "the Church has long sought to use the media to get its message across. On the other hand, in addition to being an instrument of evangelisation, it is also an instrument for spreading the Church's initiatives and activities" (Pereira, 2014, p. 58).

Communication within the patriarchate of Lisbon is achieved through various means of communication that are available to the Church. It is through these same channels that connections are often made between the Church and public opinion. According to Father Nuno Rosário:

> communication in the Patriarchate of Lisbon is achieved through the official organ of the Diocese, which is a magazine called "Catholic Life", then there is a media outlet (let's call it an office) that corresponds to the Diocese newspaper, "Voz da Verdade". There are also other types of means of communication, we use the internet, social networks and the Patriarchate's institutional website. There is another way of communication, namely internal with the priests of the Diocese through a mailing list with journalists, as the communication department contacts the media to produce texts from the bishop's homily. There is also a personal contact that is currently achieved in certain situations. (Pereira, 2014, p. 58)

The Church has clear objectives for the message that it intends to pass, both internally and externally, one of the main objectives is to reach public opinion, for Father Nuno Rosário:

> the communication is achieved in a very organised manner, territorially (locally) with the objective above all to communicate, as I said at the beginning, to get information. To reach public opinion, one seeks in some way, to convey echoes of what the Church is. Demonstrate the life of the Church, what does the Church do in society? What does the Church do in the world? And how the Church is present in our daily life. (Pereira, 2014, p. 59)

Father Nuno Rosário confirms the existence of a department dedicated to the area of communication in the diocese of Lisbon: "in the Diocese of Lisbon there is a communication department that seeks to manage this type of news, in liaison with the Bishop. The department never acts independently, all the news that is issued receives prior approval from Bishop" (Pereira, 2014, p. 65).

Regarding social networks, Father Nuno Rosário believes that they have brought rapid dissemination of information: "social networks have made information spread quickly. But you never know who is behind a social network and information can be manipulated" (Pereira, 2014, p. 65). On this matter, Pedro Gil shares the same opinion as Father Nuno Rosário, and defends that believers and non-believers should be informed about everything that goes on inside the Church, while highlighting other relevant issues for general reflection:

> all people need to be informed, not only about the most relevant or impacting news. It is not the dimension of the event that matters. The Church continues to say that God is alive and that He spoke to Men and the question that the world asks is whether this makes sense, that is the question that has to be answered. More than knowing how many alms the Church has received (this is the policy of knowing everything about the Church), the important thing is to know whether the Church is still relevant, and why? Rethinking whether we are no longer interesting. (Pereira, 2014, p. 65)

For Pedro Gil, the response to crisis communication is often not the most adequate:

> we have a dispersal of communication responsibilities and we do not always have the task of communication entrusted to whoever has that responsibility. The answer is given spontaneously and sometimes forgetting the most elementary rules of communication, the instinctive answer is not always the one that helps to originate the answer. Poorly answered communicative crises are often a key opportunity to be more careful with communication. I know that some people have the task of consulting various opinions and then the answer that comes out is not the most appropriate one. (Pereira, 2014, p. 65)

In regard to crisis communication management, Pedro Gil identifies which solutions are most suitable to defend against a crisis problem:

> it is advisable in institutions to have a crisis committee, a very well-defined group of people who know that on the day that there is a problem, they have to gather to resolve the issue. The first step in a good defence is to have already determined who takes the lead, who will be the spokesperson. (Pereira, 2014, p. 65)

In social networks the position must be carefully selected, Pedro Gil emphasises the importance of an assertive social media manager:

> it depends on the angle, there are many groups, hatred and much else. We have no exact information as to whether it has an impact, but it is to be hoped that the Church will be parallel to the echoes of the negative news coming from other institutions. Although whenever negative news comes out, we know what kind of groups can expect a particular reaction. The social media manager is important to mitigate such situations. (Pereira, 2014, p. 66)

For a Movement of People With (Re)Acknowledgement of the Media and Communication Management

Religious communication must, therefore, reflect a solid knowledge of reality on the part of those who produce it. How to observe the "audiences" that cease to be passive and become active elements in the construction of communities, must be helped to create their own identity. This should include principles that help the faithful, even in a globalised culture, to maintain the values of a certain religion.

Al Ries and Jack Trout (1980/2002) define religious communication as "the essence of any religion" (p. 181), in their book *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*. According to these two authors, the way that "the clergy applies the theory of communication to the practice of religion will have an important influence on how religion affects the congregation" (Ries & Trout, 1980/2002, p. 181). For several years, the Catholic Church has come to recognise that it had concrete communication problems, and that it was "disorganized, at best" (Ries & Trout, 1980/2002, p. 181).

After the Second Vatican Council, we witnessed an unprecedented opening of the Church to society, which has improved its communication skills. These problems were portrayed in the interviews that supported this analysis, in a more or less pronounced manner. The interviewees assumed that it is a problem rooted within the Church. With the repositioning of the Church

in society, followers have begun to question what its new role will be. Although a moral position was still recognised, this lack of definition has caused some members of the congregation to abandon the Church in favour of other interests. The Catholic Church itself has experienced difficulties in carrying out its mission, asking the question about its role in the modern world. The emergence of crises is intertwined with social evolution, which often leads to the institutionalisation of organisations in the transition to the information society. In the Church's connection to society, religion has undergone an improvement in communicative skills.

In today's society, networked, can the virtual community truly help someone? To what extent do we let the media take on a responsibility that they cannot help. To paraphrase Durkheim (1912/1989), Flusser (1967), and Appadurai (1996), we live in a multi-religious world, and based on this reality, further studies on the relations established between the various religions and the media may arise.

Any organisation is constantly liable to experience an internal or external crisis. It is therefore essential to have a well-designed crisis communication plan, ready to be implemented. The crisis is unexpected, threatens values, and can jeopardise an organisation's credibility and reputation. In this field, the Church is also no exception, as has been mentioned throughout this paper. The Catholic Church is increasingly seen as an organisation. However, concerning the principles of crisis management, the Church follows divergent paths.

Currently, with greater use of the media by the Church, among others, there is already significant participation of the faithful, who have inclusively assumed critical positions. It is common to read documents, websites, or blogs, that include comments on decisions made by members of the Church and even comments by those who constitute it.

Crisis communication plays a strategic role in recovering the institutional image of religion and its reputation because, by working on the perception of its followers, it helps them to look at this process perpetually.

It is important to emphasise the importance of the existence of officials who are responsible for the communication area so that it is achieved in an organised, targeted manner, and to understand the phenomena of communication. Pope Francis said that "in a world like this, media can help us to feel closer to one another" (Francis, 2014, para. 2), adding that "it is not

enough to be passers-by on the digital highways, simply connected; connections need to grow into true encounters. We cannot live apart, closed in on ourselves" (Francis, 2014, para. 7).

The strategic communication that is made by religious institutions does not acquire the dimensions of that practiced in companies. In the dissemination of the word or message of the religion, word of mouth has a considerable weight in the dissemination of a certain religious offer, as well as the communication made by the members of the organisation. No organisation is immune to crisis. For this reason, crisis management must be very well integrated into the strategic planning of organisations, religious institutions must be guided by these guidelines so that their communication is efficient when facing crises. This moment of crisis management always generates emotions and weaknesses, where digital media and, mainly, social media have a greater impact, increasing speed of transmission in times of crisis, which can cause problems because the institution is not always sufficiently prepared. Religion is invited to be structured for a quick response, which is transparent and true, even if it does not have all the information at first. The important thing is to show that there is a commitment to reversing the situation. In 2020, Pope Francis remarked:

> in an age when falsification is increasingly sophisticated, reaching exponential levels (as in *deep fake*), we need wisdom to be able to welcome and create beautiful, true and good stories. We need courage to reject false and evil stories. We need patience and discernment to rediscover stories that help us not to lose the thread amid today's many troubles. We need stories that reveal who we truly are, also in the untold heroism of everyday life. (para. 7)

The media and religious institutions are largely comprised by passionate and hard-working people who believe in what they do. Religious belief is understood as something that is more profound and meaningful than just signing a series of statements about the existence of the divine or determining press regulations. But belief in religious institutions or press standards means trusting these sources and acting in specific ways because of that conviction. The idea remains that the statements made by religious institutions are sacred, especially when they can understand the "sacred". When two different groups of people claim that their truth is non-negotiable, problems inevitably ensue. Therefore, it is necessary to have a form of religious literacy, and it is essential to have strategic communication plans for religion, which are less focused on the exchange of facts and more on high quality dialogue.

It can therefore be concluded that believers must be guided, through conferences, courses, round tables and congresses, that present studies or critical analyses made by experts, or even through academic training, so that believers can develop their critical views on the various themes of strategic communication. At the same time, the various religious institutions must be ready to give all the necessary collaboration in the transmission of information, communication, requests required to deal with religious issues. It is important to emphasise that a communicated religion is the proposal for the contemporary era.

Acknowledgments

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Communication and Sport

A Call to Action

Paulo Salgado

Communication and Society Research Centre, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5503-4134

Abstract

The economic influence of media has dramatically changed the world of sport, leading sports organisations to increase their focus on communication and assets like brands and reputation. The intent for a more strategic communication within the sports industry must consider a broader and more profound reflection of how the world of sports intertwines with communication and its interactive process of creation, selection, and retention of meaning (Weick, 1979). As a practice and as a business, the social role played by sports, and the singularities of sports organisations are central pieces for the comprehension of the strategic sports communication model presented in this paper. It aims at encouraging researchers to dive into the realm of sports communication.

Keywords

sports communication, strategic communication, organisational communication

Introduction

"Talking about sport scientifically is difficult because in one sense it is too easy: everyone has their own ideas on the subject and feels able to say something intelligent about it" (Bourdieu et al., 1998, p. 15).

Sports and communication do matter. The economic influence of media has created dramatic changes in sports, promoting changes in how we relate to it. These transformations have affected the stories told through sport, in service of industry, of a brand or an organisation with commercial intents (Wenner, 2013). Whether it is controversial or not to call it an industry (Gammelsæter, 2020), sport-oriented businesses increased their focus on their communication efforts to manage brands, sponsor events and use brand-building and image transfer as justifications for their investments (Gladden, 2013). Despite that, strategic sport communication can comprise more than that. Pedersen (2013) suggests a holistic communicational approach:

> all components—activity, organisation, or individual involved in the sport management and marketing—are affected by communication. Thus, from an economic and strategic point of view, communication and sport matter because they work together to form an influential and pervasive relationship throughout societies and economies. Simply stated, sport cannot exist without communication. (p. 57)

Wenner (2013), in his essay, dives deeper into this intertwined relationship between sport and communication and answers why communication is so significant in the world of sport: (a) communication offers us a frame through which we comprehend and share our cultural understandings about sport and its place in society; (b) communication about sport gives a language frame of how we think about politics; (c) sports communication also matters because it has the potential to influence our identities. The author also gives the example of gender as a great divide in sport: (d) sport is a kingpin of media consumer cultures, as it is a form of reaching large audiences — the Football World Cup, the most prominent football competition on the planet, has a cumulative global audience reach of over 3,500,000,000,000 spectators according to the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (Fifa) official numbers; and (e) the influence of media in the way stories are told through sport, influencing people and organisations in the service of an economic or marketing endeavour.

This work aims to promote a call to action to the research in communication and sports by providing a deeper reflection on how world sport intertwines with communication and its interactive process of creating meaning and how it affects the strategic communication intents. It seeks to increase researchers' motivation to look at sport organisations singularities where communication plays a pivotal role. As stated by Wolfe et al. (2005), "the use of sport in organisational studies knows no boundaries" (p. 184) and that it can bring joy, interest, amusement, fascination to the researcher's work. According to Wolfe et al. (2005), research on sport can widen the range of attention, cognition, and action to the entire area of research.

Sport and Communication as Symbolic Processes

The analysis of communication as the central force of organising, summarised in the famous perspective of the communicative constitution of organisations, which highlights the effect of language and discourse in the construction of meaning and social coordination, is an increasingly transversal topic in organisational communication research. In 1979, Karl Weick proposed that communication builds organisations through symbolic processes of creation, selection, and retention of meanings. Christensen and Cornelissen (2013) also highlight this topic, as Taylor and Every (2014) give examples of how research in organisational communication focuses, in an ever more profound way, on topics such as internal change and the identity processes that confer an interdisciplinary and distinctive theoretical

body. Wolfe et al. (2005) also refer to the importance of identity-related research topics for organisational sport studies. That can be related to how an individual maintains an affiliation with a team or organisation that fails or "when individuals find the identity of the organisation (or sports team) to be attractive, they use their association with the entity to define themselves" (Wolfe et al., 2005, p. 203).

Weick (1979) argued that human beings are reconstructing reality through mechanisms of attribution of meaning that rationalise the significance of their actions and, based on this, argued that communication is central to human life and organisations because it is the central process of organising. Moreover, like organisations, sport cannot exist without communication (Pedersen et al., 2007), in such a way that communication plays a central role in sport, whether we speak about symbolic and sense-making processes, whether we look at a strategic or economic point of view, as the sports industry thrives as a worldwide phenomenon (Gladden, 2013). Pedersen et al. (2007) propose a definition of sport communication as "a process by which people in sport, in a sport setting, or through a sport endeavour, share symbols as they create meaning through interaction" (p. 196).

Communication and sports seem to walk intertwined, to further research might contribute to a deeper understanding of our society (Pedersen, 2013; Wenner, 2013). Fredrickson (2003) even considers that research focused on sports institutions can contribute to a new look at certain phenomena of reality. Thus, one may believe that this perspective can and ought to be equally valid for the study of communication in sports organisations. Despite these points of view, Bourdieu et al. (1998) warn of the difficulties in developing the sociology of sport. The odd trait requires the researcher to be remarkably proficient in two different worlds: Sociology and sport.

Furthermore, Bourdieu et al. (1998) go further in their consideration, stating: (a) that some know the world of sport very well, but do not know how to talk about it; (b) that there are those who, not knowing the world of sport deeply, could talk about it, but disdain doing so; and (c) others who do so without adequate ownership. In 1991, the assessment made in the *Annual Review of Sociology* highlighted the lack of theory development around this field.

For Costa (2010), sport can also be seen as a mirror of society or even be a social phenomenon with planetary dimensions, symbolic nature and ritual functioning, which makes it capable of representing the most varied aspects of a global society. That is a topic that Wolfe et al. (2005) identify as a

recurring theme in terms of sports research — a microcosm of broader society. For the authors, sport is an institution that provides scientific observers with a convenient laboratory to examine values, socialisation, stratification, and bureaucracy, naming just a few of the structures and processes identified at this societal level.

Keidell (1987) goes further in the relationships with social spaces, such as organisations:

> the world of sport mirrors the world of work; the structures of the game are parallel to the structures of work. All three major sports, football, basketball and baseball, generically represent an organisational model. Baseball is a metaphor for the autonomy of the organisational parties, football is about the hierarchical control of the parties, and basketball is about voluntary cooperation between the parties. (pp. 591–592)

Eitzen and Sage (1997) also verified the notion of being in front of a microcosm in the social space. The authors affirm that the types of games people choose to play; the degree of existing competitiveness; the sort of rules; the constraints faced by athletes and the sports themselves; the pace and variety of changes promoted; and the reward system in sport provide a microcosm of society, a mirror that portrays a broader reality. Still, it is worth noting that this vision of a microcosm that can offer relevant data for a better understanding of society, organisations and the communication activities related to sports activities does not necessarily imply seeing sport or any sports practice as a universe by itself.

Bourdieu (1988) is clear about adopting a vision of sport included in a whole universe of practices and consumption that form a system with which the sports universe is related. Even if it is legitimate to consider sport as a universe with its legitimacy, the researcher must pursue a more precise analysis to define the entire space under consideration. We are facing two similar spaces, a space of practices — the offer; and a space for provisions for practice — demand. This dialectic between (a) a space characterised by its technical and intrinsic properties, and defined considering all other structures and properties of other sports spaces also offered at a given time; and (b) another space characterised by the dominant dispositions which determine the possible uses and can be portrayed at every moment by the dominant use of them. The relationship between the intrinsic truth of sport and its social truth encompasses the main interpretations of it.

One can see this perspective through the philosophical and symbolic dimensions related to sports practice in football. For Bourdieu (1988), just as a philosophical work, reinterpreted from generation to generation, sports practices may be constantly reinterpreted and generate different meanings. In the same way, communication practices within an organisation may be reinterpreted, in the form of a zeitgeist, in a world constantly changing and adapting to new forms of communication and media. Specific ways of looking, seeing and practising the sport marked an era the same way technological advances, such as the internet and social media online platforms, marked an era changing how we relate to one another. The Netherlands team became an icon of the 1970s through the practice of what became known as "total football", guided by Rinus Michels and based on the irreverence and genius of Johan Cruijff. Although the Clockwork Orange[1] (as the Dutch team of the decade is also known) has won nothing, its style represents a typically Dutch concern with the overall systems and notion of space, which is part of its painting and architecture. For Winner (2008), "total football" was deeply imbued with democratic impulses, a perfect balance between collective responsibility, equality, and individualism — a system in which each player is allowed to surpass himself and express himself. The reverse side of the medal is a system in which discipline and cohesion are always fragile. The author adds, South American football, unlike the Dutch, attaches less importance to the system and more importance to the human being who is the centre of his football. Winner (2008) also compares the Italian *catenaccio* (a system that created roots in Italian football for decades and based on a defensive system consisting of a free-and-clear defender and four defenders) to a picture of the Italian artist Ticiano — soft, seductive, and languid who accepts and embraces the opponent, to later betray him, through a goal on the counterattack, scored with the speed of a dagger.

According to Bourdieu (1988), a sport becoming more relevant in society has two different meanings: (a) it describes an objective program of sporting practices, using terms such as "football", "tennis", or "swimming", and confronts athletes; or (b) as a way of describing the right or suitable form of exercising the program, that is, the modality itself. Sport as a social construction takes on different perspectives and meanings throughout its evolution and its physical and temporal space in society. According to the dominant practices, use and various modalities, the interpretations of sport

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[1] Winner (2008) describes the style of football played by the Netherlands as "clockwork orange" — because the team usually wears orange jerseys and a clockwork because the individual members of the team play with the mechanical perfection of the world's best timepieces.

generate transformations in terms of practices affecting its meaning, practice, and place in each culture. These constant changes, referring to Wolfe et al. (2005), let us look at sport as a laboratory for social research.

Sport Organisational Singularities and Assets

The management of sports organisations in the 21st century involves applying techniques and strategies common to most companies, governments or non-profit organisations. Sports managers must be involved in strategic planning and manage a multitude of human resources such as: television broadcasting contracts that can be worth millions of euros; the well-being and mood of their top athletes, whose salaries are 100 times that of a medical career; a whole network of internal and external relationships, from the media, communities, other clubs, national and international federations, governments, sponsors, government institutions, among others (Hoye et al., 2015).

According to Stewart and Smith (1999), the sport has specific characteristics requiring sports management to apply appropriate management techniques. One of its most distinctive attributes is that people develop an irrational passion for teams, competitions, and athletes. Sport does have a symbolic dimension, a meaning concerning performance, success, the celebration of achievements, which does not exist in other social and economic areas. There are differences between sports organisations and other types of organisations and how they assess performance. Whether private or public, companies exist to make profits, to increase the wealth of their shareholders and investors, while in sport, there are other priorities or imperatives, such as winning titles, championships, providing community support that overrides financial results. Managing sports organisations involves striking a balance between the multiple performance outcomes expected for the organisation and its economic sustainability.

Sports organisations compete with one another on the *field of play*, although off of it, they are often bound to cooperate to ensure the clubs', leagues', and competitions' survival. That is also one of the singularities of sports organisations compared to business markets where competitors are not forced to work together. In most business areas, the aim is to secure the largest possible market share, outperforming the organisation's competitors and securing a monopoly. On the contrary, in sport, clubs need each other to keep competing. Moreover, in many cases, this cooperation

even makes teams share profits, manage the uncertainty of matches, and showcase their top talents to ensure their fans or supporters' continued support and interest. This environment can even be considered uncompetitive. Loaning players to other clubs, which they will have to play against, has, for example, been the subject of constant controversy in football, even requiring constant attention to regulations (Smith & Stewart, 2014).

When it takes a form of a game or challenge, the sports product also varies in quality. The outcomes of matches are usually uncertain, but if only one team or one player becomes dominant, the interest and attractiveness of the game or sport itself tend to decline. For this reason, it is harder to guarantee the quality of the sports product compared to a product any consumer can buy, as the quality tends to be similar if the purchased product is the same. It is essential to manage perceptions without compromising quality. In motor sport, if one team or one driver becomes dominant, it is common to change the rules to keep the sport competitive

Sports brands, for instance, have become ubiquitous in the business of sport. "The last 20 years have seen sport-oriented businesses increase their focus on managing brands to increase brand equity. Increasingly, corporations sponsoring sport and events use brand-building and image transfer as justifications for their financial investments" (Gladden 2013, p. 3). This critical asset for businesses depends not only on the different roles and functions based on supply and demand but also on the financial value that brands now account for in sports organisations (Nufer et al., 2017). According to Bridgewater (2010), the brand has become increasingly important in sports organisations such as football clubs, implying a need for a more across-the-board and systematic approach to brand management. Nonetheless, Nufer et al. (2017) also point out that the principles for brand identity management rarely apply within Bundesliga clubs, despite the high economic potential and the possibility to provide a competitive financial advantage.

Sport and, particularly, clubs enjoy high loyalty to their brand. The likelihood of a fan changing clubs due to a bad game or even one or more bad seasons is low. In contrast, a consumer of other types of products generally has a wide range of brands and products to choose from, and these can quickly make the consumer change opinions depending on price or quality. Though, if on the one hand, we are before the advantage of the sports product, on the other, we can also admit that the ability to attract new fans or to win them over a rival club is much less (Bridgewater, 2010).

Another asset that can be considered key for a sports organisation is its reputation and relationship with its stakeholders. Sports organisations are, by default, corporate brands, which entails a broader engagement with different vital stakeholders. That does not happen for product brands more focused on product and customer relationship management. To Bridgewater (2010), a corporate brand name is more likely to suggest mental associations related to products, experiences, shared values, attributes, and benefits, people and relationships, and corporate credibility. All these associations can connect to an effect on brand equity and performance of single products. To Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004), "a company engages in corporate branding when it markets the company itself as a brand" (p. 368). That is the case of sports clubs, where the brand name, logo, and team stand for all. The goods and services offered are seen as a part of the company's identity. For Keller (2013), a solid corporate brand is firmly attached to the company's need to maintain a high public profile to influence and shape some of the mental representations held by the different stakeholders, hence reputation.

Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) define corporate reputation as "the collective representation of *multiple constituencies'* images of a company, built up over time and based on a company's identity programs, its performance and how constituencies have perceived its behaviour" (p. 369). According to Salgado and Ruão (2013), if one applies this perspective to the sports industry, a good corporate reputation will provide benefits: (a) at the top, football clubs struggle to allure best sponsors and investors; (b) in attracting the best players, coaches and managers for their squads (applicants); (c) in increasing stadium attendances; (d) in maintaining supporters, fans and customers satisfied; (e) in creating value for the brand and products and therefore increase sales; (f) for the perceived value of the teams' football players and consequently obtain higher bids from other clubs, in the player's transfer market.

Sport can evoke unique behaviours in people, such as copying their heroes in the game, wearing the kit or jersey of their favourite club or player, and buying products that celebrities or idols advertise. Sports management can use the fact that supporters identify with the skills, abilities or lifestyle of sports personalities to create partnerships that influence their key audiences.

The fans are generally more optimistic in the face of a bad scenario, such as a series of defeats, invoking reasons such as luck being decisive to achieve a good result. (Aichner, 2019; Bridgewater, 2010; McCarthy et al., 2014; Smith & Stewart, 2014). Stewart and Smith (1999) and Smith and Stewart

(2014) also argue that sports organisations are more reluctant to adopt new technologies unless related to sports science leading to some performance advantage. In this sense, many sports organisations tend to be somewhat conservative, more attached to traditions and behaviour than other types of organisations. If we consider, for example, today's widespread use of social media platforms that, according to Aichner (2019), adds value: (a) in providing services to consumers; (b) as a marketing channel to advertise products and increase brand awareness; (c) consequently leading to better brand loyalty — considering professional football clubs use social media strategically, which according to the author is not certain.

Nevertheless, McCarthy et al. (2014) and Aichner (2019) point out that even if there is a considerable amount of research on the strategic and operational use of social media platforms when it comes to a systematic review of *why* and *how* football clubs use social media and engage on these platforms strategically nothing comes up. The lack of knowledge and research available to marketing and communication managers on to what extent sports clubs use social media in their marketing and communication strategy is quite significant as it would: (a) provide an assessment on the importance football clubs give to some social media platforms, compared to others; (b) offer a benchmark about the competitors' performance; (c) provide a deeper assessment of the return-on-investment; (d) produce more information for human capital and budget management, boosting organisational performance and efficiency. Despite this scenario, the mass use of social media platforms is now a reality for sports organisations worldwide.

Finally, another aspect that sets sports organisations apart from other types of organisations is their limited availability. In sports, clubs are limited by seasons with a defined number of matches per year. In other industries, companies can quite easily increase production to meet demand.

The Professionalisation of Sport: The Birth of a Business

One can describe sports as activities requiring physical exercise, structured and standardised under internationally defined regulatory rules. In this sense, it is relevant to make a clear distinction between organised sports (competition) and sports as non-competitive and recreational leisure activities. This boundary between organised and unorganised sport identifies two existing markets in which sports organisations seek to develop their business. While many sports organisations do not aim to generate profits

for their investors and shareholders, they generally seek out a financial outcome to promote and professionalise the sport itself. Thus, according to Spaaij and Westerbeek (2010), it makes sense to establish a difference between sports organisations that seek profit and others that seek to generate a surplus. According to the authors, the latter tend to create profit to obtain funds to finance their presence in sports competitions. In the football industry, sports organisations (or companies) seek to generate the most diverse types of income to fund their teams, hire new players, and pay high salaries to athletes and coaches. The aim is to attain the sought-after success, which supersedes the institutions' targeted sustainability and financial growth. Organisations that use sport as part of their communication strategy or are active sponsors are not considered sports business organisations in this sense.

Wherever one plays it, professional sport is the most viewed sport, the most expensive and attracts the most attention. It has a tremendous capacity to generate media coverage, to attract sponsorship and support from large companies (Boyle, 2009). Sport may have been played for a while for pure leisure by amateur athletes, but professional sport and the industry that accompanies it dominate the world of sport and those who play it. Athletes quickly become cultural icons on a global scale. Whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally, companies that gravitate in this industry now exist for the support they give to sports leagues to develop athletes and spectators' interest. These same organisations must often compete for media coverage, sponsorship and support from fans and communities or government entities. One can observe the same type of phenomena in the rise of eSports. Jenny et al. (2014) also discuss how eSports now fit within the definition of sport and the mediatisation that accompanies this activity and the industry that gravitates around it.

On the other hand, one can even consider that sport, as a business, is insatiable in its appetite for financial, social, and cultural resources. Hoye et al. (2015) point out that professional sport is an appendix of the sports industry that supports sports organisations that need to generate financial resources and cultural capital. Professional football leagues, for example, are so rooted in the identity and culture of social groups that they can even determine what it means to belong to those same groups. According to the authors, professional football leagues and their clubs have become essential for many fans and supporters to understand themselves and define who they are.

Organisations that engage in sport as a business are primarily concerned with maximising their economic capital. In this perspective, Andrews (2004) even

suggests that these organisations are a symbol, or an emblem, of neoliberal capitalist movements. In turn, it is also relevant to consider the importance of social capital that these organisations promote. Social capital highlights the benefits of meaningful social relationships based on social trust and the generalisation of reciprocity. While critics see the first perspective (maximisation of economic capital) as a promoter of social inequality, the latter (promoting social capital) reduces inequalities and promotes a community spirit and well-being. Spaaij and Westerbeek (2010) advocated that *business sports organisations* can contribute to more outstanding social capital.

Strategic Communication and Sports

Strategic communication is a recently established research area within communication sciences that analyses the use of persuasive communication to achieve organisational goals. It is a broad field encompassing different technical areas such as public relations and other corporate communication activities (such as advertising; Araújo & Ruão, 2014). Hallahan et al. (2007) argue that it is essential to look at an organisation's communication activities from a strategic and integrated viewpoint since this is a practice increasingly exploited by companies/institutions to perform better to achieve their goals. According to Smith (2013), strategic communication is:

> intentional communication undertaken by a business or non-profit organisation, sometimes by a less-structured group. It has a purpose and a plan, in which alternatives are considered and decisions are justified. Invariably, strategic communication is based on research and is subject to eventual evaluation. It operates within a particular environment, which involves both the organisation and groups of people who affect it in some way. (p. 5)

For Kitchen (1997), strategic communication incorporates three main components: marketing communication, human resources, and public relations. The integrated vision of Cornelissen (2008), who considers the coordination of all communication media efforts, is underlined by Brønn (2013). For the author, strategic communication is seen holistically as a mindset since its main objective is to manage all the processes that integrate and involve communication as a whole. She highlights that this perspective assumes that strategic communication can incorporate the experience and knowledge of many communication disciplines, including public relations, communication marketing, organisational communication, human resources

management, to integrate and manage different messages under the same umbrella (Cornelissen, 2008).

Brønn (2013) refers that organisations need to take a long-term approach to build and manage their communication assets like reputation, which involves strategy, marketing, human resources management, and communication. The author even claims that there is already ample evidence that the responsibility for building reputation, from a strategic focus, lies, if not entirely, then substantially, in the role of strategic communication.

If strategic communication tends to be seen as indispensable for creating a distinctive image, creating a solid institutional brand and developing it is a central idea in the organisational reputation literature (Brønn, 2013; Dowling, 1994; van Riel, 1995). For van Riel and Fombrun (2007), the success of the organisation's entire communication system is measured by its reflection on the organisation's reputation.

Pedersen et al. (2007) offer a perspective on strategic communication on sport, a phenomenon recognised as a "dynamic process between institutions, texts, audiences in the public sphere" (p. 196). The authors pursue this idea revealing the need of sports organisations, media, fans, agents, media networks, and leagues to communicate to and through each other. Even if the need for profit is a central piece in the industry of sport, different organisations might have different communication goals to achieve:

> networks seek high ratings and advertising revenue from sponsors and corporations, leagues, teams, and athletes. Teams and leagues seek high exposure through the media, large gate profits through fans and sport enthusiasts, and rely on the successes of their individual workers for sustenance. (Pedersen et al. 2007, p. 196)

Organisations try, through networks, to gain recognition, awareness and add value to their products and programs. As for the fans, they can receive or reject the content given, as they can watch, listen, influence, read or buy and consequently influence rating, awareness, and exert power. This perspective reinforces the importance of the strategic communication process to consider the context and all the stakeholders involved with the organisation. As Cornelissen (2004) states, "the central concern of strategy is with matching or aligning the organization's mission, and its resources and capabilities, with the opportunities and challenges in the environment" (p. 98). Figure 1 below is an adaptation of the analysis

from A.T. Kearney (Collignon & Sultan, 2014). It represents the money flow where media companies, brands, sports leagues, clubs, cities, and countries struggle and work together to grow and to obtain more revenue in the sports event market (in 2017 valued at $90,900,000,000,000) and where a strategic communication approach is required.
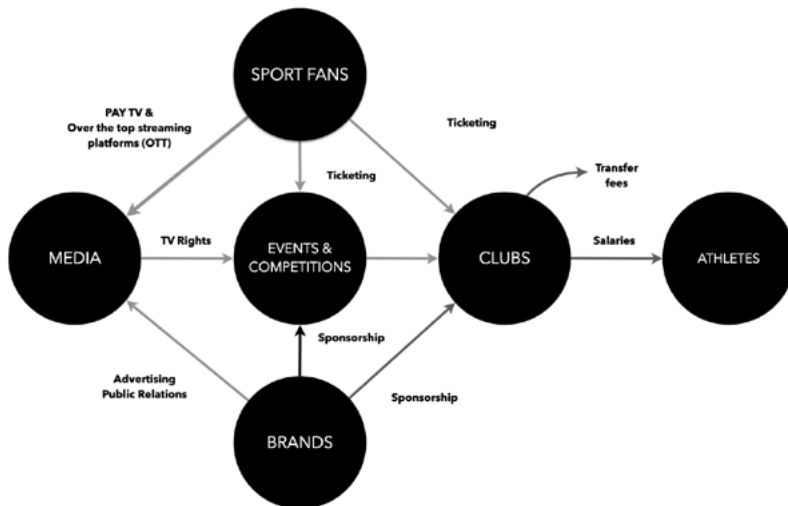

Figure 1 The sports ecosystem flow of money

Note. Adapted from Collignon & Sultan, 2014

Pedersen et al. (2007) consider three types of communication within communication in sports: (a) the communication in sports, related to the communication within the field of play; (b) communication in a sport setting that comprises all the communication within the sports organisations; and (c) the communication through sport, such as advertising or sponsorship that occur through a means of a competition, or a sporting event. In 2012, Pedersen proposed a strategic sport communication model (Table 1), presenting three interrelated strategic components to be considered in the development of a communication strategy for sports organisation: (a) personal and organisational communication in sport; (b) sports mass media (and social media as well); (c) ancillary sport communication (which include activities like public relations, advertising, media relations, community management).

Table 1 Sport strategic communication model components.
Source. Pedersen, 2012

Personal and organization communication aspects	Sports mass media aspects	Ancillary sports communication aspects
Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and small-group communication in sport; intraorganizational and interorganizational communication in sport	Traditional media (e.g., newspapers, radio, television, publishing, movies) to emerging media (e.g., new media, social media)	Sport public relations, advertising in and through sport, media relations, community relations, crisis communication, practical and theoretical research in sport communication, branding, sport management, and marketing
Examples of topics in research	Examples **of topics in research**	Examples **of topics in research**
Corporate social responsibility practices; organisational culture; jobs satisfaction; sexual harassment; coverage trends; verbal communication, nonverbal communication	Television viewership; emerging sport broadcast technologies; print media coverage of athletes; sport radio broadcasts; the portrayal of athletes in magazines; controversial Super Bowl halftime broadcasts	Strategic communication/ public relations activities and campaigns; sport funding campaigns; sponsorship programs

The perspective provided by Pedersen (2012) highlights a holistic approach that we can connect to organisation communication studies and research, and where communication plays a central role in creating meaning and sense-making activities, while it also addresses the use and analysis of media and the strategic purpose of the organisation. When Deetz (2001) analyses the communication phenomena of organisations, he considered the speciality of agency departments, and we can easily relate them to Pedersen's (2012) sports media and its ancillary components. When Deetz (2001) refers to the particular phenomenon occurring in the organisation and describes and explains the organisation, we can associate these two topics with Pedersen's (2012) personal and organisational aspects. The structure presented can be useful to organisational and strategic communication researchers as it helps define their investigation topics within a narrower scope. That might be convenient to understand how particular communication phenomena affect and influence the organisation and the relationship with different stakeholders and audiences.

A Final Note

This work intended to demonstrate that sport may benefit the understanding of organisations' management and communication and highlight the fascination that the examples drawn from sport seem to provoke in corporate management professionals. According to Parlebas (1986), the sports game portrays a micro-society, marked by its limits within space, time, and the number of participants and their modes of interaction — even the transformation of sports relates closely to the development of new media forms. There is a relation between the fact that sport is considered a mirror of society and the social phenomenon of planetary dimensions, symbolic in nature and ritual in operation, which gives it the ability to represent all aspects of global society (Costa, 2010). Given this close connection between sport, identities, communication, organisations, communities, and media, it became clear and relevant that any strategic communication program must address the singularities of sports organisations, with constant attention to stakeholder management. That will enhance the creation of value for the brand and promote a positive organisational reputation and a more profound look at all communication processes of creating, selecting, and retaining meaning.

English revision: Anabela Delgado

Acknowledgements

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Biographical Notes

Ana Castillo is an associate professor in the audiovisual communication and advertising area of the University of Malaga, Faculty of Communication Science, Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising. She is a researcher on corporate communication.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3650-2964

Email: anacastillo@uma.es

Ana Duarte Melo has a PhD in communication sciences and is assistant professor at the University of Minho. She has a master of arts in sound and image and has graduated in social communication. She teaches a variety of areas, from advertising, strategic communication, and strategic territorial communication to creativity and scriptwriting. Since 2019, she is the director of the degree course in communication sciences at the University of Minho. At the Communication and Society Research Centre, her research focus on advertising as a platform for citizenship and its interaction with the consumer-citizen. Ana Duarte Melo is an active contributor to academia in several national and international scientific associations (European Communication Research and Education Association [Ecrea] and the Portuguese Association of Communication Sciences [Sopcom]), being currently co-chair of International Association for Media and Communication Research's (IAMCR) participatory communication research section.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4598-7174

Email: anamelo@ics.uminho.pt

Antonio Raúl Fernández Rincón has a PhD in communication, a bachelor's degree in advertising and public relations from Madrid Complutense University (Spain), a master's degree in advanced communication from University of Murcia (Spain). He is an associate lecturer in audiovisual communication, and advertising from University of Murcia (Spain). Self-employed professional specialising in graphic design and communication since 1995.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7143-2175

Email: antonioraul.fernandez@um.es

Atsuho Nakayama is associate professor of marketing science. He is an expert in data analysis in marketing at Tokyo Metropolitan University in Japan. His recent research interests are the visualisation and reduction of large and complex data about consumer behaviour. He has studied the methodological and applicative method for multiway data, asymmetric data, and sparse data. Recently, he has been studying image and text data analysis using machine learning techniques and deep learning techniques. He wants to use consumers' uploading habits on the internet for marketing purposes.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9220-5059

Email: atsuho@tmu.ac.jp

Belén Amadeo holds a bachelor honors degree in political science (University of Buenos Aires, Argentina) and a PhD in public communication (University of Navarra). She is professor of public opinion at the University of Buenos Aires and of political communication at the Montevideo University.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1190-6997

Email: belenamadeo@gmail.com

Damion Waymer (PhD, Purdue University) is professor and chairperson of the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Alabama. He is an authority on issues of diversity, race, class, and gender in the context of public relations, issues management, corporate social responsibility, and strategic communication research. His research appears in outlets such as *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, and *Public Relations Review*.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5530-535X

Email: dmwaymer@ua.edu

Emilia Smolak Lozano has a PhD in communication sciences. Currently professor and researcher at the University of Malaga (Spain), teaching

advertising and public relations. Master's degree in sociology from the Jagiellonian University in Poland and european studies from the University of Exeter in United Kingdom. Her research combines sociological and European perspectives to political communications, social media, and digital communication. Author of over 30 scientific articles published in indexed journals and over 20 book chapters. Author of two books: on political communication 2.0 and digital campaigns strategic management. The scientific outcome of the research is reflected in over 40 presentations on international conferences.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8193-8786

Email: esmolaklozano@uma.es

Fábia Pereira Lima is a professor of the Graduate Programme in Social Communication of the Federal University of Minas Gerais. PhD in Communication from the School of Communications and Arts, University of São Paulo. President of the Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Comunicação Organizacional e Relações Públicas (Brazilian Association of Researchers in Organisational Communication and Public Relations). Researcher of the research groups "Mobiliza" (Mobilizes; Federal University of Minas Gerais) and Dialorg – "Comunicação no contexto organizacional: aspectos teórico-conceituais" (Communication in the organisational context: theoretical-conceptual aspects; Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais/ Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico [Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development]).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7802-107X

Email: fabialima@ufmg.br

Gemma Bridge is a research evidence impact officer at Leeds Business School and her PhD explored advocacy and lobbying in the health policy arena. Gemma's research interests include communication, social media, and health.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3888-0202

Email: G.Bridge@leedsbeckett.ac.uc

Isaura Mourão Generoso has a PhD in communication and information from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Professor, having taught in Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais and in Federal University of Minas Gerais. Consultant in organisational communication. Member of the research group Dialorg – "Comunicação no contexto organizacional: aspectos teórico--conceituais" (Communication in the organisational context: theoretical--conceptual aspects; Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais/Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico [Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development]) and of the research group "Pesquisa em Comunicação Organizacional, Cultura e Relações de Poder" (Organisational Communication, Culture and Power Relations; Grupo de Pesquisa em Comunicação Organizacional [Organizational Communication Research Group] – Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9565-5733

Email: mouraoisaura@gmail.com

Ivone de Lourdes Oliveira is a professor of the Graduate Programme in Social Communication of Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais. PhD in communication and culture from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, post-doctorate from the University Paul Sabatier, Toulouse (France), leader of the research group Dialorg — "Comunicação no contexto organizacional: aspectos teórico-conceituais" (Communication in the organisational context: theoretical-conceptual aspects; Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais/Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico [Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development]).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7365-0288

Email: ivonepucmg@gmail.com

Ivone Ferreira is assistant professor in the area of strategic communication at University Nova of Lisbon. With a PhD thesis (2012) in communication sciences with a focus on the persuasive language of television advertising. Integrated researcher at Nova Communication Institute, Ferreira belongs

to the research group of strategic communication and decision making processes, publishing in the areas of advertising, organizational communication, and public interest communication. In 2019, she was invited editor of the Scopus journal *Media & Jornalismo* (No. 34), dedicated to advertising.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3283-2373

Email: ivoneferreira@fcsh.unl.pt

Javier Trabadela-Robles is an associate professor in the audiovisual communication and advertising area of the University of Extremadura (Department of Information and Communication, Faculty of Library and Communication Science). Researcher on AR-CO (group of reseach on digital and corporate communication) and full member of ICONO14 (Scientific Association for Research in New Communication Technologies).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5338-9257

Email: jtrarob@unex.es

José Gabriel Andrade is assistant professor at the University of Minho. In 2015 he obtained the title of European doctor in communication sciences from the Catholic University of Portugal. In 2009, he received the title of master in communication sciences, from Catholic University of Portugal. He holds a degree in communication sciences from the Catholic University of Santos, São Paulo. He is a member of the Cost European Network and member of the Portuguese Association of Communication Sciences (Sopcom) — where he coordinates the Organisational and Institutional Communication Working Group — and of the international networks IAMCR, Ecrea, and Lusocom. He has been researching in organisational communication since 2002, and working as a communications advisor in public and private companies in Brazil and Portugal. His areas of academic interest are the studies of communication sciences, particularly organisational communication and new information and communication technologies.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9778-5865

Email: jgandrade@ics.uminho.pt

Luís Eusébio has a master in communication sciences — strategic communication, Nova University of Lisbon (Faculty of Social and Human Sciences). He is a marketing content producer at Webtexto agency, Lisbon.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3245-6814

Email: lece96@hotmail.com

Maria João Centeno, PhD and master in communication sciences by Nova University of Lisbon — School of Social Sciences and Humanities (2011 and 1999, respectively) and graduate in social communication by University of Beira Interior (1994). Associate professor and researcher at School of Communication and Media Studies from the Lisbon Polytechnic since 1995, where she teaches theories of communication and communication and language of the undergraduates, communication and mediation of the master in public relations strategic management. Coordinator of the Communication Sciences' Department. President of the Pedagogical Council. PhD researcher integrated in Nova Institute of Communication (ICNOVA) of Nova University of Lisbon – School of Social Sciences and Humanities. Member of the Landscape Museum.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4963-3119

Email: mcenteno@escs.ipl.pt

María-Victoria Carrillo is an associate professor in the audiovisual communication and advertising area of the University of Extremadura, Faculty of Library and Communication Science, Department of Information and Communication. The leading researcher on AR-CO (group of research on digital and corporate communication).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1256-8870

Email: vicduran@unex.es

Naíde Müller is a PhD candidate in communication sciences at Catholic University of Portugal where she is a junior researcher at the Research Center for Communication and Culture. She holds a bachelor's degree in public relations and business communication from the Higher School for Social Communication and a master of arts in integrated communication from the Institute for New Professions. Her main research interests are related with the role of strategic communication in bringing human rights activist movements closer to traditional media, especially television.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2708-1731

Email: naide0muller@gmail.com

Patricia Schroeder holds a bachelor honors degree in international affairs (University of the Republic, Uruguay) and a master's degree in organizational communication (Austral University, Argentina). She is professor of strategic communication and crisis communication at the Montevideo University.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8911-7699

Email: pschroeder@um.edu.uy

Paulo Salgado teaches strategic communication, branding, and marketing at the University of Minho and the University Institute of Maia. He complements his activity as a lecturer with more than 10 years of experience as a consultant in branding and communication in companies and communication/branding agencies. He is completing his PhD in strategic communication at the University of Minho and has international certification in corporate reputation by Reputation Institute, New York.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5503-4134

Email: paulo.salgado@gmail.com

Pedro Antonio Hellín Ortuño has a PhD in communication from University of Seville (Spain), a bachelor's degree in advertising and public relations

from Madrid Complutense University (Spain), a master's degree in corporate communication from Madrid Complutense University (Spain) and university specialist in analysis of social reality from Alicante University (Spain). Senior lecturer at the Faculty of Communication and Documentation, University of Murcia (Spain). He is part of the team which prepares the global study of trends for the Instituto Ipsos (Brazil).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1331-5103

Email: phellin@um.es

Peggy Simcic Brønn is professor emerita of communication and management in bachelor in business intelligence Norwegian Business School's Department of Communication and Culture. She was founder and leader of business intelligence's Center for Corporate Communication for 10 years. Brønn's research areas include reputation and reputation risk analysis, corporate communication, motives for social engagement, and the strategic role of communication managers. She was an associate editor of *Journal of Communication Management* until 2020, and currently sits on the editorial board of several journals. In addition to authoring or editing several books, she has published chapters in a number of books, as well published in such journals as *Journal of Business Ethics*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *International Studies of Management and Organisation*, *Corporate Reputation Review*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Public Policy and Business*, and *Society Review*.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2541-8350

Email: peggy.bronn@bi.no

Ralph Tench is the director of research for Leeds Business School and the elected president and head of the Board of Directors for the European Public Relations Research and Education Association (Euprera). Professor Tench's research interests include strategic communication, public relations, organisational competency, and health.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7760-2606

Email: R.Tench@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Robert L. Heath (PhD, University of Illinois, 1971) is professor emeritus at the University of Houston. He is author or editor of 24 books, including handbooks and master collections, and 276 articles in major journals, chapters in leading edited books, and encyclopedia entries. In addition to strategic issues management, he has written on rhetorical theory, social movements, communication theory, public relations, strategic communication, organizational communication, crisis communication, risk communication, terrorism, corporate social responsibility, investor relations, engagement, and reputation management. His most recent books are the *International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication* and the *Handbook of Organizational Rhetoric and Communication*.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7754-5629

Email: rheath1941@me.com

Sara Balonas is assistant professor at University of Minho (Portugal) and researcher at Communication and Society Research Centre. PhD in communication sciences — advertising in social sphere. Teaches strategic communication, brands, advertising and creativity. Research work is focused on the reconfiguration of advertising, its role in society beyond consumption and as a contribution to a better citizenship practice. Research interests: strategic communication, social change, behavioural communication, social marketing, non-profit communication, corporate social responsibility, communication for public health, territorial communication, political communication. Coordinator of Createlab (Creative Agency: Experimentation and Innovation Lab), Communication and Society Research Centre. Since 2013, works as a trainer and consultant in strategic communication for public health. Has professional experience in communications' field: has been working for 30 years on communication strategies and campaigns. Currently, she is CEO of B+ Communication, an advertising company created in 2002, and is founder of Be True — Programme for sustainability and social responsibility (2010). Has been ambassador of entrepreneurship, nominated by the European Commission (2010–2013).

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0885-1718

Email: sarabalonas@ics.uminho.pt

Sónia Silva has a PhD in communication studies: technology, culture and society in 2020, from the University of Minho, in partnership with the University Institute of Lisbon, the University of Beira Interior and the Lusophone University of Humanities and Technologies. She currently works as an invited assistant professor at the School of Human and Social Sciences, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro. She is a research fellow in the "Factory of the Future" project that results from the consortium between the University of Minho and Bosch. Sónia Silva's research focuses on organisational and strategic communication, risk communication, crisis communication, social responsibility, organisational identity, brands, and public relations.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8166-9851

Email: sonia.c.melo.silva@gmail.com

Teresa Ruão is associated professor in the Communication Sciences Department at the University of Minho – Portugal. She has a PhD thesis in communication sciences – organizational communication. She was vice-president of the Social Sciences Institute and president of its Pedagogical Council, from 2010 to 2019, and is currently vice-head of the Communication and Society Research Centre. Researches and teaches on organizational and strategic communication, brands and public relations, applied to corporate communication, science communication, health communication or communication for innovation.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9723-8044

Email: truao@ics.uminho.pt

W. Timothy Coombs (PhD from Purdue University in public affairs and issues management) is a full professor in Department of Communication at Texas A&M University and holds the Abell Endowed Professorship in liberal arts. He has received the 2002 recipient of Jackson, Jackson & Wagner Behavioral Science Prize from the Public Relations Society of America, and the 2013 Pathfinder Award from the Institute of Public Relations in recognition of his research contributions to the field and to the practice. Coombs has won multiple pride awards from the Public Relations Division of the National Communication Association for both books and research articles. He

is also a member of the prestigious Arthur W. Page Society. Coombs was a Fulbright Scholar in Estonia in the Spring of 2013. IIn the fall of 2013, he was named professor at Lund University, Helsingborg Campus. He is a past editor for *Corporation Communication: An International Journal.*

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3693-4388

Email: timothy.coombs@tamu.edu

Strategic communication is becoming more relevant in communication sciences, though it needs to deepen its reflective practices, especially considering its potential in a VUCA world — volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The capillary, holistic and result-oriented nature that portrays this scientific field has led to the imperative of expanding knowledge about the different approaches, methodologies and impacts in all kinds of organisations when strategic communication is applied. Therefore *Strategic Communication in Context: Theoretical Debates and Applied Research* assembles several studies and essays by renowned authors who explore the topic from different angles, thus testing the elasticity of the concept. Moreover, this group of authors represents various schools of thought and geographies, making this book particularly rich and cross-disciplinary.

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