



BOOK OF GRADUATES

**Research
Abstracts
2022**





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Preface

This year we celebrate the 24th graduation of the Part-time Executive International Master of Science in Corporate Communication Programme (MCC) at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. The programme continues its mission to enhance the academic and professional growth of communication professionals, empowering them to communicate and lead with impact.

*Nineteen new graduates have officially been awarded the **Master of Science in Corporate Communication degree** as a result. With pride, we present the abstracts of the thesis projects completed by this year's MCC graduates.*

The MCC program has brought forth 360 graduates, including this year's cohort. Their hard work and determination, combined with the knowledge, insights, and skills gained from the programme, have helped many alumni achieve significant career advancements.

The current graduates have been pushed to excel through challenging coursework, case studies, role plays, management games, cutting-edge academic theories, and guest lectures from renowned professors and industry professionals from various universities and companies across the globe. These experiences have equipped them to become even more successful communication professionals.

We hope that our graduates have gained much from their time in the programme, not just from our education but also from their peers and colleagues in the corporate communication field. On behalf of the entire teaching staff, we can say that we have learned a great deal from them as well. Their eagerness to share real-world situations and challenges from their own organisations and connect them to the topics covered in lectures was both inspiring and energising.

The new Masters of Science in Corporate Communication are:

- *Melissa van Anraad*
- *Julien Anseau*
- *Leonie Boon*
- *Nouzha Chouâli*
- *Marike Doedens*
- *Jeannette Duin*
- *Susanne Embleton*
- *Friedel Grant*
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- *Harm Theuns*
- *Amber van Veldhuizen*

Part-time Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication

Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University



In more than twenty years of the Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme we succeeded in creating an international programme that presents all leading experts in a teaching role. We would like to thank the following people (teaching staff) who contributed tremendously to the success of this programme: Paul Argenti of Dartmouth College U.S.A.; Jaap Boonstra, ESADE Business School, John Balmer of Bradford University UK; Jean-Philippe Bonardi, HEC Lausanne; Peggy Simcic Brønn, BI Norwegian Business School; Michael Etter, King's College London; Carola Hillenbrand, Henley Business School; John Hayes, Leeds University Business School; Mark Hunter, INSEAD; Oriol Iglesias, ESADE Business School; Rita Linjuan Men, University of Florida; Michael Pratt of University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign; Davide Ravasi of Bocconi University; Eliane Schoonman of Issues Management Institute; Majken Schultz of Copenhagen Business School; Bob de Wit of Nyenrode Business University; Ansgar Zerfass, University of Leipzig and from our Faculty: Cees van Riel, Guido Berens, Pursey Heugens, Gui Liberali, Florian Madertoner, Lucas Meijs, Ton Roodink, Lonneke Roza, Ingrid de Vries, Yijing Wang all working at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

It is also with great pride that we welcome Professor Emeritus Cees van Riel to award the 'Impact in Corporate Communication Award' for the most impactful thesis in the field of Corporate Communication. The award is created in recognition to the founder of the Master of Science programme, Prof. Emeritus Cees van Riel.

The 'Andreas Innovation in Communication Award' is presented by Ing. Dries van de Beek, Former Chairman of the Board, CCC BV, to the author of the most innovative thesis. The winners of the awards in 2023 (graduates of 2022) are announced during the official graduation ceremony.

We extend our warmest wishes for a bright future and successful careers to all the graduates and wholeheartedly congratulate them on their achievement.



Marijke Baumann
Executive Director



Prof. dr. Joep Cornelissen
Academic Director

Part-time Executive International Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme

Melissa van Anraad

Effective Communication in Earnings Calls

Do Cohesion and Intertextuality Impact Abnormal Returns?

Do the terms “cumulative abnormal returns” and “random-effects regression model” ring a bell? Maybe not. But they should. Because some of our stakeholders use them to assess the external communication of our organizations. As corporate communication professionals, we shouldn’t shy away from exploring methodologies applied in other fields, such as accounting or finance, to help us quantitatively demonstrate the impact we generate.

Introduction and Literature Review

In September 2021, the financial news platform Bloomberg published an article titled *If your CEO talks like Kant, think twice before investing*. The piece referred to research conducted by quantitative analysts at Nomura Holdings Inc., a global financial services provider. According to the analysis, the complex language used by executives on earnings calls, measured using the so-called Gunning fog index, leads to lower returns for the firm. This finding highlights the relevance of a company’s communication with financial stakeholders in capital markets.

“Arguably, accounting is as much about communication as it is to do with measurement. No matter how effective the process of accounting quantification, its resultant data will be less than useful unless they are communicated adequately”

(Lee, 1982, p. 152)

In recent years, scholars in accounting and finance have moved beyond the analysis of fundamentals and studied various aspects of language in financial communication to measure its impact on stock returns, volatility, or analyst coverage. A vast number of papers measure the impact of the tone, complexity, certainty, clarity, or readability of texts on stock returns and volatility or analyst coverage. A widely used way to quantitatively measure the readability or complexity are readability indices such as the Gunning fog index. However, they have been criticized by scholars in various fields for simplifying the comprehension process by only using the length and number of words and sentences.

Data and Methodology

Based on a framework originated in corporate communication, this study provides an alternative to traditional readability indices by analyzing cohesion and intertextuality, two of the seven criteria for effective communication outlined by de Beaugrande & Dressler (1981). Using corpus analysis, this paper constructs three different dictionaries and applies them to a set of 544 quarterly earnings call transcripts of 68 Nasdaq 100 companies for 2020 and 2021. This study aims to determine whether the levels of semantic cohesion, grammatical cohesion, and intertextuality of an

earnings call are associated with a company’s abnormal returns. The following four hypotheses are tested:

H1: Earnings calls of Nasdaq 100 companies in the years 2020 and 2021 are associated with cumulative abnormal returns (CAAR ≠ 0).

H2: Semantic cohesion in earnings calls is associated with cumulative abnormal returns.

H3: Grammatical cohesion in earnings calls is associated with cumulative abnormal returns.

H4: Intertextuality in earnings calls is associated with cumulative abnormal returns.

The four hypotheses are answered making use of the event study methodology to determine abnormal returns and random-effects regressions. The author used Wordstat for corpus analysis and Stata for the event study and statistical analysis.

Findings and Recommendations

The event study conducted in this thesis shows that earnings calls are not associated with significant cumulative abnormal returns. Furthermore, the study found no significant correlation between effective communication criteria and cumulative abnormal

returns. These findings were robust when evaluated for situations where companies both exceeded or did not meet the consensus estimate for their respective earnings per share and when controlled for macroeconomic conditions, running separate regressions for both years. In addition, there was no association between abnormal returns and the Gunning fog index which has been included as a control variable.

This study did not find a correlation between the selected criteria for effective communication and the Gunning fog index, which indicates that the measure applied in this paper is different from the index. Therefore, semantic and grammatical cohesion, and intertextuality are two criteria for effective communication that offer a distinct perspective from the Gunning fog index for analyzing earnings calls and should be applied to a broader sample in a more extensive study.

Findings from the literature review suggest that earnings calls are part of a company’s strategic communication, a concept that captures more than a single sender, an isolated text, and passive recipients. Future studies should acknowledge this complexity. The seven criteria for effective communication provide a valuable basis for future qualitative and quantitative research in the area of financial communication.

Biography

Melissa van Anraad



Melissa van Anraad is a corporate communication professional based in Zurich, Switzerland. She is passionate about strategy and how it is conveyed to and perceived by various stakeholder groups. Currently holding the position of Head of Public Relations at Landis+Gyr Group (SIX: LAND), an energy management organization, Melissa is responsible for all global external communication activities including the annual report, sustainability communication or financial releases. As of March 2023, she will take over the position of VP

Communication at Deutsche Bank's International Private Banking EMEA division. Previously, Melissa led the Marketing and Communication department at Swiss-based Fintech company Sentifi after she started her professional career at global financial services firm UBS working as a Communications Specialist in Wealth Management.

Melissa studied Communication and Journalism and holds a bachelor's degree from Zurich University of Applied Science.

Julien Anseau

The rise of CEO activism and its impact on share prices

CEO activism is fast becoming an important strategic issue, with more CEOs breaking from tradition and taking a stand on divisive social and political issues. Whether it is climate change, immigration, race relations, income inequality, diversity or gender equality, we are seeing an emerging and growing trend of CEOs speaking out on issues not directly related to their company's core business.

Yet despite the rise in CEO activism, its impact on corporate performance is largely unknown. Initial peer-reviewed studies focus on the morality of CEO activism, its effect on public opinion and its impact on different stakeholders - employees, customers and investors.

Research question

This thesis seeks to add knowledge to the topic by exploring how CEO activism affects companies' share price, focusing on the US where CEO activism is most prominent. With climate change seen as a highly polarized and controversial topic in the US, this thesis specifically investigates the effect of liberal tweets about climate change by CEOs of S&P 500 companies, on the short-term share prices of their companies. It is also a first attempt at studying whether celebrity CEOs have more impact than non-celebrity CEOs.

Methodology

Using historical share price data and a novel dataset of tweets from 2011 – 2021 in which CEOs of S&P 500 companies personally made liberal activist statements on climate change, an event study was conducted to assess what the normal stock returns of the affected companies should be on the day of the tweet and a number of days before and after the event, and then calculates the 'abnormal returns' attributed to the tweet by deducting normal returns from the actual returns.

This study also tests whether the effect of CEO activism is larger for celebrity CEOs than for non-celebrity CEOs - for the purpose of this research, celebrity CEOs refer to the leaders of the top five companies in the S&P 500 by market capitalisation who tweeted about climate change, namely Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Salesforce.

Results

This research shows CEO activism affects share price, although the results are inconclusive whether the effect is positive or negative among S&P 500 CEOs. However, the findings clearly show that 'celebrity CEOs' generate greater engagement with their tweets compared to non-celebrity CEOs and their companies experienced short-term positive abnormal returns after the event, possibly explained by the higher profile of the CEO, or greater public and media interest in their company.

Further research

Little is known on the impact of CEO activism on firm value, and the topic would benefit from further research. This study focuses on the US and its conclusions may not extend to non-US companies. European and Asian business leaders have been more reluctant to take public stances, although this may change in the future and could lead to interesting research. Also, the type of CEO activism may trigger different shareholder responses and further research is needed to analyze other manifestations of CEO activism.

Biography

Julien Anseau



Julien Anseau (1979) is an experienced and forward-thinking communications professional, with 15+ years of global, regional and country-level experience in international NGOs, providing strategic and technical leadership to communication teams in Africa, Americas and Asia to help build awareness on issues and generate support for organizations' missions.

Julien is currently Head of Communications and Advocacy at Wetlands International, the only global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wetlands for people, climate and nature. He is passionate about tackling the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and strongly believes in the role of

the private sector in solving global challenges.

Julien was previously Director at Blue Ocean Communications in Singapore – a consultancy providing communications services to clients working for social and environmental good – and as a PR specialist at WWF International where he was global media lead for Earth Hour, the world's largest grassroots campaign for the environment.

Julien's work has taken him to places like Afghanistan, Balkans, Japan, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Timor-Leste among many others. He now lives with his wife and daughter in Amstelveen. Julien received his MSc and BSc from the London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE).

Leonie Boon

The impact of internal communication on organizational pride during turbulent times through the lens of a geopolitical crisis

This thesis addressed an under-researched topic of organizations' internal communication facing a geopolitical crisis (i.e., the Russia-Ukraine War) and impact on employees' feelings of organizational pride. The increasing expectations from stakeholders on organizations' reactions to societal and environmental issues pose challenges for organizations to communicate effectively about the recent geopolitical crisis, especially for those whose operations and stakeholders were impacted by the war. Despite the communicative nature of companies' involvement in such geopolitical issues, limited research exists regarding how companies should communicate about geopolitical matters to their employees, as well as the impact of such communication on employee outcomes.

Research

In this explanatory case study 21 semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with communication professionals and employees in the case organization, which is a multinational energy company with operations in both Russia and Ukraine and with internal and external stakeholders directly impacted by the war. The findings from the interviews were validated by sensing information from within the case study organization.

Importance of the topic

This thesis addressed a timely but under-researched issue of internal communication during a geopolitical crisis. It advanced the theoretical understanding of organizational pride from an internal communication and reputation perspective, filling an important research gap in the literature. It not only revealed best practices ("how") but also uncovered its impact on employees' organizational pride ("why"), adding

to the literature and recent theories in internal and leadership communication. In addition, the insights drawn from this research provide practical guidance for organizations, especially multi-national organizations, in communicating about geopolitical issues with its employees across borders. The thesis also provides theoretical and practical implications for internal communication scholars, practitioners and organizational leaders.

Findings

This research describes a case in which strong organizational pride (average rating of 4 out of 5) coexist with a lower perceived external reputation. Behaviors like employee advocacy or defending the company when attacked, have been suggested as indicators for organizational pride in recent theories and literature. In this case study, a high level of organizational pride coincides with low employee advocacy and low stated intent to defend the company

when challenged. Instead, the in-dept interview findings suggest organizational pride was mostly expressed through a high commitment to delivery at work (commonly described as “going the extra mile”). Some staff responded to their employer acting against their shared values by sharing their feelings of shame on internal and public channels. Some of these responses directly called on leadership to change course. How employees stepped up and advocated for their shared values, was a driver of organizational pride for most interviewees. The key themes identified in this research, such as transparency, authenticity, accountability, empathy/care, listening and leaders walking the talk reflect internal communication excellence theory in a geopolitical crisis communication context.

Biography

Leonie Boon



Leonie is an all-round communications professional with a passion for business partnering and delivering data-driven communications strategies.

Leonie completed the Executive Master in Corporate Communication at the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) at the Erasmus University. She also holds a Master of Arts in Russian Studies from the University of Leiden and a Bachelor of Arts in European Studies from The Hague University of Applied Sciences.

Leonie currently works in the energy industry, where she has worked in various external and internal communication, marketing and commercial roles. The best advice she ever received is to “stay curious” and “treat others with respect”. She loves working in corporate communication as she is working together with amazing, inspirational people and is learning something new every day! Leonie lives with her husband and two boys in Amersfoort.

Nouzha Chouâli

Framing violence by online news outlets

The spread of online disinformation in case of conflict related issues by news outlets and how news is framed by these news outlets can influence the public opinion. Media bias and manipulation is a dangerous development that can have severe consequences when influencing the political agenda and public opinion.

Framing by online news outlets plays a significant role in the readers (critical) thinking and behavior when it comes to conflict related issues, and how the degree of violence is framed. With the rise of social media people all over the world get their daily news from the online news platforms. But journalism is not always independent and objective. What happens with the engagement and critical thinking of the readers if the news outlets favor one-side and neglect the other side?

This research is focused on a recent case study, namely the death of the Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. This case study is applicable to many other conflicts where extraordinary violence was used. When a conflict is divided into different views by the news outlets and a certain story is told with the aim to make it more relevant than the reader is guided by the news outlets to focus on what they believe is important. Media bias by news outlets influences how readers associate

different messages about the case study. The framing effect is mostly used in politics when conflicts are described. Framing effects can be strong that even after a certain period the effect remains persistent, and readers still hold on to what they have first read about a case. Online news platforms can contribute to polarization and the legitimization of violence if they share certain propaganda and hate messages. On the other hand, there is a new online movement in which influencers have the power to change the narrative and therefore influence the public opinion.

Importance of the topic

Framing is a powerful tool and manipulative if most of the content is about race/ethnicity and basically does not do justice to the real situation when human rights are violated. Therefore, news outlets and journalists need to be held accountable for reporting on what really happened.

Research

The research started with a binary classifier to detect positive and negative headlines using traditional machine learning and deep learning techniques. The second step was to dive into more complex models and to work on framing characteristics. A binary classifier was built that performs sentiment analysis on unlabeled data.

Findings

Results of the machine learning sentiment and content analysis indicate that all headlines from the news outlets in the Shireen Abu Akleh study case are biased. NOS, BBC and the New York Times, frame most of their headlines on race/ethnicity. This can easily cause ethnic stereotyping and prejudices because focus on race/ethnicity is usually framing with negative terms. In the Shireen case framing was mostly biased against Palestinians. In general, the narrative was unbalanced with misleading headlines and problematic framing.

Biography

Nouzha Chouâli



I am an enthusiastic and driven communication professional. During my career I have gained experience in various positions/roles and in various sectors such as business services, the (semi) public sector and the consumer market. You can describe me as an all-round professional: from strategy to execution and project management.

My approach is characterized by enthusiastically guiding changes and translating communication plans into a concrete approach.

Marika Doedens

How important is the role of the copywriter for Dutch infrastructure?

Does the copywriter of a tender determine the choice of the contractor who becomes responsible for building and constructing a country's bridges, roads, tunnels, locks, and other infrastructure? The author was left with that question after her employer lost a large framework agreement with Rijkswaterstaat (RWS), the government agency that is responsible for the design, construction, management, and maintenance of the main infrastructure in the Netherlands.

RWS chooses the lowest bid, based on the fictitious price, a quality/price ratio, and the challenge for the contractor lies in the quality component. The contractor must write a quality document that is assessed by RWS, and the score is based on how well the document meets the specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) requirements. Therefore, the author formulated the following research question:

“How to write a SMART document that results in the highest score when BPKV-tendering for infrastructural projects for Rijkswaterstaat as a Dutch contractor”

Research

A literature review examines the role of best value procurement and how RWS applies best value. It then looks at RWS' standards and guidelines, particularly the key performance indicators in project management for the agency and how the quality of the tender documents is assessed. Then, SMART writing is addressed – first, the genesis, then, the interpretation of the words that RWS adheres to as SMART.

To answer the research question, three real-life cases are analysed through a multiple case-study research strategy. The quality documents submitted by the contractor and the textual assessments by the tender committee are coded and analysed. The correlation between the score and the presence of SMART elements is then sought.

Conclusions

In short, the author of the coach formulates it as follows. This thesis deals with a matter of great public importance -- namely, the process of approval and selection for tender proposals on projects that absorb billions of euros in tax revenues. The author is familiar with the process as a tender writer, and the empirical impetus for her thesis is the observation that a firm bidding for a project based on a prior project that received impeccable quality evaluations can nonetheless be excluded on the grounds, precisely, of quality. The first achievement of the author is to demonstrate that the terms of evaluation can fairly be characterized as ambiguous, and worse, self-contradictory. A process that is intended to make tendering less arbitrary and more transparent -- Best Value Procurement -- lacks a certain fundamental rigor, despite its claims (well-documented by the author) to scientific precision. She does so with a dry irony that this reader appreciates : “RWS asks for measures that lead to innovation and sustainability: two popular

current themes. However, measures for sustainability and innovation have an uncertain outcome, because they have not been performed before." Wouldn't we have solved our sustainability problem long ago if we could substantiate this with past results?

The author situates the disconnect between proposals and assessment mainly in the requirement for SMART -- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely -- analysis in quality documents. Through close quantitative analysis of three separate tenders, the author distinguishes SMART elements that apparently impact the success or failure of bids. She is careful to note the limitations of her approach, in both quantity (three cases) and quality (the impossibility of semantic analysis of confidential documents on the government side). She nonetheless arrives at striking observations in particular cases, such as this: "One might conclude that... the more often a SMART element is included in the quality document, the higher the rating." In another case, conversely, "the objectives and description of the request for proposals does not contain a single SMART element", while the required quality document asks, in effect, for "a SMART answer" to "a non-SMART question." In the process of untangling such processes, the author finds keys that might be described either as supporting confounded contractors or showing how they may game the system. The key success factor, despite its practical ambiguity, emerges as the primacy of SMART terms. In one case, "higher scores are achieved if project performance SMART elements are included in the text, and ... the time element counts more than the other elements." In another, "all successful argumentation with numbers was awarded higher scores. Additionally, every time a time element (performance) was included in the text, it was rated SMART".

The author adds that SMART is an old and moving target. The acronym is popular and has existed for more than 40 years from the management world. The abbreviations are not unambiguous. For example, in the literature the A is found as: agreed upon, assignable, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented and accountable. Who is accountable is an important element in project management, however it has been omitted from the tenders of Rijkswaterstaat.

Other features remain inexplicable according to tender regulations, most notably graphic elements, which account for 28% of the pages in a submitted quality document cited by the author but are ostensibly not assessed by the tendering authority. The author acknowledges that there may be an "unconscious" effect of these graphics on bid assessors, while noting that some may be offended by wading through materials that are not requested. The author recommends that bidders save the cost of hiring professionals to create such elements, and to invest instead in writer's expert in the use of SMART elements, among other practical conclusions. She also offers pertinent advice to government authorities concerning how they might improve their tender offers. Finally, she suggests further research into how semantics impact the success or failure of tender bids.

Invitation for Rijkswaterstaat

This thesis was written under terms of confidentiality, meaning that it will not become a public document. Given the importance of the subject for public finances and the value of the author's discoveries, for firms as well as regulatory authorities, one might consider this unfortunate. I therefore will kindly invite Rijkswaterstaat to start the discussion about the outcome and to seek improvement in the tender process.

Biography

Marike Doedens



Marike Doedens (1973) is currently working as Manager of Communications at Compass, an international contractor. She has been working in the communications profession for 22 years and gained diverse knowledge and experience in different specializations. She specializes in digitalization and corporate and internal communications and has worked on projects ranging from youth crime spokespersonship to tender writing for the Dutch infrastructure. She is passionate about her work and strives to deliver the best possible results. Outside work, she enjoys Bach, playing the piano, yoga and hiking, and

spending time with her family and friends. Throughout her life, her attitude towards our profession 'communication' has become increasingly distrustful. 'Communication specialists have the capability to make the world a better place, or worse, depending on how they use their influence. This realization has made me conscious of the fact that communication can be used to construct a new reality. Therefore, I feel I have an obligation to use my communication skills responsibly and not just act as a mere messenger. I hope this sense of responsibility also resonates with my peers.'

Jeannette Duin

Implementing and communicating change in public administration organizations

Change is a constant feature in both private and public organizations. There is a wide range of literature on change management. Most of the studies and approaches to organizational change focus on and derive from the private sector. But organizations in the public sector have specific characteristics. Insights gained in the private sector are therefore not always applicable in the public sector. This thesis explores the unique challenges for change agents and communication practitioners operating in government organizations.

Although there is a growing line of research on the differences between change in the private sector and the public sector, not much is known about how change processes are influenced in practice by the specific context of public organizations. There is also little attention for the communication perspective in the literature on change in the public sector. Considering the specific characteristics of public organizations and the assertion that these characteristics influence the change process, one might expect that these features also have consequences for the communication strategy. Therefore, this research addresses the following question:

“How do the distinctive features of public administration organizations (as compared to private organizations) influence second-order change processes and how does this affect the communication strategy for the change in particular?”

Starting point for the research was an extended literature review to explore which specific characteristics of public administration organizations make change different as compared to the private sector. This resulted in six distinctive features: ‘complicated environment’, ‘multiple goals and objectives’, ‘bureaucracy’, ‘absence of competitive pressure and pursue of profit’, ‘additional legal’ and ‘formal constraints’, and ‘political context’. To examine how these distinct features affect the change process and the communication in practice, three case studies were conducted as well as expert interviews with key participant involved in the case studies and several renowned Dutch independent professional change practitioners.

The findings indicate that the features ‘multiple goals and objections’, ‘bureaucracy’, ‘absence of competitive pressure and pursue of profit’ and ‘political context’ have significant impact on both the change process and the communication in various ways. For instance, popular change models and approaches stress the need for setting the stage for acceptance of the change by creating a sense of urgency among the various stakeholders. The necessity of change is evident

when an organization is struggling for its life due to a change in consumer demands or the arrival of a new competitor. But public organizations are usually monopolies, leaving the public no choice but to take what the organization supplies. The results from the research show that the absence of competitive pressure and pursue of profit complicates the condition ‘creating a sense of urgency’. This entails the risk of indifference and complacency among employees towards the change initiative and also makes the shaping of the communication message more challenging.

The presence of political leadership in public organizations also affects the process in various ways. Although it can act as a driver of change, it can also complicate change initiatives. For example the research demonstrates change programs often compete for attention, staff and budget with policy activities. In the often capricious political dynamics of public organizations most of the priority goes to the political issues of the day and to projects that can help a politician reelected. The case studies also demonstrate that lower-level civil servants informally lobbied politicians in an attempt to undermine the change process. It is therefore important to inform the political stakeholders on a regular basis and gain and maintain their support.

These are just a few examples of the impact of how the distinct features of public organizations impact change processes and the communication strategy. More details are provided in the thesis. The research concludes with practical implications for change agents and communication practitioners and recommendations for further research.

Biography

Jeannette Duin



Jeannette Duin (1975) is an experienced and all-round communication professional. Her heart lies with the public good and she has a great interest in politics. That is why she has chosen a career in the public sector.

She started her professional life at the Province of North Holland (a regional government) where she fulfilled various communication positions. After that, she worked at the Interprovinciaal Overleg (a lobby-organization that represents the interest of the twelve Dutch provinces) and the municipality of Haarlem. Since 2020 she is spokesperson for the

Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), an independent research institute that provides policy relevant economic analyses and projections.

The field of communication is constantly in motion, especially in the new digital era. Jeannette is curious by nature and also believes it is important to keep abreast of the latest (scientific) insights and developments within her field. For this reason she registered for the Executive Master in Corporate Communication and she thoroughly enjoyed the program.

Susanne Embleton

Leadership, Employer Trust and Working from Home

How leadership affects employer trust while working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands.

The COVID-19 pandemic quickly proved to have unprecedented global consequences, following its outbreak in November 2019, it was categorised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a global pandemic in March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). As governments and policymakers struggled to come to terms with the repercussions of the required safety measures, hospitals worked day and night overburdened with a never ending catastrophic influx of infections (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). In late 2022, nearing 3 years following its outbreak, COVID-19 is now known to have triggered the largest global recession since the Great Depression (IMFBlog, 2022). And as a result has permanently changed the way we live, socialise, travel and work. As a result, companies, too, had to adapt from one day to the next (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020).

As government policies mandated working from home within a few weeks, most companies had successfully managed, from a technical perspective, to make the initial switch (Onete et al., 2021). Face to face meetings quickly shifted to video conferencing, document sharing on Google or Sharepoint were intuitive and allowed employees to communicate with each other and their stakeholders with relative ease (Onete et al., 2021; Waizenegger et al., 2020). However, while from a technical perspective most companies had figured out the best way to continue their business, from a personal, social perspective, companies and more specifically their management had to re-evaluate their existing methods of employee engagement, boosting productivity while handling the reconfiguration of their workforce and ensuring employee satisfaction (Surányi, 2021; Galanti et al., 2021).

Employees are important stakeholders for companies. Employees that don't trust their organisations are less loyal, less motivated, and less productive (Pirson

& Malhotra, 2008; Crawford et al., 2010; Saks & Gruman, 2014). As a result, employer trust plays a significant role in the growth and success of a business (Paliszkievicz et al., 2014; Chen & Sriphon, 2021; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Employer trust is defined as the willingness of an employee to have confidence in the reliability and honesty of their employer (Viktoria Rampl & Kenning, 2014). It has been well proven that a culture of trust is a major positive influence on an organisation's performance, (Paliszkievicz et al., 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014) as trust is recognised as one of the most important aspects for a successful business (Tyler, 2003).

Leadership, in the context of organisational management and employer trust, involves one person persuading other people to set aside, for a period of time, their individual concerns and to pursue a common goal that is important for the responsibilities and welfare of the group (Hogan et al., 1994). Leadership in the context of its effect on employer trust

has been examined in literature in the past by studying the behaviour of leaders while managing their teams through times of stress (Chen & Sriphon, 2021; Ipsen et al., 2021; Maurer et al., 2022).

Further, more recent literature has shown that the uncertainty and stress inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted organisational leadership (Chen & Sriphon, 2021) and specifically that it is of crucial importance that leaders develop good communication skills to be able to adequately convey information with empathy and optimism during times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, to maintain organisational trust in order to maintain organisational sustainability (Chen & Sriphon, 2021).

Working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a re-evaluation of the way that organisational leadership approaches employer trust (Chen & Sriphon, 2021). As working from home becomes more prevalent and in order to maintain successful businesses' management should evaluate the way in which they engage their employees and their levels of employer trust (Saks & Gruman, 2014) in times of stress.

The purpose of this research was to investigate how different aspects of leadership behaviours affect employer trust, and further to investigate if working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic played a moderating role in that relationship. By using an online questionnaire, 297 respondents, employed in an office environment and having experienced working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, were asked to score their managements' leadership behaviour. This research established three clusters of leadership behaviours, Motivation and Influence,

Idealised Management and Efforts and Effectiveness and examined how each element affected Employer Trust by using verified scales for both Leadership and Employer Trust. In addition, this research included working from home as a moderating factor. In order to understand whether the level of importance or value a participant attached to working from home, or if the level of support received, defined by their perceived work/life balance, had a moderating effect on the relationship between Leadership and Employer Trust.

Following an extensive analysis including an analysis of the interaction values to determine the extent to which working from home mediated the Leadership/ Employer trust relationship, this research was able to successfully conclude that all three Leadership clusters did have a significant impact on the level of Employer Trust of the respondents. Moreover, the questionnaire results indicated that while Leadership cluster 1 - Motivation and Influence was reported as being most important by respondents in building Employer Trust; upon further analysis, the data actually revealed that Leadership cluster 2 - Idealised Management was significantly more influential on Employer Trust. Further, regarding working from home, this research concludes that respondents that did not hold working from home in high regard were more significantly affected by Leadership 2 - Idealised Management than those that did hold working from home in high regard. In conclusion, this study seeks to help leaders to better understand how their leadership behaviour affects their employee's level of trust and recommends further understanding, enabling organisational leadership to become more successful with happier and healthier employees.

Biography

Susanne Embleton



Susanne Embleton has over 10 years of experience in corporate communications and investor relations. Her passion for corporate communication has driven her through out her career, first as an in-house specialist in biotech and now as a senior consultant advising companies in many different industries. Her experience includes EU and US investor relations, strategic corporate communications and reputation management,

complete corporate rebranding and financial communications. Susanne holds a BA in Human Interaction from Leiden University and now adds an MSc in Corporate Communication from Erasmus University Rotterdam.

To contact Susanne please send an email to susanneembleton@gmail.com

Friedel Grant

How organisations are listening to employees in the hybrid work era

The Covid-19 pandemic forced a dramatic change in the world of work. As lockdowns eased, flexible working patterns emerged. Now, more than ever before, employees are likely to spend a significant proportion of their working week at home or another remote location. This fundamental shift in the way we work has operational implications for businesses. In the internal communications context, one open question is this: how can organisations best listen to their employees in the current environment? Listen they must, because today's employees expect to be heard. Beyond the ramifications of the pandemic, economic trends such as the Great Resignation, political and social movements such as Black Lives Matter, and shifting generational expectations are all leading to greater employee demands for dialogue and transparency. But are traditional ways of listening still effective for increasingly remote workforces?

“The reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen the more and talk the less”.
Zeno of Citium

This thesis researched how organisations are listening to their newly hybrid workforces through 15 in-depth interviews with professionals in the UK and Europe. Interviewees were mainly communications professionals. All were directly involved in planning, carrying out and analysing the results of employee listening efforts. The study illuminated an extensive set of strategies, tactics and technologies for listening to hybrid employees. Benefits and tensions related to listening efforts, as well as future trends, were also uncovered.

The study confirmed that organisations are listening to their hybrid workforces and see the act of listening as essential. In addition, the research indicates that hybrid listening is expanding from its pre-pandemic state, in part due to greater expectations from employees

that organisations should listen to them. More data is being collected through an increasing range of mainly digital channels and the listening process is relatively complex: involving a series of distinct steps, many different actors throughout the organisation and cross-departmental collaboration.

A common theme was the perception that, while listening activities are often planned and executed by communicators, it is leaders who hold the power to act on the results of listening and it is leaders who employees expect to see in the public role of listener. Executives therefore need to cast off old ways of top-down management in favour of leadership through proactive, transparent, authentic dialogue. A failure to do so could lead to tensions with employees.

Practical Implications

Professionals who are already involved in, or seeking to develop, ways of listening to their hybrid workforces can take many practical lessons away from this study. First, this study suggests that practitioners should re-examine historic listening practices or strategies,

making sure that they reflect the new hybrid reality: one in which listening is, for example, being carried out more frequently, via more digital channels. In organisations where no listening programmes currently exist, practitioners should advocate for them to be established.

Second, this study highlights the resource demands which come along with listening to hybrid workforces. Increasing amounts of data are being collected and there is demand to listen in a more sophisticated way, for example by comparing data collected across internal systems. At the same time, many professionals report a lack of both time and tools to meet these demands. Practitioners should therefore advocate for more investment in the tools needed to listen effectively to hybrid employees.

Finally, the results of this thesis call attention to interaction between the behaviour of leaders and managers and the success of listening in a hybrid environment. When executives show up to listen, and do so in a way which is perceived as authentic and honest, it boosts listening. Those in charge of making listening happen should therefore ensure that leaders and managers are equipped to listen effectively: by providing them with training, coaching and relevant information on trends and current topics.

Biography

Friedel Grant



Energetic, motivated and proactive. Passionate about connecting people. An out-of-the-box thinker. Unhindered by hierarchy. This is how colleagues describe me. My CV says I'm a journalist and communicator. In addition to these formal titles, I see myself as many things wrapped up into one. Listener and researcher. Translator and storyteller. I fundamentally believe that communication – when done well – presents endless opportunities for organisations to positively impact their employees, their customers and the world.

My career started when I was 16. I drove my mother's car around town, interviewing people for the local newspaper. I enjoyed hearing, understanding and sharing the stories of others. At the time, I aspired to be a war correspondent. Life took me on a different path. I worked as a radio DJ and stock market reporter, lived in four countries and spent three years on the road: sleeping in fields and forests as I rode my bicycle around the world.

I believe that these diverse experiences help me to be a better communicator. The bottom line is this: communication is not just putting words on a page. To communicate means to speak and listen,

to create a dialogue. Connecting with others and seeing the world through their eyes is essential if we want to create conversations and experiences that inform, inspire and engage.

As a graduate of the Executive Master in Corporate Communication from Rotterdam School of Management, I can now compliment my practical experiences with academic knowledge and strategic frameworks. The courses I followed with dozens of like-minded inspirational professionals were a gift. Together we learned from each other and our instructors about topics such as communicating persuasively and purposefully, even during times of crisis and change. My studies also challenged me to grow as a person, reconsidering my role as a communicator and the opportunities I have to bring values such as courage, empathy and compassion into my work.

In the coming years, I look forward to applying these new perspectives and skills within the charities, foundations, network organisations and universities for which I work: innovative organisations with a human heart, helping to build a better world.

Ramon de Groot

The perception of Dutch millennials on early retirement opportunities.

Do they (even) know what it takes?

In this exploratory study on early retirement we have addressed the question: What plan do highly educated millennials, who want to retire early, have to achieve this? We have focused on the Dutch pension situation. Against this background, it is important to recognize that:

- *Almost three quarters of all Dutch people want to quit working before the state pension retirement age.*
- *The government (on the other hand) wants people to work longer and takes (tax) measures to prevent / discourage early retirement.*
- *'Pension awareness' among the Dutch is structurally low. This means that people do not know whether their (future) pension income is sufficient, and what they can do to make up for any shortfalls.*

Little is known about millennials in relation to pension behavior and plans. Qualitative research was therefore chosen to further map out the research field. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data. Our aim was to describe meanings and behaviors and understand and explain them if possible. With the collected data we were able to make a set of characteristics that applies to our target group. This can help us to sharpen our communication strategy and makes it possible to provide millennials with information about a specific subject over time, based on their wishes and interests.

Key findings

- Highly educated millennials do not (yet) have a detailed plan to retire early.
- They are satisfied with their current jobs and career perspectives. Their intrinsic desire to retire early does

not seem very strong. Rather, this is a reaction to the deterioration of the Dutch pension system (which is causing uncertainty) and worries about the physical condition by that time.

- There is no predetermined retirement age or date. The moment of retirement is flexible and depends on factors such as: personal health, job satisfaction and the (then) applicable retirement age. In any case, the retirement wishes are fairly modest. The respondents only want to retire a few years earlier than the state pension age (AOW-age). This roughly corresponds to the former retirement / state pension age of 65. Completely stopping work is not a hard requirement.

- If it is not possible to stop working earlier, the first and most-mentioned alternative is to work less. The respondents do not experience this idea as particularly unpleasant, at least if the work is (still) fulfilling.

- Media output (e.g., about increasing the pension age) and personal experiences (e.g., reintegrate after dropping out of work) are the main reasons why they started to think about early retirement (and want to do so). After identifying and acknowledging this desire, no immediate action is taken (e.g., searching for information; figuring out what the options are to achieve it).

- The ideal information provision on early retirement is concise, accessible and offered online. Furthermore, it contains the following elements: explanation of

Biography

Ramon de Groot



the different options through examples (broad view); facts, advantages and disadvantages; visuals and interactive options (e.g., do it yourself calculations); action plans (e.g., how to open an account).

- Millennials have limited knowledge of their current pension (and state pension) status, pension prospects and pension options.
- Even though their pension knowledge is far from sufficient, the respondents do believe that they are responsible for their future pension income. We see this in their behavior. They save a part (between 5% and 40%) of their income. This money is mainly invested in stocks with limited risk and has no specific purpose of 'quitting work earlier'. Rather, it is intended for other purposes.
- In order to retire earlier in the future, the respondents would give up between 0% and 20% of their current income. They rather prefer to hand in income later in order to retire earlier, namely between 20% and 40%.
- Besides travelling (or living elsewhere) and other hobbies, the respondents want to continue to contribute to society after they have retired (e.g., by transferring their expertise from work or study). When they think about themselves as (future) pensioners, the associations are positive. Key recommendations Highly educated millennials do not have enough

'pension awareness' to make a detailed plan to retire early. That is why communications must focus on 'the basics': gaining insight into the current pension situation and future pension prospects. It can help to respond to current trends (e.g., investing) and current issues (e.g., buying a home). We have seen that millennials like to conduct independent and proactive (online) research for topics of their interest, such as investing. If we can make a mental link between areas of interest and pension, this could potentially lead to new perspectives, insights and ultimately to more pension awareness.

Key recommendations

Highly educated millennials do not have enough 'pension awareness' to make a detailed plan to retire early. That is why communications must focus on 'the basics': gaining insight into the current pension situation and future pension prospects. It can help to respond to current trends (e.g., investing) and current issues (e.g., buying a home). We have seen that millennials like to conduct independent and proactive (online) research for topics of their interest, such as investing. If we can make a mental link between areas of interest and pension, this could potentially lead to new perspectives, insights and ultimately to more pension awareness.

Ramon de Groot (1984) lives and works in Rotterdam. Since 2015 with Nationale-Nederlanden. First as a contact person for pension issues and later as a complaints mediator. He currently works at the pension expert center where his area of interest is pension communication. Ramon likes to hear people out and wants to know what they think, why that is the case, and how it influences

their actions. This people-oriented approach is also central to his thesis about the reception of Millennials on early retirement. Ramon attended the 'craft school' for journalism, studied history and obtained a master's degree in Media & Journalism at the Erasmus University. During and after his studies he contributed to various radio programs and magazines.

Nienke ten Hagen-Dieterich

How to engage employees while embedding a sustainability strategy in a corporate organisation

As companies around the world recognise the urgency of transforming their organisations towards increased focus on sustainability, 'business as usual' is no longer an option (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2020). With the added complexity that such a transformation is more than just a change initiative (Bhattacharya & Polman, 2017). It is about taking responsibility as an organisation for people, planet, and long-term value creation. Only for many organisations this transition is extremely challenging, as the full integration of a sustainability strategy is a process that takes a vast amount of time, effort, and consistency.

The aim of this research is to answer the following question:

"How to engage employees while embedding a sustainability strategy in a corporate organisation?"

By answering this question, the objective is to create a better understanding of how an organisation can change its course by implementing a sustainability strategy and to identify the role of managers cascading sustainability topics within a corporate organisation. It also aims to understand how employees as key stakeholders can be influenced in their in-role behaviour.

Methodology

For this research a combination of a systematic open-coding approach for the grounded theory strategy, as well as the 'Gioia Methodology' have been used (Gioia et al., 2013). For this in-depth research approach a heterogeneous purposive sample of 14 sustainability managers have been interviewed, who are employed

by corporate organisations. Semi-structured interview techniques have been used and the questions were open-ended.

Findings and conclusions

The findings of this research define the importance of engaging all layers of an organisation when embedding a more sustainable strategy, while continuing to deliver shareholder value. The foremost important role when changing the organisational strategy is the 'tone at the top'. Even though the insights from the interviews showed that motivations of top leaders may differ, all informants agree that the whole process of embedding sustainability into an organisational strategy starts with an intrinsic motivated leader with a strong voice. For shareholder companies there may be extra attention required, as most of these organisations are more complex and divided than family-owned organisations. After setting the tone from the top of the organisation, the middle management is the driving force of the change. They cascade the sustainable strategic change to all employees. The research has also learnt that identifying the organisational change agents will help accelerate the change.

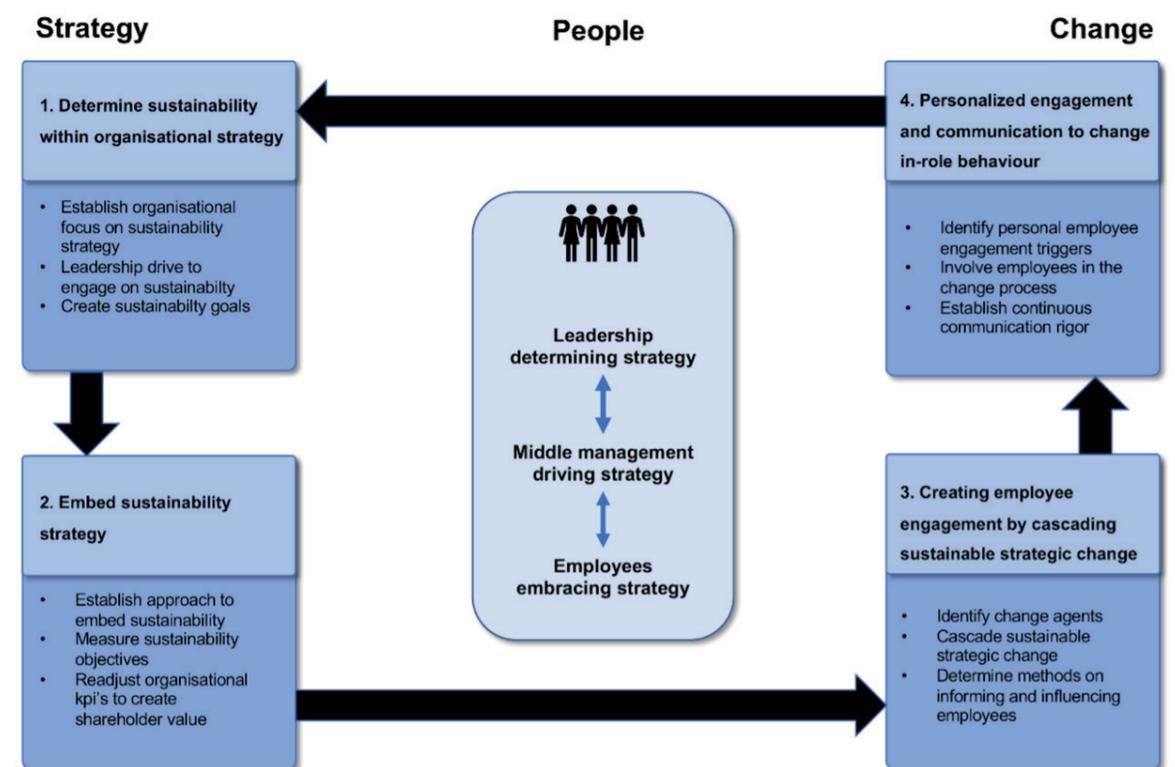
Another key finding is to determine organisational focus, by defining a purpose and strategy for 'doing good' as an organisation. By creating sustainable objectives which are close to the core of the business and by making more conscious choices in everything that you do as an organisation, the employees will embrace this strategic shift.

According to the findings, to be able to embed these sustainable strategies in the core of the business, it is key to make sure leaders and middle management start with a common approach. It is important to measure sustainability objectives and readjust the organisational KPI's to make it possible to assess the success of changing the business, while continuing to create shareholder value.

Process model: 'engaging employees in sustainable strategic change' (ten Hagen-Dieterich, 2022)

Informants explained the importance of identifying personal triggers of employees, as it comes to sustainability topics. In addition, while establishing a continuous and informative communication rigor, it is important to connect it to the personal triggers of the employees to strengthen their engagement and involvement. Finally, given the continuous changing circumstances of both organisations and the world around us, it is key to continuously re-evaluate the organisation's strategy.

This research contributes to the current literature of organizational strategic changes on sustainability and influencing employees to engage in sustainability, by bringing several pragmatic insights from a sustainability managers' perspectives. It has resulted in four practical steps for an organization to embed a sustainability strategy and influence its employees, which are demonstrated in the below process model of embedding a sustainability strategy.



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Biography

Nienke ten Hagen-Dieterich



Nienke ten Hagen – Dieterich is a creative all-round communications professional, with a strong background in marketing and well versed in internal and external communications. She specializes in marketing campaigns, brand identity as well as sustainability, crisis, integration & transformation communication.

She is born and raised in the Hague, the Netherlands. She graduated with a BSc degree in Economics, specialized in marketing communications, at the Hague University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands) in 2004. She completed this study, while working at advertising agencies in Rotterdam and Delft, in different project and account management roles. After graduating Nienke and her husband decided to pursue their dream and travel around the world in eight months.

In 2005 she joined Rabobank as a marketer retail and expanded her experience as a marketing communication manager for banking, insurance and pensions products and services at AEGON in 2007. In 2011 she started her own business as a communications, marketing, and event specialist. This included various projects from organizing total

events, teaching, and managing creatives teams inhouse and abroad - to complex marketing and communications projects for longer periods of time.

In 2018 while teaching (part-time) marketing and sales at the Hague University of Applied Sciences, she joined Nationale-Nederlanden as a senior communication specialist for the integration of the Delta Lloyd and Vivat Reaal insurance companies into NN. Since 2021 Nienke is part of the sustainability team, which is responsible for educating, engaging, and encouraging employees and advisors on sustainable innovation of products and services on both social and environmental strategic projects.

Nienke enjoys spending her free time with her husband Sebastiaan, two sons (Xavier and Maxence) watching them playing rugby as well as hiking, tennis, skiing, traveling and enjoys cooking a nice dinner.

To contact Nienke, please visit her LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nienke-ten-hagen-dieterich/>

Nataša Ivačić

The Impact of Leadership Communication on Employee Engagement in Times of Organisational Change

To remain competitive and profitable, companies need to continuously invest money and effort in streamlining and innovating their processes, hiring skilled employees and making sure their employees continue to build upon their skills and knowledge so they can move forward in the direction the company's strategy wants them to go. This means that the employees of any forward-thinking organisation will be confronted with change on a regular basis. Keeping employees motivated and engaged in times of change, however, is a difficult balancing act because change naturally goes hand in hand with uncertainty (Bordia et al., 2004). At the same time, it is of crucial importance that employees remain invested and engaged throughout the change process and once the changes have been implemented because employee engagement has a significant impact on an organisation's success: "a dramatic difference has been noted in the bottom-line results between companies with engaged employees and those without" (Men & Bowen, 2017).

Given their hierarchical position within an organisation, leaders at different levels in the organisation have an important role to play in keeping employees motivated in times of change and managing their resistance to change (Hill et al., 2012). The purpose of the thesis was to examine how leadership communication can affect employee engagement in the specific situation of companies undergoing organisational change. To answer this question, I applied the case study research method by conducting 20 semi-structured interviews with employees who were subject to a major organisational change initiative in their company.

The thesis showed that the way a direct manager informs impacted employees about upcoming organisational changes will impact how employees will experience the changes and how engaged they will be. The main findings suggest that employees

impacted by organisational change have four main questions they like to see answered before changes are implemented: (1) what are the changes, (2) why are the changes necessary, (3) how will the implementation process of the changes look like and (4) "what's in it for me". Next to being informed about the context and content of change initiatives, the conducted study also showed that the level of engagement of impacted employees is also affected by the way the direct manager – and by extension any other individual in charge of implementing the change – communicates to the employees about the impact of the change: transparency, a listening ear and understanding for the employee's personal situation are crucial to increase the probability of getting and keeping employees on board during the change process. Furthermore, the channel the direct manager uses to bring the message is of significant importance. The majority of the

Biography

Nataša Ivačić



participants in the interviews stated that they prefer being personally informed – during a face-to-face conversation – about changes impacting them, be it in a small group with other colleagues or on a one-on-one basis.

Based on these findings, this thesis resulted in the following main recommendations: before implementing change, the direct manager in charge should take the time to explain the context of the change (“what, why, how”) as well as the impact and potential benefits of the change for the employees. The manager should preferably inform the impacted employees during a face-to-face meeting to give them the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback. When communicating about change, it is not only about the message itself. Managers should also pay attention to how they bring the message. In this context, transparency, vulnerability, empathy, confidence and charisma are key.

To increase the acceptance rate, a communication strategy needs to be put into place on all hierarchical levels of the organisation, allowing for a structured cascade of the information and taking into account the fact that managers who are supposed to communicate about the change will potentially themselves also be impacted by the change.

Nataša Ivačić (Sarajevo, 1985) is a multilingual communications professional with more than ten years of experience in corporate communication. Throughout her career, Nataša has worked for private and public organisations, focusing mainly on internal communication and change & project management.

Being a war refugee from former Yugoslavia, Nataša established her life in Belgium when she moved there with her parents and brother in 1992. She obtained her bachelor's degree in business translation and interpreting at the Ghent University College. At the same time, she got certified as a court interpreter Serbo-Croatian/Dutch.

Nataša spent her professional career in Belgium and Germany where she worked as a communications professional and project manager for strategic programs for one of the biggest financial institutions in Europe. With her strengths in communication, change and project management she played an instrumental part in the execution of strategic change projects in the organisation. After moving back to Belgium, she worked as a communication manager at the University of Antwerp, where she was responsible for the strategy and implementation of internal as well as external communication initiatives.

Nataša currently lives in Antwerp, Belgium, with her husband Sebastian and their two children, Céleste and Elliot.

Roland Krijger

Corporate reputation improvement through non-financial information disclosure on social media networks

An experiment with stakeholder engagement and its dimensions

The concept of 'stakeholder capitalism' has been researched for more than a quarter of a century (Freeman & Liedtka, 1997) and its principles are outlined already fifteen years ago (Freeman, Martin, & Parmar, 2007). Although recently, stakeholder capitalism is getting more attention as on the one hand, during the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of businesses were more agile, took good care of customers and employees, and positively engaged with society and governments. On the other hand, however, other companies still focus on short-term profit for shareholders.

NN Group, a Dutch international financial services provider, is one of the companies that says it adheres to stakeholder capitalism. It aims to create long-term value for all stakeholders, and not just shareholders and their ambition is 'To be an industry leader, known for customer engagement, talented people, and contribution to society'. The progress on the ambition is measured by strategic targets around excellent customer experience, engaged employees and positive contribution to society.

How companies create sustainable value is often communicated through non-financial disclosure which, based on legitimacy and stakeholder theories, can help to meet stakeholder information expectations, and thus can be considered as a form of stakeholder engagement (Saraitė-Sariene et al., 2020). In general, stakeholder engagement can support and generate relevant information for value co-creation. This is

because, with stakeholder engagement, relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders often exceed one-way information disclosure and includes (some) involvement in the decision-making process (Park, Chidlow & Choi, 2014). When developing the appropriate unilateral communication from the organisation to the stakeholders, there is, via research, often consultation involved (Aksoy et al., 2020). Therefore, some scholars point out that stakeholders do not only benefit from the created value but, due their involvement in the interactive decision-making process, stakeholders might be co-creators of value as well and the main actors in this process become more interdependent (Sheth & Uslay, 2007). As pictured in table 1, the stakeholder engagement dimensions are not equal on their characteristics. Hence, the created value differs most likely and therefore it is expected that the impact on corporate reputation also varies.

	Stakeholder recognition	Stakeholder support	Stakeholder dialogue
Resources exchanged	None	Economic support (through contributions of time, money, or services/ products).	Information exchange (e.g. product information, market information).
Direction	Uni-directional	Uni-directional	Bi-directional
Stakeholder's involvement	Low	Moderate	High

Table 1: Characteristics of the three dimensions of stakeholder engagement (Aksoy et al., 2020).

A conceptual framework was developed based on the combined literature regarding non-financial information disclosure, social media networks, stakeholder engagement strategies and corporate reputation. This framework has provided hypotheses which were the foundation of a pre-test/post-test randomised between-subjects four-factor Solomon four-group experimental design. This experimental

design made it possible to investigate and draw conclusions on what effect stakeholder engagement and its dimensions – stakeholder recognition, stakeholder support and stakeholder dialogue – in non-financial information disclosure on social media networks have on an organisation's corporate reputation, and to what extent the impact on corporate reputation differs per dimension.

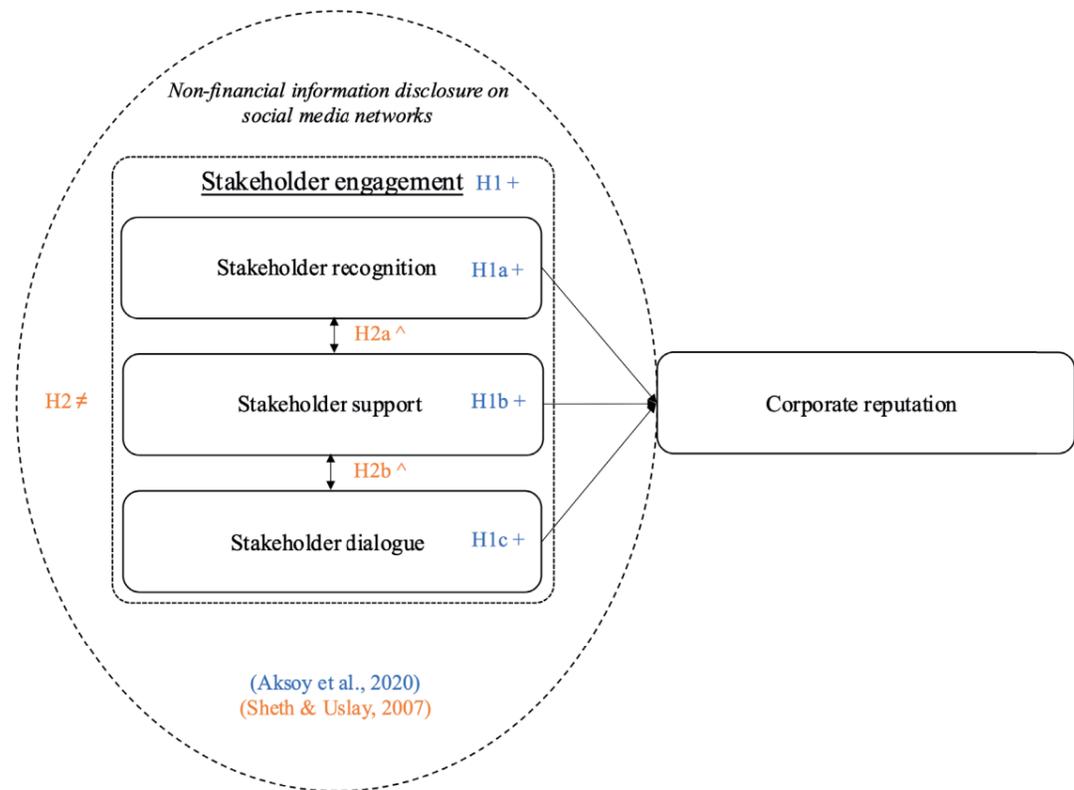


Figure 1: Conceptual model

It was found that the presence of stakeholder engagement strategies in non-financial information disclosure on social media networks can have an effect on the corporate reputation of NN Group. The dataset contained two different types of stakeholder groups: internal and external stakeholders, being respectively employees and non-employees. For employees of NN Group, the presence of stakeholder engagement in general and the specific stakeholder engagement dimension 'stakeholder support' in non-financial information disclosure on social media networks had a significant effect on the corporate reputation. However, statistical testing for the two other dimensions 'stakeholder recognition' and 'stakeholder dialogue' did not indicate a significant effect. For non-employees of NN Group, only the dimension 'stakeholder dialogue' had a significant effect. It is notable that, when looking at the specific dimensions, the two dimensions that led to a significant effect on the corporate reputation within the target audiences were the ones in which resources are exchanged between the stakeholder and the organisation.

For both stakeholder groups, it cannot be said that the impact on corporate reputation differs per stakeholder engagement dimension as the confidence intervals overlap and other statistical testing also did not indicate a significant difference between the various dimensions.

The outcomes of this research shed more light on stakeholder engagement strategies in the context of non-financial information disclosure on social media networks because this study has illustrated that

the presence of stakeholder engagement strategies can lead to a directly positive impact the corporate reputation of an organisation, in this case Dutch financial services provider NN Group. Besides that, the outcomes also indicate that only the stakeholder engagement dimensions in which resources are exchanged between the company and stakeholders had a significant effect on the corporate reputation as the only dimensions without resources exchanged 'stakeholder recognition' did not have a significant effect on corporate reputation within both stakeholder groups. Furthermore, external stakeholders seem to appreciate the bi-directionality, informational exchange and high involvement within the dimension 'stakeholder dialogue' which, more than the other dimensions, shows that stakeholders are actively involved in the decision-making process and therefore become co-creators. Internal stakeholders, on the other hand, seem to appreciate the most direct and concrete form of stakeholder engagement, being 'stakeholder support'. Managers and practitioners can use these insights to shape their communication strategies to both employees and non-employees and highlight initiatives related to stakeholder support and stakeholder dialogue on their various social media networks. For example, sharing initiatives on their external channels that relate to engaging in a dialogue with certain stakeholder groups, or shift the emphasis from just recognising stakeholders' feelings, wishes, rights, traditions or well-being to communicate about how the organisation has put the due regard into practice and exchanged resources with them, whether it be information or economic resources.

Biography

Roland Krijger



Roland Krijger (1993) is an energetic corporate communications professional with a passion to create a win-win situation for the company and its stakeholders by developing understandable communication and engaging content. Being schooled as a digital marketer at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences and the Rotterdam Business School, Roland's initial focus was selling a product to a specific customer segment. However, during his studies he found out that he loved thinking from a brand perspective as it includes a multi-stakeholder approach and therefore Roland began his career in the brand management team of Nationale-Nederlanden. He started the Executive MSc programme in Corporate Communications in 2019 and while

studying at the Rotterdam School of Management, Roland became responsible for the external digital corporate communication and channel strategy of NN Group – including social media, website, e-mail distribution and employee advocacy. Nowadays, Roland is manager public relations at AbbVie Netherlands. In this role, together with his team, he focusses on contributing to patient care and improving AbbVie's positioning. As a former rowing athlete, he is a strong advocate of the power of a multidisciplinary team, clear goalsetting and continuous development. Roland lives nearby the Erasmus University campus in Rotterdam and enjoys doing all kinds of sports, mostly running, cycling, surfing and rowing.

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Laura van Lingen

Climate Activism and defining a Communications Strategy

A study into the way large companies in the Netherlands respond to climate activism from a communications point of view. What drivers play a role and how do communications professionals expect the topic to evolve.

Climate concerns are a sign of the times and are not expected to be solved anytime soon if you see the news and read the alarming reports by amongst others the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It brings climate concerned stakeholders to put pressure on companies to act and do their part in this global crisis, to take responsibility and action when it comes to addressing climate in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy and plans. Along with the demand for action came climate activism. This is also felt at large companies in the Netherlands where communications professionals are dealing with activists visiting their premises, their Annual General Meetings (AGM), (ANP, 2022) or even when they meet in court. The topic is timely and calls for companies to respond and formulate a communications strategy.

This research aims to answer the main questions:

How do large companies in the Netherlands respond to climate activism from a communications point of view, what drivers play a role in their response and how do communications professionals expect the topic of climate activism to evolve in the future?

The overall objective is to get a better understanding how large companies in the Netherlands approach the topic and at the same time provide communications professionals with instantly useful practical insights and knowledge from their peers who are also dealing with the topic. The literature on this topic is limited, therefore the findings can enrich existing literature and possibly instigate further research on related topics. For this qualitative study, the researcher conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with communications professionals at 10 large companies in the Netherlands and communications professionals that work for 2 communications strategy agencies providing companies as well as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) advice on the topic. The interviews provided a large array of perspectives on the topic

which formed the basis of the thematic approach that was used to analyze the findings that ultimately led to the conclusions and recommendations.

The researcher concludes that the large companies in the Netherlands that participated in this study all have the topic of climate activism on their communications agendas, they are responding to climate activism one way or the other and they are trying to make the best of an often-negative situation.

The communications professionals at the researched companies have a lot of knowledge as they often work in big teams covering many different fields of communication – internal, external, stakeholder relations, media relations, social media, content creation etc. – and work with plans and protocols when needed. Most of the companies researched also have different tools at their disposal that they can use when engaging with their stakeholder community including activists. For example an extensive social media platform where the company is represented,

monitoring software, websites etc. but companies are at times struggling to find the right tone and tool to apply in a particular activist situation.

There is no “wrong” or “right” on this topic and it clearly has no “one size fits all solution”. The topic requires true willingness from companies to understand the

underlying issues and drivers and wanting to do better than before as a company when it comes to climate related concerns from stakeholders and their response to activism. By applying the given recommendations provided in the thesis, large companies and their communications professionals will be prepared to respond to climate activism now and in the near future.

Biography

Laura van Lingen



After successfully receiving the European Baccalaureate diploma at the European School in Bergen NH in 1995, Laura went to the Hotel Management School in The Hague where she did a traineeship in Mexico and Argentina and obtained a Bachelor in Hotel Management in 2000. Immediately after she started working at ABN AMRO Bank in Amsterdam where she did the Corporate Traineeship and after held various positions such as International Sales & Implementation Manager Cash Management solutions (partly in Brazil), Business Manager for the EVP Corporate & Business Banking and Media Relations Adviser, focusing on the private banking and sponsorship activities. After leaving the bank in 2012 she briefly worked for the Stichting Reclame Code or Advertising Standards Authority in the Netherlands as Press, PR and Communications Adviser and simultaneously obtained an official certification as Senior Communications Adviser from SRM, an official institution for marketing & communication education.

In 2014 she continued her career at NN-Group, a large insurance company, as Media Relations Adviser responsible for the Banking, Insurance, and Sponsorship & Partnership activities. In 2018 she left the company to work as Media Relations Adviser for

Shell International where she currently works.

In 2020 Laura decided to follow the MSc program in Corporate Communications to further invest in her academic career. Doing a master in the field she has been working in for more than 10 years has enriched her knowledge, complemented her skills and experience, and will enable her to fulfill broader and more senior communication roles. Combining academic knowledge with best practices cases from around the world that can be applied immediately in day-to-day work, together with getting to know a new network of communication professionals has made her a complete and more confident communications professional.

Keywords to describe her are: Optimistic, No-nonsense, Action driven, Pragmatic and a Relationship builder.

Laura lives with her partner and two children in Scheveningen and in her free time she likes to play tennis, travel, meet friends or do some occasional gardening.

To contact Laura, please visit her LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/laura-van-lingen-msc-b31a35/>

Tineke Meijers-Faassen

The effect of climate activism on the reputation of a corporation

Activist groups are secondary stakeholders in the sense that a corporation's survival does not depend on their continuing support. They have a claim they consider urgent and legitimate, but they have little bargaining power against corporations. At the same time, if a corporation repetitively ignores or responds negatively to an activist group's demand, the conflict endures over time and may escalate. Focusing on the climate change issue, large corporates have to deal more often than before with activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion, Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth Netherlands (Milieudefensie).

This has led to the following research question for my thesis:

“What can corporations do to mitigate possible reputational risks, as a result of specific efforts or actions by climate activist groups?”

Research method

To show the effect of climate activism on the reputation of a large corporation, explanatory research was conducted, based on a case study at Rabobank. The Reputation Signature, developed by MAHA/RIG, was used as a primary source to collect data. A signature is the set of attributes that differentiates the very best brands from the rest, looking at their reputation. The findings from these signatures, together with the findings from the literature review, served as input for qualitative interviews with a homogeneous group of participants.

Findings & results

This research study provides insights into the reputational risks and opportunities for organizations such as Rabobank, when targeted by climate activists.

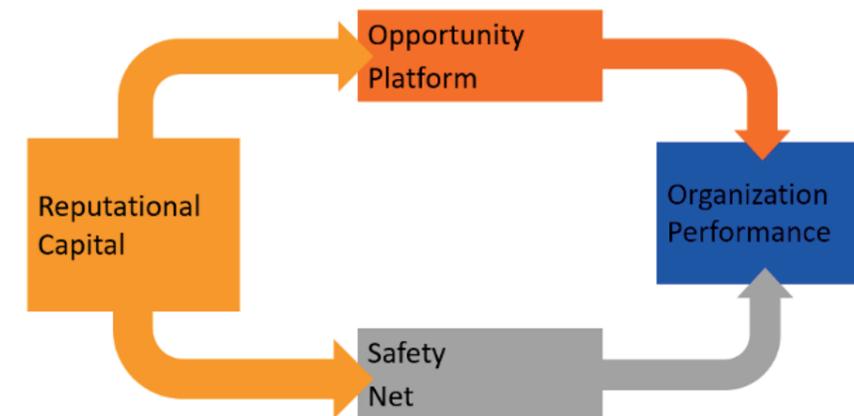
But we have also defined some operational steps - based on those insights - to either avoid reputational damage or to optimize reputation. The steps derived from this case study could also benefit communication practitioners of other Dutch, leading companies.

Conclusions

The main conclusion, as showed by the research findings, is that climate activism as such is not very harmful for a corporation's reputation. This is because actions by activists sometimes tend to end up in vandalism and this does not contribute to the cause they are fighting for. Another conclusion is that climate activism is triggered by the position a corporation chooses and the actions, or not, that it undertakes to prevent or mitigate climate change. This is also reflected in the 'E' in ESG, which is an important attribute for a company's reputation. Overall, we can conclude that in the Netherlands, there is fertile ground for climate activists to flourish.

Management framework

The Reputational Risk Management Cycle by Paul Argenti shows how a company's valuable reputation is connected to reputational opportunities as well as the company's own performance. It also suggests a reputation 'safety net' by actively promoting sound environ-



mental and social responsibility programs to reduce risk. The model can be interpreted as an opportunity platform as well. In the case of climate activism this is trying to avoid problems before they happen.

Recommendations

To help a corporation improve its performance, and thus becoming less of a trigger for climate activists, the following operational steps were identified.

Greater focus on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

A more diverse workforce is correlated with better vision and decision making as well as high ESG performance.

Focus on short-term carbon gains rather than long-term net-zero

Proclamations about net-zero are not as powerful statements anymore, as they were. The bank should define real gains and take immediate action on things that are measurable tomorrow.

Define sustainability KPIs for all staff

By making this tangible on an individual level the bank can make sure that sustainability becomes a part of each client conversation. And the client level is where you make the difference. For non-client facing staff this would also be recommended, for them to be fully knowledgeable and engaged on this topic.

Greater focus on product innovation

Commit more knowledge and labor to product innovation, with the aim to increase the availability of 'green' products. It would enable the bank to build more trust with its clients and build competitive advantage.

Adjust communications strategy to: under-promise and over-deliver

Stop communicating good intentions, plans, commitments and non-materialistic stories. And instead, communicate which impact about the transitions the bank realizes and back up each claim with substantial evidence.

Reference: Hond, F. d., & Bakker, F. G. (2007). Ideologically motivated activism: how activist groups influence corporate social change activities. *Academy of Management Review*, 901-924

Biography

Tineke Meijers-Faassen



My name is Tineke Meijers (1977). I am a driven corporate communications professional for whom concrete results are key. I have a lot of experience with both b2b as well as financial services and I am used to working in an international environment.

The past 6 years I have worked in the corporate communications field within Rabobank. I love the dynamics of working for a large corporate and to be around colleagues that I can learn from. I fulfill a proactive role in reputation- and crisis management. Also I am the go-to person for senior management for corporate and internal comms matters, often concerning complex and/or sensitive topics with large business impact. Enrolling in the RSM

Executive Master program has enriched me in many ways, both professionally and personally.

In my free time, I love to go to the gym for either a power or a cardio training. I equally love going out to (fine) dine so always looking for a balance between these two.

I live in the historical city center of Utrecht, together with my husband Remy. Currently, we are developing a second home in Sagres, Portugal.

Please feel free to contact me through LinkedIn:
Tineke Meijers-Faassen | LinkedIn

Karin Oost

Strategic communication in public-private co-creation

How could strategic communication be used for public-private co-creation in the healthcare information sector in the Netherlands?

This thesis examines the necessity of strategic communication in public-private co-creations. Public-private partnerships, collaborations, or any other designation for public institutions to work together with private organizations is getting more important in the Netherlands. The government of the future is a collaborative government (Berlo, 2012) with multiple actors to achieve societal goals. These can be citizens but also (semi) private organizations. The trend of public-private co-creation marks a change in the sectors' relationships with one another. Instead of being each other's stakeholder, public and private actors become partners.

One such public-private collaboration is the Dutch HealthCare Information Council (HIC), which is the subject of the case study in this thesis. The HIC is a collaboration between multiple actors in the healthcare sector and the Ministry of Healthcare, Welfare, and Sports (VWS) with the societal aim to build together a durable healthcare information system. Yet, despite a shared common mission, the results of the HIC are invisible and its role is unclear (Valkering, et al., 2022). This research shows that the alignment with the constituencies is poor, success is difficult to pinpoint, and communication has a secondary role. This raises the question: what should the council be doing and what it is not doing now? To compare the case HIC with other public-private collaborations, the thesis describes four other public-private organizations within the Dutch healthcare sector: AI Coalition, Health Holland, ABOARD, and Valuable AI for Healthcare. In total twenty interviews have been held for this research.

This thesis brings the concept of public-private co-creation and strategic communication together via literature research, expert interviews and five case studies. The thesis main question to answer is How could strategic communication be used for public-

private co-creation in the healthcare information sector in the Netherlands?

One of the main findings in this research is that any public-private collaboration and/or co-creation is in essence a communication project. Communication is of vital interest to any public-private co-creation where different parties from the public arena work together with private actors and civilians / end-users or representative organizations in a networked structure. When parties work together on administrative level, they should also allocate communication capacity to work together on strategic communication.

The vitality of a networked structure depends on the commitment of the individual members. This is all about stakeholder engagement: how to keep the stakeholders involved, motivated, and committed to deliver to the overarching interest. The main problem of the case HIC is the alignment with the constituents. The HIC members themselves recognize this problem that they cannot solve that issue since it has been a problem for many years. If the alignment cannot take place via the hierarchical structure, then a new

Biography

Karin Oost



approach is needed. This study recommends that the HIC should evolve the public-private collaboration to a public-private co-creation. Key success factors of a public-private co-creations that these studies find are Reflectivity (Reward), End-users, Value creation, Access, Management, Platform, Engagement / Experience, and Dialogue, in short: REVAMPED.

This means that the end-users and other stakeholders should be Engaged to solving together a societal problem by bringing in their experience, views, knowledge, and questions. If more stakeholders share these, added value can be created to come to new insights in addressing the societal aim.

This should be done in a constant dialogue supported by an online Platform. The members of the platform should have Access to documents and partners and will be Rewarded by the recognition of their contributions and contributing to a purpose. The outcome of this co-creation process can help partners in the public-private

co-creation to make better Manageable, Acceptable, Communicable, Applicable, and Workable decisions that are being followed up by the constituents since they have been engaged into the process to come to these decisions. Since the stakeholders are involved in the process the outcome will gain support for implementation. After all, the decision-makers and the end-users are on the same side.

Based on the case study and the elaboration of four other cases, the thesis presents a framework for strategic communication in public-private co-creations. This can be of help for the HIC but is also applicable in other public-private co-creation settings. This framework is based on the strategic communication framework of Argenti (2023), that, as this study shows, can be seen as an overarching model of different strategic communication models, the Vision, Culture and Image model of Hatch and Schulz (2015).

Karin Oost is quarter maker communication at the information policy directorate at the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. This she does since September 2021. After writing a communication strategy for the department, in which she already used early findings of her thesis, she was asked to build a communication team.

She has been hired in September 2021 as senior communication consultant at the Bureau Informatiebeeraad Zorg (BIZ). BIZ is a supporting office for the public-private collaboration Health Information Council (Informatiebeeraad Zorg, HIC). The HIC is also the main subject in her thesis about strategic communication in public-private co-creations.

Oost has studied journalism at the university of applied science Windesheim. She has worked for 13 years as freelance journalist writing articles and books about the internet, software, the millennium problem and photo editing and management

software. In her office as freelances she has also outsourced herself among others as knowledge broker at an ICT project for the Higher Education market in the Netherlands, has been editor at a newspaper and teacher in e-commerce for entrepreneurs. In 2008 she accepted a job as editor in chief for a doctor's platform called Artsennet, that was owned by the Royal Dutch Medical Association (RDMA). After five years of working with a variety of stakeholders she decided to start an education in strategic communication. That brought her to a senior communication consultant position at Nictiz and EIT Digital, a European organization for innovation and education funded by the European Commission. While working here, she decided to pursue a master's degree at the Rotterdam School of Management.

Karin is married in 1994 and has two children (1994, 2000). She and her husband live in the picturesque town IJsselstein in the Netherlands.

Denis Salamadin

The influence of thought leadership on consumer brand preference

Brands are continuously looking for innovative methods to differentiate themselves and attract customers to their offerings. Thought leadership could help brands stand out from the crowd and create meaningful relationships with their consumers. This research seeks to contribute to the literature on thought leadership by examining the effect of thought leadership on consumer brand preferences. How does thought leadership, as a multidimensional construct, impact brand preferences? How do the distinct components of thought leadership, such as novel point of view and trust, impact brand preferences? Finally, does self-congruity play a role in the relationship between Thought leadership and brand preference?

The overarching research question is:

“To what extent do perceptions of thought leadership among consumers influence brand preference?”

Conceptual model and research design:

Despite the growing interest in thought leadership, there has been limited research on its impact. According to Van Halderen, Paddock, and Badings (2013), organizations pursue thought leadership to promote their brand, increase brand awareness, strengthen consumer relationships, and develop consumer brand preferences. This thesis attempts to fill that gap by investigating if thought leadership leads to consumer brand preference. Furthermore, self-congruity is being researched since studies have

brand preference. To investigate the aforementioned constructs and their relationships, a conceptual model (figure 1) and a set of hypotheses are established.

A survey among 150 people was conducted to answer the research question. Tony's Chocolonely was chosen as a thought leading brand due to the novel views that they expressed in their market. Respondents were asked to answer questions about the brand's novel viewpoints, brand trust, brand preference and self-congruity.

Findings and conclusion:

This research concludes that thought leadership as an overall concept has a significant and positive effect on consumer brand preference. Additionally, this research concluded that when thought leadership was analyzed as two distinct dimensions, namely novel point of view and trust, the effect of thought leadership on brand

preference was only partially validated. In contrast to trust, which had a significant and positive effect on consumer brand preference, the brand's novel point of view had no significant effect. Furthermore, research suggests that self-congruity has no moderating effect on thought leadership and brand preference, contrary to what was hypothesized. This research also discusses the theoretical and practical implications for practitioners, arguing that brands and stakeholder groups differ and that for thought leadership to be successful, an outside-in approach is essential to formulate viewpoints derived from market and societal issues, which are relevant to stakeholders, and align with the brand's values and strategy.

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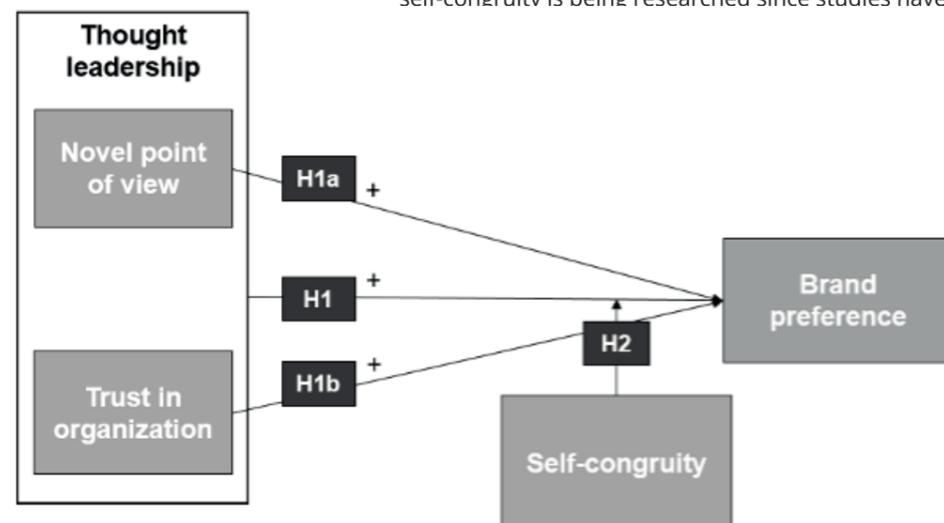
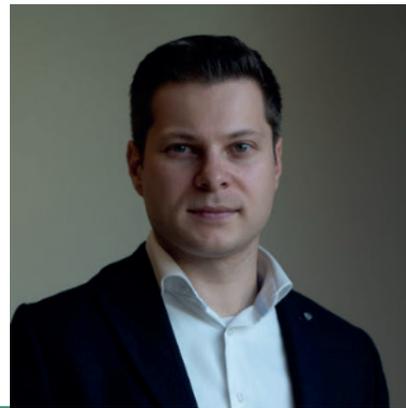


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Biography

Denis Salamadin



Denis Salamadin (1987) is a Marketing and Communications professional who has worked in a variety of national and international companies, assisting them in developing strong corporate and product brands. His area of expertise is brand and product creation, and he has a passion for the gaming, leisure, and hospitality industries.

Denis was born in Odesa, Ukraine, and relocated to Maastricht, the Netherlands, when he was five years old. Following his graduation as an IT and System Administrator, Denis enrolled at the Fontys University in Eindhoven to study Marketing Management in order to broaden his marketing, branding, and communications interests. His first job was in online marketing, where he helped set up digital B2B platforms for the organization's customers and participated in various worldwide digital campaigns. After that, he pursued a career as a marketing and communications officer for MSI, a Taiwanese IT company, where he helped establish the MSI gaming brand in Europe and eventually supervised an international team of

MarCom specialists. Denis also held the position of Marketing Manager at Kalfire Fireplaces, where he was responsible for the company's global branding, marketing, and communication strategy.

Since January 2023, Denis has been a freelance Marketing and Communications strategist, assisting firms in enhancing their brands, increasing brand awareness, and developing fresh and engaging brand stories. Moreover, he owns a boutique vodka brand named GOA Vodka, for which he is eager to effectively develop a strong brand and challenge the industry's status quo.

Denis believes that communication is crucial in establishing a strong brand, and that storytelling is essential for every successful company. The Executive Master in Corporate Communications helped him to get a broader perspective on a variety of communication topics, enhance his understanding of branding, communications, and strategy, and forge deeper ties between Marketing Management and Corporate Communications.

Humaira Suleri-Latif

Exploring why students will or will not promote Design-Based Education through TikTok

TikTok is the current most popular social platform with its short video sharing for Generation Z. Social media has changed traditional methods of promoting higher education. The current higher education students are from Gen Z and are active TikTok users as they receive gratification for their social and psychological needs from it.

The students of the Leisure and Tourism Academy of NhlStenden University of Applied Sciences follow a relatively new Design-based Education method. Promoting this DBE method through TikTok by current students is expected to be effective in attracting potential students who are also users of TikTok. Hence, this study focuses on a niche area and aims to explore whether current Gen Z students will be interested to promote their DBE education through TikTok.

Literature review

In this practice-oriented study, the Uses and Gratification Theory is used to understand the interest of the current Gen Z to promote their DBE education through TikTok. 'Gratifications' entails the 'intrinsic social psychological needs', that a person (Gen Z) fulfills because of 'the engagement' with different 'media' channels (Ruggiero, 2000 as cited Ahlse et al., 2020 p.19). As a result, the use of particular media can cause the fulfillment of one's (Gen Z's) needs (Katz et al, 1973 as cited in Montag et al., 2022). So far, another latest research showed that gratification of emotional/recreation needs was the most significant 'driver' to understanding activities on TikTok including creating content and interacting with others (Bossan & Kottasz, 2020, p.463).

Research method and design

This exploratory study followed an inductive approach to better understand the potential of TikTok usage by students of Higher Education to promote their Design-

based education method. There is a lack of research in the context of promoting this new higher education method. For semi-structured interviews, 16 students who follow the design-based education (DBE) method and use TikTok were selected using purposive sampling and the snowball technique.

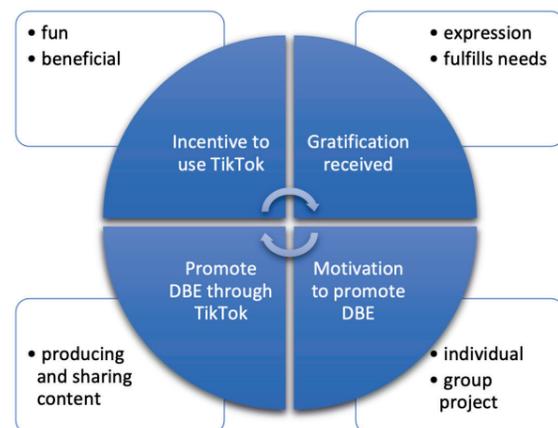
The data were analyzed with the use of coding (Boeije, 2009) and conducted in five steps: preparation, reading, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the whole research, based on three principles – consent, avoiding harm, and doing justice.

The interviews were conducted through the business meetings platform Teams and recorded with the permission of the interviewee.

Findings and Discussion

The findings depict a clear intrinsic motivation for the students for producing short authentic videos on TikTok from their perspective for explaining and showing how they positively experience DBE, especially the practical aspect of this method. This motivation accounts for both content creation for TikTok by individual students and as a group project. These facts imply the need to be connected with peers by authentic expression of their DBE experience as well as explanation vlogs of the study through TikTok. Based on the findings, it is suggested that following the TikTok features and trends will attract more target

audiences of potential students. The gratification of current students will come from feeling helpful, proud, and valuable to their university as well as connecting with their peers. Based on previous results and current empirical findings that using TikTok by Gen Z does fulfill their social-emotional requirements, the following model is proposed for the process flow for the promotion of the DBE method by Gen Z students. This can be seen as the driving force for implementing the model shown below.



Flow process: Use of TikTok for promoting DBE education (Latif, 2022)

Value of the study

More insight is added into the Uses and Gratification theory for use of TikTok by Gen Z students for promoting their DBE Education

Outlook for further research

The allure of TikTok is here to stay for usage by current and prospective Gen Z students. Further association of the use of TikTok by Gen Z students and their gratification can be explored more in-depth using a mixed method approach. Portraying more diversity among Gen Z students through TikTok by the student themselves is appreciated by the Gen Z audience. This concept can be further explored.

Moving beyond the setting of this study, it is clear that Gen Z will fill in the future work field. For them using TikTok for communication for satisfying and gratifying their needs is predominant. It is clear from previous studies and this current one that Gen Z connects in an authentic, fast-paced dynamic digital setting. In this context, they diverge from the previous generations. Consequently, communications, particularly internal communications, then ought to be personalized according to how Gen Z are at ease with digital communication.

It is argued that the use of TikTok be incorporated into B2B marketing strategies as fast-paced short videos are trending in the current digital marketing world. It is worth noting that the social media giant TikTok is currently being used for marketing by companies such as Netflix, NBA, Semrush, Shopify, and more (Dantas, 2022). Concerning internal communications, it should be noted that the management consulting firm Russel Reynolds Associates, headquartered in the USA, is already experimenting with internal communication through TikTok (Gallagher, 2022).

Thus, research into the use of TikTok in internal communications to engage wholly with Gen Z employees is needed.

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Biography

Humaira Suleri-Latif



Having lived on 3 continents and as an empathetic cosmopolitan, I can see what unites us and how to look beyond cultural barriers. Coming from a global education sector background, I contribute to society by empowering students and shaping the future workforce.

Born in Pakistan and growing up in Ghana in the 1970s and early 1980s – due to my parents' undertaking there as Director (Dad) and English Lecturer (Mum) of a British education system Secondary school - led me to believe firmly in 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world' (Mandela, 2003) as I have personally experienced.

Further, my training from the European Association for International Education (EAIE), among others, dealing with Crises facilitated me to further meaningfully engage with students. For me, this is

creating value in imparting knowledge that makes others powerful and enabling them to create a successful future as citizens of the world.

My first Master's Degree in English Literature and Applied Linguistics has always empowered me to meaningfully enable BA students to brand themselves and be active self-assured ethical professionals in their work fields – for a strong enduring effect in their working circles of influence.

I firmly believe in having a strong balance between being goal and people-oriented. Receiving and imparting knowledge is my forte. Being a proud mum of two and wife, I care for my family, students – our future generation, and our earth. I love traveling. My mantras are 'to learn and convey pragmatic knowledge till the grave' and 'Where there is a will, there is a way'.

Harm Theuns

Big Oil: Changing the narrative

In Europe, and in The Netherlands particularly, for years the reputation of the industry was deteriorating. From being very welcome and 'great for the economy and jobs' companies active within the industry - rightfully or wrongfully - now were being turned into polluters, tax evaders, and eventually accused of being the leading cause of climate change. Currently, in the eyes of large parts of the public the entire Industry is unreliable and is resisting with all of its power an accelerated energy transition. Industry faces the challenge of 1. reaching the audience with their content in the first place, and 2. aren't trusted well by the general public, as multinationals face enormous reputation issues, lots of them are even suffering from stigma. To become a full-fledged conversation partner again, the industry has to evade or push back against the negative public perception.

This negative public perception has grown stronger over the years as it is fueled in multiple ways.

Examples are:

- *Increasing climate urgency due to hot summers and forest fires*
- *Rapidly changing public opinion under the influence of the climate movement*
- *Reputational issues caused by the Industry itself*
- *Increasing energy prices as a result of geopolitical tensions and war*

The best way for oil and chemical companies to get back at the table and to be listened to again by the general public, politicians, the media, etc is to stop with pumping up and processing fossil fuels, become climate neutral and have zero emissions. Global oil production in 2021 amounted to 89.9 million barrels per day, according to the IEA. Society seems to be addicted to oil, partly for transportation, partly for the creation of commonly used materials such as plastics and rubber.

Finding alternatives on a global scale and greatly decreasing the amount of oil being used will take decades, as new technology needs to be invented, current technologies need to be disinvested, and funds need to be available to pay for such an enormous operation. Due to its scale and long-term planning and projects, industry moves slowly. In the meantime the oil industry still has to continue its business, as the world keeps asking for huge amounts of affordable energy. It is paramount for the industry to get their message across to the general public, so they can explain their vital role in society, next to the steps they are taking in becoming net zero.

Currently, industry as a whole and Big Oil in particular is under relentless attack by NGOs, politicians, media and people on social media. In response, oil companies portray themselves as 'being part of the solution'. By that they are using almost the same frames as NGOs do, in effect empowering unwillingly the talking points of NGOs. For example: a NGO calls an oil company 'a polluter'. The oil company in its communications responds by explaining how it focuses on decreasing

the level of pollution, such as 'we are working on being net zero by 2050'. By doing so, in the mind of the general public, an oil company gets linked to the term 'pollution'.

Therefore oil companies need to deviate from the frame NGOs are using, and come up with a new one that is less tainted. D'Angelo (2022) comes up with three approaches to framing. The cognitive approach is what oil companies do at the moment. They use the frame to be part of the solution and substantiate it by their own arguments, such as 'we have the technology', 'we invest in renewables' or 'we are going to be net zero in 2030'. The critical approach is in this case not viable, as in the contemporary environment public opinion and the elites contemporary worldview within The Netherlands goes directly against the current message of the oil companies. The third one is the cognitive approach, one that taps into other fields of science such as behavioral science and psychology.

By choosing the third option, a search for the right language and images emerged. What positive associations are Dutch people having with oil companies? 200 respondents associated industry with 'necessary', 'usable', 'accessibility' and 'indispensable'. So clearly they see an added value in the existence of oil companies. Positive associations, with respect to oil companies, respondents had with the terms: 'to move', 'contact', 'freedom', 'ease', 'necessary', 'usable', 'outside' and again 'accessibility'. Negative associations respondents had with terms such as 'factories', 'pollution', 'smoke', 'production' and 'emissions'. In their current communications, the industry uses these terms regularly, while they should better be avoided.

Based on the theoretical outcome of the former test a new ground frame and matching content were created. Contemporary communications of oil companies were, together with the new content, run along 203 Dutch

nationals. The texts and images were tested based on emotional impact and on credibility of the messages.

First results show the approach of changing the narrative to the *raison d'être* of the companies seem to have a very positive effect, going from an Average Emotional Score of 2.9 from ExxonMobil and a 3.6 from Shell on a scale of 1 to 10 to 6.5 and 6.8 for the two new frames. Maybe people are fed up with the 'being part of the solution' frame. Or they just don't believe it, giving them a negative feeling while being confronted with that message.

This might be true looking at the Average Credibility Scores. The messages of ExxonMobil and Shell each score 2.7 on a scale of 1 to 10, meaning they are regarded as very uncredible. Stigma might be involved here. On the other hand the new frames score 6.6 and 6.9 out of 10 respectively. They resonate more amongst the public and might help in changing the narrative to communication that is regarded positively by the public, so it helps to get the message across for the industry. A better reputation may provide oil companies a voice that is listened to in the public debate. By that they can discuss with the world the role they chose and the steps they take to combat climate change. And from working together, we will all benefit.

The research question for this thesis is: What can oil companies within The Netherlands in their communications do to reshape the narrative so they are more positively perceived by the general public?

Biography

Harm Theuns



Harm Theuns (1979) has a background in journalism, marketing and communications. Reputation, communications strategy and storytelling are fields of special interest to him. That's why he chose to work at the Public Affairs department of ExxonMobil, just after starting the Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication at the RSM Erasmus University in 2019. There he soon discovered the company was lacking eyes and ears of what was going on in the outside world. So he focused on stakeholder management, monitoring to what people within the Benelux had to say about the company and setting up social media platforms to disseminate content, showing its followers the company's side of the story.

In the past Harm used to work as a journalist at some newspapers and at the Dutch national television news. Thereafter he worked at various marketing and communication jobs at financial institutions and at Tilburg University. Currently he is manager Marketing/Communications at Mampaey Offshore Industries, the global leader in intelligent mooring, berthing and towing systems. Next to his professional career he runs a webshop in handmade jewelry.

Harm is married to Maya. The pair has two sons, David and Tristan, and a daughter called Leanore. They live together with their two cats in the city of Breda.

To contact Harm, please visit his LinkedIn profile at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/harmtheuns/>

Amber van Veldhuizen

Diversity and inclusion: a qualitative study of Dutch women of color's perceptions of diversity and inclusion in relation to the decision not to apply to the Netherlands Armed Forces

This study aims to understand what image women of color in the labor market hold of the Netherlands Armed Forces (NAF), by providing insight on how their views on diversity and inclusion relate to the decision not to apply for a job within the NAF.

Its theoretical relevance lies in deriving new theoretical aspects by providing information on the views regarding diversity and inclusion amongst women of color, and in shedding light on employer branding, job-decision making, and intersectionality theories. Societal relevance lies in how defense organizations can further embrace its diversity and inclusion policies and how they can recruit a more diverse and target audience, given their major shortages in military personnel.

To reach this goal, a main research question and sub-questions were developed. The main research question is: ***How does the perception on diversity and inclusion of Dutch women of color in the labor market relate to the decision not to apply for a job within the Netherlands Armed Forces?***

After exploring relevant literature on the image and attractiveness of an organization, diversity and inclusion, the attractiveness of defense organizations in relation to job-choice decisions, the importance of diversity and inclusion in defense organization, and understanding the value of women of color for defense organizations, ten in-depth interviews with women of color were conducted. Six interviews were conducted amongst women of color who do not work for the NAF and four interviews were conducted with

women of color who work as military personnel for the NAF. These participant groups provided insight on their views on diversity and inclusion, impression of the NAF as organization and employer, their views on diversity and inclusion in relation to the NAF, and the decision on whether to apply for a job within the NAF. By analyzing the outcome of the interviews through a thematic analysis and comparing the findings to existing literature, it was concluded that women of color do not consider applying for a job within the NAF because they lack recognition in the NAF, rely on stereotypical thinking, and hold minimal knowledge of the organization. A subject that is broader than the aim of this research also surfaced from this study: a possible coping mechanism against discrimination and mistreatment by gender and/or race by denying diversity and inclusion. Finally, limitations and recommendations were presented. Recommended for the NAF is to invest in the recognition of women of color, to pay more attention towards its internal culture by educating its employees on diversity and inclusion on the work floor, and by addressing mistreatments. Recommendations on future research include exploring the factor of ethnicity and further elaborating on the experiences within the NAF of women of color that work for the NAF as military personnel.

Biography

Amber van Veldhuizen



Amber van Veldhuizen graduated from the Royal Military Academy with a bachelor's degree in Military Business Sciences and has since then been an officer for the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Both during her education and in her first position as operational team leader, she learned a lot about leadership and the importance of communication.

Currently, she works at the labor market communication department for the Netherlands Armed Forces (@werkenbijdefensie). Within this vocation she specializes in online media, where

she is involved in devising, creating, producing, and publishing content for Werken bij Defensie. With her inquisitive character, open-minded attitude, and critical view, she is eager to understand the motives of young people and to reach them through labor market communication.

Topics that drive Amber in particular are equality, diversity, inclusion, countering discrimination and racism, and increasing equal opportunities for minorities in our society.

Coaches



Joep Cornelissen

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Joep Cornelissen is Professor of Corporate Communication and Management at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. The main focus of his research involves studies of the role of corporate and managerial communication in the context of innovation, entrepreneurship and change, and of social evaluations of the legitimacy and reputation of start-up and established firms. In addition, he also has an interest in questions of scientific reasoning and theory development in management and organisation theory.

His work has been published in the Academy of Management Review, Journal of Management Studies, Organisation Science and Organisation Studies, and he has written a general text on corporate communication (Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice, Sage Publications) which is now in its fourth edition. He is an Associate Editor for the Academy of Management Review, a Council member of the Society for the Advancement of Management Studies, a former General Editor of the Journal of Management Studies (2006-2012) and serves on the editorial boards of the Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Management, Journal of Management Studies and Organisation Studies.



Paul A. Argenti

*Professor of Corporate Communication
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Professor Paul A. Argenti has taught management, corporate responsibility, corporate communication, and healthcare management starting in 1977 at the Harvard Business School, from 1979-81 at the Columbia Business School, and since 1981 as a faculty member at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business. He has also taught as a visiting professor at the International University of Japan, the Helsinki School of Economics, Erasmus University in the Netherlands, London Business School, and Singapore Management University. He currently serves as Faculty Director for Tuck's Leadership and Strategic Impact Program, and Tuck's executive programs for Coach.

Professor Argenti's textbook, Corporate Communication, Seventh Edition, was published through McGraw-Hill/Irwin in 2016. He also published the first edition of a seminal work in 2016 entitled Corporate Responsibility for Sage, which focuses on corporate values,

shared value, corporate character, and the purpose of the corporation in modern society. Argenti co-authored (with Courtney Barnes) *Digital Strategies for Powerful Corporate Communication*, published by McGraw-Hill in 2009. Some of his other books include: *Strategic Corporate Communication*, published in 2007 by McGraw-Hill, *The Power of Corporate Communication* (co-authored with UCLA's Janis Forman), published by McGraw-Hill, and *The Fast Forward MBA Pocket Reference* (several editions), released through Wiley. Professor Argenti has written and edited numerous articles for academic publications and practitioner journals such as *Harvard Business Review*, *California Management Review*, and *Sloan Management Review*.

Professor Argenti also blogs regularly for publications such as *Harvard Business Review*, the *Washington Post*, and *US News & World Report* and appears frequently on radio (NPR and APM) and television (CNBC Fox Business) commenting on topics related to management, communications, reputation, and corporate responsibility.

Professor Argenti is a Fulbright Scholar and a winner of the Pathfinder Award in 2007 from the Institute for Public Relations for the excellence of his research over a long career. The Ethisphere Institute also listed him as one of the most influential people in Business Ethics. He serves on an advisory board to the President of the World Bank and the Board of Trustees for the Ethisphere Institute. He has also served on advisory boards to CEOs globally for a variety of companies. Finally, he has consulted and run training programs in communication for executives at hundreds of organisations over the last three decades including General Electric, The Detroit Lions, Mitsui, Novartis, and Goldman Sachs.



Guido A.J.M. Berens (PhD)
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Guido Berens is Assistant Professor at the Corporate Communication Centre (department Business Society Management) of Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. He earned his doctoral degree in Corporate Communication from the Erasmus Research Institute of Management (Erasmus University) and Master degrees in Psychology and Philosophy from the University of Nijmegen. Guido's research interests include corporate communication, corporate social responsibility, and issues management. His research has been published in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Journal of Business Ethics*, among others. Guido teaches Research Methodology as well as Communicating Sustainability in the Master and PhD programmes at RSM.



Tessa op den Buijs
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Tessa is Assistant Professor at the Netherlands Defence Academy in Breda. The combination of (maritime) military education, university-level education and personal development makes the education given at the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) unique in the Netherlands. Officers' training has been given at the NLDA for more than 180 years, a tradition that has borne a wealth of experience. The NLDA is located in Breda, Den Helder and The Hague.



Mark Lee Hunter (PhD)
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Mark Lee Hunter is a recognised innovator as a scholar and media practitioner. He is a founder of the Global Investigative Journalism Network and the lead author of its manual for practitioners, *Story-Based Inquiry*, published by UNESCO in 2009 and currently available in 14 major and minor languages. He co-founded the Future Media Management Programme at Stockholm School of Economics Riga, which trains independent media leaders from the former Soviet countries. He has taught stakeholder crisis and leadership communication at RSM since 2006. At the INSEAD Social Innovation Centre, where he is an Adjunct Professor, he co-founded the Stakeholder Media Project, whose work on emerging media sectors and communities has been published in *Harvard Business Review*, *California Management Review*, *MIT Sloan Review*, and *Corporate Communications Review* as well as practitioner journals. The most recent of his ten books is *Power is Everywhere: How stakeholder-driven media build the future of watchdog news* (2017). He has won seven US and international awards for his scholarly writing and journalism. Since 2006 he taught and consulted (for Al-Jazeera, RTE, France Télévisions and others) in 40 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, the Arab world and the Americas. He earned his doctorate at the Université de Paris II (in French, his second language) and his undergraduate degree at Harvard. When not working, he plays the electric guitar, solo and in bands.


Sofya Isaakyan
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Sofya Isaakyan is an Assistant Professor of Organisational Behaviour at the Department of Organisation and Personnel Management, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. She received her Ph.D. in Organizational Behaviour from Maastricht University in 2018. Her research focuses on understanding employees' upward expression of ideas and concerns about work-related issues (i.e., voice behavior) and the corresponding reactions by managers and team members. Her second area of research focuses on leadership development and leader identity.

Sofya is the recipient of a Veni research grant by NWO in 2022. Sofya is currently a member of the editorial review board of the Journal of Management Studies. Before entering academia, Sofya worked as a consultant in the area of leadership development.


Erik van 't Klooster (PhD)
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Over the past 10 years Erik van 't Klooster has been a teacher (both bachelor and master level) and a consultant on marketing strategy, marketing communications and consumer behavior. Also, Erik has coached many master theses on a wide range of marketing topics (e.g. consumer retail, b2b marketing, financial services, brand management, marketing automation, social media). Erik is experienced in both qualitative and quantitative research methods.


Florian Madertoner
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Florian Madertoner is a Lecturer at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. He holds a degree in Banking- and Finance. Florian's research interests include Capital Structure Theory, Behavioral Finance, Fraud and the History of Finance.

He is responsible for the Finance part of the course "Introduction to Business". In addition, Florian teaches Foundations of Finance, Corporate Finance as well as the minor "Money and Banking" in the international bachelor program. In the Master program Finance & Investment Florian is involved in the course "Financial Analysis and Valuation" and the supervision of Master theses.

He has been awarded the "Professor of the Year Award" three years consecutively in 2016, 2017 and 2018 for his undergrad course on Corporate Finance.


Prof. Rita Linjuan Men
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Rita Linjuan Men, Ph.D., APR, is Professor in the Department of Public Relations at the University of Florida. Men's background is based primarily in corporate communication research and consulting. Her research interests include employee communication, leadership communication, public engagement, measurement and evaluation, relationship/reputation management, start-up public relations, and emerging technologies.

Men is a renowned expert in employee communication. Her work has been widely published in academic journals in communication, management, and public relations. In addition to nearly 80 articles, she has lead-authored or edited three books, Excellence in Internal Communication Management (Business Expert Press), Current Trends and Issues in Internal Communication: Theory and Practice (Palgrave Macmillan), and Strategic Communications for Start-ups and Entrepreneurs in China (Routledge). Her fourth co-edited book, Internal Communication and Employee Engagement: A Case Study Approach (Routledge) is scheduled to be published in Fall 2022. Men has received 27 top paper and research awards and recognitions from national and international communication associations and conferences. She is the 2010 recipient of the Ketchum Excellence in Public Relations Research Award from the Institute for Public Relations, a three-time Arthur W. Page Legacy Scholar, a 2017-2022 Plank Scholar of the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations, and the 2016 recipient of the PRIDE Outstanding Journal Article Award for Outstanding Innovation, Development, and Educational Achievement in Public Relations from the National Communication Association in the United States. In addition, Men was identified as the most published scholar in internal communication (1970-2019) and in social media and public relations (2006-2020) respectively, according to two systematic review articles published in Public Relations Review. Men's works have been cited over 5,200 times according to Google Scholar Citations.

Men's scholarship and consulting experience have led her to serve multiple leadership roles in the field, including as an associate editor for Journal of Communication Management, an advisory board member for the International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRR) and the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) and chief research editor for the Institute for Public Relations' Organizational Communication Research Centre. She is also a member of the prestigious Arthur W. Page Society. Men earned her Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Miami. She holds an M.Phil. in Communication from Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, and a B.A. in International Communication from Zhejiang University, China.



Ton Roodink (IR, PhD)
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Ton Roodink has been an assistant professor at the Rotterdam School of Management at Erasmus University Rotterdam since 1990. Ton teaches Management of Change and predominantly he gives lectures to students between the ages of 30 and 50 who attend the programme of the Part-time Master Business Administration (MScBA). In addition, he has been a member of the faculty's Examination Board for many years.

As a consultant he performs organisation research, provide organisational advice, work as a mediator and give workshops and training courses.

Since December 2004 Ton is a senior lecturer in courses at Sezen Academy in Wijk bij Duurstede. Graduated in Applied Mathematics, with a specialisation in Operations Research (Technical Highschool Twente), he worked as a researcher from 1979 to 1983 at the Institute for Theater Research Amsterdam. From 1983 until 1990 I was a lecturer of Philosophy of Science at the University of Twente in Enschede.

His main focus areas are change management, organisational development and conflict management. He is especially interested in the use of stories as a diagnostic and interventional methodology.



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Lonneke Roza is a part-time Adjunct Assistant Professor at Rotterdam School of Management and she specialises in non-commercial (i.e. impact first and impact only) strategies to create positive social change. Her research is mainly focused on (employee engagement in) Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Social Investments. She published articles in renowned journals such as Journal of Business Ethics and Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. In addition, Lonneke is the leading editor on the first academic book on Corporate Foundations, published by Springer in 2019. Her latest project is a co-edited book that will be published at Sage on employee engagement in Corporate Social Responsibility, expected in summer 2020.

Next to her research, Lonneke teaches courses and trainings for master students and professionals on Non-Profit Management, Social Entrepreneurship, Employee Engagement in Corporate Social Investments and Employer Branding through Corporate Social Investments. In addition, she works with the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, United States) and co-delivers a course on Corporate Citizenship. Next to her position at the university, Lonneke is a consultant for companies, corporate foundations and charitable organisations and works with (international) platforms, such as European Venture Philanthropy Association and RW Institute. She serves as a chair of the board of Vattenfall Foundation (corporate foundation) and on the board of Facilicom Group Foundation (corporate foundation), KPN Mooiste Contact Fonds (corporate foundation) and Lokale Fondsen Nederland (umbrella organisation for community foundations). She is frequently asked to speak at public events and conferences on the role of businesses in society.



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Yijing Wang is Assistant Professor of Organization and Corporate Communication in the Department of Media and Communication at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She teaches in the International Bachelor program in Communication (IBCoM) and Masters in Media and Business, as well as supervising MA and BA thesis students. Before joining the department in September 2015, she was Associate Dean for Asia and Assistant Professor of Business and Society Management at TIAS Business School, Tilburg University. She obtained Master degree in Financial Economics with a high distinction from School of Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and a PhD degree in Corporate Reputation and Stakeholder Management from Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her research and teaching interests include corporate reputation management, corporate social responsibility, managing sustainability, investor relation and crisis communication. She is author of several international publications in journals such as Business Horizons, Journal of Business Ethics and Corporate Reputation Review.



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