BOOK OF
GRADUATES
2025

Research Abstracts

Part-time Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication

RSM - a force for positive change

RSM *Erasmus*

Research Abstracts 2025

Rianne Biesters
Exploring the effect of account based marketing and pursuit marketing on sales in a B2B IT service environment

Constantijn Geluk
The role of internal communication in fostering organisational purpose

Esther Gierveld
The CEO activism cycle: Framing, legitimacy, and stakeholder dynamics of CEO activism in a European context

Caro Hamacher
Between words and deeds
How internal communication strategies influence employee participation in corporate volunteering through sensemaking

Rendy Kee
The power of active listening:
How leaders can build trust

Sarah Killoh
Green transformation:
CSR rebranding in the oil and gas industry

Renske Kragt
The role of communication in creating a shared corporate culture in a hybrid work environment

Yue (Christie) Liu
Navigating change communication in global alliances:
A case study of SkyTeam's cloud migration

Sherine Nehad
When 'Oil' speaks louder than 'Green':
Market reactions to the 2024–2025 strategic pivots of BP, Shell and ExxonMobil

Ilaria Nembro
What makes CSR Volunteering engaging?
A cross-cultural qualitative study on employee perspectives

Saskia Nuijten
Persuading consumers in the Netherlands to eat insect-based foods
The role of communications in shaping consumers' willingness to eat insect-based foods

Justine Powell
Artificial intelligence in strategic communication:
How AI tools and humans interact in decision-making across agenda-setting, stakeholder-framing and message development

Abdallah Touqan
Leveraging AI for proactive and reactive corporate communication in cyber attack scenarios

Omamofe Ugboma
Impact of social media influencers on Nigeria's 2023 general elections

Marijn de Winter
Corporate purpose evolution in M&A:
A study of employee perceptions and management practices during post-merger integration

Preface

This year we celebrate the 27th 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 manage communications and reputations and lead with impact.

Fifteen 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 programme has brought forth 400 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.

The new Master of Science in Corporate Communication graduates are: Rianne Biesters, Constantijn Geluk, Esther Gierveld, Caro Hamacher, Rendy Kee, Sarah Killoh, Renske Kragt, Yue (Christie) Liu, Sherine Nehad, Ilaria Nembro, Saskia Nuijten, Justine Powell, Abdallah Touqan, Omamofe Ugboma, Marijn de Winter.

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:

- *Rianne Biesters*
- *Constantijn Geluk*
- *Esther Gierveld*
- *Caro Hamacher*
- *Rendy Kee*
- *Sarah Killoh*
- *Renske Kragt*
- *Yue (Christie) Liu*
- *Sherine Nehad*
- *Ilaria Nembro*
- *Saskia Nuijten*
- *Justine Powell*
- *Abdallah Touqan*
- *Omamofe Ugboma*
- *Marijn de Winter*

Part-time Executive
Master of Science in Corporate Communication

Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University

RSM

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; 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, Erik van 't Klooster, 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 'Cees van Riel Award for Excellence and Impact in Corporate Communication' 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 Award for Innovation in Corporate Communication' is presented by Ing. Dries (Andreas) van de Beek, Former Chairman of the Board of CCC BV, to the author of the most innovative thesis. The winners of the awards in of the graduates of 2025 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 fantastic achievement.

On behalf of the entire team,

Prof. dr. Joep Cornelissen
Academic Director

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

Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University

Rianne Biesters

Exploring the effect of account based marketing and pursuit marketing on sales in a B2B IT service environment

In this thesis I examined how Account Based Marketing influences sales in complex B2B IT service environments. ABM is often presented in practitioner literature as a driver of revenue growth (e.g., Burgess & Munn, 2021; Burgess, 2025, Berkowitz,T 2016, Cunningham K. 2025). Academic research has so far offered limited and often inconclusive empirical evidence of this effect (Monye M.& Ederwevde, I.G.2025, Spahiu et al., 2025, Agaba, M 2021).

Instead of attempting to establish a direct causal relationship between ABM activities and sales outcomes, I focused on understanding how ABM influences buying behaviour and sales processes in practice.

Through comparing a focused literature review with an in-depth analysis of selected ABM success stories and qualitative interviews with experienced practitioners, my research shows a perspective on ABM as it is applied in real-world strategic accounts and sales contexts. The interviews and success stories directly answer the central research question by showing that ABM influences sales primarily through indirect, cumulative and relational mechanisms and less through short-term, measurable effects.

The interviews largely match with the academic literature that frames B2B buying as a collective, socially embedded decision-making process rather than a linear funnel (Pederson, 2023. Johansson, Carlsson, 2006. Verville & Halingten 2002. Venkatesh, Kohli and Zaltman,1995). Interviewees said ABM is a way to structure the engagement with strategic accounts, to align internal and external stakeholders and support sense-making within complex buying centres. These findings resonate with research on organisational buying behaviour and influence strategies, which focus on the importance of credibility, legitimacy and coalition-building instead of transactional persuasion. (Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman,1995. McFarland, Challagalla & Shervani, 2006).

The success stories match these insights. They show how ABM tactics activate established principles of psychological persuasion—such as authority, social proof, reciprocity and commitment—through activities like co-creation, benchmarking, expert engagement and the provision of high-value insights. (Cialdini, 2007,2016. Mc Farland et al. (2006))

ABM worked through reducing perceived risk, increasing trust and enabling informed decision-making across multiple stakeholders. ABM can enable access to stakeholders and support sales performance in

situations where traditional selling is either ineffective or impossible Digital channels played a reinforcing role, supporting consistency and repetition of account-specific narratives rather than acting as primary drivers of conversion.

At the same time, the findings also challenge dominant practitioner narratives. Much of the ABM literature implicitly assumes scalability and broad applicability across accounts (Flexion group, 2025, ITSMA, 2013, Burgess 2025). In contrast, this research suggests that ABM is most effective in contexts resembling classical ABM and Pursuit Marketing, in one-to-one or one-to-few engagements, often linked to large, strategically important deals. All analysed success stories shared these characteristics. None of the practitioners mentioned a success story involving segmented or automated ABM. This raises a conceptual question as to whether scaled or automated forms of ABM should still be regarded as ABM, or whether they are more accurately understood as advanced forms of segment or industry marketing. This distinction is not yet sufficiently addressed in the literature.

I see several limitations and critical reflections for my study. First, the empirical analysis is based on a small number of success stories. While these cases illustrate how ABM can work, they do not capture failure modes or discontinued initiatives.

This reflects a broader bias in both practitioner discourse and empirical research, where unsuccessful ABM efforts are underreported. Future research should explicitly include non-successful cases to develop a more balanced understanding of ABM effectiveness.

Second, access to suitable interviewees proved challenging. Several organisations that were previously recognised as leaders or award winners in ABM have since reduced or abandoned the approach, often reverting to more automated or segmented marketing models. This suggests that ABM adoption may be more context-dependent and less stable over time than is often implied in the literature. The notion that customers don't like to be influenced, also made it hard to find people willing to openly speak about the tactics used.

The international nature of the success stories, and interviewees also introduces contextual variation. All respondents operate in global environments. In the different countries the cultural differences may influence how influence strategies are perceived and enacted. The relative importance of authority, social proof or external thought leadership can differ across markets, an aspect that would also be interesting for further investigation.

The study is caught in between the desire to analyse and business pragmatism. Long-term, granular measurement of ABM influence would be interesting from a research perspective, but interviewees all indicated that such measurement is difficult to justify in practice, because of the costs and complexity involved. As also noted in the literature (Lev & Zarowin, 1999; Lev, 2003) organisations tend to rely on simplified outcome measures—such as whether a deal was won or lost—rather than fully disentangling influence effects. Differences in ABM funding models further complicate this dynamic, which has a direct influence on both access to ABM support and the expectations of its value.

Overall, this research suggests that the contribution of ABM lies in its capacity to structure influence in complex B2B sales environments. By integrating interview insights and success story analysis with established theories of influence and persuasion, this thesis positions ABM as an influence system rather than a campaign type or attribution model. This perspective offers a realistic and sustainable way to understand ABM's role in contemporary B2B marketing and sales. It could be a foundation for future research that takes both success and failure, context and constraint, more explicitly into account. It can also help ABM to build a better narrative around its strategic role.

Biography
Rianne Biesters

From being labelled 'good at storytelling' at primary school to influencing complex multi-million deals in the IT Industry.

My career has been shaped by one constant: the power of narrative.

I was educated as a teacher in Biology and Dutch Language, but began my professional journey as a presenter and journalist for Stads TV Rotterdam, RTL and NOT in the Netherlands. In 1993, I moved to Switzerland to work as a reporter and trainer for CashTV and later JobTV.

In 1997, I transitioned into the IT industry as PR Manager for Sun Microsystems. Three years later, I founded my own PR and marketing agency specialising in IT services. In 2010, I returned to academia at RSM Erasmus University — a step that ultimately inspired me to re-enter the corporate world.

This led to my hiring by Hewlett-Packard in February 2011. Although the role I was hired for no longer existed when I started, I was given the freedom and trust to reinvent my contribution. With strong internal support, I repositioned myself as a Pursuit Marketeer and later became certified in Account-Based Marketing, driving pipelines of over $100 million and influencing C-level decision-making across EMEA.

Over the years, I have worked for HP, HPE, DXC, Cognizant and Wipro. Completing my master's thesis this year felt like a natural reflection point in a career shaped by curiosity, storytelling, and influence.

Today, I specialise in creating highly tailored, one-to-one marketing and communication strategies that influence customer perception, align sales and marketing teams, and deliver measurable impact. At the heart of my work is a simple belief: simplify complexity, and tell stories people can act on.

Constantijn Geluk

The role of internal communication in fostering organisational purpose

Organisational purpose has gained prominence in management and communication research, yet many organisations struggle to translate aspirational purpose statements into lived organisational reality. While much scholarship focuses on external communication or leadership narratives, limited attention has been given to the internal communicative processes that make purpose credible, meaningful, and sustainable. This thesis investigates precisely that question: how internal communication contributes to the embedding and realisation of organisational purpose.

Drawing on twenty in-depth interviews with internal communication professionals across public, corporate, educational, and non-profit organisations in the Netherlands, the study integrates thematic analysis with elements of the Gioia methodology. The resulting insights show that internal communication acts as the interpretive, relational, and moral infrastructure through which purpose becomes lived practice rather than rhetorical aspiration.

A four-lens framework for understanding purpose internally

The study conceptualises purpose through four complementary theoretical lenses that together explain how purpose gains meaning, cultural grounding, motivational energy, and credibility inside organisations:

1. **Sensemaking:** How employees interpret organisational meaning and connect purpose to daily work.

2. **Identity:** How purpose becomes culturally and morally anchored as part of "who we are."

3. **Motivation:** How purpose energises employees through autonomy, competence, relatedness, and emotional resonance.

4. **Trust:** How purpose becomes believable through perceived integrity, benevolence, transparency, and behavioural consistency.

Across cases, internal communication professionals play a central coordinating role: designing interpretive spaces, shaping narrative coherence, activating motivational energy, and safeguarding trust by challenging inconsistencies between words and actions.

Six themes: how purpose becomes lived inside organisations

The empirical analysis identifies six interconnected themes that illuminate how internal communication practices shape the lived experience of purpose:

5. **Purpose as collective sensemaking**

Purpose becomes meaningful through ongoing dialogue - not dissemination. Communication professionals facilitate conversations, stories, reflective routines, and small-scale interactions where employees translate abstract purpose statements into role-specific meaning. Sensemaking is therefore socially produced and actively scaffolded by internal communication.

6. **Purpose as identity work**

Employees recognise purpose when it aligns with organisational identity as they experience it. Communication professionals serve as narrative stewards - connecting past, present, and future, reinforcing belonging, and ensuring coherence between declared purpose and lived values. Identity provides the cultural home that allows purpose to be collectively owned.

7. **Leadership embodiment and the trusted advisor**

Employees judge purpose primarily through leadership behaviour. Communication professionals coach leaders to act consistently, communicate transparently, and acknowledge dilemmas honestly. Their trusted-advisor role includes challenging misalignment, safeguarding coherence, and enabling leaders to express purpose with credibility.

8. **Purpose as integrity under tension**

Purpose is tested when values collide with pressures, trade-offs, or crises. Employees do not expect perfection but honesty. Communication professionals play an ethical role by naming tensions, questioning alignment, and ensuring that organisational narratives do not drift into symbolism or "purpose-washing." Integrity - especially in difficult moments - emerged as the main determinant of internal credibility.

9. **Purpose as motivational infrastructure**

Purpose strengthens intrinsic motivation when employees see autonomy, meaningful contribution, emotional connection, and recognition reflected in their work. Communication professionals amplify these dynamics through authentic stories, relational practices, and safe spaces for open dialogue. Purpose acts as relational energy rather than a compliance tool.

10. **Purpose as continuity in change and crisis**

Purpose provides stability when everything else shifts. During change, uncertainty, or crisis, internal communication helps maintain coherence by framing decisions through purpose, creating reflection spaces, and ensuring leadership presence. Trust deepens when leaders communicate transparently and align decisions with stated values.

Purpose as an ecology of coherence

Synthesised across the four lenses and six empirical themes, the study conceptualises purpose as an ecology of coherence: a communicatively sustained system in which meaning (sensemaking), belonging (identity), energy (motivation), and credibility (trust) reinforce one another. Internal communication acts as the ecological orchestrator, maintaining the interpretive, cultural, motivational, and moral conditions that allow purpose to become lived and credible.

Purpose is not embedded through campaigns or one-way messaging but through continuous communicative practices: dialogue, narrative, reflection, behavioural alignment, and transparent handling of dilemmas. Internal credibility emerges when what the organisation believes, says, and does is experienced as coherent.

Contributions

1. **Theoretical contribution**

The thesis advances a multi-level ecological model showing how sensemaking, identity, motivation, and trust interact to embed purpose as a lived system. It reframes purpose not as a strategic statement but as a communicative accomplishment that depends on coherence across interpretive, cultural, relational, and moral processes.

2. **Practical contribution**

The findings demonstrate how internal communication professionals design the conditions under which purpose becomes credible: facilitating interpretation, advising leaders, maintaining identity integrity, activating motivation, and enabling transparent moral dialogue. A Purpose Embedding Toolkit translates these insights into practical guidance.

3. **Societal significance**

The study shows that internal credibility is the basis of external legitimacy. Purpose becomes trustworthy only when intention, action, and meaning align. Understanding internal purpose work is therefore essential to understanding conscientious and responsible organisational behaviour.

Future research

Further work could explore the model in other cultural contexts, use longitudinal designs to study coherence over time, or integrate narrative and behavioural measures into quantitative assessments of purpose credibility.

Biography

Constantijn Geluk

Over the past years I have built my career at the intersection of communication, strategy, and organisational development. With a background in journalism and corporate communication, I am driven by the question of how organisations create meaning and coherence - especially in times of change. In my current role I work closely with senior leadership teams on issues such as central-decentral collaboration, internal communication strategy, and purpose-driven transformation. I particularly enjoy helping leaders and teams articulate clarity, build trust, and strengthen the connection between organisational ambition and everyday practice.

My interest in purpose, identity, and internal communication ultimately led me to the Executive MSc in Corporate Communication. The combination of academic depth, reflective practice, and exposure to diverse perspectives has been both surprising and enriching. For my thesis, I explored how internal communication fosters organisational purpose, drawing on interviews across twenty organisations and developing an integrative ecological model of sensemaking, identity, motivation, and trust.

Outside work, I value time with my family and space for reflection. What guides me is a desire to contribute to organisations and local (church) communities that act with integrity, seek the good of others, and help people recognise their worth and direction. I am drawn to work that nurtures hope, restores meaning, and supports people in finding a deeper sense of calling in what they do.

Esther Gierveld

The CEO Activism Cycle:

Framing, Legitimacy, and Stakeholder Dynamics of CEO Activism in a European Context

#CEOActivism #Framing #Legitimacy #ReputationManagement #CorporateGovernance #Advocacy #Authenticity #StakeholderEngagement

CEO activism, where corporate leaders publicly address sociopolitical issues beyond their core business, has become a defining feature of modern leadership. This thesis examines how CEO activism builds and sustains legitimacy over time in Europe, as expectations grow for CEOs to act as societal voices.

Research Question
How does CEO activism build and maintain legitimacy over time within the European context?
Two sub-questions guide the analysis:

1. How are framing and legitimacy strategies applied across the different phases of CEO activism?

2. How does sustained CEO engagement influence perceptions of authenticity and stakeholder responses?

Methodology:
A Longitudinal Comparative Case Study
A longitudinal comparative case study of Paul Polman (Unilever) and Emmanuel Faber (Danone) used over 30 LexisNexis articles. Media statements were coded based on framing strategies, legitimacy dimensions, tone, timing, and stakeholder reactions. The analysis combines Olkkonen & Morsing's (2023) processual model with an integrative framework built on framing theory (Benford & Snow) and legitimacy theory (Suchman).

Key findings
The analysis shows that CEO activism is not a one-off event but a cyclical process with three stages: pre-stance deliberation, stance-taking, and post-stance involvement.

This study introduces a fourth phase, Legacy & Re-engagement, where CEOs reclaim their activist identities after tenure through global coalitions and governance roles.

- Consistent framing strategies (diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational), emphasise sustainability as both an ethical imperative and a strategic necessity.

- Legitimacy evolves, with moral legitimacy dominating early phases, pragmatic legitimacy becoming critical under market scrutiny, and cognitive legitimacy relying on continuity and consistency.

- Authenticity is crucial: sudden silence creates an identity gap, while consistent engagement builds credibility.

- The CEO paradox suggests that while activism strengthens corporate identity, it raises risks when purpose and performance clash. NGOs and purpose-driven investors are early supporters of activism, whereas traditional investors frequently oppose it. The media amplifies both support and controversy, influencing public perception.

Theoretical Contribution

This study builds on Olkkonen and Morsing's cyclical model by adding a trajectory-based fourth phase. It advances framing and legitimacy theory by exposing paradoxes and structural flaws in activist leadership.

Practical Relevance

CEO activism in Europe marks a shift from shareholder primacy to stakeholder engagement. It is a communication-driven leadership style requiring courage, strategic vision, and long-term commitment. Embedding activism into governance and maintaining visibility during transitions can turn it from a reputational risk into a strategic advantage.

Limitations and Future Research

The study focuses on two European cases and formal media sources, excluding social media and primary interviews. Future research should compare activism across regions, include informal channels, and examine post-tenure advocacy in greater depth.

In conclusion, CEO activism is a dynamic, iterative process shaped by framing, legitimacy, and stakeholder dynamics. Planning for continuity beyond tenure enables leaders to maintain their activist identity while navigating divided expectations in an era where neutrality is no longer an option.

Biography
Esther Gierveld

Esther Gierveld is a Dutch strategic communications advisor who helps organisations act with clarity, purpose, and heart. She combines strong analytical skills with a human touch, drawing on her background in Liberal Arts, Media Studies, and an Executive Master's in Corporate Communication. In 2013, she founded her own communications agency and has since supported leaders and teams across Europe and beyond through periods of change.

Her work often begins at a turning point: a new strategy, a cultural shift, or a period of growth. Esther works across sectors, including corporates, ministries, startups, and network organisations, to support organisations committed to making a meaningful difference. She is a trusted sparring partner for leaders navigating complexity and shaping the future of their organisations.

She strengthens leadership communication, guides teams through transformation, and crafts stories that connect, inspire, and align. Her expertise spans strategic direction, corporate branding, digital strategy, reputation management, employee engagement, and communication that supports change.

Esther is a member of the European Association of Communication Directors and serves on the board of House of Ubuntu, reflecting her dedication to professional excellence and social impact. Known for her energy, empathy, and clarity, she brings both spark and structure to every collaboration. Her love for the outdoors keeps her grounded and brings a fresh perspective to her work.

No matter the challenge—reputation, change, or alignment—Esther uses communication as a tool for leadership, connection, and impact.

Caro Hamacher

Between Words and Deeds

How internal communication strategies influence employee participation in corporate volunteering through sensemaking

This thesis explores how internal communication strategies shape employee participation in corporate volunteering programmes through the process of sensemaking. Corporate volunteering (CV) has become an important part of modern corporate social responsibility (CSR), providing a tangible way for organisations to connect business purpose with social impact. Yet many companies still struggle to turn awareness into action. Employees often value volunteering in principle but do not always act on it, suggesting that communication alone does not guarantee participation. The study set out to understand how internal communication can help close this gap. It examines the subtle communicative and interpretive processes that influence employees' decisions to take part in corporate volunteering. The central research question asks: **How do internal communication strategies influence employee participation in corporate volunteering programmes through the process of sensemaking?**

To explore this, the research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees from different organisations, representing varied levels of seniority and volunteering experience. This method allowed participants to reflect on their experiences and interpretations in their own words. Using thematic analysis, recurring patterns were identified in how communication, authenticity, and social influence interact to shape behaviour.

The findings suggest that employees are more likely to participate when communication feels genuine and aligns with organisational values. Authentic stories and peer encouragement appear to legitimise participation, while overly polished or promotional messages tend to create scepticism. Leadership endorsement also matters — visible support from managers signals that volunteering is truly valued within the organisation. In this sense, internal communication functions less as a tool for persuasion and more as an environment where meaning is negotiated and trust is built.

The research contributes to CSR and communication theory by conceptualising internal communication as a sensemaking infrastructure that connects organisational purpose with employees' personal values. In practical terms, it offers guidance for communication professionals seeking to design credible and engaging CSR initiatives. Building communication around authenticity, inclusion, and emotional resonance can help transform volunteering from a symbolic gesture into a meaningful, shared experience — one that benefits both employees and the communities they serve.

Biography
Caro Hamacher

Caro Hamacher is a communication professional currently working in the non-profit sector, where she brings strategic thinking together with a strong intuitive sensitivity for people and their stories. With experience across both corporate and social contexts, she is particularly drawn to communication that contributes to societal value and long-term impact.

After building a solid foundation in commercial marketing & communication roles across different sectors, Caro increasingly oriented her work toward purpose-driven environments. Alongside her professional career, she has consistently engaged with non-profit initiatives, motivated by a desire to contribute to causes that address inequality, inclusion, and human development. In her current work within the NGO landscape, she focuses on strengthening positioning, coherence, and meaningful engagement—both internally and externally.

Caro is known as an intuitive initiator and natural driver. She takes responsibility and sees struggle as an essential part of growth. Attentive to underlying dynamics—between people, generations, and organisations—she understands that sustainable progress begins with curiosity, careful listening, and building forward from what is already present.

Caro lives in Amsterdam with her partner. After completing a Bachelor's degree in European Studies, she chose to deepen her knowledge following several years of professional experience.

Rendy Kee

The Power of Active Listening:

How Leaders Can Build Trust

In the field of Corporate Communication, leadership communication plays a central role in shaping meaning, relationships, and organizational outcomes. Trust between leaders and employees is widely recognized as a critical driver of effective organizational functioning, fostering open communication, collaboration, engagement, and long-term performance.

While leadership communication has been extensively researched, much of the focus hasbeen on speaking, articulating vision, giving direction, or managing conflict. The role of listening has received comparatively limited scholarly attention. This study addresses this gap by examining how different active listening styles influence employees' perceptions of managerial trustworthiness, with a specific focus on integrity-based trust.

Drawing on the listening style framework developed by Bodie et al. (2013), this thesis investigates four active listening styles: analytical, conceptual, connective, and reflective. Integrity-based trust is defined as employees' perceptions of their manager's honesty, fairness, consistency, and ethical behavior. The central research question guiding this study is: *Which active listening style most effectively enhances integrity-based trust between managers and employees in the workplace?*
It was hypothesized that reflective listening would be the strongest predictor of integrity-based trust.

I used a quantitative, deductive research design. Data were collected through an online survey distributed to Dutch employees who were currently employed and had a direct supervisor. The final sample consisted of 123 complete responses. Perceived managerial listening styles and integrity-based trust were measured using five-point Likert scales. Statistical analyses, including Spearman's correlation and multiple linear regression, were conducted using JASP.

The results demonstrate that all four listening styles are positively associated with integrity-based trust, confirming the general importance of active listening in managerial relationships. However, connective and reflective listening emerged as the strongest predictors. Connective listening, characterized by empathy, relational awareness, and emotional attunement, showed the strongest association with perceived managerial integrity, followed closely by reflective listening, which involves paraphrasing, emotional validation, and thoughtful feedback. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, connective listening slightly outperformed reflective listening, suggesting that relational and emotionally supportive listening behaviors may be particularly effective in fostering trust.

These findings contribute to the leadership and communication literature by demonstrating that not all listening styles are equally effective in building integrity-based trust. The study highlights listening as a strategic leadership competency and offers practical implications for leadership development. Specifically, it suggests that organizations may benefit from training managers in connective and reflective listening skills to strengthen trust, enhance employee relationships, and support sustainable organizational performance.

Biography

Rendy Kee

Rendy Kee is a senior corporate communication professional with extensive experience across both profit and non-profit organizations, including retail, FMCG, healthcare, engineering, cultural institutions, and NGOs. She combines strong strategic insight with hands-on execution and is known for her ability to translate complex issues into clear and meaningful communication for diverse stakeholders. Driven by a genuine interest in people and organizational dynamics, Rendy is recognized for her connective approach and her capacity to get to the core of complex challenges through attentive listening and critical inquiry.

She completed the Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication at Erasmus University, as part of a personal commitment to lifelong learning.

While pursuing this degree, she lived and worked in both Amsterdam and Zürich, combining academic study with professional communication assignments. Her master's thesis, *The Power of Active Listening: How Leaders Can Build Trust*, examines how different managerial listening styles influence employees' perceptions of integrity-based trust. The thesis reflects the integration of academic research and professional practice that characterizes her work and marks the culmination of a challenging and highly rewarding academic journey. She now focuses on contributing to long-term organizational strategy, reputation, and ethical leadership through communication.

Sarah Killoh

Green transformation:

CSR rebranding in the oil and gas industry

This thesis investigates Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)-driven rebranding in the oil industry, focusing on the cases of bp, Ørsted, and Equinor. Applying the Communication as Constitutive of Brands (CCB) framework, the study explores how external stakeholders perceived the transformed corporate brands.

Through a qualitative, multi-case narrative analysis of corporate communications, media coverage, and external stakeholder responses, the research examines the dynamic processes of sensegiving and sensemaking that underpin brand co-creation. The findings presented reveal that successful CSR rebranding relies on material transformation or commitments, distributed communicative authority, and authentic engagement with external stakeholders, particularly environmental NGOs and the media. Ørsted's rebrand is highlighted as successful, achieved through substantive strategic shifts and collaborative stakeholder engagement, while Equinor demonstrates the importance of transparency and incremental progress in sustaining credibility amid ongoing scrutiny. Bp's experience underscores the vulnerability of CSR brands to crisis and leadership transitions, illustrating the risks of misalignment between communicated values and organisational behaviour. The thesis concludes that in the oil industry, CSR-driven rebranding is an ongoing, negotiated process in which legitimacy is co-created through authentic dialogue, operational commitment, and adaptive and transparent communication strategies. These insights offer practical guidance for communication leaders navigating the complexities of brand transformation in this sector.

Biography

Sarah Killoh

Sarah is an experienced communications professional with a strong foundation in strategic and corporate communication. As a Senior Corporate Communications Advisor at TAQA UK, she develops and delivers impactful strategies that support organisational goals and engage diverse stakeholders internally and across the energy sector.

Her academic background includes an MSc in International Politics, and a BA (Hons) in History and Politics. Combined with the MSc in Corporate Communications, this multidisciplinary education equips her with a unique perspective on global issues, stakeholder engagement, and reputation management. Since 2019, Sarah has built her career in communications within the offshore energy industry, working in the Netherlands before returning to Scotland to continue her professional journey.

Through her studies and experience, Sarah has honed expertise in strategic communication, crisis management, internal communications, and stakeholder relations. She is passionate about driving meaningful connections between organisations and their stakeholders and continues to grow her skills in an ever-evolving energy landscape.

Sarah lives in Scotland with her husband and daughter, who inspire her every day. Outside of work, she enjoys exploring Scotland's natural beauty and spending quality time with family.

Renske Kragt

The role of communication in creating a shared corporate culture in a hybrid work environment

The thesis explores the critical role of communication in creating a shared corporate culture during a merger in a hybrid work environment. Using the merger between two companies in the financial industry as a case study, this research investigates how hybrid work can facilitate or hinder cultural integration and which communication strategies are effective in a hybrid setting. The study is grounded in a comprehensive literature review. This review highlights that although effective communication is widely recognized as a key success factor in mergers, most existing research focuses on traditional, co-located work settings. The increase of hybrid work models, however, introduces new complexities. These complexities include reduced informal interactions, cultural fragmentation, and challenges in maintaining organizational cohesion.

To address the lack of research on communication during mergers in hybrid work environments, this thesis conducts an empirical study focused specifically on this context. Using a mixed-methods approach, it combines qualitative interviews with employees, HR professionals and Communication professionals, analysis of culture surveys, and quantitative data from organizational dashboards.

Key findings reveal that:

- Hybrid work environments offer flexibility and autonomy but slow down cultural integration due to fewer spontaneous, informal interactions. This is particularly challenging for new or transitioning employees.

- Effective communication strategies in hybrid settings are characterized by transparency, regular updates, stakeholder-specific messaging, and opportunities for both formal and informal interaction. Additionally, two-way communication and visible leadership are essential for building trust and engagement.

- Leadership plays a critical role in setting the tone for integration. Leaders who are transparent, empathetic, and proactive in their communication help reduce uncertainty and foster a sense of belonging.

- Cultural integration requires ongoing dialogue, recognition of emotional responses, and deliberate efforts to bridge differences. Structured onboarding, buddy systems, and in-person gatherings are recommended to accelerate integration and facilitate connection.

These key findings highlight the complexities of cultural integration in hybrid work environments. By addressing the psychological needs of employees and adapting communication strategies to the reality of hybrid work, organizations can better manage cultural integration and achieve successful post-merger outcomes. The findings contribute to both theory and practice, offering actionable insights for leaders and communication professionals going through mergers in the evolving landscape of hybrid work.

The thesis concludes with a set of practical recommendations for organizations that deal with an integration in a hybrid work setting. It advises maintaining transparent and empathetic communication throughout all phases of the process, while also emphasizing the importance of early in-person meetings and structured onboarding. Investing in leadership development is highlighted as essential, enabling managers to effectively guide their teams through change. Additionally, supporting informal interactions and encouraging collaboration across departments are recommended strategies for building a cohesive and unified organizational culture.

Biography
Renske Kragt

Background in European Studies (specialization Communication Management) from The Hague University of Applied Sciences. During her studies, Renske broadened her international experience as an exchange student in Sundsvall, Sweden, focusing on Political Sciences and Communication, and completed an internship at the Media Department of Conseil Régional in Besançon, France.

Renske Kragt began her communications career in 1997 in software and ICT in marketing communications and later continued in the financial services industry. Across these settings she has mainly worked in internal communications and organizational change.

Renske's approach is strongly language-driven. She has a passion for learning and speaking foreign languages, seeing each new language as an opportunity to connect with people and perspectives from different backgrounds. This passion also fuels her deep interest in cultures, not only between countries, but also within companies: how a corporate culture is shaped, how it is experienced, and how it influences everyday choices.

A conviction runs through her work: to contribute and grow, people need to be seen and valued as individuals. She is curious about what makes people move and what drives behavior that helps achieve strategic goals. She brings a psychological lens to change, paying attention to how people respond to change and uncertainty. Understanding the emotional and behavioral side of transitions helps her design communication that supports adaptation and strengthens cooperation.

Above all, Renske focuses on connection: between people, and through that, with the organization. Her aim is to help build environments where people feel connected and, as a result, can be successful for the company, having the possibility to make a real difference.

Outside of work, she enjoys hiking and cycling, activities that allow her to explore new places and stay active. She also loves traveling, which offers opportunities to learn from different cultures, languages, and the ways people live and work.

Yue (Christie) Liu

Navigating change communication in global alliances:

A case study of SkyTeam's cloud migration

This thesis examines how internal change communication unfolds during a major IT transformation in a global airline alliance. The case concerns the migration of shared applications for multiple member airlines and partners from a private to a public cloud. In this setting, a central secretariat coordinates but cannot compel autonomous member firms; progress depends on standards, negotiation, and shared artefacts rather than command-and-control.

The central research question is: How is internal change communication framed, enacted, and perceived within a global alliance during a major IT transformation, and how do governance structures intersect with cultural logics in this process?

The study uses a qualitative single-case design. The data corpus combines 17 semi-structured interviews with internal project documents and observational notes from cross-organisational meetings. Interviewees include project leads, managers, operational staff directly involved in the migration, internal stakeholders indirectly affected by it, and one external consultant, spanning multiple organisations and national backgrounds. Data were analysed using a grounded theory–informed approach—open and axial coding, constant comparison, and memoing—to stay close to participants' language while progressively abstracting categories (without claiming a full grounded theory).

The analysis identifies a deadline-driven process sequence and a core communicative phenomenon: delegated sensegiving under thin authority. First, deadline uncertainty around key milestones and cutover dates—often fixed before cross-party prerequisites were negotiated—created pressure and ambiguity about whether deadlines were rigid or negotiable. This uncertainty allowed frame misalignment to emerge: some actors framed the work

as a small IT change, while others experienced it as a new project with significant security and architecture implications. These misaligned frames, filtered through different cultural logics of responsibility and hierarchy, raised perceived fairness concerns about who carried the costs, risks, and rework. Over time, this pattern contributed to a tone shift from committed engagement to surface compliance and quiet withdrawal, even when formal agreement was reached.

At the same time, explanation work was increasingly delegated to intermediaries. Project leads, technical coordinators, and other boundary-spanning actors were asked to draft messages, translate technical requirements into operational implications, and tailor explanations for different airlines and functions. They selected channels and cadence—short pre-briefs, weekly cross-organisation calls, airline-specific updates—and, where meaning and capability did not yet fit, brokered temporary workarounds such as time-bounded waivers or interim technical paths. These boundary spanners combined technical, organisational–cultural, and channel–tone fluency, and were crucial in keeping multi-firm coordination moving under limited formal authority.

The thesis offers three main contributions. First, it introduces artefacted translation as a form of informal governance: alignment was built less through top-

down broadcasts and more through co-produced artefacts—checklists, dependency maps, step-by-step guides—that made cause–effect chains executable across firms. Second, it develops a view of tri-hybrid boundary spanning, where trust and legitimacy are produced through the combined work of technical translation, cultural mediation, and careful channel and tone management. Third, it specifies a deadline-driven justice mechanism: when major dates are set before prerequisites and scope are co-negotiated, deadline uncertainty leads to frame misalignment, which heightens perceived unfairness and shifts tone from discretionary effort to minimal compliance.

For practice, the study suggests that alliances and other multi-firm settings with thin authority should co-negotiate prerequisites and lead times before fixing major deadlines, govern through shared, executable artefacts (for example, current dependency maps and checklists), formalise and support boundary-spanning "translator" roles with time, access and a clear mandate, and bundle transparency with remedies, pairing difficult messages with concrete adjustment options so that disclosure invites coordination instead of merely shifting burden.

While based on a single, retrospective case in a safety-critical, highly regulated sector, the mechanisms identified—delegated sensegiving under thin authority, artefacted translation, tri-hybrid boundary spanning, and the deadline-driven process sequence—offer analytically transferable insights for other digitally intensive, multi-firm environments where formal authority is limited and cultural heterogeneity is high.

Biography

Yue (Christie) Liu

Yue (Christie) Liu is an IT strategist and project leader in the airline industry, specialising in digital architecture and cloud transformation. She currently works for a global airline alliance based in the Netherlands, where she focuses on modernising shared systems and navigating the technical and organisational complexity of multi-airline collaboration. Before moving to Europe, she worked in Digital & IT for a major Chinese airline, which sparked her interest in how technology decisions affect complex business operations and, ultimately, the passenger experience.

Experiencing both Asian and European corporate cultures first-hand made Yue increasingly curious about the "people side" of digital change. This led her to pursue the Executive MSc in Corporate Communication at Rotterdam School of Management, combining her technical background with a deeper understanding of stakeholder communication, organisational change and reputation.

Across her roles, Yue enjoys translating between IT, business and cultural perspectives, making complex change both technically robust and practically workable.

Sherine Nehad

When 'Oil' speaks louder than 'Green':

Market reactions to the 2024–2025 strategic pivots of BP, Shell and ExxonMobil

This thesis explores a timely and intriguing question in energy-finance: how do stock markets respond when major oil companies shift back to hydrocarbons after years of promising a low-carbon future? The focus is on three key announcements from 2024–2025: BP's February 2025 "Reset", Shell's March 2024 Energy Transition Strategy update, and ExxonMobil's December 2024 Corporate Plan. These moves came after a decade of net-zero pledges that often disappointed investors, who saw more talk than action and worried about greenwashing.

In 2020–2021, BP and Shell made bold commitments to net-zero, while ExxonMobil took a more cautious stance. Markets were unimpressed, with share prices showing only small or negative reactions. Investors doubted the companies could deliver profitable renewables, especially when oil and gas traditionally offered much higher returns. By 2023–2025, however, the landscape changed. Rising oil prices after the Russia-Ukraine war, activist campaigns, and a pro-oil political shift following the 2024 U.S. election created strong pressure to prioritize cash flows from hydrocarbons over green goals.

To answer the research question, this study uses an event-study approach. Daily share prices were the foundation for the market model was applied to measure abnormal returns (the "surprise" effect of each announcement) over windows of [-1,+1], [-5,+5], and [-10,+10] days. Due to the small sample size (only three companies) and unpredictable oil stock movements, the non-parametric Corrado (1989) rank test was used for significance, with additional checks to ensure reliability.

The results are surprising and not what many expected. Markets did not give a clear thumbs-up to the return to oil:

- Shell, which made the shift earliest and most gradually, saw a small but real positive reaction right away, though the gain faded quickly.

- BP faced the strongest negative response, suggesting investors saw the change as a desperate U-turn after years of failed green promises.

- ExxonMobil showed no immediate reaction, but prices dropped sharply later, indicating investors eventually viewed the company's unchanging focus on oil as too rigid in a world moving toward lower carbon.

These mixed outcomes show that markets do not automatically reward a shift back to hydrocarbons. Success depends on how credible, timely, and well-communicated the change is. Shell's careful approach earned a brief positive response, while BP's sudden reversal and ExxonMobil's inflexible stance were punished.

The findings suggest that company leaders should treat announcements as careful signals: gradual, clear, and backed by real actions are more likely to win investor support. For policymakers, the results highlight how short-term market pressures can slow the shift to cleaner energy, even when oil prices are high. Future research could look at possibly other markets (e.g. Asian giants) or longer-term effects on total shareholder returns.

In short, this thesis shows that the market's reaction to big energy shifts is far more complex than simply "oil is back, so prices go up". The way companies signal change – and how investors perceive their credibility – makes all the difference.

Biography

Sherine Nehad

Sherine is a strategic corporate affairs leader, with over two decades of progressive experience across multinational corporations, government institutions, entrepreneurial ventures, and independent consulting in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Born and raised in Cairo, Egypt, Sherine is a highly regarded communications expert with extensive experience in crafting and implementing impactful strategies. She specializes in government engagement, stakeholder management, crisis communications, and aligning internal-external messaging. Sherine has led high-stakes initiatives connecting corporate goals with public policy, sustainability, and societal needs, excelling in narrative development, executive media training, digital strategies, and behavior-changing awareness campaigns.

Her career highlights include navigating complex corporate transactions, regulatory challenges, and industry transformations in energy, sustainability, and economic reform. Adept at leading diverse teams under pressure, she has hands-on crisis management experience, including core response roles and global public information coordination.

Currently an independent consultant, she provides senior-level corporate affairs and communications advisory in the renewable energy and sustainability sectors. She specializes in developing comprehensive narratives and key messaging frameworks, and launching innovative initiatives focused on regenerative solutions within the Water-Energy-Food (WEF) nexus. Previously, as Communications Manager at Shell Egypt, Sherine led corporate affairs, including high-profile projects, major divestments and acquisitions. As an entrepreneur, Sherine co-founded Egypt's first boutique public relations agency, Profile PR, dedicated to arts, culture, and lifestyle, pioneering audience development strategies for creative institutions and establishing national cultural platforms with regional and international reach. She also served as Communications Advisor at Egypt's Ministry of Trade & Industry, pre-Arab Spring.

Sherine's strengths lie in strategic and tactical planning, creative problem-solving, and translating complex issues into compelling, accessible messages for diverse audiences. Fluent in English and Arabic with working knowledge of German, she brings cultural agility and nuanced understanding of both regional and global dynamics.

Ilaria Nembro

What Makes CSR Volunteering Engaging?

A Cross-Cultural Qualitative Study on Employee Perspectives

This thesis investigates what makes corporate volunteering engaging across different cultural contexts, focusing on TESYA Group's cross-national mentoring initiative Back to Your Future (BTYF). While previous CSR literature shows that volunteering can enhance motivation and organizational identification, limited research explores how employees from different countries interpret, emotionally experience, and find meaning in these initiatives. This study addresses that gap by examining how personal values, national cultures, and organizational conditions interact to shape engagement.

Research Design
The study adopts a qualitative interpretivist approach, based on 12 semi-structured interviews with volunteers from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, and Croatia. Interviews explored motivations, emotions, identity, and cultural frameworks. A company-wide survey (n = 59) served as triangulation, confirming transversal themes such as pride, authenticity, and relational skill development.

Key Findings
1. **Values-Based Motivation**
   Across all countries, participation was primarily intrinsically motivated, grounded in personal values, family teachings, empathy, and traditions of solidarity.

   - Italian volunteers frequently drew on parental metaphors and Catholic social norms.

   - Portuguese participants emphasized education as a moral duty passed down through families.

   - Spanish, Croatian, and Slovenian volunteers highlighted empathy, youth support, and community-based solidarity traditions.

While motivations were mainly altruistic, the data also show that some employees recognized opportunities for personal growth, learning, and exposure to different cultural or generational perspectives, although these were considered secondary to value-driven reasons.

2. **Emotional and Relational Experience**
   Volunteers described BTYF as an emotionally intense and transformative journey. Initial insecurity gave way to confidence as trust developed with mentees. Participants emphasized reciprocal learning, gaining new insights into generational and social issues. Structured training and clear methodology played a key role in reducing anxiety and supporting volunteers' sense of competence.

3. **Authenticity as a Moderator**
   Authenticity emerged as a crucial enabler of engagement. While some Italian and Croatian volunteers initially questioned the company's motives, these doubts largely faded as the project's real impact and colleagues' genuine dedication became evident. Authenticity was perceived not only as a feature of the organization but also as co-created by volunteers through their sincere involvement.

4. **Engagement and Organizational Identification**
   BTYF strengthened volunteers' engagement by fostering:

   - Pride in contributing to social impact,

   - Stronger peer relationships,

   - A deeper alignment between personal and organizational values.

However, volunteers clarified that while volunteering enhanced pride, it was not the sole driver of organizational identification, which also depends on broader workplace conditions.

Psychological Moderators and Sensemaking
Engagement was enabled by four psychological conditions: authenticity, meaningfulness, psychological safety, and a supportive volunteering climate. Employees constructed meaning through culturally resonant narratives (the caregiver, the educator, and the community member) which helped integrate volunteering into personal and professional identity.

Cross-Cultural Insights
Hofstede's dimensions helped interpret cultural tendencies (e.g., appreciation for structure in high uncertainty-avoidance countries, or emphasis on empathy in more feminine cultures). Yet several divergences showed that corporate volunteering can activate situational values not captured by national averages, highlighting the role of organizational culture and psychological moderators.

Conclusion
Corporate volunteering becomes engaging when employees experience it as authentic, meaningful, emotionally safe, and aligned with personal and cultural values. Engagement emerges as a sensemaking process, not an automatic result of program design. Multinational organizations should therefore design CSR initiatives that are structurally robust, emotionally resonant, and culturally adaptable, enabling employees to construct their own meaningful narratives of contribution.

Biography
Ilaria Nembro

Ilaria Nembro is Head of Group Marketing and Communication at TESYA Group, an international group with main offices in Milan and Madrid. She graduated in Philosophy from the University of Milan in 1997.

Her professional background includes experience across different functions. She began her career in Human Resources, working primarily on administrative and operational areas such as payroll, contributions, and process management. She later moved into process reengineering, coordinating efficiency and transformation initiatives, including spending review projects and activities related to Six Sigma methodologies.

Over the past ten years, she has been working in the areas of brand and corporate communication and has recently expanded her responsibilities to include group marketing.

Saskia Nuijten

Persuading consumers in the Netherlands to eat insect-based foods

The role of communications in shaping consumers' willingness to eat insect-based foods

Global food systems are increasingly challenged by the combined pressures of population growth, climate change, and the environmental impact of conventional agriculture. Climate change undermines food availability in interconnected ways, for example because of extreme weather (like extreme rain), changing temperatures and water availability. Besides being negatively impacted by climate change, the agricultural systems - particularly those centred on livestock production - are also major contributors to climate change. They are substantial contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, land use and water footprint.

Protein is an essential macronutrient in human diets, playing a critical role in growth, muscle tissue, and physiological functioning. In Western diets, protein intake is predominantly derived from animal-based products, including meat, dairy, and eggs. The high environmental impact of animal-based protein is driven by inefficient feed conversion ratios, extensive land use, high water consumption, and the large scale of global livestock farming. Although technological and management innovations have improved the efficiency of certain livestock systems, the environmental footprint of meat production—particularly that of red meat—remains considerable.

In this context, alternative proteins sources have emerged as a promising solution to address both nutritional and environmental challenges. Among these, insect-based proteins represent a particularly resource-efficient alternative. Edible insects offer high-quality protein and can be produced using significantly fewer resources than conventional livestock, including reduced land, water, and feed inputs. In addition, insects have a long history of safe consumption in many non-Western cultures, indicating their potential viability as a component of future food systems.

Despite these advantages, the adoption of insect-based foods in Western countries, including the Netherlands, remains limited. Cultural norms and food-related beliefs strongly shape perceptions of what is considered edible, and in Western contexts insects are more associated with contamination, disgust, or moral rejection rather than food. Food neophobia, defined as reluctance to consume unfamiliar foods, further increases resistance to insect-based products. Previous research also shows that consumer awareness and understanding of the environmental impacts of animal-based protein remain limited, constraining the potential for voluntary dietary change. These psychological and cultural barriers together represent a challenge to the mainstreaming of insect-based proteins.

However, food preferences and cultural norms are dynamic rather than fixed and can be influenced through increased familiarity, exposure, and effective communication. Empirical studies further suggest

that familiarity with insect-based foods, enhanced knowledge of their nutritional and environmental benefits, and product formats that reduce the visibility of insects (e.g. incorporation into processed foods) can mitigate negative emotional responses. However, information provision alone is insufficient; the way information is communicated plays a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes and intentions.

Communication strategies, particularly message framing and message appeal, have been shown to significantly influence consumer perceptions of novel foods. Prior research suggests that both framing and appeal can affect perceived relevance, credibility, and motivational impact. Nevertheless, there remains limited empirical evidence regarding how these communication strategies specifically influence consumer acceptance of insect-based foods within the Dutch context.

This study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on sustainable food consumption, novel food acceptance, and strategic communication by examining the drivers that influence Dutch consumers' willingness to replace meat with insect-based foods. Specifically, it investigates how consumers perceive the environmental impact of meat consumption, which benefits most strongly motivate their willingness to adopt insect-based alternatives, and how message framing and message appeal shape attitudes and intentions.

The findings aim to provide empirically grounded insights into communication approaches that may facilitate dietary transitions toward more sustainable protein sources. In addition to advancing theoretical understanding, the results are expected to offer practical implications for policymakers, communicators, and food system stakeholders seeking to promote the acceptance of insect-based foods. Ultimately, the study seeks to support the development of more sustainable, resilient, and environmentally responsible food systems.

Biography

Saskia Nuijten

Saskia (1974, Dutch) holds the position of Chief Brand and Communication Officer at EIT Food, Europe's food innovation ecosystem to build healthy, sustainable and resilient food systems. She leads the organisation's strategic communication, brand, marketing, public affairs, and stakeholder engagement. As member of the Executive Management Team of EIT Food she contributes to the organization's strategic leadership, oversees critical decision-making processes, and ensures alignment with its mission and long-term objectives.

Previously she served as EIT Food's Director of Communication, leading corporate communication,

public affairs and public engagement, having joined the organisation in 2017.

Saskia is a creative and passionate global communication leader with over 30 years of experience in communications and marketing within science- and technology-driven multinational organisations. Before joining EIT Food, Saskia worked a.o. with Corbion/CSM in the role of Corporate Communications Director and DSM Food Specialties in the role of Global Marketing Communications Manager.

Justine Powell

Artificial intelligence in strategic communication:

How AI tools and humans interact in decision-making across agenda-setting, stakeholder-framing and message development

Artificial intelligence (AI) has moved from a peripheral support tool to a defining force in how organisations communicate. No longer limited to automating routine tasks, AI now influences how issues are identified, how stakeholders are framed, and how messages are shaped and delivered. This shift is not only technical. It changes how communication decisions are made, how professional judgement is exercised, and how organisations understand their place in an increasingly complex information environment. This thesis examines that shift by exploring how AI tools and human actors interact in strategic communication decision-making across three core domains: agenda-setting, stakeholder framing, and message development.

At its foundation, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication to achieve organisational goals (Zerfass et al., 2025). Yet the ways in which communicators recognise issues, interpret environments and craft narratives are being re-shaped by dashboards, algorithms, and generative systems. These tools filter visibility, recommend priorities, segment audiences, and produce draft content. As a result, communicators increasingly work in hybrid systems in which decision-making is co-produced by humans and machines.

To examine this shift, the thesis draws on four complementary theoretical lenses. Sociotechnical Systems Theoryexplains how humans and technologies form interdependent systems of work; Actor–Network Theory (ANT) positions technologies as actants shaping outcomes; Hybrid Intelligence highlights the complementary strengths of machine computation and human judgement; and Posthuman Communication Theory challenges human-exclusive assumptions about authorship and agency. Together, these frameworks enable a deeper analysis of how AI redistributes communicative agency and reshapes professional practice.

Methodologically, the research uses a qualitative, theory-building approach based on seven secondary case studiesacross finance, consumer goods, public affairs and corporate communication. These cases were selected to capture how AI supports agenda-setting (South Africa; Switzerland), stakeholder framing (Garnier; Nike), and message development (JPMorgan Chase; L'Oréal; Coca-Cola). They draw on academic research, industry reporting, corporate releases and technology partner materials to reconstruct how AI tools are embedded in real organisational workflows.

Findings

Across all cases, AI expanded speed, scale and personalisation. Generative systems accelerated multilingual drafting and trend detection; dashboards surfaced early warning signals; predictive analytics enabled fine-grained segmentation; and generative platforms widened creative possibilities. However, in every setting, human oversight remained indispensable. Communicators validated relevance, corrected biases, adjusted tone, ensured cultural sensitivity, and provided ethical and legal review. This confirms that strategic communication in AI-enabled contexts is a hybrid sociotechnical practice, not a mechanised one.

Agenda-Setting

In South Africa and Swiss corporate newsrooms, AI tools enhanced monitoring and accelerated detection of potential issues. Dashboards reordered newsroom routines by issuing real-time alerts, while generative AI surfaced signals across diverse languages. Yet the cases also revealed AI's blind spots: strategically important but low-volume issues were easily overlooked when they failed to meet algorithmic thresholds. Professionals acted as interpretive counterweights, ensuring relevance and contextual nuance. Agenda-setting therefore emerges as a negotiated process between machine-generated visibility and human validation.

Stakeholder Framing

AI played a strong role in shaping how issues and identities were framed. Garnier's Skin Coach embedded brand values into personalised advice journeys, while Nike's predictive analytics guided psychographic segmentation and creative strategy. In both cases, algorithms structured what values and identities came to the foreground. Human actors intervened to maintain inclusivity, cultural sensitivity and ethical boundaries. The cases demonstrate how framing becomes computationally scaffolded: machines propose, humans interpret and refine.

Message Development

In message development, AI acted as assistant, collaborator and co-creator. JPMorgan's LLM Suite drafted internal and investor-facing content under compliance oversight. L'Oréal's CREAITECH Lab integrated generative AI into campaign development, guided by inclusive design principles. Coca-Cola's Create Real Magic allowed consumers to co-create branded visuals using GPT-4 and DALL·E. These examples show both the creative potential and the governance challenges of AI-supported content. Authorship became distributed, raising questions about originality, responsibility and brand safety. Across all contexts, humans remained custodians of legitimacy and coherence, ensuring outputs reflected organisational values and cultural expectations.

Cross-Cutting Patterns

Four patterns run through the cases:

1. Distributed agency: AI systems shape visibility, tone and creative options, while humans validate meaning and ethics. Decision-making becomes a shared process.

2. Ethical tensions: Algorithmic thresholds risk distorting salience; personalisation risks eroding privacy; generative outputs risk bias, hallucination or infringement. Human judgement is needed to manage these tensions.

3. Sector-specific adoption: Finance emphasises compliance; consumer goods emphasise inclusivity; beverages emphasise creative speed; public affairs emphasises fairness and linguistic nuance. Context shapes AI's role.

4. Uneven governance: Some organisations embed structured oversight; others adopt governance reactively. Responsible use depends on AI literacy, cross-functional review, and sector-appropriate safeguards.

Contributions

The thesis contributes to theory by showing that agenda-setting, framing and message development must now be understood as hybrid processes within sociotechnical systems, where machines structure the informational environment and humans negotiate meaning within it. It extends strategic communication theory by recognising AI as an embedded actor rather than a neutral support tool.

Practically, the study highlights the need for AI literacy, structured oversight, sector-specific governance,

and a shift in professional identity. Communicators increasingly act as system interpreters and ethical stewards, balancing machine-generated suggestions with contextual, cultural and organisational judgement.

Machines can widen visibility, accelerate analysis and expand creative options. Humans remain essential for interpretation, cultural awareness, ethical responsibility and legitimacy.

Conclusion

The central finding is clear: AI does not replace human strategic communicators, but it reshapes how they work. Strategic communication is becoming co-authored within hybrid systems in which humans and machines contribute differently but interdependently.

The future of strategic communication lies not in automation, but in intentional collaboration between human insight and machine capability. Organisations that recognise and design for this hybrid model will be best positioned to communicate effectively, responsibly and strategically in an AI-mediated world.

Biography

Justine Powell

I'm a strategic communications and marketing leader with 30 years' experience across media, technology and AI. I help organisations modernise how communication works, from team setup and everyday practices to the use of AI tools that improve alignment and impact.

At the appliedAI Institute for Europe, I lead marketing, communications and ecosystem engagement to strengthen Europe's competitiveness in trustworthy AI. My work is about bringing clarity and structure to a fast-growing organisation and making innovation understandable for leaders, policymakers and industry.

Alongside this, I completed an MSc in Corporate Communication at Rotterdam School of Management, where I researched how AI influences decision-making in strategic communication. I've

stayed closely involved in this field and explore and test emerging CommTech tools.

Earlier in my career, I led the news platform Handelsblatt Global, managed international partnerships at the BBC, CNBC and the Associated Press, and began as a news producer at ITN. Those experiences gave me the editorial instincts that still guide my approach to storytelling.

Along the way, I advised the first female Member of Parliament in Mongolia, qualified as a ski instructor and have supported several social enterprises as a board member.

I'm fluent in English and German and have more than 20 years of leadership experience across Europe, the UK and the US.

Abdallah Touqan

Leveraging AI for proactive and reactive corporate communication in cyber attack scenarios

Research question: How can AI support communication professionals in delivering timely, consistent, and appropriate-tone responses across the preparation, prevention, response, and revision phases of cyber crisis communication?

Context: Cyber incidents compress decision time and raise the stakes for crisis communication. Teams must move fast without losing accuracy, keep every channel aligned as facts change, and speak in a steady, accountable voice to audiences. AI tools promise speed and scale, yet their value depends on how they are embedded in real workflows, approvals, and safeguards.

Approach: The study used an abductive thematic analysis of 11 semi-structured interviews with communication leaders, resilience consultants, and cybersecurity-adjacent practitioners across the EMEA region. Analysis was structured using a context–mechanism–outcome logic that examined how specific governance and capability conditions triggered mechanisms influencing timeliness, message consistency and internal tone fit (Cornelissen & Werner, 2025). Findings are organised into three performance dimensions, Timeliness, Message Consistency, and Tone Fit, and two enablers, Governance and Capability. A practice-oriented model explains how drafting gains translate into published, trusted updates when specific conditions are met.

Main findings:
- *Timeliness:* AI reliably shortens time to draft by turning current facts into clear first versions and by helping reframe updates for different internal audiences. Real-world speed depends on approval flow, not writing. Publishing latency is shaped by who can sign, what must be reviewed by legal, and whether neutral, pre-cleared text exists.
- *Message consistency:* A single master brief with a living Q&A and a change log functions as the source of truth. AI can scale stakeholder variants from this core without factual drift when versioning is maintained and a point person owns message integrity.
- *tone fit:* AI provides factual scaffolding, while humans tune tone. A short voice card with do and do-not rules, two exemplars, and iterative prompting reduces edits. Leader-fronted notes help in sensitive moments by signalling accountability and care.

Two enablers convert AI's drafting gains into outcomes:

- *Governance:* sets rules and guardrails, roles and approvals, legal carve-outs for what must be reviewed versus what is pre-cleared, secure or enterprise AI usage, and lightweight version logging.
- *Capability:* makes performance repeatable through skills for the human final pass, small prompt and template libraries tied to incident types, drills that practice drafting and routing for sign-off, and access readiness for tools and storage.

Conclusions: AI is dependable for draft acceleration, controlled variant creation from a single source, and factual scaffolding for tone. These strengths are tool-agnostic. Publishing speed improves when approval flow is explicit and when Governance and Capability are active in daily work. Without these conditions, speed gains stall or backfire through robotic tone, legal rework, or contradictory outputs.

Recommendations: Measure two clocks, time to draft and time to publish, to reveal the true bottleneck. Maintain one master brief with a living Q&A and versioning and derive all outputs from it. Adopt a review-not-write norm for AI with a named reviewer on call. Write legal carve-outs in advance so neutral text can publish quickly while sensitive claims are reviewed. Use enterprise or private AI for sensitive work. Build small libraries by incident type that include a facts template and two pre-approved first messages. Drill drafting and approvals together, not drafting alone. Coach a few editors for the final human tone review and provide a simple voice card to guide iterative prompting.

These steps help teams convert AI's strengths into faster, more coherent, and steadier communication that supports the wider incident response.

Biography

Abdallah Touqan

Abdallah Touqan is a communications and marketing professional with 15+ years of experience in tech across EMEA and the Americas. With a bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems, he has always been passionate about how technology can solve human problems and be built into products and businesses that generate real value and income.

He recently completed an Executive Master in Corporate Communication at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. Cybersecurity is a personal interest of his: he studied the ISC2 Cyber Security Certification in 2024, which strengthened his interest in how organisations respond to cyber incidents in practice. With the rapid adoption of AI and the rising importance of cybersecurity,

Abdallah's Master's thesis explores how communication teams use AI during cyber incidents, when it helps versus when it does not, and which governance, trust, and workflow conditions shape outcomes. His work sits at the intersection of AI adoption, crisis communication, and cybersecurity.

Abdallah began his career in Jordan and later worked in Dubai before relocating to Amsterdam in 2020, which he now calls home. He has led communications for multinational online B2C platforms with millions of users and enjoys environments where decisions are guided by data and outcomes. Outside of work, he is often at the gym, running half marathons, or boxing. He is also passionate about travel, having visited 42 countries so far.

Omamofe Ugboma

Impact of social media influencers on Nigeria's 2023 general elections

The 2023 Nigerian general elections unfolded in a highly digitised political environment shaped by unprecedented levels of online activism, youth mobilisation and influencer-driven engagement across platforms such as Twitter (now X), WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. Despite this intense digital participation, enabled by over 36 million active social media users, Nigeria recorded its lowest voter turnout since 1979, with only 27% of registered voters casting their ballots. This contrast between high online enthusiasm and limited physical participation highlights a central paradox in modern Nigerian electoral behaviour. It also exposes a major gap in academic research: although social media influencers played a visible role in shaping narratives and mobilising supporters, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which their activities influenced voter behaviour, perceptions of electoral credibility and preferences during the 2023 polls. This study addresses that gap through a quantitative-led, mixed-methods investigation focused primarily on measuring the electoral impact of influencer-driven political communication.

Grounded in Agenda-Setting and Framing Theory, the study conceptualises social media influencers as digital agenda-setters who elevate particular issues, frame political narratives and shape voter interpretations of electoral events. These theories help explain how influencers amplify the salience of electoral topics, such as transparency, youth participation, corruption and trust in institutions, while also crafting interpretive frames that guide public sentiment. The duality of social media as both an empowering and polarising space is acknowledged, particularly given its capacity to spread misinformation, heighten emotional intensity and facilitate echo chambers.

The research adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, with quantitative analysis as the dominant methodological focus. The primary dataset consists of survey responses from 700 participants, mainly digitally active residents of Lagos State. The quantitative phase employed structured questionnaires to measure exposure to influencer content, frequency of political engagement online, trust in institutions and actual voting behaviour. Statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, binomial and multinomial logistic regressions, was used to identify significant predictors of voter turnout, candidate preference and perceived electoral credibility.

To strengthen validity and contextual depth, a limited qualitative component was incorporated solely as a triangulation and robustness check. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key social media influencers and digital political actors. However, the qualitative insights served only to refine the quantitative instrument and interpret the statistical findings, not to drive the study's methodology. This

hierarchy ensures that the quantitative results remain the core evidence base for the study's conclusions.

Quantitative findings reveal a clear generational divide in voting behaviour. Younger voters (18-34) were significantly more likely to support emerging or third-force parties such as the Labour Party and NNPP than older voters aged 45 and above. Yet, this same demographic also exhibited higher likelihood of non-participation, reflecting the digital participation paradox where youths engage energetically online but remain sceptical about institutional credibility offline. The data also shows that exposure to political content on social media, whether high or moderate, substantially increased the probability of supporting non-traditional political alternatives. This demonstrates that influencer-driven narratives helped legitimate and popularise outsider candidates among young and educated voters.

A more complex pattern emerges regarding voter turnout. Regression results show that greater exposure to political debates and polarised online discourse increased both political enthusiasm and political cynicism. Respondents who frequently encountered emotionally charged content, misinformation or arguments about electoral malpractice were more likely to abstain from voting. Thus, social media served as both a mobilisation tool and a demobilisation force. It amplified hope for political change while simultaneously heightening distrust in INEC's transparency and capacity.

The study also examined the extent to which influencers shaped perceptions of electoral credibility compared to traditional media. Although qualitative insights suggested that influencers believed strongly in their persuasive power, quantitative results did not show a statistically significant difference between the influence of social media influencers and mainstream media in determining credibility perceptions. Instead, perceptions of electoral fairness were most strongly influenced by personal voting experiences, expectations about institutional reliability and offline political orientations. This implies that while influencers can elevate issues and intensify discourse, they do not independently determine trust levels in electoral institutions.

The triangulation interviews reinforced several quantitative findings. Influencers consistently portrayed themselves as ideological actors rather than commercial personalities, highlighting authenticity, consistency and civic responsibility as the foundations of their online credibility. They described their communication style as assertive and confrontational, which reflects, and intensifies, the polarised nature of Nigeria's digital political culture. They also emphasised widespread distrust in INEC's processes, which align with quantitative data showing that lack of institutional confidence was a major predictor of voter abstention.

Taken together, these findings reveal that social media influencers played a meaningful but nuanced role in the 2023 Nigerian elections. They were central to amplifying youth political consciousness, legitimising alternative political options and framing narratives about governance, accountability and transparency. However, their influence was more catalytic than determinative. They contributed to shaping perceptions and elevating issues but did not, on their own, decisively shift trust in electoral institutions or overcome structural barriers to voter participation.

The study concludes that social media has become a critical component of Nigeria's electoral ecosystem, particularly among younger voters. However, its dual capacity to mobilise and demobilise highlights the need for strategic interventions. Practical recommendations include: strengthening INEC's partnership with credible, non-partisan influencers for voter education; enhancing digital literacy programmes to combat misinformation; encouraging political parties to adopt data-driven digital engagement strategies; and developing ethical guidelines for political communication on social media.

By centering quantitative evidence and validating it with targeted qualitative insights, this research provides a deeper empirical understanding of how influencers shaped voter behaviour and political attitudes during Nigeria's 2023 elections. As the country moves toward the 2027 polls, the findings offer valuable implications for policymakers, electoral bodies, civil society organisations and digital advocacy networks committed to strengthening democratic participation.

Biography

Omamofe Ugboma

Omamofe Ugboma is a highly accomplished Wealth Manager with over a decade of extensive experience in helping individuals and businesses navigate their financial journeys. Since joining Stanbic IBTC Asset Management in 2013, Omamofe has exhibited a remarkable commitment to delivering tailored financial solutions that align with her clients' unique goals. Initially appointed as a Business Manager, Omamofe honed her skills in the retail sales segment, where she played a pivotal role in providing comprehensive financial solutions to investors within the mass market. Through her dedication and keen understanding of market dynamics, she further advanced her career by specializing in portfolio management, catering to high-net-worth individuals, ultra-high-net-worth clients, and corporate entities.

Today, Omamofe spearheads the Retail Sales Unit at Stanbic IBTC Asset Management, where she continues to drive innovative strategies and foster relationships that empower clients to achieve their financial aspirations. Her extensive knowledge, coupled with her ability to analyse market trends and assess risk, positions her as a trusted advisor in the wealth management sector. Beyond her professional endeavours, Omamofe is passionate about personal growth and cultural exploration. In her leisure time, she enjoys reading, watching films, and traveling, which enrich her understanding of diverse perspectives and client needs.

Marijn de Winter

Corporate Purpose Evolution in M&A:

A Study of Employee Perceptions and Management Practices during Post-Merger Integration

Beyond articulating why an organisation exists, corporate purpose can serve as a strategic direction for organisations and a source of meaning for their stakeholders. It can help guide organisational behaviour, align stakeholders, and support long-term value creation. While the benefits of corporate purpose are widely discussed in the literature, far less is known about what happens to corporate purpose when organisations enter a period of profound change, such as a merger or acquisition.

In the integration process, two organisations, each with their own history, identity, and culture, are brought together and are expected to move forward as one. Most tensions in this process will materialise during post-merger integration, a phase where operational integration accelerates and corporate leadership establishes the checks and balances on synergies realised. In this phase, employees are confronted with uncertainty, shifting structures, and changing leadership expectations. Leaders face ambiguity themselves, as they are tasked with balancing business continuity with integration progress, while combining legacy identities and corporate strategies into a shared future direction. This raises a critical question: how does corporate purpose evolve during post-merger integration, and how is it experienced by employees and managers during this phase?

This thesis examines the evolution of corporate purpose during post-merger integration through a qualitative, longitudinal case study of an absorption-type acquisition in the medical technology sector. Semi-structured interviews with employees were conducted at two points in time during the integration. Complemented by interviews with senior managers

and external business professionals with experience in mergers, organisational change, and purpose development, the research demonstrates how perceptions of purpose shift over time and how interpretations vary across organisational levels.

The findings show that corporate purpose initially functions as a strong identity anchor for employees of the acquired organisation, providing meaning, mission clarity, and emotional connection. This connection is particularly evident during the early stages of integration, when employees sentiments are positive and trust in continuity is high. Over time, however, purpose loses salience as operational integration intensifies and doubts about the new organisation start to creep in. Employees report increased bureaucracy, reduced autonomy, and a growing gap between purpose and practice, leading to declining motivation. As a new, shared purpose has not materialised yet, identification with the organisation seems to weaken.

Managers, by contrast, frame purpose primarily as a strategic and ethical compass, and as a management system used to guide daily actions and behaviours. While they emphasise the importance of purpose

alignment and articulate a clear role for leadership, they struggle to translate this into consistent leadership actions during integration. This reflects the ambiguity and competing priorities they themselves face.

External professionals highlight that purpose can support integration only when it is actively embedded in leadership behaviour and inclusive practices. Leaders should be carefully selected to embody the right values, lead with inspiration, empower their teams, and communicate transparently. As such, purpose should not be treated merely as a symbolic narrative, but should be explicitly considered in integration practices and governance.

Overall, this study demonstrates that corporate purpose is vulnerable during post-merger integration. Its effectiveness depends on consistent enactment through leadership behaviour, decision-making, and communication. Purpose evolves dynamically during integration and by highlighting the conditions under which it supports, or undermines, employee engagement and identity continuity, this study offers insights that can help practitioners engage with purpose more deliberately during organisational change.

Biography

Marijn de Winter

Marijn de Winter is a Global Communications and Branding Professional, currently working at Dutch Ophthalmic Research Center (DORC), a ZEISS company. She has a background in Marketing, Communications and Brand Management. With over 20 years of experience, Marijn has held leadership roles in different multinational organisations in the medical device industry, helping organisations keep a patient-centric approach in their operations. She is passionate about purposeful brand development, delivering exceptional stakeholder experiences, and cultivating empowered multidisciplinary teams. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Marketing & Communication from HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, has studied Italian Language and Culture at Utrecht University and is a VU certified Organizational Behaviour Management (OBM) practitioner.

The thesis coaches and co-readers of the 2025 graduates

Prof. dr. Joep Cornelissen
Professor of Corporate Communication and Management
Academic Director MSc. Corporate Communication
Rotterdam School of Management

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. In the Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme, he teaches the 'Purpose, Leadership and Communication' masterclass.

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 Argenti
Professor of Corporate Communication
Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth
United States of America

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.

In the Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme, he teaches the 'Crisis Communication' masterclass, the 'Leadership and Communication' masterclass, and the 'Corporate Responsibility' masterclass. 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.

Dr. Guido A.J.M. Berens (PhD)
Assistant Professor
Rotterdam School of Management

Guido Berens is Assistant Professor at the Corporate Communication Centre of Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. He is also Lecturer in the Department of Business Society Management at Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Erasmus University Rotterdam, where he teaches and conducts research in corporate communication, corporate social responsibility, reputation management, and quantitative research methods. He holds master's degrees in both Psychology and Philosophy from Radboud University Nijmegen and earned his PhD in Management from Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2004. His research has been published in leading academic journals such as *Journal of Management Studies, Journal of Marketing, Long Range Planning, and Journal of Business Ethics*, alongside many other peer reviewed outlets.

Dr. Berens has also been involved in editorial work, serving as an editor for the Corporate Reputation Review journal. His academic interests include stakeholder communication, issues management, and sustainability communication, and his teaching spans bachelor, master, and PhD levels at RSM. His extensive publication record includes both academic articles and book chapters, reflecting his contributions to the fields of corporate communication and reputation research. 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.

Dr. Michael Etter (PhD)
Reader in Entrepreneurship and Digitalization
King's Business School, King's College London

Michael Etter has a PhD in organisation studies and cultural theories from the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. Before King's Business School, he has worked as Assistant Professor at Copenhagen Business School and as Marie-Curie Research Fellow at Cass Business School, City, University of London. His work has appeared in academic journals, such as Academy of Management Annals, Academy Management Review, Journal of Management Studies, and Business and Society. Michael Etter has received multiple awards for his research and teaching excellence, as well as several research grants from prestigious funding institutions, such as the British Academy. Before joining academia, he has worked in public relations and founded his own advertising agency.

Michael Etter is interested in the construction of social evaluation of new and established firms, such as organisational reputation and legitimacy, in the new media landscape, which is shaped by new information and communication technologies (ICT). He looks at strategies, which new and established firms use to establish favourable social judgments in the digital economy. The role corporate social responsibility is thereby prevalent in his work.

Dr. Mark Lee Hunter (PhD)
Doctor of Information Sciences
Université de Paris II

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 the recognised standard manual for practitioners, Story-Based Inquiry, published by UNESCO in 2009 (with a second edition in 2025) and currently available in 14 major and minor languages. He co-founded the Future Media Management Programme at Stockholm School of Economics Riga, which trained independent media leaders from the former Soviet countries in business practices. He has taught stakeholder, crisis and leadership communication at RSM since 2006. At the INSEAD Social Innovation Centre, where he served as Adjunct Professor from 2001-21, he co-founded the Stakeholder Media Project. Its work on emerging media sectors and communities has been published in Harvard Business Review, California Management Review, MIT Sloan Management Review, and Corporate Communications Review as well as practitioner journals. The most recent of his twelve books are Community-Powered Journalism (Marie and Gustav Ander Centre for Media Studies, Stockholm School of Economics Riga, 2020) and Pour Sophie et tous les autres (2023), an investigation of the "right to die" that employed a stakeholder-driven distribution strategy and impacted the national debate on the subject in France. He has won seven US and international awards for his scholarly writing and journalism. Since 2006 he taught and consulted (for Allianz, BP, Al-Jazeera, RTE, France Télévisions, Vattenfall and others) in 40 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, the Arab world and the Americas. He has also given

numerous keynote speeches at journalism conferences. In 2024, a conference he co-organised with Vattenfall on "overcoming the bad news problem in climate journalism" drew 1.2 million live online viewers and mobilised speakers from across the mainstream and stakeholder-driven media sectors. 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.

Florian Madertoner (MA)
Lecturer
Rotterdam School of Management (RSM)

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 and the Economic History. He is responsible for the course "Economics" in the bachelor study programs International Business Administration and Business Administration. In addition, Florian teaches "Corporate Finance" and supervises bachelor theses in both programs. In the master program Finance & Investment Florian supervises Master theses. Florian teaches the elective "Finance for Communication Professionals" in the executive master program Corporate Communication and at the Rotterdam school of Management he teaches the executive training "Finance for Non-Financials". He has been awarded multiple awards for his teaching activities: the "Professor of the Year Award" seven years consecutively from 2016 to 2022 for his undergraduate course "Corporate Finance" in the programs IBA and BA. In 2020 Florian has also been awarded the "Professor of the Year Award" for his course "Economics" in the IBA program as well an award for "Best Adaptation to the Coronavirus Situation". He is currently pursuing a part-time PhD at the Erasmus Research Institute of Management (ERIM).

Prof. Rita Linjuan Men
Professor in the Department of Public Relations
University of Florida

Rita Linjuan Men, Ph.D., APR, is full 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.

In the Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication programme, she teaches in the 'Employee Communication' masterclass.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 (IPRRC) 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.

Dr. Lonneke Roza (PhD)
Academic Researcher
Department of Business-Society Management
Rotterdam School of Management (RSM)

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). Currently she works at NN Group as Head of Community Investment. She is frequently asked to speak at public events and conferences on the role of businesses in society.

Ingrid de Vries (MSc)
Lecturer
HZ University of Applied Sciences
Research Associate
ERIM Centre for corporate eco-transformation
Rotterdam School of Management (RSM)

Ingrid de Vries has her Master Degree in Business Administration and her Post Master Degree in Controlling from Erasmus University Rotterdam. She currently works both at HZ University of Applied Sciences and Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Erasmus University Rotterdam. Ingrid does qualitative research in Circular Economy, using systems thinking and soft systems methodology. She has an important role as research associate at Erasmus University's official research centre; ERIM centre for corporate eco-transformation. Other fields of expertise of Ingrid include management accounting & control, change management, green events.
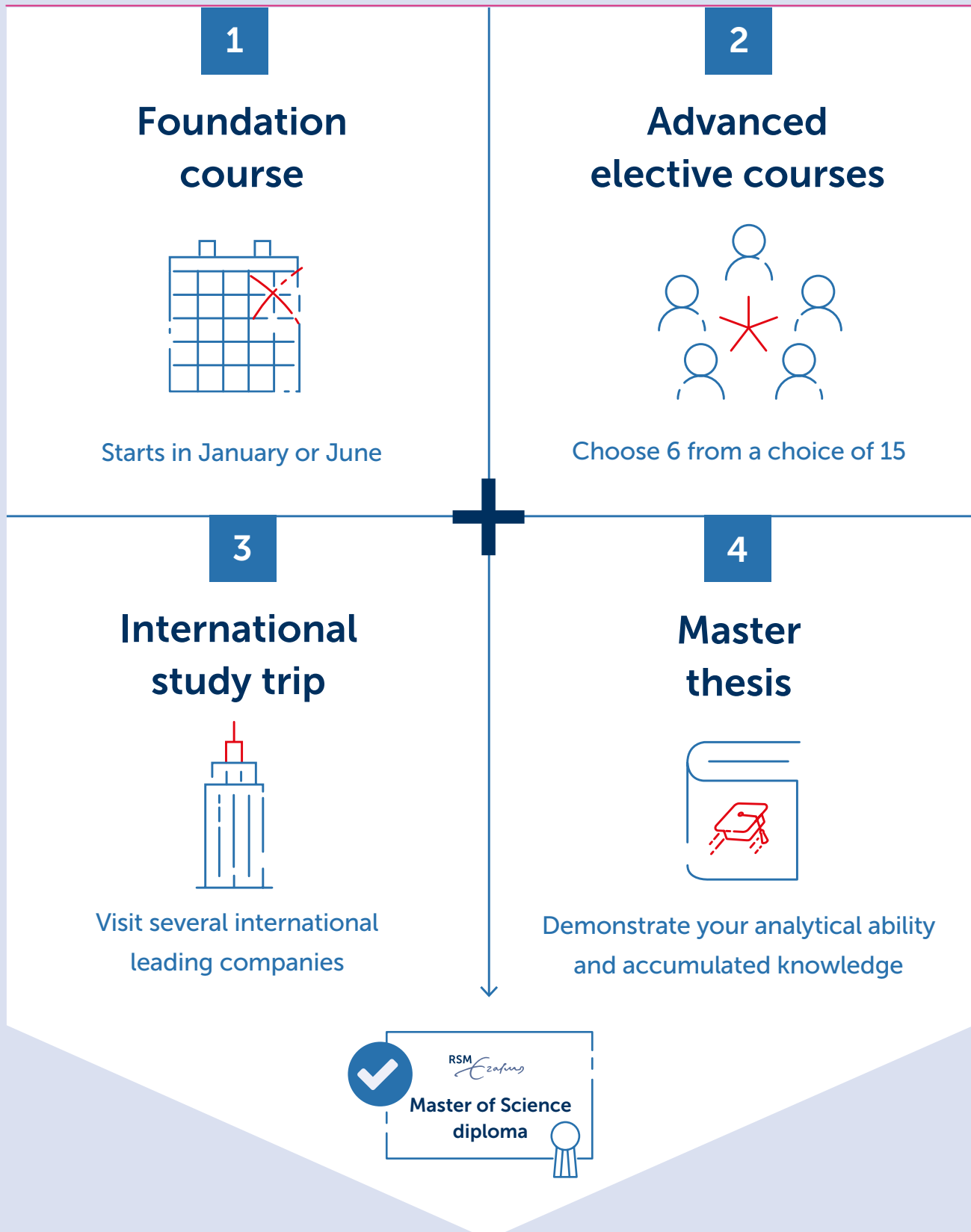
Prof. dr. Yijing Wang
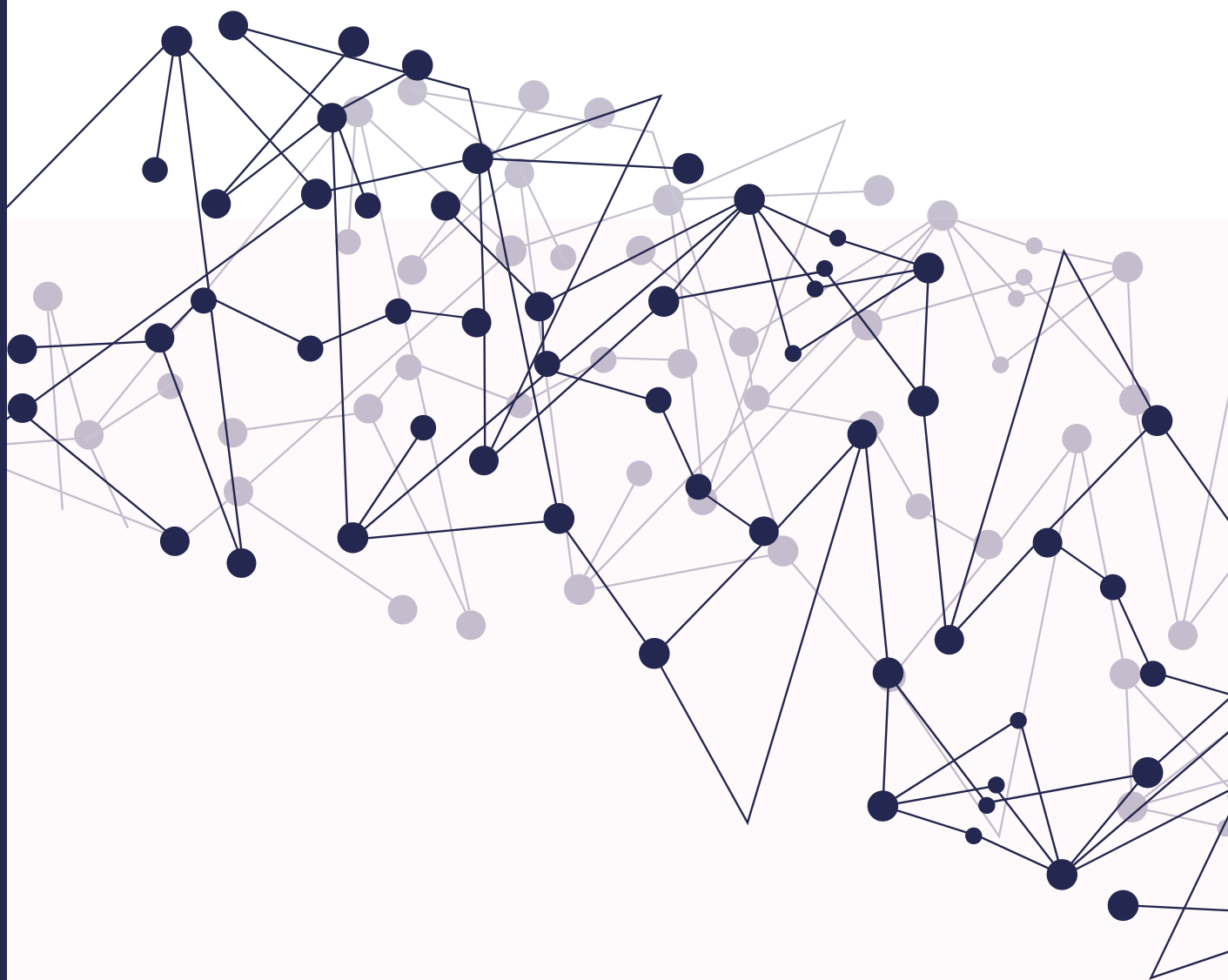*Professor in the Department of Media and Communication*
Erasmus University, Rotterdam

Prof. dr. Yijing Wang is a strategic communication scholar specialising in crisis communication and sustainability transitions. She is a full Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at Erasmus University Rotterdam and serves as Vice Chair of the ECREA Crisis Communication Section. She is Editor-in-Chief of Corporate Reputation Review and an editorial board member of Business Horizons, and she has guest-edited several special issues, including in Public Relations Review and the International Journal of Communication. Prof. Wang is the Principal Investigator and Coordinator of the Horizon Europe project CUES (€6.5 million, 2024–2028), a Management Committee Member of the COST Action project Alert Hub, and a member of the Crisis Communication Think Tank (CCTT). She obtained her PhD in Corporate Reputation and Stakeholder Management from Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Erasmus University Rotterdam. Prof. Wang has published extensively in leading journals, including Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of International Management, Business Horizons, Convergence, Public Relations Review, Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, and Media and Communication. She has received multiple awards for her research and teaching, including Best Paper (2024), Best Full Paper (2024), Best Reviewer (2021), and Best Teacher (2020), and contributes internationally through visiting scholarships at Lund University and Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She also teaches courses on strategic communication, sustainability communication, and risk and crisis communication at both Bachelor's and Master's levels.

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

1

Foundation course

Starts in January or June

2

Advanced elective courses

Choose 6 from a choice of 15

3

International study trip

Visit several international leading companies

4

Master thesis

Demonstrate your analytical ability and accumulated knowledge

RSM Erasmus

Master of Science diploma

Research Abstracts
2025