



BOOK OF GRADUATES

**Research
Abstracts
2020**





Research Abstracts 2020

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Preface

This year we celebrate the 22nd graduation of the Part-time Executive International Master of Science in Corporate Communication Programme (MCC) at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

The programme was founded to foster the academic and professional development of communication professionals, so they are able to communicate and lead with impact. This is still the philosophy of the programme today.

*Eleven new graduates have officially been awarded the **Master of Science in Corporate Communication degree** as a result. We are proud to present the abstracts of the eleven theses that have been written by the graduates of this Master programme.*

Including this year's graduates, the MCC programme has delivered around 330 MCC graduates. Many of them made a significant career move after their graduation, which they were able to realise by the knowledge, insights and skills gained by the programme, and even more so by their own perseverance and ability to bring this into practice.

Over the last years they have been challenged with intensive courses, case studies, role plays, management games, the most recent academic theories and guest lectures from worldwide renowned professors of a diverse range of universities and businesses practitioners from different (inter) national companies, in order to support their goals to become even more successful communication professionals.

The new Masters of Science in Corporate Communication are: Pamela de Beus, Arno van Dijk, Bart de Graaff, Manon van der Ham, Marion Geraats, Lucila Perez Mollo, Andreia Severo e Bogalho Paiva, Marloes Smittenaar, Mariëlle Stege, Stefan Vasic and Claudia Verbeek.

The new Masters of Science in Corporate Communication are:

- *Pamela de Beus*
- *Arno van Dijk*
- *Bart de Graaff*
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Part-time Executive Master of Science in Corporate Communication

Rotterdam School of Management
Erasmus University

RSM
Erasmus

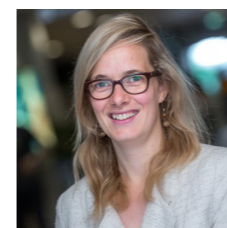
We hope they have learned a lot during the courses over the past years, not only from our education but also from their peers, their 'colleagues' in the corporate communication field. The least we could say, also on behalf of all the teaching staff that worked with them, is that we have learned a lot from them too. Their willingness to discuss situations and challenges from practice in their own organisations and to relate these to the topics discussed in the lectures were inspiring and exciting.

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.; John Balmer of Bradford University UK; Jean-Philippe Bonardi, HEC Lausanne; Peggy Simcic Brønn, BI Norwegian Business School; Michael Etter, King's College London; Mignon van Halderen, Fontys Hogeschool; Carola Hillenbrand, Henley Business School; John Hayes, Leeds University Business School; Mark Hunter, INSEAD; Oriol Iglesias, ESADE Business School; Jan Kleinnijenhuis, VU University Amsterdam; Rita Linjuan Men, University of Florida; Michael Pratt of University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign; Davide Ravasi of Bocconi University; Eliane Schoonman of Issues Management Institute; Majken Schultz of Copenhagen Business School; Bob de Wit of Nyenrode Business University; Ansgar Zerfass, University of Leipzig and from our Faculty: Cees van Riel, Guido Berens, Frans van den Bosch, Dirk Brounen, Gerrit van Bruggen, Pursey Heugens, Slawek Magala, Florian Madertoner, Gerard Mertens, Lucas Meijs, Stefano Puntoni, Eric Waarts, all working at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

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

'The Andreas Innovation in Communication Award' is presented by Ing. Dries van de Beek, Former Chairman of the Board, CCC BV, to the author of the most innovative thesis. The winners of the awards in 2020 are announced on November 27, during the official graduation ceremony.

We wish all the graduates a bright future with successful careers and we congratulate them with their accomplishment.



Marijke Baumann
Executive Director



Prof. dr. Joep Cornelissen
Academic Director

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

Pamela de Beus

“Prediction is very difficult, especially if it’s about the future”

Predictive Analytics in the field of Crisis Communication

Predictive analytics concerns making predictions based on available data to imagine how contexts or e.g. crisis will develop. Proponents emphasize the ability to predict complex economic relationships and thereby gain a competitive advantage. Sceptics doubt the validity of the analyses, especially in the field of communication.

Currently, there are possibilities in content-marketing parameters to identify, which content will be discussed in social networks and which formulations will be used. In addition, issue and topic analyses can be predicted by means of calculated probabilities (e.g. what exactly the net audience is affected by and how long they are likely to spend on a topic). Recommendations for action can be derived from the results (e.g. when should a new message be published and what should be deleted?). Experts doubt, however, that a predictive analysis of corporate communications can be applied meaningfully to intervening variables and provide reliable results because of the large volume of data. In particular, unexpected trends are not unusual in crisis situations. However, these trends cannot be captured by an analysis of recurring patterns, on which predictive analytics is essentially based. Since algorithms can predict future developments based on a large number of data about past experience, this means that, in this sense, the future must be similar to the past.

Therefore, in this paper, I examine in detail how the use of predictive analytics could help to predict potential crisis events for a company or certain industries in the field of crisis communication. Regarding predictive analytics, I include a literature review of accepted

academic theories and models of crisis communication that might be relevant for predictive analytics, and the role that reputation might play in this context. Furthermore, data mining and the theory of predictive analysis are described. To understand today's views on predictive analytics in the field of crisis communication, I summarize the results and analysis of quantitative and qualitative research based on a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews specifically designed for this work. These approaches identify attitudes and preferences toward this topic. By providing the above data and information, my research reveals that predicted analytics is only used to a very limited extent in companies to identify crises.

The use of predicted analytics in a crisis is also considered critical, as crises are often based on surprising, irrational, emotional and political behavior. Nevertheless, predicted analytics is recognized as a support for human judgement in crisis prediction. While science now uses predictive analytics for crisis prediction in its models, predicting a crisis remains a manual process based on the experiences and assessments of the respective managers in the companies surveyed. Finally, based on the main conclusions, a model is developed to support the use of predicted analytics in the company for crisis prediction.

Biography **Pamela de Beus**



Pamela de Beus is currently a Member of the Management Board of TUI Fly GmbH. In this role she is responsible for Aviation Safety and Risk Management. She has been Head of Aviation Safety and Risk Management since 2018, Member of the Management Board TUIfly since 2019, and participating in the High Potential Leadership Programme “Digital Step” TUI AG since 2020. Moreover, since 2008 she is active as an airline pilot at TUI Fly GmbH as well.

Besides her career at the airline, she is the founder of the Consulting Firm for Crisis Communication & Management specialist on High Reliability Organisations.

Pamela has started her journey with the MSc programme in 2015, and it opened up many doors for her until date. Feel free to check out her LinkedIn profile and connect: www.linkedin.com/in/pamela-de-beus-b4169941/

Arno van Dijk

Great ideas; from the coffee corner to the rest of the world

A research into facilitating and prohibiting conditions for Social Intrapreneurs at a University of Applied Sciences.

The societal role of Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) in The Netherlands is very important. Every year, 70.000 students graduate from one of the 37 UASs. Their impact on a new economic, social and sustainable world is immense. However, to achieve this, students need to be educated about the wicked problems the world is facing. They should be able to address these and in the long run, resolve these issues.

The biggest influencers at universities to students are its lecturers. Some lecturers have a personal motivation to add social or sustainable value to society through their company (Grayson, McLaren and Spitzack, 2011), this is the Social Intrapreneur (SI). The SI is a specific kind of internal change leader with no formal authority that is focused on making a positive social or ecological impact in line with the core business objectives of the organization (Davis and White, 2015). It brings innovation to study programs using the same skills as social entrepreneurs do (Elkington, 2008) with a bottom-up mind-set (Hadad and Cantaragiu, 2017). However, the SI is not an official job-description (Hadad and Cantaragiu, 2017), in fact, the SI does not even know that it is one.

They bring multiple advantages to the company and sustainable innovation within companies is one of them (Grayson, McLaren and Spitzack, 2011). Delivering societal value by the company to society is another (Venn and Berg, 2013). This in return will have a positive impact on a company's reputation (2013). Next to that, they are the company's barometer to what society actually needs (Robert Collins, 2015).

However, not all initiatives of SIs within UAS develop to their full potential. Not much is known about this issue yet from literature. The essence of this research is to deepen our understanding of the needs of SIs. The question that is centred in this research is: What are facilitating and prohibiting conditions for Social Intrapreneurs to scale their initiatives?

After a theoretical research into existing literature on the SI, interviews were conducted with SIs within The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS). They were selected using the snowballing method. The interviews were conducted in the period of October 2019 to January 2020. They were asked about what their needs are concerning realizing their initiatives. These semi-structured interviews gave the possibility to ask in-depth questions into the opinions of the interviewees. Saturation was achieved with 10 interviews.

The most important conclusions of these interviews can be summarised in four main themes. First of all, SIs experience continuing barriers that lead to a continuous form of pressure. Furthermore, they need acknowledgement by the system and by their colleagues. Thirdly, they want the university's educational system to adapt to their needs in making a social impact. Finally, the observation of SIs that the university's educational system has a lack of system adaptability.

Theoretical implication of this research is the addition of a new type of SI to the Grayson et al. (2011) SI type list; the Activist. The Activist has its initiative formed and is ready to discuss it with the university. The SI will show activist behaviour in order to put the issue on the agenda. It wants the UAS to address this and has its own ideas how to implement this. When the university acknowledges this, the SI will provide the university with new educational approaches, new market opportunities,

new research based materials and a positive impact on the university's reputation. When the SI is not acknowledged in its cause, the risk of burn-out is always present.

Advised practical implications on a general level for the university are to celebrate the Social Intrapreneurs within UAS and for the SI to accept the system and work with it. The tools needed for the SI are; an official assignment and allocated time from management, ownership for its initiative, implementation of a sustainable and social vision of the UAS, a social safety net of likeminded colleagues, a buddy, acceptance by management that the SI's vision is its personal drive and the room for SIs to experiment with their initiatives. The educational system of UASs already provides room for experimenting. It is available outside of the compulsory programs in minors, electives and projects.

On the other hand, the SI has to understand the system and should realise that struggle is part of its role. It is important that the SI meets new likeminded people (i.e. a community). This helps in framing ideas and to build internal support. A personal buddy is important for practical and emotional support.

The findings of this thesis could provide a base for further research into the Activist SI. Furthermore, it can provide SIs and management of UAS tools to work on a better balance between social and sustainable needs of society and implementation and innovation in the educational system. The keyword for this approach is dialogue between SI and management. Learning to understand each other's point of view is essential in addressing the world's wicked problems in (future) UAS education.

Biography

Arno van Dijk



Arno van Dijk became a lecturer in the marketing program at The Hague University at the age of 35. Coming from a communications and marketing background, he soon realised that his experience and personal enthusiasm for others made him a fine teacher. In the marketing program he discovered that his ambition is intertwined with those who want to make a positive change in this world through education, be it students, colleagues or professionals.

In the ten years since, he taught a great deal of various marketing disciplines. But a burn-out made him think of the essence of marketing. He realised that marketing and communications can be a helpful tool in our everchanging world. He feels that a lot of responsibility and possibilities lies with those in communications and marketing to address, and solve, the world's wicked problem, with graduated students

being important drivers of the solutions. With this in mind he has become one of the frontrunners for a new impact driven Marketing program and founding father of a university wide informal "bottom-up" network of gamechangers, as a direct result of his thesis. Participating in networks of Global Citizenship, Circular Economics and Sustainable Development Goals has provided him with the platform he needs to live up to his mission.

Connection is the key word for positive change. Only working together will deliver us the opportunities to shape a better world. His best skill is connecting with students, connecting with colleagues and connecting with professionals. As it is his goal to give a helping hand to those who are willing to make a positive change in our world.

Bart de Graaff

The effect of intermediaries word-of-mouth on employer reputation assumptions with potential 'Army Special Operations Forces' applicants

Master thesis on employer branding

Every organization is in a constant struggle to attract new talented employees. During periods of economic growth and low unemployment this 'war for talent' intensifies. Employer branding is a way to add value to organizations as an employer. Employer knowledge consists of the evaluation of an organization in the minds of its stakeholders. Every one of these stakeholders receive information by means of word-of-mouth from intermediaries, and by doing so are more or less influenced towards positive or negative evaluations of the organization as an employer. The employer reputation dimension plays an important role in these evaluations. Employer reputation in this study can best be described as "[...] a job seeker's belief about how the organization is evaluated by others [...]" (Cable & Turban, 2001, p. 127)

This research working hypothesis expects source expertise and tie strength to moderate the level of influence of word-of-mouth on employer reputation assumptions. Does the fact that someone's father talks positive about the organization as an employer exert disproportional more influence in regard to a distant acquaintance that acts the same? To investigate this phenomenon a theory oriented descriptive cross-sectional research approach was performed by means of a mono method quantitative survey. A total number of n=1636 respondents filled in an online questionnaire. After filtering this population in accordance with the aimed research population a total sample of n=665 remained which was deemed statistically significant. A set of relevant variables for measurement were adapted from prior studies.

The results of this study provide a preliminary empirical validation of the influence of intermediaries word-of-mouth on employer reputation. A strong significant direct effect of intermediaries word-of-mouth on employer reputation was registered. These results show the importance of intermediaries as a conductor of employer related information

and their anticipated influence on reputation building. Both source expertise and tie strength are of significant influence concerning the employer reputation assumptions of potential applicants. We therefore assume the level of tie strength and source expertise to positively affect the level of cognitive elaboration. The working hypothesis expected the moderating effect of tie strength and source expertise on word-of-mouth in its relationship with employer reputation. This study showed no significant evidence of this phenomenon occurring. Considering these results we can conclude that the level of tie strength and source expertise do not exert disproportionate influence on employer reputation beliefs of potential applicants.

Translating these theoretical findings to practical implications, there are three avenues to optimize employer branding efforts. First, organizations should focus employer branding not only on potential applicants. Intermediaries are important influencers who exert considerable influence over those who value their opinion. These intermediaries should be targeted by employer branding efforts too.

Second, the level of adjudged expertise determines for a great part the influence intermediaries exert on a given stakeholder. Investing in commonly regarded 'experts' of an organization or profession therefore is an easy way to optimize brand performance. Third, current employees are important ambassadors of the organization. Internal and external branding campaigns should therefore always depict the values and feelings of employees currently employed by the organization. But above all, the identity of an organization needs to be well aligned with its desired image. If these dimensions are misaligned it could well create an ambiguous environment where corporate expectations from stakehold-

ers are ultimately not met, potentially resulting in employee turnover and poor employer reputation. For this reason it is very important to elaborate on organizational identity and culture before any steps are made towards employer branding. Questions that should arise are: 'Does the present image reflect our true identity?' and 'Do employees see their identity portrayed in organizational communication?' These are examples of central questions that need to be addressed before any attempts are made towards actively engaging in employer branding.

Biography

Bart de Graaff



My name is Bart de Graaff and I live a humble life with my wife Sera in the beautiful town of Breda. After I finished high school I began a study multimedia design at the graphical lyceum in Utrecht. Designing and creating graphical products was an exhilarating experience, but I missed adventure and a challenge in my life. In order to fulfill these needs I signed up for the Royal Netherlands Army to serve in one of its elite units. I planned to stay for only 4 years and then move on to focus my attention to graphic design again. Presently I am still working for the Army 16 years after my career switch, although now as head of communication and recruitment. My operational career made me into the man I am today.

The combination of military missions and actions together with multiple studies in the art of communication turned out to be a perfect mix in order to thrust my career into a next phase.

The study corporate communication at Rotterdam School of Management learned me a great deal about academic thinking and cultural perspectives. Due to the fact this study is internationally focused and multiple nationalities participate in class, you learn a lot about cultural differences and the way people view and conceive communication.

Marion Geraats

What is the potential for SintLucas to pursue a thought leadership strategy

Thought leadership is a concept that is not widely known but which has proved to be successful for a number of large multinationals and also smaller organizations in The Netherlands. Van Halderen, lecturer in this field describes thought leadership as: 'The action of promoting thoughtprovoking viewpoints that reframe the way stakeholders think about their key issues, helping them toward new insights and solutions.' For an organization the strength of being perceived as a thought leader lies in combining thought leadership as a positioning strategy with being a revolutionary game changer.

SintLucas

SintLucas is a vocational college (mbo-vakschool) for the creative industries. Established in 1948 in Boxtel, Noord-Brabant as a school for house-painters, SintLucas has developed over the decades as a vocational college for creative professions with branches in Eindhoven and Boxtel. Now SintLucas has around 400 teachers and staff and more than 3300 students enrolled in design courses ranging from game and interaction design, interior design to arts & crafts. With creativity as the main theme. For decades SintLucas has been a household name in the creative sector. Students come from all over the south of the Netherlands and after finishing SintLucas they are welcomed to companies and college programs across the country and abroad.

Research question and methodology

This study aims to investigate *the extent to which and how SintLucas can pursue a thought leadership strategy*. To answer this research question, a qualitative exploratory research method was designed based on the Thought Leadership Framework™ of Van Halderen and a conceptual model. Three groups of stakeholders - SintLucas employees', SintLucas management and external stakeholders- were interviewed in order to determine the level of trust and the opportunity for a strong novel point of view stakeholders perceive and what is needed to build on these important requirements.

Findings

The findings of the thirteen interviews show that both the internal interviewees – employees and management – as well as the external interviewees see a goal and contributions for pursuing a thought leadership strategy as well as a match with the SintLucas' identity. Also they see a number of concrete options for a theme that can grow into a novel point of view. Employees also acknowledge the benefits of a thought leadership strategy for themselves and are willing to contribute. To increase their commitment and thus their trust a clear plan and focus, training and support from management and the communications department, and resources are needed. In addition to the obvious channels to share knowledge and expertise on the theme, external respondents emphasize the importance of a personification of the thought leader and literally bringing out know-how as important factors with which SintLucas can build trust.

Recommendation

For SintLucas to actually pursue a thought leadership strategy it is important to determine the ambition, allocate resources and develop and implement an action plan with a central role of the communications department.

Contribution to academic knowledge and recommendations for further research

Commitment among employees is an important precursor for trust. Van Halderen does not elaborate on the meaning of or how to build commitment among employees to a thought leadership strategy. In this study the work of Meyer & Herscovitch (2002), Meyer & Allen (1991) and Neves (2011) has proved suitable to investigate the concept of commitment among employees in more depth.

With regard to areas for further research, in this study external respondents mentioned the need for a thought leader to have a face, a person or a group of persons who personalize the thought leader position and the novel point of view. The majority of the internal interviewees strongly rejected this. In the theory this issue has not yet been addressed. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent a thought leader person contributes to building a thought leadership strategy and whether internal and external stakeholders have different opinions about this.

Biography Marion Geraats



Marion Geraats (1968) educational background includes a Bachelor in Commercial Economics and Linguistics in 1992 from the Hogeschool Zuyd (HEAO) in Sittard and a Bachelor in Applied Psychology in 2008 at Fontys Hogescholen Tilburg. She started her career in 1992 in marketing & sales at Meneba Weert (at that time Presco). As a highly innovative and solution driven company, Meneba supplies products for a wide variety of food applications such as bread, pastry and pasta. In 1994, she joined Start People Employment Agency as a recruitment consultant for the marketing & communication segment and in 1997 became manager of the Eindhoven branch of TopStart, specialist in recruitment & selection of highly qualified staff. Having an international focus, she moved to the United States in 2000 where she worked as a marketing & communications officer at Macy advertising in Lancaster (PA).

At this agency she contributed to the positioning and branding strategies of multiple clients. In 2003 she continued her career at SintLucas in Eindhoven-Boxtel, a vocational college (mbo) for the creative industries where she has served for over 17 years now as a marketing & communications manager. She still takes pride in building the brand and reputation of SintLucas and guiding the organization through ever-present changes including a merger and the development of a private branch by using communication and storytelling as a driver.

Marion lives in Eindhoven with her husband and two teenage daughters. Away from the office, she enjoys sports, reading, cultmovies, travelling and spending time with family and friends.

You can contact Marion via her LinkedIn profile: [linkedin.com/in/marion-henckens-233a302](https://www.linkedin.com/in/marion-henckens-233a302)

Manon van der Ham

The effect of organizational leaders on employee voice and employee silence

Employee silence has been implicated as a contributor to a host of detrimental outcomes, including weak performance, corruption, low employee morale and accidents. In addition, employee voice is seen to be contributing to the organization's effectiveness, e.g., by making better decision making possible.

In the literature review, we found four main reasons or drivers for employees to speak up or stay silent. These are attitude (do I want to speak up), capability (am I able to speak up), safety (do I feel safe to speak up) and social cues (influence of other to speak up). The factors that play a role in this driver are self-confidence, power (intentional withholding of information), disengagement and it must be worth the effort (e.g., the issue must be handled adequately). In the capability driver the opportunity (knowing where to find the information) or Control (the manager has to be open for feedback play a role). Many authors mention the driver safety as the most important reason for employee silence. The fear of negative consequences of speaking up such as reputation damage, or lack of job safety play a role. In addition, trust is an important factor in the decision to speak up. In social cues, the influence of others is described. Positive role modeling, deeply engrained social norms, peer pressure and support from others come into play. The silence of colleagues influences the decision to stay silent, which leads to a collective behavior.

What is the most important driver?

To identify this most important driver of employee voice and employee silence quantitative and qualitative research was conducted. We found that for our respondents all four drivers play a role in speaking up about issues inside the organization as well as outside the organization, but the influence of them differs depending on the topic of the issue. In the interviews, we saw a different attitude towards speaking up in situations that the organization should stand up for

a societal issue or a process that could be improved, versus when an ethical issue, e.g., suspicion of abuse or misconduct such as fraud or sexual harassment, is at stake. When an issue crosses one's moral or ethical boundary, employees are more inclined to speak up regardless the consequences. Engagement with the subject is an important factor in instances where an issue does not cross one's ethical boundary.

Most salient findings

Our primary goal for this study was to determine which drivers are most important in employee voice and employee silence. The most salient findings were:

1. There is not one driver that is the most important in the decision to speak up. All drivers (attitude, capability, safety and social cues) play a role in the process and they influence each other.
2. The topic of the (moral) issue matters and more specifically the effect that it has on the person speaking up.
3. The manager plays a critical role in improving the culture to speak up and increasing the actual number of employees that speak up.
4. CEO activism has a positive effect on the intention to speak up

Our contribution to the knowledge of 'employee voice' (employees speaking up) and 'employee silence' is that we provide a comprehensive overview of the factors that come into play in case of employee voice or employee silence in situations inside and outside the organization. This is summarized in a model that can be used to better understand the motives behind employee silence and employee voice.



Figure 1 Speak up model

Drivers	Beliefs	Moderator	Factor
Attitude	"I want to"	Belief Thoughts or feelings that adhere to or conflict with speaking up Expectations Employees expectations of what will happen after speaking up	Belief - Power: Withholding information out of power or self-protection, politics - Lack of self-confidence: it is not my position to, I have only just started this job, what if I am wrong - Disengagement: I don't care about, that's head office Expectations -It is not worth the effort: nothing will change, no action taken, not taken seriously
Capability	"I am able to"	Control Employees' sense that they have or don't have the autonomy to take action or implement changes Opportunity Employees knowledge or ability of how to take action based on the available information	Control out of my sphere of influence Opportunity I know whom to contact, I know where to find, it is easy.
Safety	"I feel safe"	Beliefs Thoughts and feelings that lead stakeholders to not feel safe in the workplace or in speaking up Expectations Employees' expectations of what will happen after speaking up.	Beliefs -Trust: No trust in management/organization Expectations -Fear of consequences: retaliation, personal/career consequences -Reputation damage
Social cues	"Others are"	Norms Cues and actions of others close to the employees (colleagues) that steer them toward speaking up Signals Messages and incentives that make employees speak up or stay silent	Norms -Others are doing it: I will do it if others are doing it, things only change if we all do this -Relationship value: I don't want to hurt my colleague, what if I am wrong, I don't want to hurt teamspirit or relationship with colleague Signals -Team behavior: Support from others, peer pressure -Management behavior: Exemplary behavior, Manager tells me to do something else, People expect me to do this, support from management, appreciation, manager avoids feedback, organization does not welcome report of wrongdoing, not the same consequences for managers, favoritism

Our work indicates a critical issue for organizational leaders. They can make or break a culture of silence and they can build a culture of speech. They have to really listen to their employees and act upon their signals. They also have to keep them safe and support and reward employee voice. Standing up for societal issues in an inspirational way can also help employees to speak up.

Communication practitioners can assist their managers in this process. They can be their coach and organizational conscience. They can help build an open communication climate and facilitate the communications concerning employee voice and silence. They can also assist their organization's leaders in their CEO activism, by being the eyes and ears of the organization and advising in which issues to stand up for.

Biography

Manon van der Ham



(1975) I am a results-driven, enthusiastic communications professional with years of experience in financial organizations as a manager, project manager and strategic communications advisor. I currently work at Rabobank in the corporate communications team on different projects such as financial/investor communications, communication strategies for change programs, issue management and crisis communications. I believe in constantly challenging myself to learn and accelerate change. That's why I love to work in dynamic environments. I believe in delivering on promises and getting things done.

I have a special interest in change. The question why people do the things they do fascinates me. We can learn a lot from the things people voice, but also what they do not say. I believe that when people work together, amazing results can be achieved. Through my work, I hope to contribute to an environment where we can step by step create a better world.

I live near Rotterdam with my husband, my cats and two horses. In my spare time, I like to compete with my horses or just go riding with them for fun.

If you want to reach out, please contact me at [linkedin.com/in/manondezward](https://www.linkedin.com/in/manondezward)

Lucila Perez Mollo

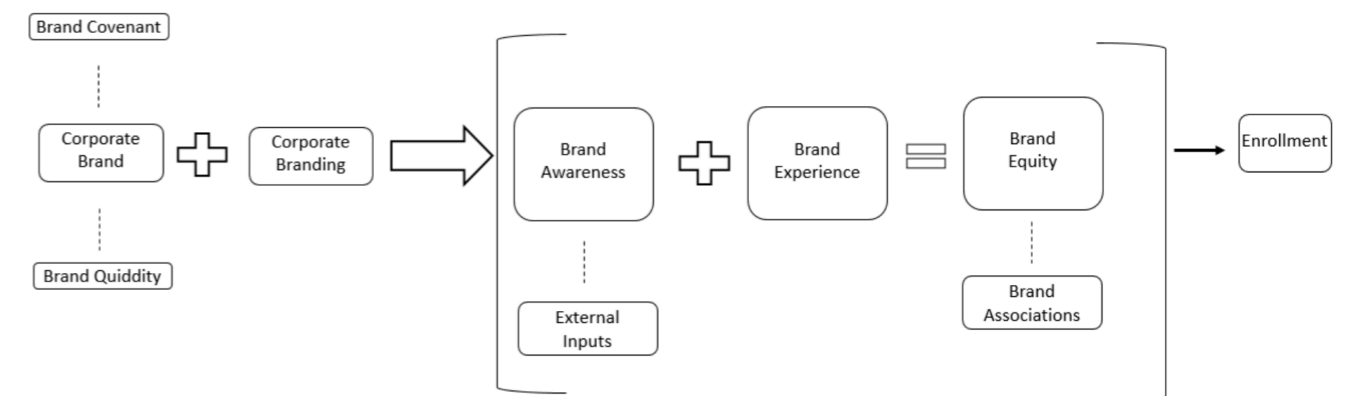
Implications of branding initiatives in higher education institutions: a study of the impact of branding on student enrollment

Like several other industries, the higher education sector has been subject to a series of fundamental changes over the past decade and an increasingly complex and competitive marketplace. Branding initiatives are therefore becoming a common practice among institutions often competing for the same students, with competitive pressure existing simultaneously at the individual, institutional, national, and international levels.

This study examined the relationship between branding initiatives and student recruitment outcomes, focusing on the impact of various branding practices and different brand components on student enrollment results. It also specifically studied the importance ascribed by prospective students to various branding dimensions in their decision-making process when confronted with the decision of choosing a university for their studies.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between branding efforts and student recruitment?
2. What are the branding dimensions that matter the most to prospective students?



University Branding and Student Enrollment Framework

The research was practice-oriented. Its objectives were achieved using a mixed methodology approach by distributing an online survey among prospective and current university students at Franklin University Switzerland, and conducting semi-structured interviews among university practitioners in Europe. The data gathered from the survey lent interesting insight into the benefits of branding and the importance of different brand and branding effort dimensions (i.e., brand covenant and quiddity, brand awareness, brand experience, and brand equity) indicated by the students and their impact on the students' decision to enroll. The study revealed that several branding components carry more weight with students when they decide. It also showed that while some components are more influential (i.e., campus location, favorable academic reputation, and positive experience during the application process), several factors affect the students' decision-making process.

The interviews provided additional insights regarding best practices and the perceived impact of branding on recruitment outcomes from a practitioner's perspective. According to the interviewed professionals, branding appears to beneficially impact higher education institutions. Increasing brand awareness and strengthening student-based brand equity, continually monitoring and managing brand associations and establishing partnerships were just a few of the critical managerial implications from this study. The various findings led to a clear call for university leaders to increase their focus and the resources dedicated to such crucial efforts.

Summary of Practical Recommendations

Universities considering using branding approaches in their student recruitment efforts should take into account the following points:

- Conduct regular surveys of prospective students to identify whether student perceptions of the university's brand match the attributes that are deemed most important by the marketing/enrollment department in its branding efforts. This will help to identify the elements to build on or strengthen in recruitment outreach.
- Design and implement specific brand awareness campaigns in their key markets (such as Europe and North America in Franklin's specific case).
- Use branding initiatives to promote the university's unique qualities, including intangibles, such as social experiences that are valued by students at both the pre-enrollment and post-enrollment stages.
- Introduce communication campaigns to strengthen the brand equity elements with lower ratings (in the case of Franklin, good value for money, Franklin's graduates' attractiveness to employers, etc.)
- Find ways to build a sense of community among prospective and current students in the university, aligning them with the institutional identity via branding.
- Remember that the university's location was found as a key influencing factor, so destination-branding approaches may help to increase potential interest and perceptions of value.
- Incorporate peer-to-peer approaches to recruitment by enhancing outreach efforts by current students and alumni to friends and family who may be prospective students.
- Build interdepartmental, intercampus, and cross-organizational partnerships to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of branding initiatives.
- Use the internet and web morphing techniques to effectively present and reinforce the university's branding on its website and social media, as well as to market directly to students seeking information online about potential campuses that match their specific priority criteria and their needs
- Communicate about cost factors in a way that highlights the brand's value and matches the price-related concerns of prospective students.
- Identify the different segments of the student market and customize branding and communication outreach to match the desired segments.

Biography

Lucila Perez Mollo



Lucila is a results-driven higher education professional with nearly 15 years of expertise in marketing and communication, student recruitment, and student affairs within international settings.

As Dean of Admissions and Enrollment Management at Franklin University Switzerland, she leads the student recruitment, selection, and enrollment efforts for undergraduate and graduate programs.

As an Argentinian-Italian-Swiss who has traveled to 70+ countries across six continents, she is very passionate about languages and the extraordinary diversity within this world. In addition to native Spanish and Italian, Lucila speaks fluent English, French, and Portuguese.

Having lived in Canada and Argentina, she then moved to the French side of Switzerland at the age of 20. She is currently based in the breath-taking city of Lugano, in

the Italian side of Switzerland. Alongside her full-time role at Franklin University, she reports international rugby-related stories and tournaments in her spare time as a freelance press correspondent.

Lucila's educational background includes a Bachelor of Science (Honors) in International Hospitality Management, a Master of Science in Corporate Communication, and several Executive Education certificates in Leadership, Corporate Branding, Marketing Strategy and Executive Coaching. She is currently working towards completing her Professional Coaching Training, leading to the Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credential issued by the International Coaching Federation.

To contact Lucila, please visit her LinkedIn profile <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lucila-perez-mollo-1989869>

Andreia Severo e Bogalho Paiva

Situating the Relevance Theory within Leadership Communications

Back in 1996 Bill Gates said: “Content is king”. Today many say: context is the queen. Reality is that: both content and context sit at the throne ruling the XXIst century and the way communications is thought of and practiced. One cannot be separated from the other as context is what makes content meaningful. Being able to master both is now considered an (entertaining) art. At a leadership communications level, especially during organizational change, being able to convince and engage employees starts with understanding respective audiences. If communication is a question of relevance, relevance is a question of context. How is then relevance established in the context of leadership communications? The challenge many corporate communicators and leaders encounter is especially one: to establish an expressive connection to their audiences. By situating the Relevance Theory within leadership communications this thesis explores the innovativeness of the RT itself and shows evidence of the usefulness of its principles by analyzing real leadership discourse.

The starting point

The challenge is already here: we live in the age of the Web 2.0 that is already evolving into 3.0, and the democratization of information will continue to be a reality, available 24/7 with a simple click. How can humans/speakers/hearers do their best and distinguish business-relevant signals versus noise (meaningless content)? How should companies and their leaders enhance their ability of being relevant and communicating effectively as the communication process is rooted in listening and responding? To companies this is a continuous challenge as it implies that leaders must connect in a consistent and authentic way with their companies' purpose, strategy and with all types of audiences. By truly understanding their needs and opinions and reacting to them, a message can resonate, and this requires the ability to fully understand the human communicative process.

The Relevance Theory

To fully grasp what is communicated, hearers do have other means of comprehending a message that go beyond the classic focus on semantics. Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986, 1995) arrived as an innovative communication theory as it brought together elements from the pragmatics and cognitive fields while highlighting crucial and fundamental mechanisms of human communication. It represented an innovative way of exploring the nature of real and authentic communicative processes: as hearers we will only interpret information if it is relevant to us. Relevance results from the comparison between the processing effort of an implicature (or something that the speaker suggests) and the interpretation effect of that same implicature (from the hearer). The authors state that “every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance.” To fully understand this statement there is the need to explore relevance from the *effort and effect* perspective as relevance is a communication goal of the human communicative process.

The central question...and leadership communications

How is relevance established in the context of leadership communication? The Relevance Theory defines “relevance” in a detailed and technical way, it centers itself on the need to measure effort and effect and it positions relevance and communication in the cognitive processes of the human mind. By taking RT into leadership communication strategy, leaders will be efficiently producing an ostensive stimulus (designed to attract the audience's attention) encouraging their audience(s) to presume that their message is relevant enough to be worth processing. This is of importance in scenarios of change. What (and how) a leader of a company communicates can be effective or not depending on the level of knowledge that, for example, a company's audience has when exposed to various organizational “noises”. RT connects communication and cognition and in doing so avoids such noise.

The goals

This thesis has three main goals, besides examining and bringing the RT into leadership communications:

1. Situating the RT within corporate communications;
2. Understanding: what a relevant message is and how to hold the attention of an audience;
3. Assess the communication challenge that CEOs are facing nowadays - to be and to stay relevant - by analyzing, Siemens AG President and CEO Joe Kaeser's leadership discourse during organizational transformation.

Findings & contributions

While analyzing leadership communication speech acts, the research showed evidence that leadership communications involves more than simple encoding and decoding messages. Leadership communication, as a corporate communications field, needs to explore context through ostensive communication. Leadership communication is highly intentional.

The discourse analysis showed evidence of clear ostension of the information to be communicated. An additional comparison with advertising was presented: if for an advertiser the purpose is to engage in creating the purchasing necessity, for a corporate leader/CEO the intention is to get the acceptance from the investors and employees. The created conceptual framework provides the visualization of relevance and optimal relevance dynamics, respectively.

Main limitations

1. The selection of specific samples of leadership discourse limited the research in some ways.
2. The thesis is highly focused on the official speech of Joe Kaeser. By analyzing the RT (model and principles) in the context of leadership discourse, the reader might limit the RT application to other communication fields which is not the intention of this thesis. Also, while going through Joe Kaeser's speech samples the reader is suggested not to generalize the findings as these are specific to Siemens and its CEO only.
3. Additional exploration on media response to Joe Kaeser's announcements could add the other side of the story.

Relevance of this study

Bringing the RT into leadership communication is the ultimate purpose of this thesis, based on a profound belief that it would be supporting leaders and corporate communications professionals understanding better how to benefit from (mastering) contextual meaning. Leaders need to communicate creatively and using problem/concern-solving approaches to grasp hearers and persuade them of what is intended. That means developing human-centered messages from contextual exploration.

Biography

Andreia Severo e Bogalho Paiva



Andreia Severo e Bogalho Paiva, Portuguese and born in 1981, is an experienced corporate communications consultant focused on creating clear and compelling strategies and messages that inform, engage and inspire. Andreia strongly believes that, done well, communication has the power to shape an organization and its people, and to build perception and value in the world. To her, that requires a clear understanding of audiences, content and context, but it also demands real innovation to create messages that cut through, use the right mix of media, and truly connect with people. Andreia loves to define and shape those communications, working with management, teams and agencies, to help organizations stand out and thrive.

After studying in Portugal and Italy, Andreia graduated from the University of Lisbon in Portuguese and English Studies. She began her career as an interpreter and office manager in the fashion industry. Following that she started her career at Siemens AG (2006), first in Portugal (Lisbon) and then Germany (Munich) where she lives since 2008 with her husband and two daughters. From project management to corporate communications, Andreia held different positions within Siemens AG Global Business Services (GBS).

At Siemens GBS, and as a senior communications manager, she was responsible for the strategic messaging and positioning and managed the global communications network.

After 14 years within Siemens AG GBS, Andreia joined Siemens AG HR People & Leadership organization as a Communications Consultant. She says that: "Life is made up of chapters—some short, some long. And if Siemens is my career book, I like to think that I am furthering my story by joining HR." Engagement, to Andreia, is at the heart of a successful HR department and this engagement is driven by communication. That's where Andreia comes in. With her extensive background in project management and strategic communications, she will support the organization finding solutions to the challenges the HR community will face in the near future. And, as an avid learner and lifelong student, she is enthusiastic to apply her knowledge to new areas as they develop and grow.

Meet Andreia: [linkedin.com/in/andreia-paiva-a1106697](https://www.linkedin.com/in/andreia-paiva-a1106697)

Marloes Smittenaar

The Pressure To Change

The Role of Climate Change Communication Strategies in the Energy Industry

Companies in the energy sector, are currently going through extensive changes due to all the transitions in the environment and in society. Communicating about CSR and climate change specifically is important to stay competitive, and companies in the energy sector seem to take this seriously by including it in their business strategies. With these recent changes there is an important business need to make the company more 'future-proof' and stay relevant. As a result of ongoing pressure, the willingness of energy companies to act responsibly towards environmental issues and especially climate change has increased throughout the years. There is enough literature available about CSR and CSR communication, yet, climate change communication is a topic that is fairly new and most companies in the energy-intensive industry are still searching for the most successful way to communicate about climate change. Thus, additional research would be valuable for practitioners, as it would be useful to learn about the latest strategies and its effects. This paper will provide answers to the main research question: what are effective and ineffective communication tactics of climate change communication strategies for major companies in the energy industry?

Literature

Current available literature outlines the concept and value of CSR and CSR Communication. Yet, larger energy companies are still often accused of greenwashing and climate change communication is not always effective. Communicating about CSR and climate change is specifically important to stay competitive, and companies in the energy sector seem to take this seriously by including it in their business strategies. Communicating about climate change is a challenge, especially for companies in the energy sector.

Literature shows that the impact of communication depends on the approach. Information provision is a weak tool for climate change communication, impact depends upon matching a strategy to appropriate

goals, audiences, resources, and contexts, and far too often the necessary careful research and design has not been done" (Johnson, 2012, p.386). Moreover, it highlights the importance of providing the correct information, as it is a way to try to cross this enormous gap between the findings of climate science and public understanding of those facts (Patil, 2019). In addition, lobbying can be an important communication tool to change things around (Winston, 2019). Climate change communication is a topic that is fairly new and additional research would be valuable. Outcomes of the communication strategies are still not ideal, and more research will give better insights about the role and essentially the effects of climate change communication.

Methodology

The research is a qualitative cross-sectional study, zooming in on a few strategies of bigger companies, as well as providing and reviewing best practices of industry experts, and will provide answers to the main research question raised in the introduction.

The approach was based on theory (analysis of Corporate Communication Framework), and it also includes field-based research (interviews with industry experts). The sustainable communication strategies of four energy companies were observed and analyzed (archival research), according to Argenti's Corporate Communication Strategy Framework (2016, p.44). The companies allocated were all members of the OGCI or IPIECA initiatives in 2020. With these memberships, the company is indicating that they are committed to a more sustainable business and future.

Findings

Based on the archival research one can conclude that each company in the analysis acknowledges the need to tackle the climate change issue, yet they all have a different climate change communications strategy based on their company's strategy. Although there are some alignments and similarities such as choice of channel and the tone of voice, the way the companies are structuring their messaging, is different. The companies are talking to different audiences and dealing with different legislation, thus different methods need to be applied to communicate effectively.

There are many different facets to think about before implementing a climate change communications strategy, and there is not a 'one size fits all' approach. A constantly changing environment requires a serious dedicated approach. The energy companies are using most of the climate change communications techniques described in the literature and have made some progress in meaningful conversations with critical audiences according to the interviewees in the thesis.

Yet they do not know how exactly their climate change communications is perceived and there is still a gap with the general public for most of them.

Besides these findings from the archival research, the industry experts in the interviews also confirm that climate change communication strategies require a tailor-made solution, and time needs to be invested to understand the needs of the company's constituencies. Effectively communicating about climate change, according to the interviewees, depends on various items: interpersonal communication, trust, transparency, a clear narrative, collectives & collaborations, and a continuous commitment from the top and engagement with constituencies.

Recommendations

Overall, there are several recommendations for practitioners and the companies. First, it is essential to take all of the concerns of the company's constituencies seriously. Although some of these, such as the general public, might not have a direct effect on business performance, in the long run it will affect the business. Furthermore, a well-thought-out action plan, explaining how you will tackle this climate change issue is needed before sending out any messaging. Simply addressing climate change and the intentions to do better are not enough anymore. Constituencies will pick up plans that are unrealistic or do not make a real difference in their opinion. A lot of time has passed by without any concrete actions of the energy companies and people want to see real change now. Lastly, although there is a great deal of pressure for the companies to communicate their sustainable efforts to as many people as they can, climate change is a delicate topic and needs to be treated as such. Especially now, it is so important to stick to authentic communications based on a realistic action plan. In the long run, all this invested time and efforts are likely to pay off.

Biography

Marloes Smittenaar



Marloes Smittenaar (1986) is a passionate communications professional with 9+ years experience and a professional skillset spanning multiple communication disciplines in an internal corporate environment. She has a special interest in sustainability and energy transition, and experience in delivering integrated communication programs, CSR, crisis communications, stakeholder management and employee communications.

In 2010, she earned her Bachelor's degree in Communication at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, and in 2019 entered the Corporate Communication Master program at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. Marloes joined Aramco in 2013 and has since held different roles covering communications and stakeholder management. Over the past years, Marloes has fulfilled numerous roles varying from project management of high-level

external stakeholder projects (e.g. World Economic Forum Davos) to managing CSR programs and partnerships in Europe, where she developed and delivered local and global communication campaigns and projects.

Marloes is a curious, solutions-oriented professional and is always looking to overcome challenges and create a positive working environment. Over time, she has developed a special interest in sustainability and energy transition, and she is eager to enhance the communications around this topic.

In her free time, she likes to explore new places, travel (as soon as that is possible again!) and take part in a diverse number of social activities.

To contact Marloes, please visit her LinkedIn profile [linkedin.com/in/marloes-smittenaar-ms1986](https://www.linkedin.com/in/marloes-smittenaar-ms1986)

Mariëlle Stege

The untapped potential of Social Media Employee Advocacy

The importance of employees in building and promoting a brand is growing. Since employees are trusted more than the company, its CEO or formal spokespersons, they can become powerful and credible sources of information for external audiences. The digital era we are in now, makes the role of employees as informal spokespersons and advocates more salient and powerful than ever before. By sharing positive company-related content on their personal social media accounts, employees can reach large audiences with their messages. Employees who act as social media employee advocate can help building the brand, strengthen the commitment of stakeholders to the organization and contribute to a strong reputation and image. The benefits of social media employee advocacy are clear. But how can organizations tap into to this new source of positive endorsement for their company?

The objective of this research is to provide insights into the drivers of social media employee advocacy from the perspective of employees and empirical implications for corporate communication practitioners regarding how to influence social media employee advocacy, the main research question of this study. To get more insights on social media employee advocacy an extensive literature review was conducted, followed by a practice-oriented case study at Rabobank, a large all-finance bank in the Netherlands and leading Food and Agriculture bank international. The literature review provided answers on the different drivers of social media employee advocacy which formed the basis for the qualitative research approach.

Drivers of social media employee advocacy

The literature review showed several drivers of social media employee advocacy, divided in to two categories: work-related drivers and personal drivers. The work-related drivers were divided into four categories: A positive emotional culture, open internal communication, leadership and organizational commitment. The personal drivers also formed four categories: relationship management, ambassadorship, personal branding and social identity expressiveness.

The literature was not clear on whether some drivers were more influential than others although the personal drivers predominated in the literature reviewed. A qualitative research approach was adopted to validate the findings of the literature review and get insights into how corporate communications can influence social media employee advocacy. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees active as social media employee advocates.

Results

The qualitative research outcomes supported the conclusion that personal drivers seem to be the real drivers of social media employee advocacy, especially relationship management and ambassadorship. Personal branding was mentioned as a welcome side effect. For commercial roles social selling also emerged as a driver. Work-related drivers, although not mentioned as drivers for social media employee advocacy, can be seen as positive influencing factors that can stimulate social media employee advocacy. If an organization has a positive open culture, open internal communications, a supportive leadership and employees who feel highly committed, this will form a breeding ground or the right circumstances for social media employee advocacy to occur in an organization.

How to influence social media employee advocacy?

The research showed three roles organizations have to incorporate to stimulate social media employee advocacy. Organizations have to facilitate, appreciate and motivate employees to act as social media employee advocates. Corporate communications play a crucial role in how organizations perform these roles and can be the driving force behind stimulating and accelerating social media employee advocacy.

- 1. Facilitate:** first of all organizations should facilitate employees in their work-related social media use. This is a basis for social media employee advocacy and not only entails education, tools and guidelines but also open, symmetrical and sufficient internal communications. Finding a balance between providing guidelines and giving employees the freedom to be authentic, creative and relevant in their work-related social media content is important.
- 2. Appreciate:** Letting employees know that their voluntary extra role behaviour is seen and appreciated by the organization and (direct) managers, stimulates social media employee advocacy. Showing the results of social media employee advocacy and putting social media employee advocacy higher on the management agenda also emphasises the importance of social media employee advocacy.
- 3. Motivate:** Since social media employee advocacy originates from personal drivers it takes more than facilitating and appreciating social media employee advocacy. Tapping into employees' personal drivers and emphasising the personal advantage of social media employee advocacy is key. Sharing work-related content can enrich an employee's social media presence, build a strong personal brand and help their network. Social media employee advocacy not only benefits the employer but also the employee. The exemplary role of leadership can also be a strong motivating factor for social media employee advocacy.

Practical implications

With the rise of social media employee advocacy the role of corporate communications is changing. Next to managing their own corporate content, corporate communications will have to focus on managing and facilitating other employees who also produce content and communicate with external audiences, a role that was formerly the prerogative of corporate communications and formal spokespersons. Corporate communications should also involve other departments such as HR, Marketing and Sales. Cooperation in developing training, integrating social media employee advocacy in existing programs, business- and marketing plans is important to accelerate social media employee advocacy. A third role for corporate communications is to involve leadership. Corporate communications should not only support leadership to be a role model in social media employee advocacy but also stimulate leadership to show appreciation for employees who are active as social media employee advocate and motivate other employees to become social media employee advocates as well.

Conclusion

Employees can become an organization's greatest and most credible advocates if supported well. Since social media employee advocacy is a voluntary behaviour, employees have to want to share work-related content. Facilitating employees in their social media employee advocate roles, motivating and appreciating them are crucial elements in stimulating social media employee advocacy. By tapping into employee's personal motivation, empowering them and showing appreciation for their extra-role behavior, organizations and employees can both experience the benefits from social media employee advocacy creating a win-win situation.

Biography

Mariëlle Stege



Mariëlle Stege is an experienced all round senior communications professional. She likes to work on complicated communication issues, is results driven and decisive. She is highly skilled in building and managing communications teams, developing and implementing communication strategies and managing large strategic communication projects

After graduating in Business Economics from Erasmus University Rotterdam, Mariëlle held a number of different marketing and communication (management) positions in the financial industry.

Currently, Mariëlle leads the Corporate Communications team at Rabobank, a large all-finance bank in the Netherlands and global leading Food & Agri bank. Rabobank's mission: "Growing a better world together" is close to her heart. She is part of the management team and responsible for corporate communications. Her areas of expertise are Corporate & Financial communications, Issue & Crisis Communications and Brand Architecture. Mariëlle lives in Driebergen-Rijsenburg with her family, loves to travel, photography, gardening and is still trying to master the Spanish language.

Stefan Vasic

Employer branding in the context of diversity

An analysis from the LGBTQ+ perspective for Swiss International Air Lines [Confidential]

What exactly is diversity and why has it become a daily mantra in HR circles that can no longer be ignored? Why do contemporarily managed companies deal so much with the topic of gender, religion, national and sexual diversity and what role does the LGBTQ+ community play? How are diversity and inclusion, the LGBTQ+ community and employer branding related? The war for talent is no longer only about salary, social and fringe benefits, but more and more employees are paying attention to the values of their future employers. A large proportion of these talents are also to be found in the LGBTQ+ ranks; young, talented, excellently trained and educated, mobile and generally without family obligations. But how do you attract this group of employees?

The master thesis combines these questions to an internal employer branding view from the perspective of the LGBTQ+ community, using the example of the author's employer. The focus of the paper was to analyse the subjective perception of how his employer is positioned in terms of LGBTQ+ friendliness. The basis is provided by the literature review, which consists of different approaches encompassing brand management, employer branding, in the narrower sense the Employee Value Proposition, diversity and inclusion, and a special section focusing on the LGBTQ+ community.

This thesis compiles and compares academic, theoretical but also practical literature and draws on current studies in order to obtain an overview of what is known and what is not known about employer branding and the LGBTQ+ community and more broadly about diversity and inclusion. In the methods part a particular focus is put on gaining a deep understanding of people's opinions and attitudes but also on their thoughts and feelings.

Based on qualitative research methods in the form of semi-structured interviews with key persons in the company, an insight into various perspectives of the corresponding positioning is gained and analysed. The evaluation of the data offers interesting conclusions about the current LGBTQ+ friendliness, which are analysed and discussed in detail.

The resulting recommendations for action are embedded in a framework designed by the author and considered to be practical and thus ready for implementation at any time. Finally, the author gives possible directions in which he sees the future development of the research and shows where it would be worthwhile to invest further research time.

The thesis is categorised as confidential as it contains internal data from the author's employer.

Biography

Stefan Vasic



Born and raised in Switzerland, the author, after completing his school-leaving exams and a brief excursion to a bank, began working as a flight attendant for Swiss International Air Lines in 2007, where he is still active today. Parallel to his job as a flight attendant, Stefan Vasic studied Business Communications and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree. He then worked for several years in internal communications for cabin crews, moving to the company's press office in 2015 and working as a media spokesperson for Europe, the Middle East and Africa until January 2020.

In February 2020, he has been appointed as head of the Sponsorship, Event Management and Social Media department. Stefan Vasic has always been interested in brand management, brand building and the influence the brand has on the choice of employer, which is why he has dedicated his master thesis at the Rotterdam School of Management to this very specific field of brand management.

Claudia Verbeek

Losing talent following a private equity acquisition: Part of the deal?

Explaining job switching behavior of key talent through the lens of the Push-Pull-Mooring model: a grounded theory approach

Research objective

This research provides a deeper understanding of job switching behaviour post-acquisition through the lens of the Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) model. Despite originating from a different field, this research argues that the analogies between migration constructs and job switching behaviour are both plausible and straightforward. The findings of this research broaden the available academic knowledge in the field of job switching behaviour in relation to acquisitions. Furthermore, this research provides practical insights on how to retain key talent throughout an acquisition and on how to poach key talent of other firms that go through an acquisition.

This research answers the following research questions:

1. *Which variables drive key talent of a firm involved in an acquisition by a private equity firm to switch their employer post-acquisition?*
 - a. Which variables drive key talent to switch employer, e.g. which 'push variables' can be identified and what is their importance?
 - b. Which positive variables draw key talent towards working for another firm, e.g. which 'pull variables' can be identified and what is their importance?
 - c. Which variables act to inhibit or facilitate job switching behaviour post-acquisition, e.g. which 'mooring variables' can be identified and what is their importance?
2. *Based on these variables, what practical advice can be extracted to enable management of firms involved in a private equity acquisition to retain talent?*

Data analysis

This qualitative research follows a grounded theory approach, as proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Data consists of interviews with relevant stakeholders. Data analysis consists of a variety of coding steps: open-coding for identifying concepts and categories, axial-coding for the relationship between categories, directed coding to reflect the valence of the *push*, *pull* and *mooring* variables and selective-coding for theory formation.

Results

Data analysis reveals 3 core categories of push variables that play a crucial role in reaching the decision to switch jobs post-acquisition: *change*, *diminished power and control* and *disengagement*. Several pull variables emerge from the obtained data, which trace back to one overall category: *alternative attractiveness*. Pull variables start to play a role right after the acquisition, e.g. the *change*. Two dominant mooring variables emerge: *safety* and *emotional attachment*. Mooring variables appear to have a strong moderating effect on job switching behaviour. This means that even if push variables are strong, someone may choose not to switch, due to the mooring variables.

Practical advice

Following the obtained scientific evidence, this research provides practical advice on various communications. This enables practitioners to make decisions informed by social science and organizational research. In sum, the advice is: *make communication personal, acknowledge emotions, prepare the senior management and apply goal setting to increase cohesion*. Lastly, the advice is: *improve talent detection efforts*. The retention of certain individuals may be particularly important for the organisational success. Assessing the extent to which turnover is functional or dysfunctional should receive more attention. After all, it makes little strategic sense to invest a great deal in talent retention without truly understanding who your key talent is.

To conclude

It would be a shame to hold on to the thought that losing talent is 'just part of the deal', since properly retaining key talent could be a possible value enhancer, and thus increase return on investment. Language that should be appealing to a PE.

Biography

Claudia Verbeek



Claudia Verbeek (1993) is an internationally oriented communications professional with a strong background in acquisition-communication.

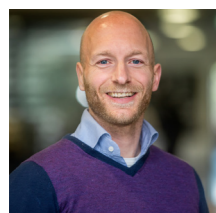
After graduating from the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Communication Science, Claudia started her professional career as a brand strategist in the world of private equity. In her first week, a senior board member of an oil & gas company asked: *"Is communications not just a dumping ground for tactical managers who are uncomfortable with the quantitative skills needed for success in other functions?"* Ever since, it has been Claudia's passion to make communication efforts more tangible and thus help companies shift towards a more strategic approach on communications.

Which is one of the reasons she decided to participate in the Executive Master of Corporate Communication.

Currently, Claudia works as a marketing strategist at business consultancy firm ITDS. The firm has recently been acquired by a private equity, which presents exciting challenges that fit right up her alley. Think of leadership communication and employee engagement.

If you would like to get in touch with Claudia, please visit her LinkedIn page [linkedin.com/in/claudiaverbeek](https://www.linkedin.com/in/claudiaverbeek)

Coaches



Joep Cornelissen

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

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



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

Professor Argenti's textbook, *Corporate Communication*, Seventh Edition, was published through McGraw-Hill/Irwin in 2016. He also published the first edition of a seminal work in 2016 entitled *Corporate Responsibility* for Sage, which focuses on corporate values, shared value, corporate character, and the purpose of the corporation in modern society. Argenti co-authored (with Courtney Barnes) *Digital Strategies for Powerful Corporate Communication*, published by McGraw-Hill in 2009. Some of his other books include: *Strategic Corporate Communication*, published in 2007 by McGraw-Hill, *The Power of Corporate Communication* (co-authored with UCLA's Janis Forman), published by McGraw-Hill, and *The Fast Forward MBA Pocket Reference* (several editions), released through Wiley. Professor Argenti has written and edited numerous articles for academic publications and practitioner journals such as *Harvard Business Review*, *California Management Review*, and *Sloan Management Review*.

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

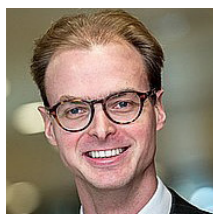
Professor Argenti is a Fulbright Scholar and a winner of the Pathfinder Award in 2007 from the Institute for Public Relations for the excellence of his research over a long career. The Ethisphere Institute also listed him as one of the most influential people in Business Ethics. He serves on an advisory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



Guido A.J.M. Berens (PhD)

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



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



Florian Madertoner
Lecturer
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Florian Madertoner is a Lecturer at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. He holds a degree in Banking- and Finance. Florian's research interests include Capital Structure Theory, Behavioral Finance, Fraud and the History of Finance. He is responsible for the Finance part of the course "Introduction to Business". In addition, Florian teaches Foundations of Finance, Corporate Finance as well as the minor "Money and Banking" in the international bachelor program. In the Master program Finance & Investment Florian is involved in the course "Financial Analysis and Valuation" and the supervision of Master theses. He has been awarded the "Professor of the Year Award" three years consecutively in 2016, 2017 and 2018 for his undergrad course on Corporate Finance.



Lucas Meijs
*Professor of Volunteering, Civil Society and Businesses and
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Department of Business-Society Management
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Lucas C.P.M. Meijs is professor of Strategic Philanthropy and Volunteering at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM). Professor Meijs' current research focuses on issues related to strategic philanthropy, volunteer/non-profit management, corporate community involvement, voluntary energy as a natural resource and involved learning (life-long development by volunteering).

He served two term as the first non-american co-editor in chief of Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Quarterly. He has been an appointed member of the Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, the official policy advisory body for the Dutch government and parliament.

He was a guest researcher at the Centre of Philanthropy and Non-profit studies at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia. He has also been a visiting scholar at the University of Georgia's Department of Political Science as well as its School of Social Work.

Professor Meijs teaches NGO/NPO management and several business-non-profit relations courses at the master level, as well as service learning, consultancy and social entrepreneurship at the bachelor level.



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

As a consultant he performs organization research, provide organizational advice, work as a mediator and give workshops and training courses. Since December 2004 Ton is a senior lecturer in courses at Sezen Academy in Wijk bij Duurstede.

Graduated in Applied Mathematics, with a specialization in Operations Research (Technical Highschool Twente), he worked as a researcher from 1979 to 1983 at the Institute for Theater Research Amsterdam. From 1983 until 1990 I was a lecturer of Philosophy of Science at the University of Twente in Enschede. His main focus areas are change management, organizational development and conflict management. He is especially interested in the use of stories as a diagnostic and interventional methodology.



Lonneke Roza (PhD)
Academic Researcher
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Dr. Lonneke Roza is a part-time Adjunct Assistant Professor at Rotterdam School of Management and she specializes 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 organizations 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 organization for community foundations). She is frequently asked to speak at public events and conferences on the role of businesses in society.



Ingrid de Vries

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Research Associate

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Ingrid de Vries currently works at HZ University of Applied Sciences and the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Erasmus University Rotterdam. Ingrid does qualitative research in Circular Economy, using systems thinking and soft systems methodology.



Dr. Yijing Wang

Assistant Professor

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



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