Senders and Receivers
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New Perspectives on Market Communication
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Senders and Receivers
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By Jørn Helder and Simon Kragh

Introduction
According to a general view on communication, the purpose of the discipline is to provide companies with a set of conceptual tools explaining what to communicate, how, when, to whom and why. The purpose of communication is to contribute to the company’s short- and long-term goals, and the assumption is that the right tools and their correct use can contribute to this.

This idea has been criticised for a number of reasons. One is that the viewpoint exaggerates the possibilities of the sender to influence the audience, and correspondingly that the role of the receiver as an actor who influences the meaning and the effect of the messages has been underestimated. The fact that receivers may not have the same perspectives as senders opens up for the possibility that the same messages mean different things to the parties involved in communication.

The stronger emphasis on the receiver’s ability to interpret messages in particular ways or to reject them in part or wholly, implies recognition of the receiver as being a more active and powerful part of the process of communication, and not the passive individual who is open to manipulation by the sender.

The consequence of this more recent view is that the effectiveness of rational, goal-oriented planning diminishes, and that the belief in a kit of communicative tools that can be applied to obtain desired results tends to be too idealistic. The rational planning concept, where a sender sets him or herself a goal and determines the communicative means to
achieve it must, at least, be balanced with the possibility that the receiver interferes with unexpected interpretations and actions which will reduce the effectiveness of planning. From a more radical and postmodern perspective, you could even claim that unambiguous communication as a whole is impossible, because the sender cannot control the reception of the messages. Due to different and individualised interpretations the meaning of the messages is bound to fragment.

However, even though it can be admitted that the power of the sender is severely limited by the receiver’s independent interpretations and responses, the sender does retain the ability to communicate meaningfully as intended and to influence and even manipulate the receiver by means of shrewdly constructed messages.

The articles presented here analyse and discuss a range of communication strategies which in varying degrees take their point of departure in the rational, sender-oriented perspective or in more receiver-oriented approaches. The question: who controls the outcome of communication implicitly or explicitly characterises the contributions. They all share the notion that communication is a purposeful activity and an important dimension of the business activities of the companies, but also that the receivers as active actors limit the influence of the company.

Most of the authors take a holistic approach to communication. In contrast to the traditional view which sees the discipline as verbal communication only, perhaps with the inclusion of pictures, the general standpoint here is that all kinds of exchange of symbols, meaningful behaviours and objects are messages that are communicated, intentionally or unintentionally. External communication thus covers all basic marketing variables in so far as they carry communicative meaning, i.e. it is not, as generally described in marketing, one variable among several, but an overarching variable which potentially covers all marketing activities. In fact, all of the company communicates, from employees to management. Even the architecture of office buildings and factories are messages from this perspective. To the extent that management seeks to control the communication of the company, it has to take all of these factors into consideration and place the responsibility at the strategic level of decision-making.

The background of the present collection of texts is the Danish book *Modtageren som medproducent – nye tendenser i virksomhedens kommunika-

This book shows how the sharper competition for the attention of the receivers, the development of electronic media and the enormous growth of information has led to a new understanding of communication. An understanding which implies that most PR- and marketing departments in companies have had to reconsider their accustomed product- and sender-oriented approach to communication and replace it with a view on information and communication which integrates the receiver more explicitly than has been the case so far.

Whereas Modtageren som medproducent looked at the internal dimensions of corporate communication, the theme of the present volume is the external dimension of corporate communication. It is generally agreed among the contributors that internal and external communication are closely related to each other. External communication also has the employees of the company as receivers and – intendedly or unintendedly – gives them a picture of the company they work in. Internal communication creates the identity and corporate culture which constitutes the bases for external corporate communication. Furthermore, consumers are not always satisfied with the external communication of the company, and often critically seek to understand the values communicated internally in the company. On this background, the distinction between internal and external communication is largely a matter of viewing an integrated whole from two different angles.

We have chosen to edit the book in English due to the expansion of courses taught in this language. The texts inevitably bear the mark of the non English-speaking origin of the contributors, but it is our hope that independent and active receivers are able to make sense of the texts, the faults of the senders notwithstanding.¹

The book is divided into three sections: the first section deals with branding of products and employees, the second section with aspects of international marketing and consumer values, and the last section focuses on management and marketing communication.

The article “Brand Management. A Comparative Analysis of Brand Management Frameworks in the Brand Management Literature” by

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¹ The chapters 3, 7, 8 and 9 have been translated by Conni Borggård Kristiansen. She has also translated Danish quotations and Danish book titles where they appear in the articles.
Mogens Bjerre, ass. prof., Department of Marketing, presents an overview of central perspectives on brand managements with the purpose of identifying possible directions of change. Two dimensions stand out in the texts. On the one hand, authors differ with regard to the scope of concept of brand management, the number of business activities it covers. On the other hand, the literature on the subject puts different emphasis on internal company factors and external market factors in the formulation of brand-strategies. At one end of the scale, it is argued that management must take the point of departure in the identification of internal capabilities and the identity of the company, and at the other end of the scale, a group of texts stress the importance of building strategy on the perception of customers, competitive positioning and other external conditions.

Jesper Højberg Christensen, CEO, Advice Consultants, unfolds in his article “Company Branding and Company Storytelling – Corporate Branding, Storytelling and Image Recruitment in a Reflexive Network Society” branding by adopting a new point of view on branding. He focuses on one of the most overseen perspectives of branding when he deals with branding of the employees of a company as a means to attract potential new employees. He presents four perspectives of branding: strategic branding, marketing branding, employee-branding, and stakeholder branding which he claims to be the entire corporate branding of a company. A company must simply try to harmonise these four perspectives: the fundamental strategic branding as a task for management, the internal branding that ensures that employees do live with the company, and finally the external branding processes, which analytically can be divided into market-oriented and stakeholder-oriented. Management must simply construct meaning by telling stories on branding. Stories that employees are able to identify as their own. Corporate branding therefore can be seen as a way for a company to reflect on itself and to analyse, describe, and mirror its uniqueness. Branding is a strategic self-observation and process of development.

Ass. prof., Department of Intercultural Communication and Management Roy Langer’s article “Place Images and Place Marketing” describes how the marketing concept has been extended to cover countries and cities in order to promote tourism, attract investors or due to the need to improve the political image of a country. Langer presents a number of examples showing how local and national governments draw on professional agencies with the purpose of changing or enhancing their images.
to an international audience using rationally planned communication strategies. A number of cases and tools are presented which have been recommended in the literature on place marketing and used in practice. Some of the examples indicate that images can be difficult to control. This was the case of the Mexican town of Tijuana in which the local government decided to have the name of the city registered as a trademark in order to avoid the reproduction of its image as being a city ridden by drugs, crime and discrimination.

Consumer research is fundamentally receiver-oriented and owes its existence to the recognition that companies must adapt to the needs and wants of their customers in order to communicate successfully. In his article “Value Dimensions – Are they Really That Many?” Flemming Hansen, professor, Department of Marketing, describes and discusses the development of the most important quantitative research instruments available to producers of consumer products. The statistical techniques used in the analysis usually produce a number of value dimensions which in different degrees characterise consumers. The argument is that these systems tend to exaggerate the number of variables needed to describe the most important values of the consumers. The author shows that all systems produce dimensions such as “collectivism vs. individualism” and “tradition vs. modernity”. This seems to constitute universal core values. At the general level, the article is a reminder in two ways. First of all it shows that consumer research a long time ago has recognised the receiver as the necessary point of departure, and secondly – in contrast to the prevalent qualitative approach to communication – it shows that values can be identified and described using sophisticated statistical techniques. At the empirical level, the article informs on a range of Danish and to some extent Norwegian values, which may serve as input in the formulation of receiver-oriented communication strategies.

Simon Kragh, ass. prof., Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, writes on “Indigenisation of Marketing”. In the article he discusses four notions of global markets. He refers to the ongoing debate about the development of the global markets and the appropriate marketing responses. To Simon Kragh consumers are not passive receivers of goods which have fixed and objective meanings but rather active interpreters who use their cultural knowledge, habits and customs to make sense of the products. From this viewpoint he discusses four perspectives: the standardisation perspective, the adaptation perspective, the one-to-
one perspective – a perspective that states that markets are fragmented and postmodern – and finally the indigenisation perspective. He gives several examples, e.g. McDonald’s in Saudi Arabia and Armani in Congo. He concludes that indigenisation sees markets and products as webs of meaning which are associated to products and behaviours, but which cannot be ascertained by external observation alone. What a given product, message or behaviour is depends on the meaning it is given in the local culture and not on some intrinsic features or what the producer intended it to mean. It follows that the concept of standardisation and global fragmentation may be adequate descriptions of the observable aspects of marketing but may be problematic when the local meaning of products and messages are taken into consideration.

Ass. prof., Department of English Jørn Helder’s article “Danisco – Figuratively Speaking” describes the attempt of Danisco to manage the impression of the company in the public showing photos of the board of directors. On the basis of a discussion of several approaches to communication studies, the author analyses the means that the company or its agency has chosen to communicate a coherent image of reliability to the customers and other stakeholders. As noted by Helder, the company is aware of the fact that the receivers may understand a message differently from the sender, and that meaning may fragment. However, the cause is not seen as lying with the receiver: when the company has different images it is not due to the different decoding of the receiver but comes about when different representatives of the company send the same message. This sender-oriented view on the external communication implies that the solution to the potential problem lies with the company and thus within the range of managerial decision-making. The solution is a set of corporate guidelines which seek to make one unified sender out of the whole company and photos of the directors which in a carefully planned way represent them as a united group with the same high level of trustworthiness.

The strong belief in the ability of the sender to control the representation of the company in the mind of the customers and stakeholders puts the responsibility of the image on the shoulders of the representatives of the company. This leaves an interesting question open: who is to blame when external receivers interpret the communication in a way that deviates from the intentions of the company in a negative way? Will the managers hold themselves and other company representatives responsible, or will they recognise the freedom and the ability of the stakeholders
to create their own images of the company, and by the same token recognise that their power to control their image is smaller than assumed?

In his article “Management as the Telling of Tales – Structures and Social Implications of Strategies and Accounts as Medium of Management Communication” Stig Hartmann, ass. prof., Department of Operations Management, deals with management as storytelling. Stig Hartmann operates inside the framework of integrated communication (cf. above) when he poses that storytelling is one of the most important tasks of management. By telling stories management constructs meaning and reality. One of the most important issues of management is to ensure commitment and confidence in the mission of the company. Stig Hartmann deals with strategies, annual reports, and budgets and poses that they have the same structural forms as folktales by having a fixed number of characters and a certain number of tests and contrasts. This means that we ought to see these stories as a kind of directives from the management, which serve as examples for future behaviour and communicate the identity of the company to an internal and external audience.

In his article “Strategic Communication”, Erik Johnsen, professor at the Center for Applied Management Studies, also considers management as marketing communication. He stresses that his article is to be considered more an essay on selling goods or visions rather than a scientific article. He poses that whatever you sell as a manager – goods, attitudes, culture – it should result in satisfaction both with the selling and the buying part. According to Erik Johnsen there are two basic types of selling. The first one deals with making someone do something they never even thought of, e.g. buying a new product or a new idea. The second one deals with making someone do something quite differently from what they had intended. Both scenarios require what Erik Johnsen names strategic management and strategic communication. In his essay he poses synonymy between communication and relations, which is one of the demands for management. Actually, one of his points is to say that the way a manager sells his company both internally and externally is the way he communicates.

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Jørn Helder and Simon Kragh
Frederiksberg, 2002
1. Introduction

The inspiration for the chapter stems from experience lecturing in brand management (BM), and in particular from a perception that several appealing propositions, concepts and frameworks have been developed in the BM literature during the nineties. However, despite more or less identical focus in these BM frameworks it appears problematic to integrate them into one another as well as to implement them.

The meaning of the concept, brands and brand management, has changed. This goes for theory as well as practice according to authors in the field of marketing, strategy and communication. Hanby (1999) discusses this change, and summarises “the new view” of brands in the following way: “as holistic entities with many of the characteristics of living
beings” (1999). This view is apparent in most of today’s writing and research about brand management, relationship marketing and communication, see for example Kapferer (1997), Parker and Funkhouser (1997), Fournier (1998) and Berry (1999).

Additionally, the stand taken in the literature is to acknowledge the active role that consumers play in the formation of brand image. Thus the distinction between the desired brand identity and the brand image is stated as a result from the managed as well as the unmanaged parts of the brand. BM is therefore changing from a planning-based approach to an exchange-based approach in which the receivers are as important as the sender. With this as the starting point and Hanby’s point that a change has taken place, two questions are obvious: What should companies do and what issues and phenomena should they be concerned with according to the literature that deals with brand management?

2. Method

Based on the perception that the literature consists of a number of frameworks that are difficult to integrate, the following question has governed the comparative analysis of the literature: Do the frameworks in the literature represent different basic views of brand management?

To be able to answer this question the process began by analysing a selection of influential, well referred, frameworks in the BM literature. Only an overview of the main findings from this analysis is presented in this chapter.

When comparing frameworks in the literature, two dimensions immediately appeared to be core discriminators between the BM views or perspectives, namely “point of departure” and “scope”.

In the analysis of the literature, other dimensions appeared, i.e. conception of the firm including discussion of boundaries of the firm – i.e. what should be managed as part of the BM process. A second dimension was how organisations accumulate know-how and experience – i.e. where and how do experiences accumulate within the organisation, and what characterises this process. A third dimension was the conception of the consumer – i.e. the consumer regarded as an active or passive player, positive or critical etc.

Additionally, in the analysis of the literature differences between
frameworks were observed, apparently depending on discipline of science and field from which the author originally stems.

Here, the discussion is limited to the first two dimensions due to two main reasons. Firstly, at this point of the analysis, they appear as being core discriminators of frameworks in the literature. Secondly, these dimensions, and consequently the difference between frameworks or views, come to underline the relevance of rising the question – is the underlying assumptions of BM changing?

The first dimension, “point of departure”, deals with the extent to which brand management is presented as a business process that has its basis in and is predominately governed by an inside-out or an outside-in perspective. I.e. do company values, visions, resources, capabilities or characteristics of business processes etc. set the “stage” when defining or developing brand identity, or does knowledge about external constituencies (such as consumers, vendors, resellers, competitors etc.) play this role?

The outside-in perspective seems to have been dominant in the sense that it is necessary to position the brand with due respect to existing players and to underline the differences between these. In this perspective the brand may exist per se.

The inside-out perspective seems to be under development. It focuses on the interaction between the brand and the receiver and how the brand may focus on serving the receivers matching the desired brand’s identity. In this view the brand does not exist before the receiver has met the brand.

As for the second dimension, “scope”, it covers a continuum of activities, actors and relationships that are described as being directly related to the task of creating and nurturing a brand (a product brand or a corporate brand).

Scope may be narrow – focus on the actual product dimensions and characteristics and the brand boundaries are likely to be defined by simple frameworks such as the 4 P’s. A wide scope could include the corporate level and might also include history – i.e. a path dependency perspective.
3. Brand Management in the Literature

Initially, it is worth noting that the literature is rich in terms of frameworks describing “what companies must do” and/or “what companies must consider” in relation to BM – e.g. Chernatony and McDonald (1992), van Riel (1995), Aaker (1996), Ind (1997), Kapferer (1997), Duncan and Moriarty (1997, and Keller (1998) to name a few.

Secondly, it shall be underlined that the purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of differences between a selection of influential frameworks. Before giving a short presentation of the views, it is noted that the selection of authors has been based on what they themselves emphasise and have elaborated on with respect to “point of departure” and “scope”.

Combining the two dimensions results in the following options – please refer to figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Point of Departure</th>
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<td>Product and brand inside-out</td>
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distribution and promotion – i.e. closely related to the birth of the 4 P’s and Borden’s (1964) definition of the marketing mix.

Actually, advocates of this view are often found to be somewhat present in the other views, as these have basically added elements and gradually departed from the product-focused view. One of the problems of the product-focused view is, according to Montague (1999), that the importance of perceiving the product and the brand as an integrated entity is not included in this view. He argues: “(...) in many companies brand marketing is so far removed from product development that the promise/delivery equation is complicated by disparate goals, disconnected time lines, and competing voices – and further complicated by wildly different procedures, techniques, and technologies.” (Montague (1999: 17).

One spokesman in the academia for a second view, the “product and brand identity view”, is Kapferer (1997). Although Kapferer highlights the importance of product development to “preserve the superior image of a brand”, he does not penetrate the innovation issue to any depth. Thus, he does not present how to manage the process of securing and integrating the product development process with the brand-identity process.

Although Kapferer in the first chapter of his book Strategic Brand Management (1997) underlines the importance of incorporating the consumer’s perspective of the brand, several times he states that “(...) before knowing how we are perceived, we must know who we are.” (ibid.: 71). And he continues: “It is not up to the consumer to define the brand and its content, it is up to the company to do so.”

The inside-out perspective is clearly visible in the illustrations of the linkages between the “brand’s DNA” and the identity in which the culture of the organisations plays a vital part.

A third view, closely related to the second view, is the “capabilities and resource view” where a preoccupation with communication from an inside-out perspective can be identified.

One representative of this view is van Riel (1995) who in his book “Principles of Corporate Communication” points to the importance of becoming aware of and establishing concepts that: “(...) could be considered as central values which function as the basis for undertaking any kinds of communication.” (ibid.: 19).

But how are these values identified and established? Van Riel defines the answer as: “Representatives of the various communication specialists
jointly develop the “common starting point” derived directly from the chosen communication strategy, itself a consequence of the company’s actual and desired corporate identity and the company’s image.” (ibid.: 19).

In terms of “point of departure” he states that: “(...) the company must know itself well, i.e. it must have a clear picture of its real situation, in order to present itself clearly through its behaviour, communication, and symbolism.” (ibid.: 33). Whereas van Riel takes a holistic view on communication, others have emphasised certain aspects such as symbolism or aesthetics. The last aspect was emphasised during the nineties, and the term “marketing aesthetics” became a buzzword (Schmitt and Simonson 1997).

What distinguishes this view from the others is an emphasis on considering assets and capabilities related to both market knowledge and technology knowledge developed over the years in various business processes when formulating visions and values with respect to brand identity.

As to the “scope” dimension, the core question governing “what shall be managed” appeared to be what capabilities that have a potential to sustain or strengthen existing assets (residing inside the company).

A fourth view identified in the literature is the “product and brand inside-out view”. This view has not yet been elaborated in depth, although we do find many representatives of it such as Chernatony and McDonald (1992), Ind (1997), Chernatony (1999). In their book “Creating Powerful Brands” Chernatony and McDonald stress the importance of not to “(...) just focus on one element of the marketing mix.” (ibid.: 15). Furthermore, they use the term “holistic approach” to highlight that “(...) successful brands do not stress just one part of the brand asset.” (ibid.: 157).

The “point of departure” is the voice of the consumer, but in his later writings Chernatony gives much emphasis to the company’s “inner voice”, i.e. the company’s visions, values, and norms. Chernatony also discusses how to balance between an inside and an outside perspective, and his suggestion is “(...) by incorporating an externally oriented measure, i.e. brand reputation, with the internal components involved in brand building, i.e. brand identity, we have a mechanism to facilitate a balanced approach to brand building.” (ibid.: 170).

What is left to understand in the typology are two views predomi-
nantely governed by an outside-in perspective. I will begin with the *fifth view*, the "design management view".

Authors and researcher placed in this category share an integrated and holistic view of a brand. Consequently, they share a holistic view of which business processes are related to branding, i.e. business processes concerned with creating and nurturing a brand, such as Bruce and Cooper (1997), Duncan and Moriarty (1997), and Cooper and Press (1995).

The frameworks contain engineering and product design, packaging design, interior design and corporate identity design. Explicit frameworks presenting this view are predominantly seen in journals oriented towards practical application, such as *The Design Management Journal*.

The opinion related to “point of departure” is quite clear, namely that “(...), market information is required throughout the design process (whether it is design for corporate communications or new product development), from the justification for allocating design resources, through assessing and choosing design concepts, to consumer testing and post-launch evaluation.” (Bruce and Cooper 1997: 86).

The one-to-one dialogue with consumers also plays an important part in this new opinion.

Finally the *sixth view*, including prominent authors such as Aaker (1996), Gronstedt (1996), and Keller (1998), represents what has been identified as the “integrated communication view”.

This view is based on an analysis of the external context such as competitors and consumers, and the company’s evaluation of its own position. In his book *Building Strong Brands* Aaker presents an outside-in approach identifying elements or “subset of the brand identity” (1996: 177) to be used when executing the communication.

The integrated part of this view is based on the core and extended brand identity, subdivided into product, symbol, personality, and organisation. The integrated point also becomes evident, as building brand equity is regarded as a mean in itself according to Keller (1998: 69) – involving a holistic approach to branding elements.
Based on the comparison you might argue for integrating the competence perspective of management with marketing for the sake of developing theory. The competence view is here conceived as integrating and extending the resource based perspective and a capability view (Barney 1991, Grant 1998, Leonard-Barton 1992, and Andrew and Ciborra 1996). An extension of this view includes a manager’s ability to manage the brand management process from a system view is discussed (Sivula 1997, Sanchez et al. 1996, Sanchez and Heene 1996).

4. Future Developments

As it has been illustrated in this chapter, it is relevant to discuss how “point of departure” and “scope” influence the way BM is described and presented. Furthermore, the impact of these two dimensions seems to suggest different groups of BM frameworks. The suggested typology also
points to a situation in which a number of combinations between the two dimensions fail to identify BM frameworks.

Furthermore, it is interesting to see how recent contributions develop in different directions with an internal or an external focus, or even both. This may suggest an increasing holistic orientation on the description and analysis of brands. Transforming this orientation towards the BM frameworks may be expected to enhance the development of the corporate brand to a larger extent than ever before.

The orientation mentioned above may simultaneously drive an increased focus on how to take advantages of core competencies related to various business processes and knowledge about customer values and behaviour. Future BM frameworks are therefore expected to stress core competencies as points of departure when defining and developing brand identity, choosing how to communicate the identity and monitor the resulting image.

Finally, these developments are expected to change the understanding of BM frameworks, and may lead to BM as being conceived as a corporate management process that deals with the integration of business processes – i.e. the strategy process.

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