

THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF COMMUNICATION: NAVIGATING STRATEGIC VALUE, CULTURAL DYNAMICS, AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES

Mateusz BYCZYK

Poznan University of Economics and Business, Department of Organisation and Management Theory, Poland;
mateusz.bczyk@ue.poznan.pl, ORCID: 0000-0003-3188-2619

Purpose: This article investigates the commercialization of communication within organizations, focusing on its drivers, impacts, and ethical considerations. By analyzing cultural and technological influences, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how communication, as a measurable asset, shapes organizational interactions and performance.

Design/methodology/approach: Specifically, this paper uses a Critical Literature Review (CLR) to investigate previous studies on communication in the disciplines of management, economics and human resource management. In order to gauge what is known about the commercial value of communication, comprehensive review of 30 relevant publications from 2009 to 2022 was conducted.

Findings: The study reveals that while communication technologies and tools can be commodified, the intrinsic human value of authentic interaction remains essential for organizational success. Technological advancements, such as social media and ICT tools, have enhanced communication efficiency but also pose challenges like information overload and reduced clarity. Cultural dynamics play a pivotal role, requiring adaptive strategies to navigate the differences between collectivist and individualist societies. Ethical concerns, including equity and transparency, are increasingly significant in communication practices.

Practical implications: The findings provide practical guidance for organizational leaders on how to effectively combine commodified communication tools with authentic, human-centered interaction. By prioritizing ethical and culturally aware communication practices, leaders can foster greater employee engagement, improve teamwork, and drive innovation.

Social implications: The study highlights the importance of fair access to communication tools and practices, particularly in diverse and multicultural workplaces. By promoting inclusivity and transparency we can foster stronger collaboration and trust, addressing broader social concerns about fairness regarding communication.

Originality/value: This study offers different perspective on the relationship between internal qualities of human communication and its growing commercialization in modern industry. It can be useful for communication professionals, leaders, and scholars who want to comprehend the economic and ethical consequences of communication in corporate settings.

Keywords: Communication, commercialization of communication, communication improvements, communication dynamics, organizational communication.

Category of the paper: Literature review.

1. Introduction

Human contact and organizational performance are largely dependent on communication, which has developed from a natural activity to a precise and purposeful tool. In the modern business environment, communication is more than simply an interpersonal skill; it shapes company's identity and outcomes. We can see this development in many industries. Currently, communication is absolutely essential not just to business in general but especially in areas such as public relations, marketing, journalism and information technology. Following that, Total Corporate Communication (TCC) is crucial for controlling company identity and shaping stakeholder behavior (Balmer, 2017). TCC includes both "controlled" and "uncontrolled" interactions, which together form a comprehensive strategy, shaping how organizations are perceived and how they function (Balmer, 2017). Building on this foundation, communication's role within organizations has expanded.

As communication continues to evolve, it has become a pivotal organizational function, giving rise to specialized roles such as Communication Professionals (CPs). These roles have gained importance in industrial environments where interpersonal relations are increasingly critical to success. According to Fuller et al. (2018), these experts are essential in creating purpose-driven communication, whether it is through written, spoken or visual media, making sure that businesses communicate with their stakeholders in a clear and purposeful manner. The rising commercialization of communication as an asset that can be trained, purchased and sold is reflected in the development of communication competencies, which reflect investigation, analytical aptitude, and technical communication abilities (Fuller et al., 2018) which then help to navigate in rapidly changing/evolving environment.

Technological advancements have revolutionized communication, enabling businesses to connect with stakeholders more effectively. According to Basri & Siam (2019), digital platforms and tools like social media have made communication a service that can be 'bought'. Compared to more established communication channels like radio, television, and newspapers, social media is a relatively new medium for communication (Basri, Siam, 2019). Organizations may now contact their audiences in new ways thanks to social media, in particular. This allows for targeted messaging which can affect public image as well as company outcomes (Basri, Siam, 2019). However, the distinction between natural and commercialized communication is growing more blurred, as organizations increasingly turn towards technology to link up not just with co-workers inside the company but also viewers beyond their walls.

Regarding how important communication is to the success of a company, it is crucial to think about whether or not it can be 'bought' and how valuable it is in those situations. Advertising industries, where access to audience and messages are purchased and sold like goods as well as in consulting companies, where they pay for communication competence, the monetary value of communication is increasing. In efforts like the introduction of ERP

systems, where interaction among teams and stakeholders may have a significant impact on the project's success, and also, according to Barth & Koch (2019) and Koivumäki & Wilkinson (2020) there is a need of good communication techniques and interactions.

Moreover, the commercialization of communication raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding accessibility and equity across diverse cultural contexts. In collectivist societies, for example, the emphasis on harmony and social cohesion shapes how communication technologies are adopted and valued (Kalemci et al., 2019). These variations underline the challenges of applying commercialized communication practices across different regions, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive strategies (Kalemci et al., 2019).

The ethical and economic implications of communication's commercialization present both opportunities and challenges for organizations. While tools and services can be purchased, the intrinsic value of authentic, human-driven communication remains crucial. As businesses navigate the complexities of the digital era, their ability to balance natural and commercialized communication will be critical to their success.

This article investigates the commercialization of communication within organizations, focusing on its drivers, impacts, and ethical considerations. By analyzing cultural and technological influences, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how communication, as a measurable asset, shapes organizational interactions and performance. The research aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the drivers and impacts of the commercialization of communication in organizations?
2. How do cultural and technological factors shape the value of communication?
3. What ethical concerns arise from the increasing commercialization of communication?

2. Methods

The Critical Literature Review (CLR) was chosen as the methodology for this study to evaluate the existing body of knowledge on communication value in organizations. CLR allows researchers to systematically summarize, critique, and synthesize literature to identify gaps and areas requiring further exploration. This structured approach highlights strengths and weaknesses in prior research, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Publications on management, economics, and human resource management were sourced for this review from databases. The databases that were chosen were "GOOGLE SCHOLAR", "EMERALD", and "CAMBRIDGE JOURNALS". These databases were selected because they include one of the widest ranges of articles within the scientific field under analysis. The following keyword combinations were used in the search: "communication" /AND/ "value", "team", "team management", "communication efficiency", "work efficiency",

"performance". The keyword selection ensured that the search captured a broad spectrum of literature related to communication's role in organizational performance and efficiency. Boolean operators were used to refine search results and maintain focus on the study's scope.

The following criteria were used to choose papers relevant to the scope of this article: (1) communication was the main subject; (2) articles addressed communication issues and problems; (3) articles came from a variety of fields; (4) articles addressed recent work environment characteristics and were no older than fifteen years, with the majority of papers coming from the years 2017-2022, and (5) all articles had to be in English, since it is the most widely used language in scientific literature.

The initial search database consisted of **2872 results**, reflected the breadth of the inquiry. To refine this selection the following steps of analysis were employed:

- (1) **Abstract and title screening:** Firstly, each title and abstract were reviewed to assess alignment with the research topic. This step excluded **2298 articles** deemed irrelevant due to peripheral topics or lack of focus on communication value.
- (2) **Eligibility verification:** Then the remaining **574 articles** were evaluated based on the inclusion criteria. During this phase, **407 publications** were removed for being tangential to the core theme, such as general discussions of communication without a focus on its measurable value or organizational implications.
- (3) **Full-text analysis:** The final **167 articles** underwent detailed examination to assess their contribution to the research question. Ultimately, **30 publications** were identified as most relevant for in-depth analysis due to their focus on communication's measurable value, organizational impact, and cultural considerations.

The methodology has certain limitations, including potential bias in database selection and reliance on English-language publications, which may exclude relevant studies in other languages. Future reviews could expand to additional databases and include multilingual searches to address these constraints.

3. Literature review – The Commercialization of Communication

One of the keys to a successful organization in this complex business environment is communication. Effective communication provides a foundation for top performance and innovation, and is used to develop solid corporate identities, steer change, or boost teamwork among groups or within a team.

This literature review examines the commercialization of communication within organizations, focusing on its drivers, impacts, and ethical considerations. It explores how communication, as a measurable asset, influences organizational success, team dynamics, financial performance, technological integration, and cultural cohesion. By addressing these

interconnected themes, the review provides a foundation for understanding the factors shaping communication value and its broader implications.

The central theme of this review is that communication is not merely a functional process but a multidimensional construct. Its commercialization has transformed it into a strategic organizational asset, influencing outcomes across multiple domains. This review is structured to address the research questions through five thematic lenses.

3.1. Drivers and Impacts of Communication Commercialization

Communication plays a significant role in shaping how organizations operate and succeed. The increasing commercialization of communication is driven by globalization, technological advancements, and growing organizational complexity. Communication is now seen as a measurable resource that enhances collaboration, innovation, and strategic decision-making.

Balmer (2017) emphasizes that Total Corporate Communication (TCC) integrates "controlled" and "uncontrolled" interactions to shape corporate identity and influence stakeholder behavior. This structured approach highlights communication's role as a driver of trust, loyalty, and employee engagement, which are critical for organizational success. Additionally, communication can enhance employee commitment by underlining the idea of corporate identity.

Melewar et al. (2017) describe corporate identity as an organization's unique qualities, which serve as a core component and unifying force within the company and its employees. They explain that communication influences organizational success by answering critical questions such as "who you are", "what work you do", and "how you perform it" (Melewar et al., 2017). Communication is thus a collection of messages delivered through a variety of mediums, both official and unofficial, that can affect employees' trust, loyalty, and overall commitment to the organization (Melewar et al., 2017). Also, managers are advised to ensure the consistency and clarity of communication strategies to maximize their influence across the organization (Melewar et al., 2017). However, to effectively engage with employees, it is essential to have the skills and resources directly tied to communication. However, acquiring these skills often necessitates undergoing specialized training or hiring additional experts in the field, which can lead to increased costs for the organization to employ multifaceted layouts.

Barth & Koch (2019) link this communication to the successful implementation of complex systems like enterprise resource planning (ERP). Effective communication during such projects promotes collaboration, mitigates misunderstandings, and ensures alignment among stakeholders. These impacts illustrate how communication commercialization supports organizational agility and adaptability (Barth, Koch, 2019). The creation of such culture enables efficient collaboration and allows organizations to adapt to changes and innovations more easily.

3.2. Cultural and Technological Influences on Communication

Cultural and technological factors can influence how communication is valued and implemented within organizations. Kalemci et al. (2019) point out that collectivist cultures prioritize interpersonal harmony and group cohesion, whereas individualist cultures favor more autonomous and direct communication. Leaders must adapt communication strategies to bridge these cultural divides, fostering inclusivity and collaboration (Kalemci et al., 2019). Miszczak (2022) emphasizes that leaders have a duty to assist subordinates in achieving their professional and personal goals through effective communication, which, according to Portnova and Peiseniece (2017) fosters innovation and engagement within teams, as well as employment of specific technologies.

Sundram et al. (2020) emphasize that the transformative impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools improve communication efficiency and help organizations achieve higher performance levels by facilitating the sharing of information across departments and locations (Kashive et al., 2022). Additionally, according to Moura Dominguez & Varajão (2019), without effective communication, teams may become disoriented, leading to delays in achieving organizational objectives. They also introduce risks, such as misinterpretation and information overload, requiring careful management by communication professionals.

Moreover, social media is another key technological driver. Basri & Siam (2019) discuss the role of social media in corporate communication, noticing that it provides new opportunities for organizations to interact with stakeholders and the community. Social media allows for the open sharing of information, particularly regarding organizational changes, corporate sustainability, and new product development (Basri, Siam, 2019). This medium fosters transparency and community engagement but also demands a strategic approach to maintain clarity and relevance.

3.3. The Financial Impact of Organizational Communication

Communication's financial value lies in its ability to drive efficiency, innovation, and employee satisfaction. Zientara & Kuczyński (2009) argue that job satisfaction, which is influenced by communication, minimize absence and turnover rates, leading to cost savings for organizations. Satisfied employees are less likely to leave their jobs, resulting in reduced recruitment and training expenses (Zientara, Kuczyński, 2009). Additionally, teamwork and knowledge sharing (good communication) are among the factors that contribute to positive job satisfaction. Poor communication, on the other hand, can lead to misunderstandings and errors, which may cause financial losses for organizations.

Sundram et al. (2020) note that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a critical role in improving organizational performance, also, Renkema et al. (2018) suggests that frequent communication can enhance decision-making processes and collaboration

between employees. Investments in ICT tools allow for better communication, streamlining workflows and boosting productivity (Zhou et al., 2021). Moreover, Rathod (2022) further argues that encouraging employees to share ideas and capabilities can enhance team cohesion and performance. Additionally, Zanjirchi et al. (2019) highlight the value of communication in fostering innovations, with organizations that prioritize communication showing better performance outcomes through collaboration with external partners and stakeholders. Conversely, poor communication can lead to misunderstandings and errors, resulting in financial losses. These findings underscore the critical role of communication in maintaining operational efficiency and profitability.

3.4. Leveraging Communication Technologies in Organizations

The adoption of communication technologies has revolutionized organizational operations, enabling seamless information sharing and enhanced collaboration. Sundram et al. (2020) emphasize that ICT tools improve communication efficiency, fostering transparency across departments and locations.

However, Koivumäki & Wilkinson (2020) highlight that although digital communication opens new ways for interaction, it may also lead to a lack of clarity. Communication professionals must manage these tools carefully to ensure that messages remain clear and effective, even in virtual settings (Koivumäki, Wilkinson, 2020). For example, virtual environments require clear protocols to prevent miscommunication and maintain consistency.

Furthermore, Barth & Koch (2019) argue that digital tools are particularly valuable in large-scale projects, ensuring that communication should remain consistent and transparent throughout the organization. Also, according to Raymundo (2020), project teams need clear and frequent communication, particularly when individuals are unable to meet face-to-face. Finally, modern professionals require communication skills that allow them to seek out and apply new information, while helping teams solve problems creatively while working together (Raymundo, 2020).

Moreover, social media platforms further enhance organizational communication. Basri & Siam (2019) highlight their role in disseminating information on corporate initiatives, sustainability efforts, and product innovations. These tools enable organizations to engage with stakeholders in real time, creating opportunities for transparency and relationship building.

3.5. Ethical Considerations and Cultural Impacts

The commercialization of communication raises ethical concerns, particularly around equity, accessibility, and transparency. Lašáková et al. (2017) argue that ethical communication fosters employee satisfaction and engagement, enhancing organizational culture. Leaders who prioritize ethical communication are more likely to foster employee engagement and satisfaction, contributing to a positive organizational culture (Lašáková et al., 2017).

Cultural differences further complicate ethical considerations. Kalemci et al. (2019) note that collectivist cultures may struggle with communication technologies that prioritize individual autonomy, potentially leading to misunderstandings or exclusion. Leadership communication styles also play a critical role in team dynamics. Democratic leaders foster open dialogue and encourage team members to participate in decision-making, ultimately leading to more effective teamwork (Milewski, 2021). In this environment, ethical leadership involves adapting communication strategies to respect cultural norms while promoting inclusivity.

Finally, Melewar et al. (2017) and Portnova & Peiseniece (2017) emphasize the role of communication in fostering a shared organizational identity. This is closely tied to communication and serves as the foundation of an organization's success. Effective communication strengthens this identity and unifies employees around common goals, enhancing organizational cohesion (Melewar et al., 2017).

The selected literature highlights the multidimensional impacts of communication commercialization, shaped by cultural and technological factors and accompanied by ethical challenges. These findings provide a broad foundation for analyzing communication's role as a measurable asset within organizations, addressing the drivers, influences, and implications outlined in the research questions.

4. Discussion

This part focuses on analyzing the study's objectives: to explore the drivers and impacts of communication commercialization, the influence of cultural and technological factors, and the ethical considerations involved. By synthesizing these dimensions, this section aims to establish a cohesive understanding of how communication shapes organizational dynamics and outcomes.

4.1. Drivers and Impacts of Communication Commercialization

The commercialization of communication arises from its increasing value as a measurable and strategic asset in organizational success. Balmer (2017) highlights the role of Total Corporate Communication (TCC) in enhancing corporate identity, trust, and stakeholder loyalty. This aligns with the finding that communication influences not just employee engagement but also broader organizational outcomes, such as financial performance and innovation.

The practical impacts of communication commercialization are particularly seen in project management. For example, Barth & Koch (2019) connect communication to the successful implementation of complex systems like ERP, where collaboration and stakeholder alignment

are critical. This underscores the dual role of communication as both a functional tool and a strategic resource that organizations invest in to ensure operational efficiency.

However, the financial costs associated with acquiring communication competencies - through training or hiring experts - present challenges for some organizations. Balancing these investments with tangible outcomes remains a critical consideration for businesses navigating in this competitive environment.

4.2. Cultural and Technological Influences

Cultural and technological factors thoroughly shape the implementation and value of communication in organizations. The findings by Kalemci et al. (2019) highlight the influence of cultural contexts, where collectivist societies prioritize harmony and group cohesion, while individualist societies emphasize simplicity and autonomy. These differences demand adaptive communication strategies from leaders to foster inclusivity and mutual understanding.

Technological advancements, particularly ICT tools and social media, have transformed how communication occurs. Sundram et al. (2020) and Basri & Siam (2019) emphasize that these tools enable real-time information sharing and stakeholder engagement. However, challenges such as information overload and miscommunication in virtual environments remain. For example, Koivumäki & Wilkinson (2020) point that digital tools can introduce ambiguity if not managed effectively, highlighting the need for clear protocols and skilled communication professionals.

The findings suggest that while technology amplifies communication's reach and efficiency, its successful integration requires balancing speed and clarity, particularly in multicultural and remote settings.

4.3. Ethical Considerations in Communication Practices

The ethical dimensions of communication are increasingly significant, particularly regarding accessibility, equity, and transparency. Effective communication fosters trust, as emphasized by Lašáková et al. (2017), who argue that ethical communication practices contribute to a positive organizational culture. Transparent dialogues build trust and cooperation, creating an environment where employees feel appreciated and needed.

Cultural sensitivity further highlights ethical considerations. In diverse teams, where language and cultural barriers may exist, managers must actively recognize and address different perspectives. For instance, Kappagomtula (2017) highlights the importance of cultural awareness in ensuring accurate communication and fostering understanding in multicultural teams.

Moreover, ethical leadership in communication involves creating spaces for innovation and collaboration. Portnova & Peiseniece (2017) underline the role of leaders in enabling open communication, which serves as a foundation for fostering creativity and long-term organizational development.

4.4. The Role of Communication in Team Dynamics and Innovation

Effective communication is a key of team performance and innovation. Dusenberry & Robinson (2020) link open communication to enhanced team satisfaction, which positively impacts productivity and creativity. A culture of communication not only helps resolve conflicts but also promotes collaboration, allowing team members to share ideas and expertise.

Meanwhile, leadership communication styles are particularly important in team settings. Milewski (2021) contrasts autocratic and democratic leadership styles, showing that open and participatory approaches lead to better teamwork and decision-making. This finding aligns with Vardiashvili (2022), who argues that leaders must go beyond traditional management tasks to create supportive environments that encourage innovation and engagement.

In innovative organizations, communication serves as a catalyst for growth. Buzamăt (2022) emphasizes that creativity thrives in environments where open communication supports the exchange of fresh ideas. This further underscores the role of communication as not only an operational tool but also a driver of long-term strategic success.

4.5. Communication as a Strategic Asset in Modern Organizations

The findings collectively demonstrate that communication is a multidimensional asset, influencing leadership, team dynamics, financial outcomes, and organizational culture. As emphasized by Wallace et al. (2020), ensuring that the team is prepared, highly motivated, and has the opportunity to fully engage in team activities is another responsibility of the team head, all of which depends on the team leader's communication abilities. Organizations that prioritize communication practices are better prepared for today's global and multicultural business environment.

For example, Klein, Beuren & Dal Vesco (2019) emphasize that participatory communication aligns teams with strategic goals while fostering continuous improvement. Similarly, Zientara & Kuczyński (2009) argue that communication reduces turnover and absenteeism by enhancing job satisfaction, leading to cost savings and improved performance.

By synthesizing these insights, it becomes clear that communication's role extends beyond routine operations - it is integral to foster trust, innovation, and collaboration, ultimately shaping the organization's identity and success.

This study highlights the role of communication in modern organizational success, by addressing the study's research questions by exploring its drivers, cultural and technological influences, and ethical implications. Communication is not only a functional process but also a strategic part of leadership, teamwork, and innovation. With the employment of digital communication, leaders can "pass through the digital environment" by closing the gap between innovation, technology, and people (Ngayo Fotso, 2021). As organizations continue to adapt to technological and cultural changes, their ability to balance the natural and commercialized aspects of communication will determine their capacity to seek for competitive and dynamic environments.

5. Summary

In the evolving business landscape, communication has transformed from a natural human function into a strategic organizational asset. This article explores the interplay between communication's intrinsic interpersonal value and its commercialization as a measurable resource. The findings highlight communication's complex role in organizational success, emphasizing its impact on leadership, team dynamics, innovation, and financial performance.

The commercialization of communication, driven by globalization, technological advancements, and organizational complexity, has elevated its status as a critical factor in shaping corporate identity, stakeholder engagement, and operational efficiency. Tools such as social media platforms and ICT's enable real-time collaboration and stakeholder interaction, but they also present challenges such as information overload and the risk of miscommunication. As noted by Sundram et al. (2020) and Koivumäki & Wilkinson (2020), organizations must carefully balance the speed and clarity of communication in these contexts to maximize effectiveness. As noted by Rowe (2019), modern workplaces now expect more from their employees, including problem-solving and resilience, all of which are underpinned by strong communication skills.

Ethical and cultural dimensions further complicate communication strategies. The article underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and fairness in diverse teams, where leadership must adapt strategies to foster inclusivity and mutual understanding (Kalemci et al., 2019; Kappagomtula, 2017). Ethical considerations, such as transparency and accessibility, are also vital in ensuring trust and cooperation within organizations, as highlighted by Lašáková et al. (2017).

Leadership communication emerges as a cornerstone of organizational success, influencing employee engagement, innovation, and crisis management. Effective leaders create environments of trust and mutual respect, facilitating open dialogue and encouraging creative problem-solving (Domínguez-Escrig et al., 2021; Kashive et al., 2022). The ability to inspire and empower teams through communication becomes particularly critical in the context of globalization and digital transformation. In many organizations, communication is no longer just a soft skill; it has become a strategic asset that can be bought, sold, and optimized through digital tools and professional expertise. The advent of new technologies and innovative behaviors, has amplified this trend, making communication a critical factor in shaping public image, corporate culture, and organizational success (Domínguez-Escrig et al., 2021; Hess, 2018; Zientara, Kuczyński, 2009).

While many aspects of communication - such as tools, platforms, and professional expertise - can be commercialized, the human-driven essence of communication remains invaluable. Employee engagement, team cohesion, and organizational culture rely on authentic, interpersonal interactions. Additionally, giving constructive feedback can improve dialogue and

enhance team dynamics, as highlighted by Klein, Beuren & Dal Vesco (2019), who found that constructive criticism leads to higher respect and appreciation within teams. Also, Zientara & Kuczyński (2009) emphasize that job satisfaction and reduced turnover are tied to the quality of workplace communication, underscoring its role in sustaining organizational success.

This article also examines the ethical consequences of shaping communication as a commercialized asset. Larger organizations often face greater challenges in maintaining fairness and transparency compared to smaller firms, where informal and direct communication methods may be more effective (Zientara, Kuczyński, 2009). Moreover, leaders of large, multicultural teams must navigate the complexities of differing cultural perspectives to ensure inclusivity and equity.

In conclusion, communication is both a natural human function and a strategic organizational asset. Its commercialization reflects its growing importance, but organizations must prioritize integrating commercialized tools with authentic, human-driven interactions. Future success depends on the ability to balance these dimensions, fostering environments that support creativity, innovation, and collaboration. As emphasized by Camp, Young & Bushardt (2022), continuous development of communication skills and self-improvements are essential for navigating in the complexities of modern business.

6. Limitations

A number of limitations should be noted, even if this study provides insightful information about the commercialization of communication in business contexts. Firstly, the study only uses a Critical Literature Review (CLR), which could not include the most recent empirical data or practical advancements in contemporary business settings. Furthermore, more recent developments in communication technology and their effects on enterprises can be overlooked by the selection of literature from 2009 to 2022. Finally, the lack of primary data in the study restricts its capacity to test the theoretical ideas in practice or give real-world applications. The issue would be better understood with more study, especially empirical investigations.

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