

Exploring Strategic Communication: A Theoretical Framework or Paradigm in Communication Study

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Strategic Communication; Theoretical Framework; Paradigm; Communication Strategy.

The continuing debate around classification of strategic communication as a theoretical framework or an interdisciplinary paradigm is critical to the field of communication studies. This research paper is to examine how strategic communication ties together multiple academic disciplines to determine if it is a paradigmatic shift in theoretical foundations or whether it remains a pragmatic framework for how communication strategy merges with organizational aim. This investigation uses a qualitative, literature based methodology performing a thematic analysis across major contributions to understand prevailing points of view. The results illuminate two divergent viewpoints: Argue that strategic communication functions as a paradigm, one that reconceives the role that communication should play in the development of strategic initiatives, while others argue that strategic communication is an approach for overseeing processes such as stakeholder relationship management and crisis management. Ultimately, the study argues that strategic communication's dualistic nature as a paradigm but also as a framework is useful in two ways: firstly, from a more practical angle, in terms of helping to understand how to manoeuvre through the complexities that are present in the environments of contemporary organizations, which have been intensified by the impact of digital transformation and the changing stakeholder expectations.

ABSTRAK

Kata Kunci:

Komunikasi Strategis; Kerangka Teori; Paradigma; Strategi Komunikasi.

Perdebatan yang terus berlanjut seputar klasifikasi komunikasi strategis sebagai kerangka teori atau paradigma interdisipliner sangat penting bagi bidang studi komunikasi. Makalah penelitian ini akan mengkaji bagaimana komunikasi strategis menyatukan berbagai disiplin ilmu untuk menentukan apakah komunikasi strategis merupakan pergeseran paradigmatis dalam fondasi teoretis atau tetap merupakan kerangka kerja

pragmatis tentang bagaimana strategi komunikasi menyatu dengan tujuan organisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif berbasis literatur yang melakukan analisis tematik di seluruh kontribusi utama untuk memahami sudut pandang yang ada. Hasilnya menjelaskan dua sudut pandang yang berbeda: Ada yang berpendapat bahwa komunikasi strategis berfungsi sebagai sebuah paradigma, yaitu paradigma yang memahami kembali peran yang seharusnya dimainkan oleh komunikasi dalam pengembangan inisiatif strategis, sementara yang lain berpendapat bahwa komunikasi strategis merupakan sebuah pendekatan untuk mengawasi proses-proses seperti manajemen hubungan dengan pemangku kepentingan dan manajemen krisis. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini berpendapat bahwa sifat dualistik komunikasi strategis sebagai sebuah paradigma dan juga sebagai sebuah kerangka kerja berguna dalam dua hal: pertama, dari sudut pandang yang lebih praktis, dalam hal membantu memahami bagaimana bermanuver melalui kompleksitas yang ada di lingkungan organisasi kontemporer, yang telah diintensifkan oleh dampak transformasi digital dan perubahan ekspektasi para pemangku kepentingan.

INTRODUCTION

Communication studies is a broad discipline which encompasses diverse theories and frameworks applicable to various forms of communication. The exploration of this field goes beyond interpersonal communication, which is the communication in between people, to corporate communication, a communication that takes place both within an organization to other organizations and stakeholders. Under this context, Strategic Communication is a very important notion that encompasses a variety of such practices about effective communication. The practices included below, though not limited to: public relations aiming to manage a corporation's public image; corporate communication that refers to all communicative activities included in any organization; marketing directed towards the promotion and sale of products or services; crisis communication related to the management of communication in emergency situations and change management that has to do with articulating positions relative to an organization.

Understanding the categorization of Strategic Communication in the academic community, there has been extensive debate on its categorization. There is disagreement among scholars as to whether it should be conceived as a new paradigm that calls for revision of extant theories of communication or as a

set of interrelated practices that, while important, do not mark a separate dimension within scholarly discourse.

Communication studies is a wide, wide discipline of a wide variety of theories, paradigms, and frameworks that examines the many faces of communication. This examination spans interpersonal communication to organizational and corporate communication, with emphasis on strategic management of information both inside and outside institutional constraints. Strategic communication has become an important area of scholarly inquiry within this wider domain that encompasses public relations, corporate communication, corporate communication, crisis communication and change management. However, in theoretical foundations of strategic communication, scholars opposedly argue over whether it should be regarded as a new communication paradigm or as an all together framework of previous strategic communication practices.

DeCarlo (2018) defines a paradigm in the realm of scientific inquiry as a cohesive topic or set of assumptions of and methodologies for conducting research that occurs within a particular domain. It includes many transformations in the notion of how phenomena are presented and how they are seen or scrutinised. However, a theoretical framework is the opposite as a structured lens that can be used to understand certain phenomena with existing theories framing research questions (DeCarlo, 2018). Scholars within the field of communication studies have explored these distinction among the Indonesian setting such as Nasucha & Turpyn (2024), the study analyzes the fluid and changing nature of communication paradigms within this field.

In the domain of scientific inquiry, a paradigm serves as a comprehensive worldview or framework that informs the assumptions and methodologies employed within a specific research discipline, as articulated by DeCarlo (2020). This notion advanced a major change in our understanding, impacting how phenomena are analyzed and interpreted. A theoretical framework on the other hand provides a structured window through which selected phenomena can be elucidated through the help of already tested theories in framing the research questions DeCarlo (2018). Scholars in the field of communication studies, such as Nasucha & Turpyn (2024) have examined these perspectives in an Indonesian context—one where paradigms of communication inexorably adapt and change.

The discussion around Strategic Communication as a communication paradigm, or as a theoretical framework, is an ongoing discourse. Werder et al.

(2018) and Overton-De Klerk (2023) suggest that a paradigmatic approach to Strategic Communication is preferable to that of Estaswara, Halim, & Burhan (2020) and Hoffjann (2024), who consider it as a theoretical framework. This spot of divergence of thought can also be an attractive topic for further study to gain scholarly understanding of whether Strategic Communication should be considered part of Communication Theory or as a new research paradigm that requires independent additional study.

In order to critically analyze the competing positions as to whether Strategic Communication is to be conceptualized as a paradigm or a framework for its interpretation, this article is offered. Werder et al. (2018) define Strategic Communication as an interdisciplinary paradigm that combines public relations, marketing, and corporate communication so that the puzzle of the respective fields plus their descriptions can be completed. Our investigation carries a focus on the ways Strategic Communication can articulate organizational objectives, is used to build reputational capital, and functions to manage stakeholder relationships in the complex environment of present communication.

This paper explores two contrasting perspectives on strategic communication: it is a paradigmatic shift or organizing framework. Recent scholars paradigm suggests strategic communication could introduce new assumptions and reshape the field, however, both Giddens (1984) in Whittington (2015) and DeCarlo (2018) remind us of the importance of frameworks already in place. How it functions as a systematic integration of multiple practices is highlighted also by Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel (2021), Deuze & McQuail (2020) and Holtzhausen et al. (2021) who argue that frameworks assist in organizing communication knowledge. This study then explores how these views influence the role of strategic communication in managing stakeholder engagement, organizational objectives and reputation. The paper presents through a comparative literature review about the intersections and differences between these theoretical approaches in order to contribute to ongoing debates about whether strategic communication is a paradigm or a framework.

In this paper I investigate whether Strategic Communication is a new paradigm in the study of communication or simply a structure based on existing theories. Others argue that Strategic Communication changes the delivery of a communication to the sophisticated strategic management of the public and stakeholders. Whereas, those who regard it as a framework characterize it as the amalgamation of present disciplines like public relations and marketing, rather

than as a new concept. The paper is structured as follows: The Literature Review examines scholarly literature that is related to Strategic Communication. The Methodology is explained by exhibiting the comparative literature review as the principal research guide. The Discussion concludes with a reflection of the central debate in light of key findings. At last, the Conclusion supports one of the two views and recommends further research to improve the study of Strategic Communication.

In an attempt to substantiate our claim, it is inevitable that the substantial amount of the literature on Strategic Communication simply represents the confluence and amalgamation of all aspects and the specific academic disciplines — and they include, but are not limited to, public relations, corporate communication, marketing strategy, crisis management protocols, and change management processes. There is, as of yet, a continual discussion and heated debate within the scholarly community over whether Strategic Communication should be seen as an isolated and wholly new paradigm that should be examined apart from the rest, or as an ongoing and ever adapting format that effectively combines the best of various fields. This is a detailed review of important, seminal works, concentrating in particular upon several critical dimensions, for example (1) the exact definition of Strategic Communication and its wide (2) and how it harmoniously coexists with and is supportive to other existing academic disciplines, (3) practical applications and implications in change management and crisis communication, (4) the debate among theorists around paradigms versus frameworks, and (5) the nonexistent gaps in current literature on this topic matter. This section attempts to provide distinctive insights and deepen understanding of Strategic Communication as a critical and multi-faceted field of study that is open to consolidate as the communication challenges of the time change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Strategic Communication

Strategic communication has rapidly emerged as a prominent concept in communication studies. However, as noted by Nothhaft et al. (2018) and Botan (2018), it remains challenging to position strategic communication as a standalone theory. Instead, it is better understood as a multidisciplinary field with distinct research objects, a growing body of specialist knowledge, and organizing

concepts. These scholars highlight that strategic communication also involves specific terminologies, institutional manifestations, and research methods, positioning it as an applied field that bridges communication theory and practice. Furthermore, it emphasizes the use of information within organizations to plan and execute campaigns that manage relationships between organizations and their stakeholders.

A recurring theme in the literature is the broad applicability of strategic communication across multiple contexts. It functions as a macro-level framework, guiding communication practices aligned with organizational goals and audience expectations. Mahbob, Sulaiman, and Mahmud (2019) argue that strategic communication involves not only what is communicated but also what is deliberately left unsaid. It serves as the basis for selecting communication goals, defining action plans, and tailoring messages to influence behavior. Strategic communication's essence lies in designing purposeful communication plans to achieve specific objectives—ensuring the target audience understands the message and is motivated to take action.

Strategic Communication is the planned use of communication to achieve organizational objectives by aligning Organizational objectives with internal and external Stakeholders. It is, however, multipurpose in the evolving discourse, serving to build reputational capital (Zerfass et al., 2018), engage audiences (Zerfass et al., 2018), and, in times of crisis, facilitate crisis management (Zerfass et al., 2018). The book "Strategic Communication: Key insights are offered in Contemporary Perspective. In Chapter 1, it is framed as a field that attempts to understand how organizations craft communication in a purposeful way within a complex environment, and in Chapter 6 we highlight that the communication strategies must consider ethical considerations and clearly engage with stakeholders in a number of channels.

According to Werder et al. (2018), Strategic Communication departs from public relations, marketing, and corporate communication, and it's defined by its long term goal of alignment of efforts with organizational objectives. Scholars like van Ruler (2018) highlight the dual nature of the field: For some, it is a controlled, one way process to gain audience approval, while for others communication, is constitutive, and shapes strategic decisions concurrently. This divergence reflects Strategic Communication's dual role: Through stakeholder interaction, it builds strategy internally, while promoting strategic choices externally.

Reflecting on these developments, Estaswara (2021) emphasizes the interactive and negotiated nature of strategic communication from the perspective of communication science. Unlike linear, one-way models, strategic communication emphasizes multi-directional and participatory interactions, fostering deeper meaning-making processes through continuous dialogue and negotiation between multiple actors. This complexity underscores the shift from traditional communication models to more nuanced, iterative forms of interaction.

Adding depth to the discussion, Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015), cited in Macnamara (2018), describe strategic communication as deliberate and purposive communication enacted by agents in the public sphere to achieve specific objectives. Macnamara (2018) also broadens the scope of strategic communication by linking it to contemporary management approaches, such as customer-centric strategies in business, citizen engagement, and participatory governance in public-sector organizations. In line with this, Frandsen and Johansen (2015) argue that strategic communication can be viewed as a discipline encompassing all types of organizational communication activities, focusing on collaborative engagement and agile management processes.

This is why Van Ruler (2018) raises the case of the communication processes as being continued managed in a continuous strategy loop (Strategic Communication). The omniscient, interactive process guarantees that strategies are created along with societal expectations. Communication is more than a tactical method of doing something, but it is also a way to deploy strategy in time, supporting both the presentation and realization aspects of organizational goals.

Strategic Communication and Public Relations, Corporate Communication, and Marketing

Public relations, corporate communication and marketing are the basic pillars of Strategic Communication that integrate to make this practice what it is. There is overlap among these disciplines, scholars especially highlight the relation of these disciplines in areas of brand management, stakeholder engagement and message consistency in platforms (van Ruler, 2018). Strategic Communication, however, diverges from the rest, adopting a holistic approach by integrating its

communication efforts within the organization's more long term objectives (Nothhaft et al., 2018).

Corporate communication presented itself as an effort to communicate organizational values to internal and external audiences, while public relations was either a means of two-way interaction through active communication with stakeholders, or a passive means to generate dialogue. Consumer engagement and building brand equity are the focus areas for marketing communication to build consumer engagement and build brand equity which serves as a basis for market repositioning. Strategic Communication takes all these fields into a harmony by aligning all communication activities to the organization's vision and strategic objectives (Werder et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Mahbob et al. (2019) tried to elaborate from an organizational perspective that strategic communication is effective when it incorporates elements such as communication patterns, direction, channels, content, and style. Additionally, leadership and interpersonal skills, as well as careful planning, execution, and evaluation, are essential for achieving communication effectiveness. This multi-faceted approach reinforces the dynamic nature of strategic communication in practice, reflecting both internal and external dimensions of communication within organizations.

van Ruler (2018) adds further nuance to the conceptualization of strategic communication, suggesting that it should be seen as an agile management process rather than a static set of practices. She proposes that strategic communication involves continuous meaning-making and negotiation, both internally and externally, through dynamic feedback loops. This diachronic, omnidirectional process aligns communication with strategy building, testing decisions through interaction, and refining them based on stakeholder responses. Van Ruler's framework reflects the evolution of strategic communication into an iterative, adaptive, and participatory process, positioning it as an essential component of modern organizational management.

Although they are connected, for instance, and interdependent, there is an objection by an unashamedly contingent – and critical – school of theorists and practitioners who worry about theoretical integrity under the weight of such a project. Specifically, Werder et al. (2018) offer a cautionary line of sight, whereby the theoretical limits of Strategic Communication continue to be necessarily fluid and evolving. This observation prompts the emergence of a significant inquiry: Do we herald the arrival of a new paradigm in communication

landscape with Strategic Communication, or is it merely an overall framework to bring together and combine existing practices in the communication discipline?

Paradigm vs. Framework: Scholarly Debates

This ongoing discourse amongst academics is whether Strategic Communication is a paradigm or a framework. Kuhn (1962) in van Ruler (2018) defines paradigm as a disruptive element that overthrows a discipline's bedrock foundations, and the ways in which problems are identified and solutions proposed. In this context, Strategic Communication can be seen as an evolution from representing simply as a mechanism for message transmission to a broader and more integrated model which pursues alignment with overarching strategic objectives. Specifically speaking, it is more beneficial to view communication as a process to develop organizational alignment around particular goals through intentional, coordinated communication undertakings, rather than seeing communication as a means of delivering messages.

Strategic communication is increasingly recognized as a vital management practice within organizations, as highlighted by various scholars. Macnamara & Gregory (2018), Werder et al. (2018), and Mishra & Balani (2018) emphasize that strategic communication transcends traditional theoretical models. This evolution reflects a shift in how organizations approach communication, recognizing its critical role in achieving organizational goals and fostering effective stakeholder relationships. Estaswara, Halim, & Burhan (2020) delves into the historical context of strategic communication, tracing its origins and illustrating how it has transformed into a strategic tool for organizational management. This historical perspective is essential for understanding how communication strategies have adapted to meet the changing needs of organizations in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

In contrast, scholars like Hoffjann (2024) and Botan (2018) argue that strategic communication should be viewed as part of a broader communication framework. This perspective suggests that while strategic communication is crucial, it operates within a larger ecosystem of communication practices that include public relations, marketing, and internal communication. This integrative approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of various communication strategies and the need for organizations to adopt a holistic view of their communication efforts. The recognition of strategic communication as a

management practice signifies its importance in navigating challenges such as crisis management, reputation building, and stakeholder engagement. Organizations are now more than ever aware that effective communication can lead to enhanced organizational performance, increased transparency, and improved public perception.

Other scholars working in this field argue that what we see here is not a set of parallel ideas which simply happen to lead to apparently similar outcomes, but a complete framework consisting of a robust methodology and a systematic and coherent manner in which communicative practice is organized and coordinated to meet a particular set of ends. This assertion is further illustrated by Giddens (1984), for example, who posits in his structuration theory that such frameworks do not, by definition, require a transform in what we think or an entire total reformatting of current frames of reference. As van Ruler (2018) describes, Strategic Communication has its origin in communication theory on both theoretical and practical level and is a more or less instrumental way of managing different communicative processes, while at the same time a broader paradigm that includes all of the said processes.

And this is of course a highly important angle within this discourse because it impacts the act of trying to understand the theoretical foundations on which Strategic Communication rests upon. From a theoretical perspective, when we consider Strategic Communication as a paradigm, it becomes clear that previously accepted concepts of communication studies may require redefinition and reexamination. However, a significant level of scholarship and resources will be used to perfect and refine communicative practices when these activities are bounded to a particular locus, rather than for the radical transformation of the entire discipline.

From this perspective, strategic communication transcends conventional definitions by recognizing the necessity of interaction and negotiation in constructing meaning. This is particularly relevant in understanding how organizations navigate communication challenges in diverse environments and contexts. Alghasi & Falkheimer (2024), Diers-Lawson & Fredheim (2024), and Pettersen & Karlsen (2024) wrote as book sections on "Strategic Communication—Contemporary Perspective" further enrich this discourse, where they explore strategic communication as a theoretical construct, strategy, and even as a paradigm. Their examination invites scholars to consider the broader

implications of strategic communication, fostering a dialogue on the theoretical frameworks that inform practice.

Gaps in the Literature

Strategic Communication scholars offer diverse perspectives on how communication functions in practice. Van Ruler (2018) highlights two competing viewpoints: some regard communication as a one-way process aimed at securing audience approval, while others view it as a co-creative process that helps shape strategic decisions. This divergence has contributed to fragmentation within the field, complicating efforts to establish a unified conceptual framework.

While Strategic Communication has evolved, empirical studies exploring its status as a paradigm remain sparse. Much of the research focuses on its application within narrow fields (Werder et al., 2018). There is a need for comparative studies across industries and cultural contexts to examine how Strategic Communication varies in different settings and whether it constitutes a paradigmatic shift or remains a framework for applied practice.

The rise of digital communication platforms, such as social media and real-time engagement tools, has introduced new challenges for Strategic Communication frameworks. Estaswara (2021), Brønn (2021), and Macnamara & Gregory (2018) emphasize that existing frameworks need to evolve to accommodate the dynamic and interactive nature of digital communication. This points to a gap in the integration of digital tools and platforms into traditional models, necessitating more adaptive and fluid approaches to communication.

METODE

This section outlines the research methodology employed to explore whether Strategic Communication functions as a paradigm or a framework. It covers the research design, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The study adopts a qualitative research design, focusing on thematic analysis of scholarly literature and expert interviews. A qualitative approach is suitable because it allows for an in-depth exploration of theoretical concepts and their practical applications. This research design also helps uncover underlying assumptions within the field. Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring patterns and themes in the literature and interview data. This method

allows for the comparison of different perspectives on Strategic Communication—whether it is a paradigm or a framework.

The study uses thematic analysis to interpret and categorize the data collected from the literature. Thematic analysis is well-suited to identify recurring patterns, key themes, and divergent viewpoints across various sources. By coding key themes—such as one-way vs. constitutive communication, the strategic development loop, and the integration of multiple disciplines—the analysis provides clarity on the evolving nature of Strategic Communication.

Given the conceptual focus of the study, a literature-based research approach is ideal. It allows the integration of existing knowledge and theories, facilitating critical reflection on how Strategic Communication has developed and continues to evolve. The reliance on secondary sources also enables comparative analysis across different scholars' views, ensuring the study captures diverse perspectives on whether Strategic Communication represents a paradigm or framework.

A literature-based qualitative design inherently limits the ability to test hypotheses empirically or gather new data directly from communication practitioners. However, the strength of this approach lies in its theoretical depth and ability to synthesize insights across disciplines. Future research could complement this study with empirical methods, such as interviews or surveys, to explore how Strategic Communication is applied in practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The analysis of the literature reveals two primary perspectives on Strategic Communication: From one perspective, one perceives it as a practical framework for applied organizational communication practices, while from another perspective, it is conceptualized as a paradigm integrating various communication theories and practices. By their turn, Estaswara (2021), Németh (2021), and Hoffjann (2024) claim that the strategic communication has evolved beyond the classical frameworks and developed an interdisciplinary approach to the complex organizational processes of change management, crisis communication, and digital engagement. This implies paradigmatic patterns, thereby carrying over sectoral boundaries and incorporating aspects from public relations, corporate communication and marketing.

In opposition to this stance, scholars such as Falkheimer et al. (2017), van Ruler (2018), Werder et al. (2018), Holtzhausen et al. (2021), and Overton-De Klerk (2023) argue that while Strategic Communication continues to be a strategic tool that facilitates alignment of communication and organizational goals, it has yet to develop into a true paradigm. Such a perspective highlights the operational utility of Strategic Communication as a continuous–iterative process of managing communication under fluid contexts of organizational strategy. This theoretical fragmentation in the field is a result of the differing perspectives, which are described in the literature review, and this ongoing debate over whether Strategic Communication constitutes a new paradigm or not.

The scholarly investigation conducted in this research highlights two primary academic perspectives on Strategic Communication: the first is one that regards it as an interdisciplinary paradigm that crosses the traditional academic borders, while the other regards it as a practical framework under whose theories can be applied to real world situations. Strategic Communication is argued by many scholars to be an holistic, putting together insights from various disciplines such as public relations, corporate communication and marketing in an integrated body of knowledge. This approach is supported by Werder et al. (2018), Mishra & Balani (2018) and Holtzhausen et al. (2021), who suggest that this approach brings the communication strategies in line with the organization's broader objectives so that Strategic Communication becomes a meta discipline to manage reputation, engage stakeholders and build organizational identity in various contexts.

Scholars such as Falkheimer et al. (2017), Kostić S & Šarenac J (2020), Brønn (2021), and Alghasi & Falkheimer (2024) however, caution away from treating Strategic Communication as a simple interdisciplinary synthesis. However, they maintain that communication processes involve substantial complexity, and there are far more relating factors that you need to understand how to interpret and, therefore, extract the inherent nuance of the decisions made by individuals in an organization. This group of scholars emphasizes the importance of Strategic Communication to not only aligning messages with strategic objectives, but also to navigate complex processes of meaning making, identity negotiation and stakeholder influence in dynamic and uncertain environments. The domain of Strategic Communication is on ongoing debate, reflecting the common dynamic of the field as somewhere at the interface of

theoretical abstraction and practical application, a stimulant to scholarly competitiveness and empirical action.

Exploring on two perspectives: paradigm and framework through 41 papers, book sections, and books published year between 2018-2024 with open access as simple chart and calculation by categorizing each one of them based-on conclusion, result, or discussion in their works (see figure 1).

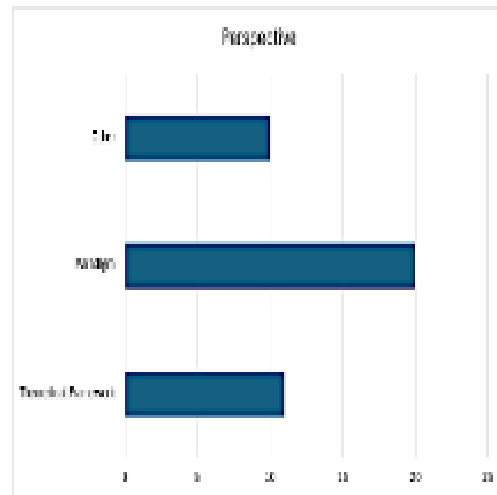


Figure 1 Chart of Authors Perspective on Their Work

Source: Authors

These and other multiple perspectives figure in the chart and reflect a majority of works in the area as a paradigm of strategic communication. Some use it as a theoretical framework, a smaller but significant number treat it as a paradigm, and the rest fall under "Other," a group that focuses on practical applications without actively debating theoretical or paradigmatic issues, whatever you prefer to call them. This distribution supports the primary objective of this paper: by arguing that rather than opposition, paradigmatic and framework perspectives serve to enrich the study and practice of strategic communication. The data also indicates that scholars should not only reconsider binary categorizations of strategic communication but must expand beyond these dichotomies to consider strategic communication, on both the conceptual and the practical side, as an integrated discipline.

Strategic Communication and Organizational Complexity

Heide et al. (2018) argue that Strategic Communication should move beyond simple, linear models, noting that real-world communication often takes place within complex, uncertain environments. They advocate for a holistic model, viewing Strategic Communication as a dynamic process embedded within organizational complexity. Their research emphasizes the interconnectedness between communication, power dynamics, and continuous strategy development. Unlike frameworks that suggest a top-down approach to messaging, Heide and colleagues propose a decentralized, interactive model, where communication flows are adaptive and reflexive. This aligns with CCO theory, emphasizing the constitutive role of communication in shaping strategy.

Similarly, Estaswara (2021), in his examination of Strategic Communication in Indonesian contexts, identifies the need for cultural adaptability within communication strategies. His research underscores that effective communication must align with local values, norms, and stakeholder expectations. Such perspectives expand the scope of Strategic Communication beyond Western-centric models, underscoring the importance of contextual factors and organizational complexity. His research and context had similarities with several scholars, Macnamara & Gregory (2018), Mahbob, Ibrahim, & Hassan (2022), Mahbob et al. (2019), and even Botan (2018) even though his view and perspective sought Strategic Communication part of theory, but the way his picture it using cocreational model and result in his work emerging issues and challenges in strategic communication related to risk communication, public safety and disaster management, and countering terrorism.

Communication Paradigm or Theoretical Framework Revisited

The research findings also point to a continued different perspectives between treating Strategic Communication as a framework for applied communication and positioning it as a paradigm. Botan (2018) note that the field's diversity and interdisciplinary nature complicate efforts to establish a singular paradigm. While paradigmatic approaches, such as those championed by Nothhaft et al. (2018), suggest that Strategic Communication encompasses a meta-theoretical framework for integrating various communication disciplines, others caution that too broad a conceptualization may dilute the field's practical relevance. Those works amplified by many scholars Brønn (2021), Hoffjann (2024), and Németh (2021), although Németh view not exactly as framework but methodologies and quite similar with Kostić & Šarenac (2020) and Lock et al.

(2020) that their perspective not entirely agrees view strategic communication as simply framework.

This different perspectives is further reflected in how organizations balance one-way and two-way communication models. For instance, Werder et al. (2018) emphasizes that in highly regulated industries or during crisis communication, organizations may favor controlled, one-way communication. Conversely, Heide et al. (2018) argue for two-way, dialogic communication models that better reflect the complexity of stakeholder relations and continuous organizational adaptation, furthermore strategic communication could improve organizations objectives by conceptualized with interdisciplinary framework, for example psychology or project management (Mitrović & Vulić, 2020). This dualities of thinking we could picture it from the book "Strategic Communication in Context: Theoretical Debates and Applied Research" (2021), the debates between view strategic communication as paradigm or broad-view of implementation of different communication field with capture strategic communication as communication theory split into two part. The first part of book shows strategic communication was theoretical framework and the other part could be conclude as the application of theory and paradigm.

DISCUSSION

Analyzing the Role of Strategic Communication in Complexity

Let us shift our focus to one of the critical insights from recent literature in the area of Strategic Communication, namely that it has to attend to the actuality of organizational complexity and the sheer flux of change in organizational life. As starter, Fredriksson & Pallas (2015) and Heide et al. (2018) put forward a more nuanced view: communication is not just a tool for achieving strategic goals but an ongoing process in which strategy is formed and reformulated. Like these earlier frameworks, this view rejects early views, which treated communication in organizations as linear and message driven, in favor of emphasizing the reflexive nature of communication within organizations. Communication strategies must change as organizations respond to new stakeholder expectations, social dynamics and new and emerging technologies.

This argument is reinforced, for example, by Estaswara (2021) who argues that effective communication must be locally context sensitive if one is to be effective and is concerned that strategic models must be both context sensitive

and flexible. According to LaBelle & Waldeck (2020) in their work many explores how Strategic Communication can be align to deliver organization's goals and objectives to the same audiences, strategic communication is one umbrella term that covers all types of Communication like management, marketing, public relations, and political communication directed to various stakeholders. This broad perspective is in line with the concept of paradigm as it includes a set of rules and practices that guide the way in which organizations do communicate effectively in a complex and changeable environment. In line with the notion of a paradigm, this broad perspective captures the principles and practice that bring organizations to communicate effectively in a complex and dynamic environment.

Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, the contributions of scholars expand the conceptual boundaries of Strategic Communication by highlighting its interdisciplinary nature. These perspectives suggest that communication is no longer confined to supporting functions like public relations or marketing; rather, it is central to the strategic management of organizations. This aligns with Lock et al. (2020), Kostić & Šarenac (2020), Alghasi & Falkheimer (2024) argument that Strategic Communication serves as both a tool for organizational communication, control, and a mechanism for continuous adaptation.

Practical implications also emerge from this analysis. Heide et al. (2018) argue that organizations must develop communication strategies that are responsive to uncertainty and complexity, adopting a decentralized approach to stakeholder engagement. This suggests that linear communication models may be inadequate in addressing the challenges of modern organizations, where power relations and decision-making processes are often distributed across multiple stakeholders. Estaswara (2021) provides further evidence by emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness in communication strategies, particularly in non-Western contexts. Organizations that fail to account for these cultural nuances risk alienating key stakeholders and undermining their strategic objectives.

CONCLUSION

It is shown that Strategic Communication is both a theoretical framework and an emerging paradigm because of its dual status in communication studies.

As the field has transcended the study of individual communication static and has matured as a meta discipline, scholars insist that it is no longer a simple domain consisting of various discrete communication functions. But this shift also comes with challenges: on one hand, the field must push back on theoretical ambitions while on the other it needs to make its work relevant to practice.

A Strategic Communication course features how communication shapes organizational strategy and stakeholder engagement. Even as a framework or paradigm, it functions as an explanatory device in making sense of how communication influences complex organizational settings. Future research should fill the gap between theory and practice, explain how organizations digitally manage communication complexity within real world settings, and extend theoretical models to answer the challenges presented by digital communication technology.

The analysis of these 41 publications suggests that no lens is more paradigmatic, no more theoretical framework, but rather both are mutually strengthening as lenses. By treating strategic communication as a paradigm we can achieve a broad worldview that incorporates several components of communication. Meanwhile, the simultaneous view of viewing it as a framework makes it possible to apply communication theories in specific situations — structured methodologies for planning, implementation, and evaluation of communication strategies.

By combining these two approaches, scholars and practitioners can attend to the richness of strategic communication. The paradigm lens is used to understand communication in terms of systemic context, and the framework perspective is provided for the realization of communication strategies. Together both perspectives serve to help advance the field of strategic communication through the development and use of tools for understanding, planning and managing communication environments become more and more complex.

The present systematic literature review advertises the critical position of strategic communication in contemporary organizational administration. It brings together key contributions and perspectives, and underlines that organizations need to adopt strategic communication practices that are intentional, systematic and interdisciplinary. Other research is needed to understand the emerging nature of strategic communication and its ramifications for organizational effectiveness.

In this sense, Strategic Communication is an interdisciplinary field with no end in sight, its valuable input in both hierarchical and organizational practice. As

Strategic Communication itself could be considered by accepted scholars and practitioners as communication paradigm or a theoretical framework, it allows them to focus on how Strategic Communication itself shapes a strategy and adds value to an organization. The field will have to change as new technologies and future challenges occur, and communication should still be an integral part of the strategic decision making process.

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