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**THE IMPACTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION.
CASE: DOTMARK**

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Abstract <p>This research aims to uncover how employee engagement affect the facilitation of collective intelligence via internal communication in strategic communication. Its effort is supported by theories of communication as well as engagement to look for the difference in behaviors of organizational actors while being engaged or disengaged by managers. Then, the research observed and analyze the consequences of these actions to determine the relevance between employee engagement and strategic communication.</p> <p>Qualitative methodology is utilized for this study with the case study being conducted on the personnel of one organization. The interactive relationships between its members are units of analysis while the external environment surrounding the organization is considered the contextual background. Empirical data is collected via semi-structured interviews and project group study with approximately 245 hours of recorded data. The sample size for this research is 10, justified by the cultural consensus model and the interpretative phenomenological approach.</p> <p>In consideration of the sensemaking/horizontal communicative structure of the case organization as well as the nature of strategic communication, this research chooses to utilize coworkership – a developing concept of employee engagement – as the theoretical lens to analyse the phenomena occur during the research period. The characteristics that define the concept are openness, collective spirit, and engagement. Therefore, the study will explore the effects generated by the existence or non-existence of these traits. Additionally, communicative factors that belongs to leadership as well as strategy processes will also be analysed within the identified internal communication and respectively, strategic communication.</p> <p>This research provides a glimpse into how managing the dynamics between organizational actors can change the way an organization achieves its overall, long-term goals. Its contribution can be used to further expand the conceptualization of coworkership by providing practical as well as theoretical evidence of a <i>pseudo-coworkership</i> – a paradoxical engagement type characterized by subterfuge and systematic distortion of information. Consequently, the contribution can also benefit managers as it points out possible scenarios that can happen when attempting to establish a communicative climate that is diverse from the network that the organization is within. That said, to satisfy the generalizability of the findings from this paper, further observations are suggested.</p>			
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Additional information -			

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theoretical and contextual background

Strategic communication, in essence, is a conscious effort for organizations to reach their comprehensive objectives (Falkheimer & Heide, 2011). It is achieved via analyzing and constructing connections between organizations, their stakeholders, and society. As organizations begin moving away from traditional communication approaches, the role of employee is becoming more important. This is because employees are now perceived as brand ambassadors – individuals who communicate the values of an organization to society and stakeholders (Karmak, 2005). As a result, internal communication (with the support of strategic communication) has evolved from just purely transmitting information within an organization to create understanding among employees for better representation of values to the audience (Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Mazzei, 2010; Zerfass & Franke, 2013).

Strategic communication is based on a hypothesis that considers society as well as organizations as democratic or non-authoritative. This fails to address the impacts of information retention, and other complex social interactions on communication as well as strategy. Interest groups include top managers, consultants, employees, etc. use their respective organizational dispositions and influence tactics to regulate organizational change so that such transformation can be beneficial to them or not happening at all in the case of change resistance (Bradshaw & Boonstra, 2008). In fact, there is a call for more extensive study regarding the employee's role in strategic communication with scholars emphasizing

the significance of internal communication, particularly employee engagement, through their works (see Ki, 2015; Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Zerfass & Franke, 2013)

One perspective in employee engagement suggests that between business success and employees, there exists a close relationship. As a matter of facts, several academic work imply an exploitation of this relationship to promote employee engagement as an organizational tool (see Anitha, 2014; Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013). Foster and Jonker (2015, p.51) then conclude: "Many organizations have interpreted this engagement as a form of 'management' (read: 'control') where there is an attempt to organize, structure and thus 'manipulate' the relationship in the belief that this will best serve their needs". That said, the manipulation of social relationships is not always negative. In fact, the problems that organizations face on a daily basis are multitude and a single solution or perspective is non-existent. After all, the world is a very complex and interrelated system that a precise prediction is nigh impossible.

The Western world during the late seventeenth century developed a new scientific movement and societal paradigm which is later named "modernity". This collective of norms is characterized by rationality (science over tradition), progressivism, individuality, and objectivism (Lee, 2013; Linehan, 2009). The transition of society to modernity was greatly aided by the appearance of mass media such as daily press, radio and television which helps nations, governmental entities as well as a corporations to establish control in place of traditional forces (Couldry, 2017). Consequently, the modernity ideology describes the role of communication as ensuring organizational efficiency via standard practices (Murdock, 1993)

In 1990, Anthony Giddens (1990) proposed another concept in which modern institutions spread at a global scale and changes are faster: late modernity. In this type of liquid society, the boundaries between citizens, corporations, governments, and society become barely recognizable with less security but more individual choices (Bauman, 2000). As a result, work in the context of late modernity diverts from uniformity and is more aligned to reflexivity (Canizzo & James, 2020; Findlay & Thompson, 2017). We can deduce that, from an organizational perspective, the act of organizing become less efficient due to large amount of information necessary to make a decision.

Late modernity is important for understanding the theoretical background related to strategic communication. This is because strategic communication is about achieving organizational goals via collective intelligence and action (Falkheimer & Heide, 2011, Marchiori & Bilgarov, 2015) – aspects that are facilitated by the late modern society. Furthermore, the new structure described by Jenkins (2006) has several characteristics that are closely relevant to strategic communication. First, old forms of communication from the modern era still exists but are slowly changed by new technologies i.e., communication devices are now mobile (Jenkins, 2006). This means actors have more access to information than before and become capable of interpreting messages regardless of time and space. Such mobility leads to the second characteristic of participatory culture where new media technologies allow direct communication between stakeholders (Hopkins, Hare, Jo, Donaghey & Abbott, 2014). These characteristics ultimately constitute the final trait of late modernity and, respectively, strategic communication: problem solving through individuals with diverse background and expertise i.e., collective intelligence (Jenkins, 2006).

1.1.1 Introduction to strategic communication

As the interest in communication increases, there is also a shift of academic perspective about the field. Particularly, scholars begin to not only view communication as one-way information transmission used for tactical maneuver but rather, communication is now regarded on a strategic level – it is the backbone of organization and miscommunication can cause seriously adverse consequences (Falkheimer, Heide, Simonsson, Zerfass, & Verhoeven, 2016). Strategic communication moves away from the classical way information is “pushed” onto recipients and emphasizes the mutual activity that takes place when communication happens i.e., interpretation of message. Organizational members are gradually considered capable of reflexively processing information without the boundary of space and time by utilizing highly computerized networks. This new perspective about employees is represented by the way they are called by many scholars when talking about employee’s role in an organization: advocate or representative of a company’s values (see Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Karmak, 2005). In light of this development, strategic communication researchers have begun focusing more on the role of employee, represented by works from several scholars such as Kang & Sung (2017) or Kim & Rhee (2011). Other researches on strategic communication also highlight the role of employees, especially in the area of internal communication (Mazzei, 2010; Mazzei, 2014; Mazzei, Dell’Oro & Kim, 2012). However, the common overlook of these studies is that they have not, or only mildly, considered external factors apart from the organization itself that can potentially affect internal communication and respectively, strategic communication.

Strategic communication, in essence, is quite normative (Heath, Johansen, Hallahan, Steyn, Falkheimer & Raupp, 2018). It is based upon a democratic view of reality in which actors of

communication are allowed equal access to information and bypass the element of complexity – a research gap. This paper aims to partially fill in such gap by investigating the elements of social dynamics (an aspect of organizational complexity) that can affect how organizations achieve its overall long-term goals via communication. As a result, we may understand better why in some cases, employees fail to coherently communicate with stakeholders despite management's efforts in facilitating collective intelligence. The aim is justified by the fact that we are living in a late modern society (Jenkins, 2006) and in the environment where the old collides with the new, it is no longer enough to study strategic communication without considering non-normative factors. Consequently, the study effectively contributes to strategic communication literature by filling in the gap created by its normative characteristic.

1.1.2 Introduction to employee engagement

Similar to strategic communication, employee engagement has recently gain popularity in management research. Reasons for this development can be attributed to organization's perceived competitive advantage (Mazzei, 2014), employee engagement's significance in achieving organizational success (Kang & Sung, 2017) and the boost in reputation of an organization to the public (Kim & Rhee, 2011; Opitz, Chaudhri & Wang, 2017). As the role of communication is being progressively emphasized, engagement also becomes trendy. Inferred from the previously mentioned studies, this popularization is associated with how managers view engagement as a miracle remedy that can power-up the productivity of workers and as the standard measurement for the effectiveness of their communicative capabilities. Furthermore, because the studies in this field aim to explore the nature of the relationship between an organization and employees for organizational improvement, it is reasonable to

assume that engaging employees is one possible way to successfully optimize strategic communication. However, there has yet an academic venture to investigate the impact of employee engagement in reaching consistent message interpretation via collective intelligence – a key characteristic of strategic communication. Therefore, just as with other trendy concepts, it is important to understand employee engagement from a critical and reflexive vantage point.

1.2 Research questions and goals

As previously stated, this research aims to uncover how employee engagement affect the facilitation of collective intelligence via internal communication in strategic communication. Researchers such as Andersson (2019), Heide & Simonsson (2011), van Ruler (2018) all acknowledge a growing need of more in-depth studies on the field. This praiseworthy ambition is challenged by a fact that the research field is justified by normativity so when relevant issues such as uncertainty are looked at from an organizational efficiency point of view, conflict ensues (Heide, Simonsson, von Platen & Falkheimer, 2018). However, it is exactly because of this dispute that novel approaches and questions are created to be explored (Holthausen & Zerfass, 2014). Additionally, new media such as instant messaging applications create a new paradigm that challenges the traditional transmission communication approach of organization and creates new methods to communicate with stakeholders (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2016). Studying the how these new communicative tools affect the internal communication can provide valuable data as to how managers can maintain control and transparency at the same time.

Research questions are divided into primary and secondary. The primary research question deals with discovering the impacts of employee engagement on strategic communication while secondary questions are utilized to clarify information regarding communication processes and interaction between stakeholders. By investigating the relationship between workers, data concerning the interpretation of meanings can be extracted and analyzed. The primary research question is:

How does employee engagement affect the strategic communication of an organization?

A set of secondary questions is proposed to help answering the primary question. Internal communication is considered the most important aspect of strategic communication as previous studies have shown that organizations with effective procedures for information circulation achieve goals more easily and the working environment is also significantly improved (Morley, Shockley-Zalabak & Cesaria, 2002). Whitworth (2006) denoted that internal communication is built upon three interdependent pillars: hierarchical (formal), mass media, and informal communication. In a traditional organization, information is transmitted from workers up to the management level where decisions are made and passed back down. The bigger and more complex an organization is, the more ineffective this model works and there is a risk of information being withheld, either deliberately or accidentally. Furthermore, managers may not be able to control the interpretation of organizational values from employees which is affected by their engagement with coworkers (Heide & Simonsson, 2018). Therefore, the first secondary question tries to identify the factors which influence the transmission and interpretation of information in Dotmark:

How is information received and processed by Dotmark's employees?

Email, instant messaging apps, collaborative platform, meetings, etc. are examples of tools utilized in strategic communication, both external and internal. Compared to hierarchical methods, these media provide leeway for timing improvement and consistency of information without relying too much on managers (Whitworth, 2006). However, such media are also the cause of information deluge (Mugoniwa, Musungwini & Furusa, 2018). Consequently, the issue of balance is unveiled: managers need to make sure that employees are informed but letting everyone have access to everything is "unnecessary". As a result, the next secondary question is:

How much access to information are employees allowed to have in the context of Dotmark?

The last pillar of internal communication is informal communication. It has the greatest volume and is the fundamental construct of organizational processes that are used to design and maintain an organization (Mumby, 2011). Additionally, interpretation is mostly based on information that is exchanged between members inside "community of practice" - a concept defined by Lave and Wenger (1991) as a collective people who share the same concerns and actively discuss issues with reference from their personal background. In organizational and internal communication context, it is a group of employees who gossip about the new activities from their respective departments and then, construe a meaning from these developments based on their experiences. Even though informal communication helps to spread information quickly and efficiently, there is a risk that misinterpretation transpires the further messages are from the source (Whittaker, Frohlich & Daly-Jones, 1994). Ergo, the final secondary question is:

How do actors involved in the observed strategic communication affect the flow of information?

1.3 Empirical research

The study adopts qualitative research methods with the digital division of ADT Group Holdings – Dotmark – as the case of interest and relationships between its actors are units of analysis. Dotmark Connect (Dotmark) is the digital marketing division of the multi-media advertising corporation ADT Group Holdings (ADT). Recently acquired as an effort by ADT to digitalize its business, Dotmark emerges as a division brimming with youthful energy and openly collaborative environment. The division main responsibilities are managing social media advertising channels and providing marketing campaign for its clientele. This means that the members of Dotmark are constantly in direct contact with stakeholders, both internal and external. As a result, it is crucial for the division to make sure that every employee is on the same page and capable of convey communicative values to various actors in order to achieve its long-term goals. Dotmark is deemed suitable for this research because it is the division that is in direct contact with stakeholders outside of the company (e.g., users, clients, partners) and must be able to create a compromise between these parties to avoid or minimize conflict of interests when communicating with them.

1.4 Research structure and approach

Reviews of literature about strategic communication and employee engagement are used to explore underlying factors that affect the interpretation of involved actors within Dotmark.

Organizational members who have been under observation as well as prolonged contact with the researcher are interviewed. This process, coupled with data analysis, is supported by the previously mentioned literature reviews.

The research structure will be as follows. The second chapter begins with a discussion about different perspectives of communication then theories belonging to modernity and late modernity. Theoretical knowledge regarding communication will be summarized in a manner that demonstrate the transition of research ideology from traditional to the current perspective and how this development affects internal communication (respectively, strategic communication). In other words, this chapter is the macro context of this paper. The theoretical section of the paper concludes with the introduction of strategic communication starting from its defining characteristics to the practice in the third chapter. This part will also see the relationships that have been hinted at in the previous parts to be discussed in more detail with knowledge about employee engagement and coworkership i.e., aspects of social dynamics in internal communication. The introduction of strategic communication in Chapter Three represents the culmination of previously mentioned shift in research approach and it serves as a more direct or micro context to the study. Throughout chapters two to three, there will be a focus on how interrelated relationships between organizational actors affect the concepts of communication at strategic level. Furthermore, perspectives on employee engagement are the center of discussion to highlight their distinctive consequences to an organization's strategic communication i.e., how the relationship between workers affect meaning interpretation. Applied research methodology will be presented next in Chapter Five. Then, Chapter Six is where gathered empirical data is presented for analysis. Finally, the research is concluded with reflections and prospects of further future studies.

2 THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION LITERATURE AND WHAT IT MEANS TO STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Scientific description of communication is difficult because the field is discussed in vast arrays of disciplines as well as approaches. At first, communication is only regarded as a tool for information transmission but over time, this definition slowly changes. In recent years, there are even researchers in the organization field who claims that communication is the constitution of organizations (Taylor & Van Every, 2000; Torp, 2015). Therefore, this chapter utilizes the fundamentals of social sciences and humanities to describe the evolution communication – from a tool to an existential necessity of organization - in relevance to strategic communication.

2.1 Perspectives of communication

Communication is divided to help researchers and scholars understand the reasons as well as mechanisms that make the act of exchange information works or not work in certain scenarios (Carey, 2009). The division produces two fundamental perspectives: transmission and ritual/sensemaking (Carey, 1975; van Ruler, 2018).

The conceptualization origin of the transmission perspective can be attributed to Shannon and Weaver's (1949) "*The Mathematical Theory of Communication*". In this work, the scholars introduced an effective communication process between sender and receiver. It can be inferred from this study and several others (see Jensen & Neuman, 2013; McQuail, 2010)

that communication, from the transmission perspective, is very simple – a mechanical process for moving information from point A (sender) to point B (receiver). Eriksson (2014) once acknowledge that an organization is typically perceived as a mechanical entity with clearly defined boundaries between departments and levels. This is an idea so deeply rooted that people regard communication as more technical process where messages are sent by a transmitter to many receivers than social interactions between equal parties (Carey, 1975). James Carey (1989) used that assumption as a basis for his conceptualization of the one-way transmission model of communication. He furthered noted in later research that within the realm of transmission communication, any alteration to the content on the way is disregarded and the process is acknowledged as successful once the recipient received the message (Carey, 2009). It can be inferred from this that the choice of words is very critical in this perspective because the transmitter has to make sure that the receiver understands the message via any medium. Moreover, scholars such as Shotter (1993) as well as Sapienza, Veenstra, Kirtiklis and Giannino (2016) posited that the transmission perspective is mainly about technology and communicators must be able to find the right words, arrange them in an extremely meticulous manner then decide on an effective technical instrument.

The sensemaking perspective of communication is the polar opposite of the transmission perspective. Aggerholm and Thomsen (2015, p.175) described communication as “a complex web of sensemaking” where people with diverse intentions and backgrounds “intersect, clash and interfere” with each other for the purpose of making sense of reality. It can be inferred from this that even when humans encounter a situation that is not how it has always been established during our adolescent years, we always reject or try to find new meanings together. Therefore, humans are inherently communicative. Unlike the transmission view

where language can be used to precisely describe or depict objective reality, sensemaking practitioners assume that language instead supports labeling and understanding reality (van Ruler, 2018). Differentiation in cultural backgrounds, experience, and training can lead to contrasting interpretations of the same thing. From this reasoning, employees may view an event or crisis within their organization distinctly from each other based on their backgrounds or organizational levels (Bergman, Löve, Hultberg & Skargert, 2017). For example, when there is a new directive from upper management, each organizational actor may have different explanation as to why this happens. Content creators may perceive that the source material is not attractive enough despite their best efforts to create best cuts to attract viewers. Meanwhile, performance marketing specialist would think that that the problem lies in search engine optimization. The complexity of interpretation will be further diversified based on personal aspects and professional dispositions that each individual possesses.

Normatively, the communication process is a dialogue in which two or more parties interact to reach mutual understanding. However, in a practical organization environment, relationships between individual interactions affects communication: actors with more information and a seemingly “dominant” position have more strategic communicative resources (van Ruler, 2018). For example, an employee who specializes in data analytics may hold and understand more information regarding important metrics in social media marketing optimization. This leads to him/her virtually more important in discussion about how to effectively engage with users. Historically, the transmission perspective has dominated the planning and execution of strategic communication efforts because, according to Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015), the perspective easy to understand. However, this does not mean that it should be viewed as negative because there are situations that require authoritarian measures. Cases

include crises when it is mandatory to transmit instructions to all involved parties without delay using media with low feedback capabilities such as emails. At a higher organizational level, sensemaking communication can be used to influence the desired outcomes which suit the interest of certain stakeholder groups.

2.2 The evolution of communication theory

Communication is one of the most popular research interests so relevant theories are abundant. Starting from the most ancient theory of rhetoric – the art of persuasions using words by Aristotle to the recent communication as co-creation theory, we can see that there is a theoretical evolution in the field. That said, beginning the discussion about how we move from defining communication as a one-way process to a multi-way process with ancient art of rhetoric is too far-fetched. Instead, this subchapter opts for two theories that strongly correlate with modernity and later modernity: mass communication and communication as co-creation. Respectively, these theories also represent the shift of academic interest as the society is transitioning toward a more pluralistic paradigm or in communication literature, sensemaking perspective.

2.2.1 Mass communication of the modern world

Mass communication theory's root in the transmission model is very apparent as it is “designed to reach the many” (McQuail, 2010, p. 52). Harold D. Lasswell's (1984) five elements of communication are probably the most notable representation of this theory. In his work, Lasswell (1984, p.117) presented the mass communication process as: *Who says what, to*

whom, in which channel, and with what effect. In later date, it is apparent that the component that receive the most attention in this Lasswell's process is *with what effect* i.e., how does mass communication affect the actors. In fact, scholars such as Lazarsfeld, Gaudet & Berelson (1944) expressed their concern over the way election might be influenced by media – expressing interest in learning the effects communication has on the audience. Twenty-four years later, Lazarfeld and his colleague then released the result of their study, positing that media exposure creates inconclusive or omnidirectional patterns in political behavior (Lazarfeld, Gaudet & Berelson, 1968). It can be inferred from their work that the mass communication does have considerable effect on the public or from a strategic communication perspective, organizational actors.

One noteworthy mass communication theory is the agenda-setting theory. It stated that mass media relatively decides what is discussed among the public but does not control how people make sense of the content (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). When put into an organizational context, this theory is understood as what employees talk about can be controlled by organizations but how they interpret the message is influenced by coworkers.

2.2.2 Co-creating the late modern society

Co-creation communication theory is the result of a shift from the division between senders and receivers to a more interactive, participatory approach (Peña, Jamilena & Molina, 2014). An example of this theory can be found in Normann and Ramírez's (1998) investigation into how the interaction between customers and suppliers can greatly add more value to a product. As a result, the responsibility and ability to create value is no longer dependent solely on an

individual (Payne & Holt, 2001). In communication context, we can infer that the information can now be created by anyone. This is especially true in the late modern society where most people are in possession of powerful mobile devices with content-creation functions. As a result, the communication as co-creation theory is a delineation from the transmission perspective that views communication as linear causality and more in favor of considering communicative relationships as well as networks. Later works by Freeman (2004), Monge & Contractor (2003) has taken a step further and brought communication network to the spotlight, emphasizing one's relational environment in the communication process. These scholars posited that interactions between communication actors can create outcomes that have substantial social and behavioral impacts on a network (Freeman, 2004).

2.3 From modernity to late modernity: what does this mean for internal communication and respectively, strategic communication?

In the transition to a late modern society, internal communication is no longer simply planned activities for collecting and providing information (Ford & Ford, 1995). Hübner (2007) stated that organizations should stop relying on a single (communication) department to carry out internal communication but instead, opt for actually constructing practices capable of engraving important values into the organizational structure. It can be inferred from these statements that instead of treating employees and other stakeholders as “gears” within a large machine, organizations are gradually (and they should be) perceiving them as “humans” with complicated relationships between each other as well as the external environment. The task of creating organizational brand and representing them to the public is not single-handedly performed by communication professionals any longer but rather every organizational actor

become an ambassador (Heide & Simonsson, 2011). An increase in communicators will increase an organization's exposure to the environment as well as external stakeholders which, consequently, increases the risk of misinterpretation or lack of common understanding between organizational members (Zerfass & Franke, 2013). Because the role of employees is emphasized in the internal communication process, which is a very important component of strategic communication (Zerfass, 2017), the traditional view on strategic communication is changed as well.

3 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Throughout Chapter Two, we clearly see that there is an orientation or evolution of theory in the way scholars research communication which inclines toward the sensemaking perspective. This movement represents of how the transition of society from modernity to late modernity influences the academic interest to move forward and explore theories that are shifting away from functionalism to social constructionism e.g., from describing reality to actually trying to understand it. Consequently, the academic field of strategic communication becomes more popular. This chapter will discuss the definition of the concept and how using engagement to affect its most important component – communication with coworkers – can significantly change the effectiveness of an organization’s communication.

3.1 What is strategic communication?

Strategic communication is often understood as planned communication as defined by Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic and Sriramesh (2007). Danish professors Finn Frandsen and Winni Johansen published a comprehensive definition of strategic communication which is shown below.

“The study of how organizations use communication purposefully to fulfill their overall missions.” (Frandsen & Johansen, 2017)

However, the definition by Hallahan et al. and Frandsen & Johansen is criticized by many scholars such as Aggerholm and Thomsen (2015, p.174) to be too “naïve” and “simplistic”. Windahl and Signitzer (2009) even pointed out that a communication campaign is nothing but tactical public relations to influence and control target audience groups or their behaviors. Moreover, planned communication share the characteristics that define rhetoric and mass communication theories. Consequently, this concept belongs to the transmission perspective of communication – information is transmitted from senders to receivers without discourse. The term “strategic communication” is being used with intense frequency by consultancy agencies because the utilization of sophisticated concepts boosts the confidence of professionals in their status (Alvesson, 2013).

To better define the etymology of strategic communication, established scholars have released many fundamental studies on the subject. Paul (2011, p. 28) stated that researchers should not only consider messages when trying to define strategic communication but must include actions as well because “what we do is often more important than what we say”. Later on, some scholars concluded that strategic communication has to be built upon the solid bedrock of mutual understanding created by two-way interaction between active participants (Falkheimer & Heide, 2011, Marchiori & Bilgarov, 2015). Communication in this case is no longer a tool for information dissemination but rather, an important factor to determine the legitimacy of an organization and is created via interaction (Heide & Simonsson, 2011; Nico-tera, 2009; Zerfass & Franke, 2013).

3.1.1 [Strategic] Communication

In 2006, Whittington suggested a need for more focus on the participants of strategizing process, implying that researchers should also consider the external as well as internal environment of an organization in their study (Whittington, 2006). This movement is sometimes called a linguistic turn – influenced by the transition of society to late modernity and from a communication context, a shift to sensemaking (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). Some notable representation of this movement includes Taylor & van Every's (2000) statement on the stimulation of knowledge by interaction within an organization or the notion about human communication constitutes organization by Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen & Clark (2011).

The re-highlight of sensemaking concepts can be interpreted that organizations nowadays focus more on what members/actors think and do about the strategy rather than treating them as mere followers. This prompts researchers to also re-consider their research interests to include strategy practitioners into the equation, together with the traditional perspective contains only formal advancement of strategies at an administrative level (Whittington, 2004). As humans frequently contradict what is said and what is done, it is the same for academic studies about strategic communication: organizational members often do things diversely in practice compared to what theories suggest they would do. Therefore, this movement is considered an improvement of strategic communication research because it begins to distinguish from simple normative models and incorporate more complex elements for increasingly accurate research results (Andersson, 2020).

In an environment filled with interpretive variables, especially today's ever-changing world, concrete standards for evaluation and judgment are no longer sufficient. Consequently,

strategizing has transformed into a communicative practice involving organizational members of multiple levels creating and implementing endlessly. A more loosely linked system with a high affinity to change adaptation is more favorable in late modern organizations.

3.1.2 A transitioning framework

There are three separate research fields integrated within the framework of strategic communication: public relations, organizational communication, and marketing communication (Zerfass, Verčič, Nothhaft & Wegner, 2018). In recent years, organizational communication researchers have started moving away from functionalist ideology as it de-humanizes organizational activities and showing more interest in mutually beneficial relationships and unified communication (see Paul, 2011). As for public relations, cases similar to a study by Zaidi & Ahmad (2020) have also shifted the function of public relations toward a more relationship-oriented field, emphasizing the understanding of the surrounding environment – an orientation toward sensemaking.

These are examples of transition within the main fields which demonstrates that the framework of strategic communication is also steadily orientating toward an approach that concentrating on the explanation of social reality – the communicative constitution of organization (CCO). CCO scholars rationalize that reality does not happen to be in existence but in fact, constructed via communicative interaction between humans (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009). Van Ruler (2018, p.370) stated from his examination of CCO that in communication (respectively, strategic communication), “the people within and around an organization order and build the organization by negotiating their meaning over and over again.”

3.1.3 A increasing importance of employees

When your business is providing service to clients and interacting with users to generate values, organizational members, particularly coworkers are very crucial. By constantly in contact with external stakeholders, employees can easily communicate and modify the perception of users, clients or partners about them because they “live the brand” (Ind, 2001). We can infer from these references and the CCO approach of strategic communication that, coworkers create the brand via internal communication. Supported by their direct superiors, employees hold conversation with each other to create a common understanding or interpretation then start reflecting whatever values the organization stands for onto their work (Morrison, 2001). Additionally, there are a few strategic communication discourses that emphasize the communication responsibility of employee (see Andersson, 2019).

3.2 Employee engagement

“Engaged employees often experience positive emotions, including happiness, joy, and enthusiasm; experience better health; create their own job and personal resources; and transfer their engagement to others” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 215). This statement by Bakker and Demerouti (2008) is an example for the importance of employee in engagement as well as strategic communication study. From previous literature, we can deduce that at its nature, employee engagement belongs to the realm of sensemaking communication because it considers employees as “humans”. However, the study of employee engagement is plagued by widespread managerialism and bureaucratic rationalism i.e., it is dominated by research

based the transmission model which views employees as mere “components” (see Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there has been a linguistic or sensemaking turn in organizational studies as well as strategic communication research which promotes considering employees’ viewpoint for building discourse and mutual understanding. To gain insights into how the interactions between members of an organization can affect strategic communication, the following sections will introduce different perspective of engagement and the coworkership approach which moves away the common managerialist view.

3.2.1 Perspectives of engagement

The origin of engagement studies can be traced back to the article “*Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work*” published by William A. Kahn in 1990. In his work, Kahn described the concept as employees are free to express themselves “physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). This definition can still be considered valid in today’s circumstances, but it is important to understand how different perspectives representing individual and organizational level interactions are utilized to achieve certain objectives within organizational communication and, from a broader viewpoint, strategic communication.

One perspective of employee engagement views communication from a sensemaking point of view – a way to understand and make sense of organizations (Carey, 2009). Engagement is then created when employees start acting as active dialogue communicators instead of passive information receivers (Heide & Simonsson, 2011). A notable example of this

perspective is the concept of *employeeship* defined as an employee's capability in handling duties and social interactions with other employees (see Bertlette, Johansson, Arvidsson & Jern, 2011). Therefore, it can be understood that employees can express defiance to the actions of managers which stemmed from contrasting interpretation of messages from higher management – an acknowledgment of multiple goals and interests existing within an organization. Even if the organization has clearly defined goals which are communicated correctly to all internal stakeholders, it is far from unidirectional (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004). Taylor (2009) noted that in a multivocal community, what sounds rational is the result of continuous co-orientational negotiation instead of valid arguments.

An alternative perspective emerges when managers justify engagement as a bond between employee interaction and corporate success (see Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). In essence, employee engagement is built upon a mutual relationship between workers and organizations as a reciprocal construct (Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004). However, researchers have found that many organizations tend to interpret engagement as a form of control and try to manipulate this bond for their interests (Foster & Jonker, 2015). Additionally, communication is regarded as the main driving force and a prerequisite for employee engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2014; Men & Stacks, 2013; Welch, 2012). Hence, it can be understood that managers' utilization of tactics such as rhetoric to influence the relationships in practice transforms engagement to one-way communication without discourse.

From an organizational communication perspective, internal communication is believed to have a significant impact on employee engagement (Chong, 2007; Saks, 2006). Osborne & Hammoud (2017) stated that the quality of engagement is determined by how well

information is conveyed within an organization. Additionally, employees' participation and willingness to cooperate is often associated with high-level of expectations (Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Stadler & Saks, 2014). This kind of understanding is regarded as a demonstration of functionalism about the organization as well as communication.

3.2.2 Significance of coworkership on strategic communication

The previously mentioned shifts in communication and the differentiation of engagement perspectives from functionalist managerialism to social constructionism greatly affect research in strategic communication. One of the effects is the emergence of *coworkership* – a concept currently popular in Scandinavian working environments (Møller, 1994). It is identified as the practices and attitudes coworkers develop in tandem with the organization (their employer), managers, and colleagues (Heide & Simonsson, 2011). This description is an example on the emphasis of relationship between coworkership and engagement by including characteristics such as commitment, initiative, and cooperation. The interest in coworkership for management and research can be attributed to the transition of the world economy from production to information and service. For some (if not most) organizations, the emphasis on engagement is the most effective way to maintain profit in the long-term (see Kortmann, Gelhard, Zimmerman & Piller, 2014). Consequently, the organizational structure gradually shifts from a hierarchical, close supervision entity to flexible networks of horizontal communication, managed by values and visions (Fairtlough, 2008). Employees are expected to not only work according to instructions but must think and act “outside the box”, be innovative and socially enabled i.e., they must be engaged communicators influencing both internal and external stakeholders (Heide & Simonsson, 2018; Tengblad, 2006).

Additionally, organizational members are now perceived as brand ambassadors because when service is offered to customers, their expectations will be fulfilled by communicative engagement from employees – emphasizing the importance of internal communication (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). Consequently, this approach relies on equal access to information for all organizational members so that everyone will be on the same page to understand and convey values to stakeholders accurately. However, there will be organizational actors with more influence because their social dispositions within the organization allow them access to more information. They can either deliberately manipulate the interpretation of messages or unconsciously create misunderstanding due to their working habits. This will create a paradox: a pluralistic approach to achieve overall organizational goals being controlled by a few individuals i.e., managerialism within social constructivism.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From a strategic communication perspective, goals are synchronized throughout an organization from top to bottom and inside to outside. But the essence of the concept, where interpretation is the most important, lies with internal communication or specifically, communication between coworkers. It is not an overstatement to say that without it, an organization does not meet the prerequisite to come into existence. If an organization wishes to convey their values to outside audience, they must start by making sure that members are on the same page first. Vice versa, when the public communicates with members about their perception of the organization, it also affects the interpretation of workers. This is especially potent with

organizations that are in direct contact with both internal and external stakeholders such as Dotmark.

Employee engagement, therefore, becomes the topic of interest that this paper focuses on. The reason would be that since strategic communication is grounded in normativity, it often bypasses the biggest issue of the sensemaking communication perspective that it belongs to – organizational complexity. Practical working environment is not always a democracy where everyone is willing to express their opinion. Real-life workplace is comprised of coworkers whose intentions are diverse and nearly unpredictable. In order to study how employee engagement affects the facilitation of collective intelligence via internal communication in strategic communication, the thesis explores the interpretation-making process of coworkers e.g., the way message is interpreted via social dynamics in internal communication by following the concept that is the most closely relevant to strategic communication: coworkership – a concept of employee engagement that is developed upon the philosophy of social constructionism. This study chooses to follow the definition of coworkership, used by Bergman, Löve, Hultberg & Skargert (2017), as practices and behaviors that employees develop together with the whole organization. Therefore, it is in tandem with Dotmark's horizontal organizational and communicative structure where all actors are considered coworkers. The study will look for the difference in behaviors of organizational actors compared to their theoretical description when being engaged or disengaged by managers. Since the coworkership perspective of employee engagement is characterized by openness, collective spirit and engagement, it is imperative that the researcher also look for the impacts created by the existence or non-existence of these traits on the internal communication (respectively, strategic communication) of the case organization.

Researchers on strategic communication also determine that leadership and strategy processes are the two aspects of the field that are greatly affected by the how coworker interacts with each other (Cummings, McGregor, Davey, Lee, Wong, Lo, Muise & Stafford, 2010). Therefore, communicative elements regarding the previously mentioned areas will be examined within the identified strategic communication at Dotmark. The possibility of paradox and its consequences will also be examined. The information acquired in this section through the literature review serves as the paradigm upon which the discussion about how behaviors between organizational members affect strategic communication in the context of Dotmark.

5 METHODOLOGY

The study will be conducted via qualitative methods. This allows the researcher to explore the deeper aspects of human behavior and answers “Why” as well “How” questions such as: “how do these employees interpret these messages?”, “why do they understand the intention of top management this way?”, “why does the organization decide to keep up with this practice even though there are better options?”, etc. In other words, qualitative research allows us to look at issues from the informants’ perspective (Minichiello, 1990). The following paragraph describes the justification of theory as context coupled with methodological approaches that will be implemented by the researcher.

5.1 Consideration of methodologies

Data for this research will be collected via semi-structured interviews and project group study with a sample size of ten (10). Justification for this size is done through the implementation of the cultural consensus model and interpretative phenomenological approach for the study.

Cultural consensus theory maintains the assumption that ethnological knowledge is shared among people which creates a common perspective about the external world and society within that group of people (Caroll, 2006; Romney, Batchelder & Weller, 1986). Romney et al. (1986) further noted that while there are various levels of consensus on different topics among individuals of the same cultural background, they are finite. In other words, determination of sample size can be conducted via asking a series of questions on the same topic and difficulty to the target population of similar cultural background so when a consensus is

reached (data saturation), the number of informants necessary to reach that consensus can be considered the sample size. One notable example is a study by Atran, Medin and Ross (2005, p.73) where “as few as 10 informants were needed to reliably establish a consensus”. On the other hand, interpretative phenomenal approach (IPA) focuses on idiographic information i.e., an exploration into how people make sense of a certain phenomenon in a certain context (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In most cases, IPA studies involve a detailed examination of sense-making process and psychological experience of a group of participants. Some researchers suggested that because of the requirement for rigorous contextual description, a sample size for IPA research should range between three (3) to fifteen (15) (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). Furthermore, a sample size of 10 has been utilized in a study by Smith, Flowers and Osborn (1999) with the aim of investigating each participant’s experience.

Due to its subjective nature, scholars find it difficult to apply conventional standards of reliability as well as validity to qualitative studies. Consequently, a different set of criteria is introduced to evaluate research of this type: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjen & Moser, 2018). For this thesis paper, there are several ways to satisfy the criteria. Participants of the study are workers who have been in prolonged contact with the researcher for at least six months coupled with the continuation reflection on the study ensure the credibility of the research. In the case of transferability, “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) method is utilized. A detailed description of the context in which the study is conducted will be provided to justify observations and interpretations made by the researcher. After the interviews are conducted, a uniformity check of the responses and methodological triangulation (interviews, group study, literature) will create a construct to test the dependability of the questionnaire. Confirmability is guaranteed through cognitive interviewing

questions for the participants or audit trail. Cognitive interview is a method used to probe into the four-stage process of answering a question (comprehension, memory retrieval, decision, and response) to evaluate the understanding of respondents of the instrument's intended use by its developer (Dietrich & Ehrlenspiel, 2010). On the other hand, an audit trail is a process in which the author describes the processes of data collection, data analysis, and result presentation to attest to the interpretations made in the research (Wolf, 2003).

From the provided information, semi-structured interviews and project group studies are chosen as methods of data collection. Interviews will allow the researcher to explore the current social dynamics of the case, subsequently resolve the secondary research questions. The project group approach let the researcher observe how participants act in real-life scenarios in comparison to how they think they act as Walsh (1963) noted that there is a contrary between thought and action due to the manifold nature of tangible human interaction. Then, data compiled from both methods is analyzed to determine the possible impact of the way organizational actors interact with each other on strategic communication. Details regarding two data collection process will be elaborated in the following sections.

5.1.1 Data collection via semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview is the main data collecting method for this research. By definition, it is an exploratory approach utilizing open-ended questions to probe and follow various directions as information is being shared while maintaining concentration on pre-determined goals (Hill, Knox, Thompson, William, Hess & Ladany, 2005). Unlike the classical structured interview in which the questionnaire is strictly followed by orders, semi-structured

interview constructs a comfortable environment for participants to freely share their personal experiences and provide researchers with insightful information about a designated topic of interests (Fylan, 2005; Polit & Beck, 2010). In this case, it is the effects generated from the complex relationship between individual interaction on an organization's (Dotmark) strategic communication.

The rich and complex data gathered from semi-structured interviews can be overwhelming. Therefore, a focused approach is utilized to decrease the scope of the interview under the theoretical foundation surrounding the research questions designated beforehand by the researcher. When interviewing in a focused manner, the interviewer is equipped with sufficient information about the participants so when they are starting to sidetrack from the main themes, the interviewer will mildly intervene to re-focus the conversation back to the important subjects (Gray, 2009). The themes on which the interview framework built upon are derived from the aspects noted by Heide and Simonsson (2018) to important in investigating employee engagement concerning strategic communication: communication climate, coworker voice, peer leadership, and communication. Each interview is conducted in the following phases, following the suggestions made by various scholars (see DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Whiting, 2008):

- Apprehension phase: the participant is allowed to pose any questions about the research and its purpose. The interviewer then asks for permission for the conversation to be recorded and transcribed.
- Introduction phase: the participant is asked several questions within the themes of interest to establish rapport. This will help the interviewee become more familiar with the research topics in preparation for a more in-depth conversation later.

- Exploration phase: the interviewer will probe more carefully into the interviewee's personal experience. During this phase, participants will be encouraged to share more so the researcher may see the thought processes and how they make sense of a situation.
- Cooperation phase: after the participant is comfortable enough with both the established environment and the topics, the interviewer proceeds to guide the conversation into more specific details in the abundant of the information that was provided in the previous phase. The interviewer must keep the conversation from becoming too casual.
- Conclusion phase: this phase is consisted of fact-based questions to confirm all the information that is provided by the interviewee. Structured questions will be asked by the interviewer at this point to guide the discussion toward its ending.

Due to the geographical difference between the researcher and the participants, interviews are conducted online via Zoom. Additionally, Vietnamese is the preferred language since it is within the comfort zone of both parties. There are a total of ten interviews being conducted in December 2020. Participants are employees and managers of Dotmark who work alongside with each other and are in frequent contact with stakeholders outside of the organization. More details regarding the interviews are presented in the Appendix.

5.1.2 Data collection via project group study

Interviews alone are not sufficient to gain the desired depth of understanding that this paper is trying to achieve. To witness how people make sense of a situation based on the interactions of multiple individuals, an additional method to collect observational data is required. Usually, research methods are chosen based on the epistemological as well as ontological hypothesis of the researchers (Stayaert & Bouwen, 2004). As stated at the beginning and throughout the literature of this paper, the theoretical premise for the research is heavily influenced by the concepts of strategic communication and coworkership. These theories are based on a social constructionist point of view about communication – in other words, they explore the evolution of meaning interpretation from multiple voices in a living social context. Additionally, the case organization (Dotmark) exists in the “natural” contextual paradigm – an integrated part of the natural organizational environment (Stayaert & Bouwen, 2004). This leads the researcher to avoid choosing methods that are from within the “objective” context e.g., methods that reflects a functionalistic point of view involving direct interventions to achieve pre-indicated goals. Thus, project group study is determined as suitable for this research because the researcher can observe how social interactions of organizational actors correlates and affects the natural meaning interpretation, which in turn influence the outcome of an organization’s strategic communication.

The first step to conduct group study is integration – the researcher has to become a member of the team and maintain contact for a prolonged period of time (Stayaer & Bowen, 2004). This is achieved by an internship which the researcher has taken up and through other agreements with the company as well as relevant parties, contact with the team is still preserved at the moment. Then, the communication activities of Dotmark’s members regarding daily

proceedings, meetings, task fulfillment, and other relevant organizational interactions are recorded. Non-verbal indications such as reactions towards ideas, who remains focused, laughs, etc. are also observed and noted. Due to the potential overload of data, video, and audio recordings are not required.

The project group study was conducted from May 2020 to November 2020. During this period, the research was an active member of Dotmark as an intern for three months and continue his role as an organizational member later on after reaching a mutual agreement with the management of ADT as well as Dotmark. As a result, the research was allowed to participate in every aspect of the organization functions, ranging from attending regular meetings to discussing new initiative with managers. Additionally, campaigns or projects commissioned by clients are outstanding opportunities for greater observation of interactions between participants. Observational data was recorded daily with a more extensive summary at the end of every week with approximately 240 hours of data. Data recorded include, but not limited to individual and group reactions to new developments, exchanges between Dotmark's members and other stakeholders, individual attitudes to feedback, manager's reaction to different practices, etc.

5.2 Data analysis

Wilson (2010) suggested a four-step approach in qualitative analysis because qualitative research is more exploratory than descriptive, and researchers may be confused by the large volume of data. Thus, this study also implements these steps to ensure a rigorous conduct. The first activity is transcription. After all participants have been interviewed and recorded,

the content is then formatted into text for proofreading and coding. In the case of this paper, transcribed texts are to be translated from Vietnamese to English to synchronize with the linguistic settings of this research. Next, data is coded – a process involving fracturing the data and “re-arranging it into categories that facilitates the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (Strauss, 1987). The type of coding depends on whether categories are determined beforehand (a priori/deductive) or emerges during the data examination process (emergent/inductive) (Wilson, 2010). In the context of this research, primary categories have been identified with the literature reviews and demonstrated via the interview framework (Appendix).

Nonetheless, one cannot overlook the fact that new points of interests or categories may show up when the data is being processed. Ergo, the most suitable option is abductive coding. Additionally, data reduction is also utilized to removed chunks of irrelevant information. Interpretation is the third step of data analysis. Wilson (2010) noted that the majority of this part is generally about looking for connections between categories and what they represent. Because theoretical literature is the root from which themes are generated, there will be an interdependence between analysis and theoretical proposition (e.g., Yin, 2009). As noted at the end of Chapter four, the academic review of literature about employee engagement and its potential impacts on strategic communication serves as the prime foundation for this research. Consequently, the interpretation of collected data will follows that framework. The final step of qualitative analysis is the compilation of a research report.

Because this research utilizes project group study, there exists observational data. Therefore, the first step of processing this data type is quite different from the verbal data of interviews (Wilson, 2010). Instead of transcription, observational data needs reduction as the first step.

Additionally, data analysis of the project group study will consider elements such as chronology, settings, processes, etc. to bring insights into the behaviors of the participants that demonstrate openness, collective spirit and engagement – characteristics of coworkership according to Bergman, Löve, Hultberg & Skargert (2017)

6 DOTMARK AND THE DIGITALIZATION ATTEMPT OF ADT GROUP HOLDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of qualitative data gathered from previously mentioned interviews and project group observations. Information about the communication climate and perspective of strategy in ADT compared to Dotmark is introduced first to reveal the contrast in organizational behaviors from two closely related business entities. Next, a more detailed analysis of Dotmark's activities is presented to further clarify the utilized communication process of the digital division, how the dynamics between members can affect the level of information awareness and message interpretation. The effects employee engagement has on Dotmark's strategic communication will be summarized at the end of every sub-chapter.

6.1 Dotmark within ADT Group Holdings

ADT Group Holdings is multimedia media advertising corporation focusing on providing marketing solutions on their platforms. Previously, ADT's operation relied on full-package communication consultation to prospective clients using in-house tools, partnering with major television channels in Vietnam such as VTV, HTV, and THVL (ADT, 2021). However, when the Technological Revolution 4.0 kicked off in the South East Asian country, the top management of ADT realized that they had to change or more specifically, digitalize their business model to be able to survive in the new era. Therefore, Dotmark Connect was acquired in 2017 to become the firm's leading division, focusing on providing digital solutions such as social media advertising, performance advertising, UI/UX design, digital strategy

consultation, and content creation (Dotmark, 2021). According to their annual report in 2020, ADT generated approximately 250 million EUR and Dotmark is accounted for 50% of that revenue (ADT, 2020)

Interviews with Dotmark employees reveal that despite being a division within a large “family”, there are disparities in communication as well as social interactions between the young members of the digital division and veterans of ADT. To begin, the communication approach of ADT is one-way, in other words, it is a transmission communication model. The way communication is being handled within ADT is like many standard organizations around the world: there is a sender and multiple receivers. Information is passed down from the top to the bottom using heavily monitored formal communication channels such as emails, and there is almost no discussion whatsoever. Hierarchy has a significant influence on the corporation’s official operation as well as extracurricular activities. For example, whenever the upper management of ADT decides to organize a party or celebration, employees are expected to participate. Even though participation is voluntary, it is an unspoken rule that everyone must engage in these activities, or otherwise, they will be viewed as “inactive” or “uncooperative”.

From an employee engagement perspective, this phenomenon aligns with how managers with functionalistic ideology tend to perceive engagement: by forcing employees to involuntarily participate in activities that they are not motivated to join, they perceive that they have succeeded in facilitating engagement within their teams by the participation that is not out of the deliberate intention of the workers. Additionally, the feedback process of ADT is significantly hindered by layers of bureaucracy created from heavily monitored formal communication channels. Management has high expectations for employees and they always project

the image that the corporation is doing well so each member of the organization must prove that the quality of their work is up to that standards. Consequently, employees are not enthusiastic in asking questions because they think that feedbacks and questions are signs of shortcomings. “I must act like I know how to solve this, or another guy may take advantage of this” or “If I do not know this then I will disappoint the manager” are the common trains of thought. In contrast, Dotmark has a more horizontal approach:

Yes, the communication approach of our division is quite horizontal, and I am alright with that. One member can directly converse with our Head of Digital Marketing about any work problems. As long as it does not affect the workflows, I do not have any complaints. (Interview P1, 2020)

There are virtually no boundaries within Dotmark as employees can gain access to information and ask for clarification on matters they are unsure of. This is stemmed from the characteristics of the tasks Dotmark oversees: creativity-centric activities tailoring to the needs of customers and users. Members of the digital marketing division often converse with each other not only about work-related issues but also engage in random gossiping. This is deemed an effective way to create knowledge and increase creativity based on the abundance of outside-of-work information which then can be funneled into the brainstorming process of Dotmark’s marketing campaigns for their clients.

We have our own ways of doing things compared to the rest of the company. Maybe because we are younger, so we feel more comfortable discussing with each other equally than how they (ADT) do it. I can say that our communication approach is not influenced by ADT. (Interview P5, 2020)

In general, although Dotmark is a division within ADT, the nature of their tasks has created the foundation for a more open communication climate. Virtually, every member of Dotmark can confide in the superiors about any professional matters, and engagement within the division is established naturally via the interactions of actors rather than by force. While ADT is characterized by modernity with a strong focus on strategic actions and classical representation of strategizing, Dotmark demonstrates more communicative actions and emphasizes pluralistic strategizing practices – traits of late modern ideology.

6.2 Dotmark as a unit

The digital division of ADT works in close relation with various stakeholders and their relationship can be demonstrated in the following diagram (Figure 1).

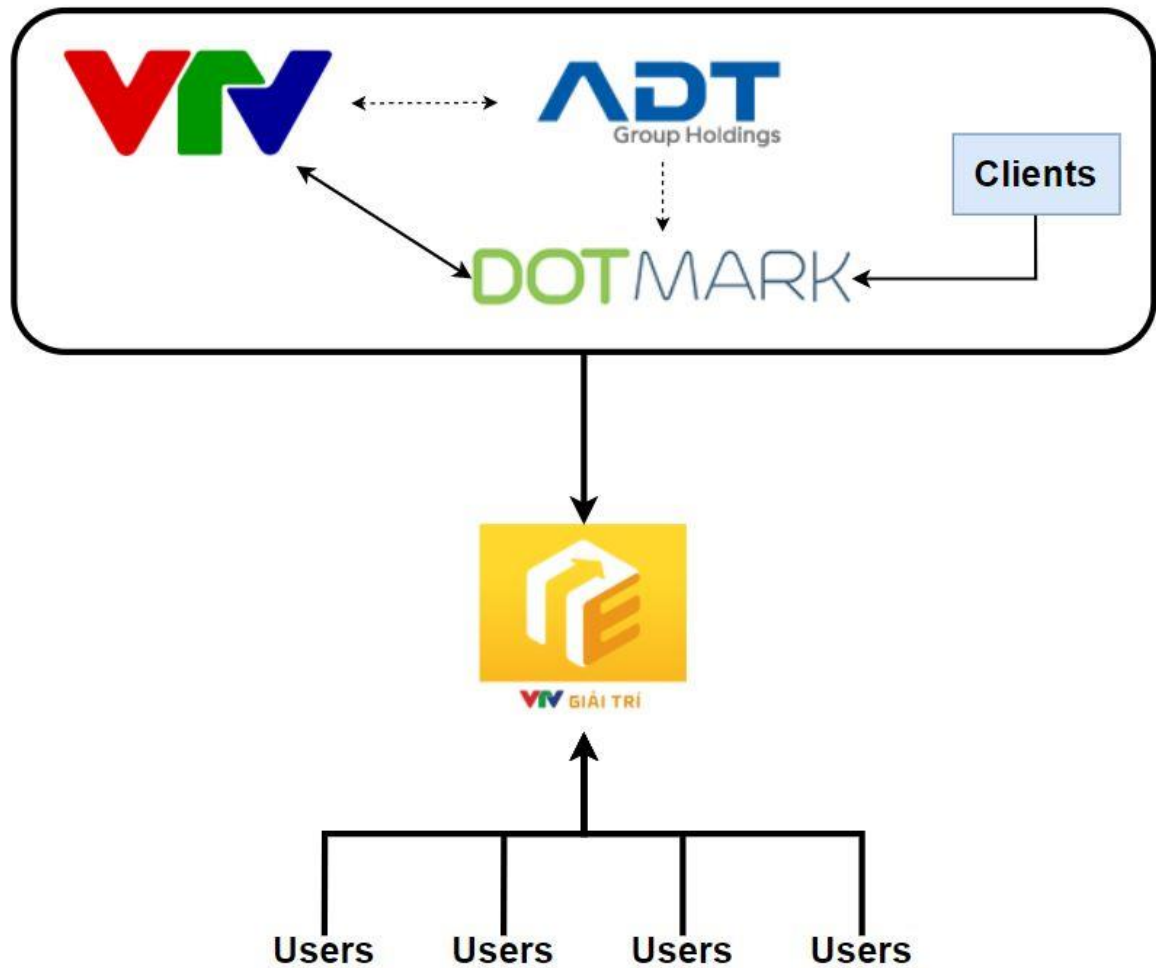


Figure 1. Communicative relationships between Dotmark and stakeholders

Dotmark’s partner is VTV – the national television network of Vietnam. More accurately, the television network is in a partnership with ADT, and Dotmark is the division that it works directly with. VTV is responsible for providing “raw materials” such as tv series and movies produced by the network for the team to create digital content for their brand, VTV Giai Tri, on social media channels. Dotmark can monetize its videos on YouTube and Facebook for revenues. Additionally, the unit oversees the development and manages the mobile application version of VTV Giai Tri with the same monetization rights as with social media content. Whenever Dotmark wants to exploit any show that is produced by VTV, they will make a formal request via emails to their partner and after being approved, the said “raw materials”

will be sent to the team for editing and posting on various channels. Therefore, it is inferred from this information that VTV is an entity with a significant position in the relationship matrix between Dotmark and its stakeholders.

Clients are companies or brands that want to purchase advertisement slots and showcase their marketing material on VTV Giai Tri social media. With over nine (9) million followers on the Facebook fan page and nearly one (1) million subscribers on Youtube, the product of Dotmark has a large potential reach for marketing campaigns. This disposition is both a competitive advantage as well as a challenge for Dotmark and its product: on one hand, they can manage to capitalize on the large audience to make money from social media monetization and commission fee of clients. On the other hand, the expectation from the clients will be very high as Dotmark will be required to “expose” the campaign as much as possible towards their users. Usually, clients will contact Dotmark to commission digital marketing campaigns on the platforms. The terms and conditions are discussed via face-to-face meetings, online messaging, and emails. Based on the requirements and budget, the team may also be required to produce exclusive ads for them as well. That said, because their business model focuses on performance-based marketing, advertising content production is not a frequent task.

Users or viewers is the revenue-generating stakeholder that Dotmark pay much attention too. The number of subscribers and followers alone does not represent the entire target audience of their product (VTV Giai Tri). In fact, their audience “reaches as many as 15 million viewers/users who are interested in watching Vietnamese films and series.” (Interview P4, 2020). The noteworthy size has given users certain degrees of influence over the decision-making process: if Dotmark wants to increase their turnover, they have to create contents that are attractive to this group. In this context, organizational actors directly interact with the public

to gain feedbacks, exploring popular trends and other information to tailor their products according to the demands of the market. This is achieved by engaging with users using comments, public posts on a Facebook fan page as well as a group created specifically to communicate with users.

Within this matrix of communicative relationships, ADT exists as a catalyst for many important developments that affect the behaviors of Dotmark members. The upper management of the company wants to be in control of everything i.e., all exchanges between Dotmark and VTV must be followed up by a representative of ADT. That said, it is not as simple as putting that person on the same mailing thread for monitoring. For example, a member of the digital marketing team can contact VTV to retrieve source content. However, the “middleman” from ADT can also contact VTV for the same task and then relay the information to Dotmark. Consequently, this sometimes creates confusion and inefficiency because of the overlapping information which causes employees to re-confirm the information they receive to avoid being held accountable for any possible issues.

To sum up, the context in which Dotmark operates is relatively complicated: the division must exchange information with external stakeholders effectively to satisfy the demands of the market and be able to convey the values of clients as well as partners. On the other hand, Dotmark is within a hierarchical environment created by ADT which requires much bureaucracy and occasionally, imposes information retention. Such context can be the foundation for a paradox that was proposed in Chapter Four: pluralistic and social constructionist practices being conducted in a managerialist manner.

6.2.1 Levels of information awareness

After understanding the context in which Dotmark operate, we will now look into the way information is being exchanged i.e., the communication procedures of the digital marketing division. By exploring how members communicate with each other, we can determine whether there is an information gap in the organization and if it exists, how do organizational actors react or take initiative into filling such gap.

To start, Dotmark is led by the Head of Digital Marketing, and being the top personnel of the division, this individual naturally has the most access to information relevant to the organization. Employees are assigned to functional teams responsible for specific tasks or areas of expertise (digital content, social media analytics, marketing platforms management, etc.) Each group is managed by a manager which serves primarily as the contact point between the Head and the rest of Dotmark's workforce. When there is a new directive or development, the Head will first discuss with the managers to provide detailed information and plan out a general plan of action. If necessary, a small meeting may be held in case the information is abundant or the priority is high. Then, it is the responsibility of the managers to go back to their respective teams and exchange what was in discussion so that everyone has a basic grasp on what is going on. It is important to note that discourse is an essential element in the observed process as stated by most interviewees. The most common reasons for this are the effectiveness of collaborative thinking and the sense of appreciation for personal contribution.

There is much discussion involved because it is always better to have many heads brainstorming rather than one. Additionally, people feel appreciated if you let them express their opinion. (Interview P1, 2020)

Yes, I always talk to my colleagues about how we should proceed with tasks for the sake of clarification. (Interview P2, 2020)

My opinions are heard and for that, I feel valued. (Interview P7, 2020)

Formal communication channels are emails and face-to-face meetings. Emails are only used for administrative activities. Meetings are more preferred by Dotmark as it encourages discussions and brainstorming to reach a compromise. In fact, the division has a fixed schedule for internal meetings (weekly, monthly, and so on) to update its workers on the current situation and plans. On the other hand, informal channels such as Slack and Skype are the most extensively used communication methods. Slack is the communication platform specifically approved by ADT for Dotmark only. Members of the digital marketing team use this platform for quick exchange of job-related matters and personal chit-chat. Due to its versatility and variety of functions (file sharing, online meetings, secure messaging channels, etc.), Slack is considered the primary channel of information exchange and as proven by the researcher's observation, also another method of formal communication.

On the surface, every organizational actor of Dotmark receives the same amount of information because of the horizontal communicative procedure. However, when asked in a more detailed manner, an information lag was discovered. Particularly, there is a lag between when team leaders are provided with information and when other employees are allowed access to the same content. As a matter of fact, employees who are not in managing positions are only allowed access to activities after they have been finalized. From the normative view of communication as co-creation theory, this phenomenon is considered detrimental to strategic communication. An information gap means that everyone is not on the same page and if it is

work-related matters, it can create confusion as well as unproductivity because of the way information is withheld. That said, in a practical working environment, there is a somewhat logical explanation as to this phenomenon. Managers can intentionally relay information to employees late to keep strategic steps being leaked out too soon, possibly because of confidentiality requirements from clients. In the case of Dotmark, the cause of lag is entirely subjective:

When we determine that it is not the right time or the personnel involved has not grown enough to receive the information early, we decide to withhold it from them for the time being. (Interview P1, 2020)

This problem is further amplified by the way employees communicate with each other. Previously, face-to-face meetings and Slack are determined as the main communication channels of Dotmark. While they are very effective in facilitating a pluralistic communication climate, a very important component is missing: an archive specifically for important exchanges and ideas. Updates on the current situation and plans are almost exclusively being conveyed in meetings but there are no physical records for them. This is confirmed by all employees who participated in the research. If workers want to check back on what has been discussed, they have no choice but to ask their colleagues, but this is not an optimal solution because not everyone can remember every little detail, even managers. Furthermore, Slack has a setting that enables administrators to schedule periodic chat log refresh which includes all files that were shared and any pinned-up announcement. To increase data security and prevent confidential information from being leaked, Dotmark imposes 14-days limitation of all messages and files. It means every two weeks, all discussions in their channels are wiped clean and workers may have to restart important conversations or re-share work files again. While this

practice has its advantages, the fact that the organization does not document important exchanges, brainstorm ideas, meetings proceeding, etc. severely increases the disadvantages in the long-term.

Arguably, employees need to actively converse with one another to gain information. However, it is simply inefficient when workers have to constantly figure out what should have been distributed among the team. Instead, more effort can be poured into generating more values from the fundamental information that is supposed to be provided on time. From the perspective of employee engagement, particularly the coworkership concept, employees of Dotmark are unable to cooperate effectively and share the same vision of the business because they are not provided with enough information on time. Additionally, they have to be dependent on their colleagues who are managers to allow them access. These managers/team leaders judge the readiness of peers via subjective opinions about their “growth” which is questionable.

Team leaders are usually reprimanded for “slow communication” (...) they also contributed largely to the issues because they use their own objective opinions to determine “when” it is necessary for us to know about something. Simply false assumption.
(Interview P8, 2020)

It is safe to deduce that the “growth” mentioned by team leaders is whatever their coworkers come up with after “engaging” with others to guess the intention of Dotmark’s management. This can be considered counter-productive from the perspective of coworkership. Instead of creating new values via exchanging information, employees must spend time picking up the “breadcrumbs” and try to guess what is in the mind of managers. If repeated multiple times,

employees will find their work tedious because their efforts are diverted from achieving overall organizational goals to trying to get what should be provided to them. This notion was later confirmed by interviewees.

One way or another, this practice has consequences, and they were demonstrated on various occasions. What happened in a digital campaign for their client is an example. Dotmark's employees were informed of such activities so late that they were caught by surprise when it was announced. Short on time as well as information, the team had to rush to make the campaign happen. While the overall result of the project was acceptable, interviewees revealed that being kept in the dark left them exhausted and unmotivated.

Sometimes, a project is near its implementation phase, but the planning has not been finalized so it creates a situation where our team is informed very closely to the date of implementation. This has occurred several times and we feel quite exhausted every time it happens again. (Interview P9, 2020)

As it turns out, choosing a time to convey information based on subjective preferences, as stated by functionalist engagement scholars such as Chong (2007) and Dolphin (2005), does not yield positive results for an organization's strategic communication at all.

One functional team seemed to have a grasp of the complex situation and devised their own system for storing knowledge. Detailed investigation reveals that this team has higher efficiency than others because members are more informed, and they have an archive to reconfirm information at any given time. Nonetheless, this practice only exists in one functional

team, and given the communication structure of the entire division, the unawareness of a potential improvement in productivity from other teams is questionable.

6.2.2 Message interpretation

Dotmark operates horizontally – it means that members freely engage with each other about any issues without having to go through bureaucratic procedures. This is best demonstrated in their meetings as everyone could voice out their opinions or ask questions about topics that they want further clarification on. Observation of these meetings and their daily exchange yields a fact that the employees are indeed engaging each other via discourse. Furthermore, their main communication channel (Slack) greatly supports this practice as it encourages an easy-going, discursive climate within the organization. In theory, particularly the concept of coworkership that this paper is using as a framework, this type of social constructionist approach facilitates collective intelligence that brings all organizational actors on the same page and as a result, strengthening strategic communication (Heide & Simonsson, 2018). In simpler words, when all workers of Dotmark communicate with each other to gain a common understanding of all aspects of their operation, they can synchronically interpret messages and effectively convey values to stakeholders with much less variation, avoiding confusion as well as misunderstanding. That said,

In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice; but in practice, there is.
(Savitch, 1984)

As the management of the digital marketing division was searching for new ways to expand its operation, a new task was delivered to all employees: create comprehensive lists of foreign

TV series from a specific period that are popular among the Vietnamese audience. Each team was responsible for researching a distinct region. As per usual, the Head of Digital Marketing entrusted the assignments to team leaders, and they discuss them with members for further details such as action plans, deadlines, work division, etc. From this point, there was a phenomenal turn. Essentially, the task was assigned to the whole division but there was no exchange among the teams about it at all. In fact, there were only pinned messages of team leaders tagging their respective members to announce which documents they would be using for the report. Every team continued to operate separately with their daily functions, and no engagement was attempted, either by employees or managers.

When there is an assignment, we rarely talk to each other about it and just solely focus on completing it. Furthermore, no one steps up to play the role of the conductor and create some form of teamwork. There is no cooperation, just loosely connected individuals (...) So as you can see, we are not very pro-active in co-working. (Interview P4, 2020)

The statement suggests that every team within Dotmark interprets messages differently and further observations confirm that is true. Without discourse, teams proceeded with the previously mentioned task according to their own interpretations. One team made the list as detailed as possible, actively brainstormed about its utilization in future projects, and carried on filtering to refine the results. On the other hand, the task was met with a lukewarm reaction in another team and as the deadline approached, a patched-up version was presented by cramming all information members can find in a few hours without filtration or consideration. In the end, all members were reprimanded by the Head not only because of the inconsistent results between teams but also the under-qualified list that cannot be used for future

references. This is phenomenon repeated multiple times during the observation period of the research. Despite such a sensemaking environment made available via pluralistic communication channels and approaches, why did a complication that can only exist in the realm of transmission communication?

The research found that employees of the digital marketing division are very active in engaging in conversation with each other. Nonetheless, this is only applicable with casual topics irrelevant to work. When it comes to work-related issues, workers are quite lethargic to ignite a “cross-teams” discussion. In fact, each team is so focused on their own “oasis” that they are mostly oblivious of the situation in other teams.

Everyone is on their own. We do not know what the other teams are doing, only what has been done. (Interview P8, 2020)

I do not think that each worker is aware of what others are doing. Even though we are in the same division, sitting and working closely with each other, we are separated. (Interview P2, 2020).

These are some examples of conclusive evidence showing that there is almost no collective organizational knowledge – the central point of message interpretation to achieve effective strategic communication. Further testaments from interviewees reveal that the general meetings do not help resolve the problems despite the efforts from the Head of Digital Marketing to provide resolutions. This is because explanations for strategic decisions or disclosure of future strategy are too vague. Managers must “decipher” the message and make their own interpretations which they then deliberately choose when other members are allowed to know.

In coworkership, employees can actively communicate with each other and managers about the challenges they face, ideas of improvement, or even critically assess strategic decisions for managers to have better consideration (Tourish, 2005). That said, observations and interview records determine that they do not exist in the strategic communication of Dotmark. This is especially peculiar because the organization utilizes a horizontal communication approach which should, by definition and according to the workers' interpretation, facilitate decentralized, cross-functional feedbacks.

A more in-depth investigation divulges that the management body of Dotmark does not encourage feedback. As a matter of fact, management does not express negative or positive reactions at all. If someone has a question, they can ask anyone about it, including managers and the Head of Digital Marketing, without having to go through any bureaucratic procedures, but this is something employees must figure out by themselves. From the perspective of engagement and coworkership, employees are not engaged by managers and consequently, they are reluctant to engage their coworkers. Additionally, interviewees stated that they have to shoulder very high expectations on achieving results which cause individuals to become more isolated from debates as they are afraid of making mistakes.

The Head of Marketing has very high expectation about the teams and it creates a “fear of mistakes”. When there is a task and we do not know how to do it, we are hesitant to ask because we are afraid that we might make some mistakes (Interview P9, 2020)

Not having a clear affirmation from their immediate supervisors coupled with working under an authoritative environment of ADT and high expectation have put Dotmark's workers

inside a paradox: they are uncertain which behavior is correct and thus, opting for an ambivalent solution – only communicate “horizontally” for casual purposes while work matters are communicated “vertically”. In other words, managerialism within social constructionism.

The disparate interpretation of messages has a significant impact on Dotmark’s operation, particularly its overall goal fulfillment. Apart from the incident about the list of foreign TV series, which was previously mentioned, there were multiple instances where the contradicting interpretation of messages has put workers at odds with clients. Despite most of them were resolved via senior personnel’s intervention, it goes on to show that the Dotmark’s management is inadvertently or even deliberately unaware of how damaging such issues can be to their operation in the long-term. There were also observed occurrences where internal conflicts between employees were left unsolved because involved parties were too reluctant to engage with each other and instead, just waited out. As employees are considered as brand ambassadors of a company, the disconcerting communication within Dotmark is reflected in their interactions with clients and partners. Consequently, stakeholders will begin to question the digital marketing division’s, and potentially, ADT’s capability in delivering their values to users.

7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following content contains the discussion of the finding from the research. By answering the pre-determined research questions, the study will provide a summarized explanation about the impacts of employee engagement on strategic communication. Then, based on what has been learnt, the author will present the contribution of this research from a theoretical as well as managerial perspective. This chapter then proceeds to conclude the paper with the current limitation of the study and possible suggestion for future endeavors.

7.1 Findings review

To systematically summarize the findings, we will review the research questions designated in Chapter One and follow up with the answers for each of them. The sub-questions are to be presented first.

How is information received and processed in the context of Dotmark?

The main source of official information is the Head of Digital Marketing who discusses directives and plans with team leaders. Then, via an instant collaborative workspace (i.e., Slack) and face-to-face meetings, information is communicated to all employees which, theoretically, facilitates discourse and collective message interpretation. In other words, the horizontal communication structure is meant to provide workers with an opportunity to actively express their opinions and ergo, create a common understanding. However, an archive of important discussions and announcement is non-existent. As a result, information is often lost

as the conversation moves on and employees are unable to recall matters regarding strategic plans or business activities without consulting with team leaders – an inefficient practice. This discovery intrigues the researcher into questioning the levels of information awareness within Dotmark, which is represented by the second sub-question.

How much information are workers allowed to have in the context of Dotmark?

Essentially, all workers of the digital marketing division have the same information awareness level. It means that employees are allowed to know what managers know thanks to the non-hierarchical communication structure. Nonetheless, there is a delay from when team leaders create/are informed of an event to the time which the remaining personnel is noticed. This lag is so significant that it causes an information gap within Dotmark. Team leaders decide to withhold from informing team members about on-going and future developments based on their own subjective opinions about the readiness of their colleagues. As many interviewees have pointed out, assessing an individual's capability to process information without objective and well-defined metrics is equal to false assumptions.

The practice forces Dotmark's employees to engage with each other in a counter-productive way. Instead of creating new knowledge, they have to spend valuable time and resources figuring out information that should have been shared collectively which leaves workers demotivated. Consequently, these actors are not on the same page for an extended period that when they finally reach a compromise, the interpretive difference is too ingrained. Having ascertained the existence of a flaw which disables employees from achieving overall organizational goals, the study proceeds to investigate deeper into the communicative relationships within Dotmark by asking the third sub-question.

How do actors involved in the observed strategic communication affect the flow of information?

Despite the utilization of a democratic horizontal approach to communication, functional teams within the digital division work in separate communicative spheres. A team is only aware of their own tasks and responsibility with little awareness of what other teams are doing. This means that whenever a directive or message is conveyed, each team interprets that information differently and acts according to their own exclusive interpretation. Discussions are mostly for trivial matters and there is little to no peer-to-peer evaluation on topics directly relevant to Dotmark's organizational development. This is a phenomenon caused by the lack of proactive engagement. Leading figures in the organization do not express a well-defined reaction, whether positive or negative, about the communicative practices being utilized by workers. Coupled with working under a highly hierarchical context (i.e., the organizational structure of ADT), employees only appear to actively engage with each other while in fact, knowledge is not exchanged to create collective intelligence. Thus, a paradox is born – a sensemaking organization built upon the transmission perspective of communication. This is the pivotal discovery which effectively answers the ultimate research question:

How does employee engagement affect the strategic communication of an organization?

The lack of engagement can substantially affect the strategic communication of an organization. It is previously mentioned that team leaders would choose to retain or release information based on their assessment of the “growth” of coworkers. Because discourse and debates can be utilized to determine an employee's personal growth, it can be inferred that team leaders are deprived of much necessarily objective information to make better evaluations.

Therefore, knowledge is only circulated within selected few workers for an extended period and the remaining personnel must independently generate their own interpretation based on limited information. The high expectation from the management adds up to the already detrimental situation by permeating the notion of inferiority which is falsely associated with the act of asking questions.

Prevented from accessing information and received unclear orientation for organizational as well as communication practices, functional teams start to become loosely connected “oases”. Each group is so focused on themselves that they are practically unaware of what others are doing to unanimously come to an understanding. Consequently, the values and intentions they try to convey to other stakeholders are also different and in some cases, starkly in contrast. These occurrences then develop into conflicts because whenever these stakeholders interact with different team members, they are provided with inconsistent interpretations which permeate confusions. Furthermore, internal disputes are harder to resolve as workers are reluctant to engage with each other and management is largely unaware of the situation despite, ironically, borderless interaction.

The impacts of employee engagement are also demonstrated by evidence showing that there is a functional team whose members actively engage with each other. Individuals of this group are well-informed to some degree and created a common understanding of matters via discussions. This helps them create consistency in their conversation with stakeholders and spend less effort going re-confirming information that should have been clear from the start. Such productivity and organizational efficiency are overlooked by other teams because the fact remains that this group is still an “oasis” – others are unaware of the practice and thus, it cannot become shared knowledge within the division.

7.2 Theoretical and managerial contribution

This study uncovers the impacts of employee engagement on strategic communication, providing perspectives on how managing the dynamics between organizational actors can change the way an organization fulfills its long-term goals. Thus, the research manages to contribute to both strategic communication and engagement literature. Firstly, this research approaches strategic communication from a more practical direction by considering the existence of complexity within a real-world organizational environment. The research field of strategic communication itself has been evaluated by scholars to be much reliant on idealistically democratic perspectives and often bypass complicated relationships (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2015; Andersson, 2019; Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). In other words, the study broadens the literature of this research field by investigating the relevance between strategic communication and employee engagement. Previous study by scholars such as Aggerholm & Thomsen (2015) and Holtzhausen & Zerfass (2015) are too concentrated on the organization itself that they overlooked the encompassing communicative network. This thesis does not only explore the case organization but also look at the bigger picture which, consequently, figure out how outer forces can significantly impact internal communication and altering the way organizations achieve overall goals.

Secondly, the paper also contributes to employee engagement literature by using the perspective of coworkership to investigate communicative phenomena. Considering the ontology and epistemology of strategic communication, this study can be considered a theoretical evidence of coworkership's compatibility with strategic communication and potentially leads to more in-depth academic works in the future as suggested by Bergman, Löve, Hultber & Skargert (2017). Moreover, the study would like to propose the expansion of coworkership

literature in the form of a new concept called *pseudo-coworkership* where organizational actors only communicate horizontally on the surface to appeal to the public while in fact, work-related matter is transmitted vertically. This concept is characterized by the lack of engagement and a hierarchical communicative network which separate actors into detached communicative spheres with independent interpretations. Furthermore, since coworkership promotes horizontal communication for consensus it is deemed to be aligned with the definition of communicative action which also includes understanding (Habermas, 1984). On the other hand, strategic action is more vertical and purely for the strategic purpose of maintain an organization's image. Inspire the theory created by Habermas, the researcher suggests that *pseudo-coworkership*, characterized by subterfuge to generate a false image of horizontal communication, can be surmised to belong to the strategic action theory.

Apart from the theoretical contribution, there are also managerial implications from the study. The research pointed out several issues that managers, as well as organizational actors, must pay attention to when establishing a communicative environment that is diverse from the bigger communicative network that they belong to. This knowledge is considered very valuable for newly form departments or divisions that focus on creative work and community-related agenda. From the case of Dotmark, it is imperative for managers to be transparent about their intention and orientation towards specific behaviors so that a change can be properly implemented and become beneficial practice overtime. Half-hearted engagement as well as unclear intention do not only render change initiative to be ineffective but even created a kind of paradox where the actors are detached from each other. As a result, achieving overall organizational goals becomes difficult and the organization may experience abiding inefficiency.

7.3 Limitations and suggestion for future studies

Despite seeking to provide a more practical perspective to strategic communication by taking into account organizational complexity (engagement), the empirical data collected from this research primarily emphasize the “communication” aspect while discussions concerning “strategy” are mainly introductory. This is due to the time constraint of the research which prevent in-depth exploration into the strategizing practices of the case organization. Thus, the researcher elected to concentrate the scope of the study to communication practices. However, it is imperative to note that the theories of strategic communication also concern strategizing practices of actors. Specifically, it is the strategy-as-practice literature that emphasizes the plurality of involved organizational actors (Whittington, Molloy, Mayer & Smith, 2006).

In recent years, scholars have begun to study strategy as well as strategic communication based on organizational interactions to move away from the normative perspective which has been considered too optimistic (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007; Whittington, 2006). As a result, power relations in strategizing processes are gaining popularity among academic literature as it represents organizational uncertainty. By studying how the power dynamics of an organization affect its strategic communication, researchers may broaden the literature concerning the knowledge fields of not only strategic communication but also strategy and complexity.

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APPENDIX

Outlines for semi-structure interviews

Questions about the contextual environment, communication climates and openness

- How do you describe the communication climate within your team?
- What are the communication channels your team have (formal and informal)?
- Does open discussion about various topics (professional and personal) allowed? Why? Why not?
- What do you usually talk about with your colleagues?
- How frequently do you discuss directives or messages sent by upper management with others?
- What do you think about the communication climate of your team (Dotmark) compared to other teams/the whole corporation?

Questions about engagement and collective spirit

- Do you think your opinions are taken into consideration by your team's manager?
- If you do not understand the underlying motif of a task, are you willing to ask for an answer or not? Why?
- There are opinion leaders in your team. Do you think that they represent the collective voice of their peers? Why?

Interview details

Interview code	Duration
P1	37 minutes
P2	36 minutes
P3	32 minutes
P4	20 minutes
P5	23 minutes
P6	28 minutes
P7	24 minutes
P8	31 minutes

P9	20 minutes
P10	35 minutes

Questions about strategy realization

- How do you become aware of new strategic actions or plan?
- Do you think you receive enough information about such plan? Why? Why not?
- What kind of support do you receive to realize the strategy?
- How “in control” do you feel when you are put in charge of a new initiative?
- How often do you discuss plan/strategy details with your coworker?