FUTURE TRENDS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Organizational positioning in a changing environment

**Digital conference
20th of May & 27th of May 2020
2:15pm - 4:45pm
Online via Zoom**

DEAR ESTEEMED GUESTS, / DEAR PARTICIPANTS,

today's society is shaped by huge transformation processes. Issues such as sustainability and diversity have become an integral part of the public discourse and therefore have a big influence on strategic communication. One of the greatest challenges for managers and communicators today is to focus on societal values – especially in the context of increasingly digitized work processes. How organizations face up to this task has been investigated in several research projects conducted by the master class "Communication Management" of 2019 at Leipzig University. Their results are presented at the digital conference "Future Trends of Strategic Communication: Organizational Positioning in a Changing Environment" on the 21st and 27th of May 2020. This program booklet provides an overview of the event's schedule and topics. We warmly welcome you and look forward to an enriching scientific exchange.

Master Class "Communication Management", May 2020

TIMING

2:15 – 2:40 PM **OFFICIAL START**
Welcome by the host, Keynote and discussion

4:25 – 4:45 PM **FINAL WORDS**
Opportunity for final discussion and closing words by the host

20/05

DIGITIZED COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN POSITIONING

2:45 – 3:15 PM **PRESENTATION 1**
Agile vs. conventional structures: Generation Y and agility preferences in the communication sector

3:20 – 3:50 PM **PRESENTATION 2**
Strategic masculinity: Supporting female and male start-up CEOs in online gender presentation

3:55 – 4:25 PM **PRESENTATION 3**
Victory is made by humans, and so is communication: How Bundesliga football clubs use Impression Management in their Instagram communication to secure loyalty

27/05

SUSTAINABILITY IN THE COMMUNICATION SECTOR

2:45 – 3:15 PM **PRESENTATION 1**
Bridging business action and transparency demands: Sustainability reporting in grocery retail

3:20 – 3:50 PM **PRESENTATION 2**
Mobilisation through collective action frames: A concent analysis of the twitter account "Fridays For Future Germany"

3:55 – 4:25 PM **PRESENTATION 3**
Establishing relationships with key publics through political brand messages: How the fritz-kola brand answers to societal values

PANEL 1
DIGITIZED COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN POSITIONING

20/05
HOST: EMILIA BUSCHBECK

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
HOW DIGITALIZATION CHANGED COMMUNICATIONS

MARTIN FENSCH Senior Director Corporate Affairs & Diversified Products / Managing Director, Pfizer
JUTTA KLAUER Senior Manager Digital Communications, Pfizer

PRESENTATION 1
Agile vs. conventional structures: Generation Y and agility preferences in the communication sector

Alice Bacher, Henrike Janz, Mattes Kohlmeier, Janine Zehner

PRESENTATION 2
Strategic masculinity: Supporting female and male start-up CEOs in online gender presentation

Jonas Bisschop, Katja Fischer, Adrian Fonger, Alicia Hemstege, Hannah Zimmermann

PRESENTATION 3
Victory is made by humans, and so is communication: How Bundesliga football clubs use Impression Management in their Instagram communication to secure loyalty
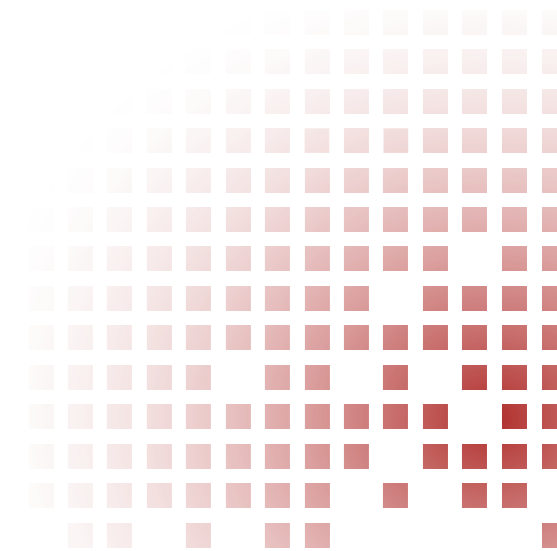
Alina Engfer, Matthias Leuker, Theresa Nickol, Theresa Ruf, Lisa Zweier

PANEL 2
SUSTAINABILITY
IN THE COMMUNICATION
SECTOR

27/05
HOST: KATJA FISCHER

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
SUSTAINABILITY IN A FAST-MOVING POLICY

MATHILDE LEMESLE Speaker for press relations and political communication, Alliance 90/The Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) state parliamentary group in the Parliament of Saxony-Anhalt

PRESENTATION 1
Bridging business action and transparency demands: Sustainability reporting in grocery retail

Julia Selina Gottschalk, Maximilian Morlock, Verena Ribnitzky, Manuel Tietze, Phoebe Toennessen

PRESENTATION 2
Mobilisation through collective action frames: A concent analysis of the twitter account "Fridays For Future Germany"

Emilia Buschbeck, Diana Elschner, Lina Funfack, Asha Terasa, Lisa-Marie Trabitzsch, Pia Weinforth

PRESENTATION 3
Establishing relationships with key publics through political brand messages: How the fritz-kola brand answers to societal values

Laura Krauel, Nicole Kupke, Paulin Ostrowski, Lydia Schwarz, Christina Weidl

AGILE VS. CONVENTIONAL STRUCTURES

GENERATION Y AND AGILITY PREFERENCES IN THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

Increasing challenges posed by the digitalization and dynamization of the corporate environment affect organizations in a wide range of dimensions, including the constant re-evaluation of the structuring of their own working environment. Agility as a corporate concept attempts to do justice to the market conditions in the VUCA world (Buchholz & Knorre, 2017) by means of structural changes (Zerfass et al., 2018). The organization's added value of agile working is seen above all in the greater flexibility as well as quicker reactions to market events and customer wishes (Gehrckens, 2016; Zerfass et al., 2018)

Looking at the future development of the professional landscape in public relations and given that the Generation Y in particular is described as a cohort of workers who, like no other generation before them, influence developments in the economy, working life and talent management (Parment, 2013), it is important to investigate the preferences of students and Young Professionals regarding agile work structures, examining which are favoured or rejected, in order to give recommendations on how to design a working environment which is appealing to them.

Due to the crucial role of the communications department in successfully implementing agile structures (Buchholz & Knorre, 2017) and it being a company-wide driver for this implementation, e.g. by creating a new corporate

culture, the observation of this sector is of particular interest.

While research and practice often focus on organizations by exploring how agile working methods can increase efficiency and effectiveness, less research has been done on how these new ways of working are perceived by employees. In particular, the attitudes of the upcoming generation of communication professionals towards agile work are largely unexplored. However, since research results show the relevance of employees for the effective implementation of agile work, a human-centered perspective is elementary (Peters et al., 2019).

In order to approach such an investigation, existing literature on agility was systematically reviewed. In a study of participants aged between 18 and 34 years, data from an online survey of 172 students and Young Professionals in the German communication sector were used to test two hypotheses: whether Students and Young Professionals prefer agile work structures to non-agile work structures, and whether Students and Young Professionals rate the sense of purpose as a more important criterion for the job choice than a high income. For the operationalization of the first hypothesis, an agility preference scale consisting of 21 items was developed based on four agility dimensions (structures, processes, people and culture) according to Zerfass et al (2018). Values between 1 and 4 were assigned to each given answer concerning agility preference and enabled the calculation of a comparable average preference score. A special interest was to investigate, which aspects of agile working are of particular

importance for the succeeding generation in order to derive recommendations for the effective implementation of the agility concept in practice.

Significant results show an overall dominant preference of agile work structures compared to conventional work structures. Since the evaluation was carried out using a comparable score for preference towards agility, structural elements were reviewed individually and ranked by popularity. On average, participants prefer the content-related aspects of the agility concept (e.g. regular feedback, continuous professional development, variety of topics and tasks) over the formal conditions it entails (e.g. open-plan offices). Several agile structures were rejected, most strongly the recurrent change of colleagues instead of working in consistent teams as well as not being assigned a permanent workstation.

The data shows a relation between higher agility preference and the high evaluation of career opportunities as an important job factor, which is remarkable, as the two aspects traditionally tend to

be in contrast to each other. Organizations should therefore possibly place emphasis on the design of agile structures without clearly defined hierarchies, but with clear prospects for advancement.

Annually repeating the study would be particularly interesting regarding the identification of trends and their significance for far-reaching structural decisions within organizations. Furthermore, follow-up research could look at a larger sample in order to investigate possible differences in agility preferences between specified groups.

Summarizing, organizations in the communications sector that want to create a future- oriented, satisfactory working environment should no longer be concerned with the question of 'whether' but rather with 'how' to implement agile structures. The study's derivation of agility into individually measurable and comparable items could prove helpful in the establishment of agile structures, that are more appreciated than rejected.

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STRATEGIC MASCULINITY

SUPPORTING FEMALE AND MALE START-UP CEOS
IN ONLINE GENDER PRESENTATION

CEOs are representing corporations both externally and internally (Men, 2012, p. 171). While many societies are becoming proceedingly aware of the economic and social gravity of diversity, the presentation of gender and the conformity with existing gender stereotypes becomes more relevant to business leaders.

This is especially an issue for female founders and leaders, since women are still underrepresented in leadership positions and must often conquer new roles and spaces against societal opposition. Meanwhile, male business leaders are also confronted with their mode of gender presentation since the term toxic masculinity has become the fanfare of a fundamental reflection on power-destructive behavioural patterns in society. In conclusion, stereotypes and the (non)compliance to them influence behavior (Schneider, 2004, p. 435) and are relevant factors when creating intangible values.

Since communicators increasingly become consultants, advisors and coaches to business leaders, we conducted this research to develop recommendations helping professional communicators and their respective CEOs to reflect on the presentation of gender and the effect of gender positioning on their strategic communication goals. For this matter, we researched the influence of gender representation in the social media communication

of the CEOs of start-up businesses on the perception of their business and its leader.

Our study was built upon a theoretical framework which took the findings on gender stereotypes and their association with typical manager attributes into account, especially the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) with each 20 typical female, male and neutral characteristics (Bem, 1974, p. 155f.) and the 92-Item Schein Descriptive Index (SDI), which collected a series of attributes that were either perceived as female, male or typical attribute of a manager (Schein, 1973, p. 96).

While research literature has sufficiently shown which characteristics are associated with men, women and successful managers, the influence of stereotyped communication and the extent to which it contributes to gender-specific role thinking and company valuation has not yet been investigated.

To explore our case, we conducted an online experiment, the sample of which consisted of young professionals, who either were already members of the labourforce or expected soon to enter their professional career. In the end, our sample had a size of n=234 valid cases.

Our experiment followed a two by three design of hypothetical female and male CEOs, each of whom communicating either in a stereotypical feminine, masculine or gender neutral way. They were presented to our probands as CEOs of a fictitious start-up business that was placed in a gender neutral industry, as

senders of LinkedIn posts that varied in content and language among the different stimulus groups. After being exposed to our stimulus, the recipients were asked to estimate the CEO's compliance to a set of typical female, male and manager-attributes and their guess about the business's reputation. The probands were also asked to estimate their own fit in the tested scale of gender attributes.

We formulated and tested 12 hypotheses about possible correlations between the mode of gender presentation, the perceived compliance with existing gender stereotypes and the ascribed business reputation. Moreover, we also tested to which extent e. g. the recipients' own gender was an interfering variable to these correlations.

Our findings show that often there were very few significant differences between typically female and male communicating CEOs in the reception of their gender and the attribution of reputation to their business. Yet, we can state as a result with statistical

significance that the perception of male CEOs differs depending on their communication style. Those who communicate in a stereotypical masculine way are perceived more often as successful entrepreneurs compared to their rather feminine (p=0,003) or neutral (p=0,036) communicating colleagues. It seems, a strategic presentation of gender can help male CEOs to communicate more successfully.

In 1991, Eagly & Karau stated that "the best way for women to achieve leadership is to emulate male behavior" (Eagly & Karau, 1991, p. 705). Our study implicates otherwise: the data show no significant differences between feminine, masculine or neutral communication of female CEOs regarding the perceived compliance with gender stereotypes or the attribution of reputation to their business - a result that could well take off some pressure and encourage female entrepreneurs to make other aspects than the complicity with gender stereotypes in communication the strategic priority.

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VICTORY IS MADE BY HUMANS, AND SO IS COMMUNICATION

HOW BUNDESLIGA FOOTBALL CLUBS USE IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

IN THEIR INSTAGRAM COMMUNICATION TO SECURE LOYALTY

In Germany, football is moving, popularizing and emotionalizing the masses (Banke, 2013, p.10). Since football clubs rely on their fan's support, it is crucial to build relationships based on honesty and trust. This is why the basics of public relations – people and relationships – play a central role for sport clubs. The result of a game is never predictable which may create challenges for communicators as they have to react instantly and address emotions of several parties appropriately. A suitable medium for human-centered sport communication is social media. It enables clubs to closely connect with their fans (Kainz et al., 2014, p. 45). Thus, football clubs can be human, real and approachable to the public. The popular platform Instagram is a suitable way to communicate and interact with stakeholders (Plume et al., 2017, p. 1). It creates a community which celebrates its heroes after victories and moves closer together after defeats (Kainz et al., 2014, p. 45).

Due to its interactive and visual character, Instagram provides football clubs space for Impression Management, which refers to the self-presenta- tion of organisations to position themselves in a socially relevant interaction context (Mummendey, 2004, p. 1). In literature a distinction is made between the strategic use of positive Impression Management techniques following the aim to reinforce or maintain a positive image, whereas negative techniques are used as a protection from failure and thus to avoid damage to the image (Laux & Schütz, 1996, p. 47).

While the use of Impression Management techniques has been examined in other organizational contexts, the application of the techniques in the social media communication of football clubs has not yet been investigated. Because of the great social relevance and the emotionalising character of the sport it is important to investigate how football clubs communicate on Instagram with the help of the techniques and how their communication strategy differs after defeats and victories.

In order to fill this research gap a quantitative content analysis of the Instagram profiles of three Bundesliga clubs with different levels of success (FC Bayern Munich, SV Werder Bremen and Hannover 96) was conducted to examine the Impression Management techniques used for the communication after defeats compared to the ones after victories. In a second step, the image content is categorized by use of a qualitative image sorting study. The timeframe of the analysis covers the two seasons 2017/18 and 2018/19 in order to ensure both high actuality and an appropriate sample of 319 game-related posts.

Results show that both after victories and defeats, on average more positive than negative techniques were used. By using more positive than negative techniques after defeats, the clubs present themselves as morally exemplary, demonstrate openness and provoke emotional empathy. This allows them to establish honesty- and trust-based relationships which creates value not only for the football club but also for the fans who thus feel more connected. When communicating after victories, the clubs focus on bringing their great personal achievements to the fore and presenting the victory in a dramatized and emotionalised way and thus creating the association of their team with success and establishing a positive image in the public perception.

Regarding the image content, football clubs therefore focus on the own team and its success after victories to strengthen the positive perception of the club and reinforce the fans' sense of belonging to the club. After defeats the visual language gives the impression that the team has fought and asks the recipients to show compassion and acknowledge the fighting spirit of their team. Overall, it can be assumed that the clubs put fans at the centre of communication strategies to gain acceptance and trust, regardless of the sporting success.

Especially in the context of football with its great social relevance, the study showed how important it is for football clubs to be guided by human values when presenting themselves on Instagram in order to create long-term engagement with fans and avoiding reputational damage (Piwinger & Bazil, 2014, p. 206).

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BRIDGING BUSINESS ACTION AND TRANSPARENCY DEMANDS

SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING IN GROCERY RETAIL

It is a segment that acts as an interface connecting consumers and products: grocery retail. Especially in dynamic times and an associated increasing demand for information, a focus on this role of a human-centred organization is essential. Therefore, integrating the concerns of stakeholders into corporate and communicative activities and reflecting on social responsibility is a crucial approach (Heinrich & Schmidpeter 2018, p. 6).

According to the concept of the triple bottom line, previous research classifies the macro-social obligation in the three dimensions of economic, environmental, and social responsibility. Thus, the task is to ensure that corporate activities do not negatively affect these aspects and human welfare (Elkington 1997, p. 19-21). In order to make the efforts and the organization itself accessible to the public in the context of these aspects, open communication is indispensable.

A valid medium for communicating openly is the sustainability report, which presents corporate strategy and actions transparently with regard to this multidimensionality and enables a trustful dialogue with relevant stakeholders (Fifka 2014, p. 5). In this context, standardization according to postulated guidelines such as those of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (2019) is often discernible. Public trust and credibility can be identified as the central

communicative mechanisms of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its dimensions, the value of which lies in gaining public acceptance and legitimization. Since it is constituted by the communication of social responsibility, trust is a key goal of strategic communication (Bentele 1994, p. 132). The theoretical framework is provided by Bentele's theory of public trust (1994), which focuses on a processual relationship. Within this trust process, corporate communication and its measures can be determined as a significant facilitator of trust.

Due to the essential importance of grocery retailing for society and its impact on the environment, CSR should be considered as an integral part of the core business. In view of the lack of empirical data about the sustainability reporting of grocery retailers, an in-depth quantitative content analysis of nine published sustainability reports was conducted. The main research question in this study was to what extent grocery retailers in Germany communicate their CSR through sustainability reports. For the purpose of making qualified statements, this was enhanced by sub hypothesis deducted from the literature.

The study reveals that the social dimension of the triple bottom line concept dominated in the case of a clear assignment. Nevertheless, the extent and depth of the three dimensions' thematization differed among grocery retailers. Moreover, employees, suppliers, and consumers were identified as relevant stakeholder groups of grocery retailers. Their prioritization makes it evident that the human aspect is at the centre of their entre

preneurial operations. In line with previous research, the results indicate that negatively connotated business practices are rarely disclosed in sustainability reports. As a conclusion, there might be a presumption that organizations change the content to their advantage or generally do not integrate it in their report. Another research assumption regarding the GRI standards (GRI 2019) was confirmed, as a positive correlation was observed between the use of these standards and increasing trust, as well as between the number of words and the trust attributed. This reveals that trust can be built through comprehensive, comparable reporting and a high degree of standardization. Although there are differences in the implementation of these guidelines among grocery retailers, the application of these argues for a professionalization of the communication of CSR activities.

The results of the report indicate beneficial insights into how CSR communication is implemented in the grocery retail segment and in sustainability reports. It reveals the role of this communicative medium as a bridge between entrepreneurial activity and the license to operate. This research contributes to emphasize the necessity of considering relevant stakeholders with all their demands and provides practical implications for communicators of all industry sectors. It stressed once again the importance of public relations as an enabler and creator of relationships based on trust and transparency.

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MOBILISATION THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE TWITTER ACCOUNT "FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE GERMANY"

In 2018, United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, called climate change "the most systemic threat to humankind" (United Nations, 2018). Since its emergence in the same year, the social movement Fridays for Future (FFF) has shaped the public discourse on the climate crisis and climate policy worldwide (Marks, 2019). FFF has brought public attention to an existential crisis of humankind and mobilises for the need to act and prevent this crisis. Although being controversially discussed, the movement raised hope for a brighter, sustainable future with a young generation fighting for it worldwide. Sommer et al. (2019) identified their framing strategy as one crucial element of the movement's success.

According to Snow and Benford (2000), social movements frequently make use of so-called collective action frames, which consist of three key elements: motivational, diagnostic and prognostic frames (p. 613-615). Their theory has been the basis for a large body of research concerning the framing used by social movements (Terriquez, Brenes, & Lopez, 2018; Bennett & Segerberg, 2011; Snow & Byrd, 2007). So far, no in-depth analyses of framing on FFF's social media channels were conducted, although the movement is active on several platforms; for instance, the movement actively uses the microblog Twitter, as it is a space for "public negotiation of political issues" (Thimm et al., 2017, p. 262).

Considering the great relevance of Twitter and the role of framing for the success of social movements, the following research question arises: "Which frames does the FFF movement use to design its communication on the Twitter account 'Fridays for Future Germany' in the twelve months since the account was founded?". Three hypotheses were stated, concerning the occurrence and specific characteristics of the three different frames.

To pursue this matter, a quantitative content analysis of the 1382 tweets posted on the Twitter account of Fridays for Future Germany (@FridayForFuture) in the first 12 months of the account's existence was conducted. As images play an increasingly important role in mass media an additional qualitative image-sorting-study was conducted prior to the main study.

The results indicate that FFF uses collective action frames according to the assumptions of Benford and Snow (2000). However, differences between the three frames depending on their intended purpose and addressees can be found. The motivational frame makes more use of visual material and integrates images that especially portray demonstrations and their participants. This indicates that FFF uses the emotional aspect of visual imagery to mobilise for participation. The motivational frame was also identified as the most frequently used frame within the study. Furthermore, its use increases with time proximity to the global climate strikes, which can be interpreted as an enhanced attempt to mobilize people for FFF's cause. Prognostic and diagnostic frames on the other hand are mostly found in combination with each other. While the diagnostic frame points out socially relevant problems, the prognostic frame finds direct logical connection through presenting solutions and alternatives offered by the movement. Together, they are used to construct consequential statements mostly addressing decision-makers in politics and economy.

These findings provide twofold utility by confirming the usage of collective action framing proposed in research literature on social media, likewise, differentiating the associated communicative characteristics. The movement's mobilisation success argues for a transfer of virtually induced interpretation effects into real space, which emphasizes the importance of strategic communication to guide societal change.

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ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH KEY PUBLICS THROUGH POLITICAL BRAND MESSAGES

HOW THE FRITZ-KOLA BRAND ANSWERS TO SOCIETAL VALUES

Sustainability, diversity and social responsibility: Issues like these are becoming increasingly important in today's society. Regarding this societal transformation process, public relations practitioners have to tie up with their stakeholders' values and expectations by shifting the organizational focus on building trustworthy relationships. According to the theory of relationship management, "effective management of organization-public relationships supports mutual understanding and benefit" (Ledingham, 2003, p. 195). This perspective not only reflects upon the values created for organizations "but also for the publics those organizations serve and the societies in which they exist" (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, p. xiii).

Aligning brands with specific political values and opinions is a new and innovative approach of building relationships with key publics. As consumers are increasingly demanding a political positioning, companies recently have been making efforts to build brand identities guided by evolving social principles (Lambertin, 2019; Reichertz, 2019). This creation of value-based, symbolic brand benefits is described as "Purpose Marketing" (Reichertz, 2019) and includes the alignment of brands as "Corporate Citizens" (Kemming, 2019, p. 138). One representative of this strategy is the German beverage brand fritz-kola, which was chosen as a research object. Especially on its social media

channels the brand regularly addresses socially relevant issues, which are particularly expected to appeal to the LOHAS – "Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability" (Helmke, Scherberich, & Uebel, 2016, S. 1) – consumer target group. Besides the theoretical foundation, the orientation of brands as political actors in practice has hardly been empirically researched so far, especially not by taking on a rather consumer-oriented view.

Therefore, the study to be presented examined the political brand communication of fritz-kola with a multi-method research design. In a first step, a qualitative image content analysis was conducted to investigate how the brand incorporates political statements into its posts on the social network Instagram. In a second step, a quantitative online survey amongst 235 participants was realized to research whether the political messages are successfully communicated to consumers, and how these messages are perceived. The established hypotheses were based on the results of the content analysis and examined the respondents' knowledge of the political brand communication and their attitudes towards it. It was found that the political statements in the brand's Instagram posts can be assigned to different subject areas: politicians, social policy and sustainability. The content indicates a positioning against right-wing parties as a clear political opinion. It was noticeable that the posts were oriented towards the political values of the LOHAS target group, especially regarding

sustainability. Although the online survey concluded that respondents knew little about the political messages, they were generally positive and open-minded about them. It was furthermore found that the value-oriented brand communication was particularly appealing to members of the LOHAS target group, even though they too showed a lack of knowledge. This finding indicates that the positioning of fritz-kola as a Corporate Citizen is not successfully communicated to key publics, despite the positive attitude towards this kind of Purpose Marketing.

In order to deepen consumers' knowledge of the value-oriented brand identity, the brand needs to continuously expand their political communication. The LOHAS target group offers an attractive starting point for consolidating an organization-public relationship through sustainability communication to build collaborative networks with stakeholders. The establishment of strong, value-oriented brand identities that appeal to promising consumer groups is an effective way to stand out alongside competing brands. In connection with the use of recent technologies such as social media, this practice represents a new professional capability in the field of public relations that contributes to a more meaningful and approachable understanding of business.

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