Silent Communication -
A Challenge to Established Marketing Communication Practice
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Key words: Silent communication, marketing communication, relationship communication, service-dominant logic, brand management

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SILENT COMMUNICATION – A CHALLENGE TO ESTABLISHED
MARKETING COMMUNICATION PRACTICE

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SILENT COMMUNICATION – A CHALLENGE TO ESTABLISHED MARKETING COMMUNICATION PRACTICE

Conceptual paper

Purpose
The paper examines the concept of silent communication and its implications in marketing communication. It defines silent communication and proposes an analytic framework enabling an expanded view of marketing communication.

Design/methodology/approach
By explicitly adopting a customer-oriented perspective, combined with insights from service marketing and relationship communication, the paper extends current models of marketing communication.

Findings
The paper identifies different types of silent communication and presents new perspectives on marketing communication. The authors outline a framework for understanding how the company can/cannot control different forms of marketing communication and discuss the implications of this.

Research implications/limitations
The paper concentrates on a conceptual analysis, offering a number of empirical illustrations. The conceptual development creates new research issues that should lead to a deeper understanding of customers’ meaning creation, actions and reactions.

Practical implications
Silent communication constitutes a managerial challenge as it is often invisible to the management. The paper points to the need to develop methods to reveal the effects of silent communication as well as create guidelines for managerially handling silent communication.

Originality/value
The customer-based perspective and the focus on silent communication provide a completely new approach to analysing and understanding marketing communication. The paper contributes to service marketing and marketing communication research by introducing conceptualisations of silent communication that have an interest for both academic research and practitioners.

KEYWORDS: Silent communication, marketing communication, relationship communication, service-dominant logic, brand management
INTRODUCTION

Several years ago Duncan and Moriarty (1998) argued that although customer relationship-based thinking had been introduced as a new marketing approach, the critical role of communication was still not fully recognized and understood. In their view the relationship marketing literature had generally focused on the outcome of communication and had failed to include the communication process as a critical dimension in relationship building. Consequently they suggested a communication-based marketing model for managing relationships, which should be based on studying the influence of interactivity and how meaning is created among customers. Compared to traditional marketing communication this represented a new approach. In traditional marketing communication the company is the driver and director of the meaning created concerning corporate and brand images. The situation is still largely the same, even though there are a few studies that focus on customer-based relationship communication (Lindberg-Repo 2001, Finne 2004, Finne and Grönroos 2009).

Schultz (2006), a prominent proponent of integrated marketing communication (IMC), has recently pointed out the need to take a new approach in order to recognize the customer’s active role in marketing communication. Indeed, he admits:

"The error I made was in thinking that integration could be driven by what the marketer or agency did or could do. That is, that integration was how the marketer arranged his marketing and communications messages, how he sent them out, how he measured the marketplace result. That’s not how integration works – not at all. Marketers don’t do the integrating, consumers do. That is, the
real value of integration occurs at the customer end, not the marketer end of the process.” (Schultz 2006, p.7)

However, there is still limited knowledge on what the implications are of this shift of perspective.

Interestingly, in the service literature a similar shift in focus has been proposed when discussing a service-dominant logic or service logic and a focus on value-in-use has been proposed (Grönroos 1978, 2006, 2008, Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008). This focus is based on the view that value is created when customers use resources provided by the service company rather than on the notion of built-in value in services delivered to the customer. It has been suggested that the concept of service should be used to denote the customer-dominant process instead of the traditional producer-based product. Both streams of literature assume that value emerges in interactions between a service provider and a customer and that the service provider to a large extent can control the process. In this paper we will challenge this view but we will delimit our discussion to communication issues. The company-centered view will be contrasted with a customer-centered view, where the basic assumption is that companies have marginal influence on how value is created, even if different companies’ services and physical products are used in the process. Focusing on communication, we explore implications of the standpoint that empowered customers take an active role in their communication and interaction with companies.

Based on a review of the literature, we argue that the current marketing communications, service management and relationship marketing literature is overly optimistic about companies’ possibilities to control interactions and communication with customers, and that this leads to overlooking the problem of silent or invisible
We define silent communication as occurring when no communication seems to take place from the marketer’s point of view but still does so from the customer’s point of view. In other words the communication is not heard or seen by the marketer. This problem has only partially been discussed in earlier academic literature and does not seem to be recognized in practice either, as we will demonstrate in the paper.

Silent communication occurs in many forms. We also consider communication that is assumed to take place, but in fact does not, to be a form of silent, invisible communication. Our approach cuts through established categorizations of messages as being planned, unplanned, service, product or absent messages (Calonius 1989, Duncan and Moriarty 1997, Grönroos 2000). A part of the marketers’ planned communication is silent for example when it communicates something else than the marketers intended and they are not aware of this. Silent communication also includes absence of communication: Planned absence is visible for and controllable by the marketer whereas unplanned absence of communication can be categorized as silent. Silent communication is relative and marketer-dependent: it is a question of how well the marketer is aware of customer processes and outcomes of all kinds of communication.

The aim of this paper is to examine the implications for marketing communication practice when it is assumed that customers are active integrators of communication about a company or brand. This encompasses not only intentional communication from the company but any communication from any source about the company. Our approach builds on ideas discussed in recent service literature where a service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008) or service logic (Grönroos 2006, 2008) has been
proposed. The paper challenges current conceptual models of marketing communication by adopting a customer-based perspective. Drawing on traditional marketing communication research, service management research, and insights from relationship communication research, we propose a framework that expands the categories of communication by including the customer relationship context. Not only do we propose silent communication as a new category of communication, but we also argue that silent communication may have more influence on customers than the explicit communication recognized and managed by a company. Thus a real challenge for marketing management is to see, i.e. notice and understand, more of the currently silent and invisible communication. In this paper we put the emphasis on exploring and making explicit the implications and challenges for the marketer.

The paper is structured as follows. The conceptual framework consists of two elements. First, the paper conceptualizes customer activity in communication by outlining an Activity Matrix. Second, different modes and outcomes of communication are outlined in a Communication Matrix. Next, the implications for managers are discussed by characterizing different types of contact points, and finally suggestions for future research are offered.

**Customer activity in communication**

The traditional communication perspective, with a sender (company) sending a message and a receiver (customer) receiving it (see for example Schramm 1971), gives a far too narrow picture of what can occur in a customer relationship in terms of communication. This traditional perspective has been criticized because it sees the customer as a passive object (Buttle 1995). On one hand customers have acquired more power in the
communication flow (Schultz and Barnes 1999), and on the other hand increasing competition has brought about a need for a better understanding of how customers perceive different messages. Thus, there are several arguments for focusing more on the consumer/customer in the communication process.

In advertising research, Percy, Rossiter and Elliott (2001) have suggested two dimensions, an activity dimension and a contextual dimension, to characterize customer activity. According to these researchers, most advertising studies consider the audience to be passive with no contextual influence. However, a few recent researchers position themselves in the opposite camp where the audience is assumed to be active and contextual influence is taken into account. A stronger focus on the customer raises the question of the participants’ roles in the communication process, where the receiver should not be seen as a passive receiving object, but as an active individual who creates his own meaning from a variety of messages. Meaning can be defined as ‘... one outcome of perception; meaning formation is a process within the perceptual process’ (Friedmann and Zimmer 1988: 31). The meaning-based model by Mick and Buhl (1992) stresses the role and influence of the customer’s life history, personally interest-driven life projects and life themes on the subjective outcome of marketing communication. Thus Mick and Buhl recognize the influence of a time perspective, which is also the case when a customer-relationship view is applied. Therefore, studies on relationship communication including customer activity and context may offer additional insights about the communication process.

During the last decade relationship marketing has developed increasingly as a fruitful approach. Associated with this paradigm, the term relationship communication, which
emphasizes interaction between the company and the customer over time, has started to be used especially amongst researchers representing marketing communication research within the Nordic School (Grönroos 2000b, Gummesson 1995, Lindberg-Repo 2001, Finne 2004, Finne and Grönroos 2009). As there are two parties in a relationship, the challenge for a service company is not only to integrate its own communication as such, as is proposed in the integrated marketing communication tradition, but also to understand how the customer integrates the communication and reacts on it.

On one hand customer activity can be seen as the customers’ mental activity in creating meaning from messages received, which means that the message is interpreted and integrated with other information about the company or their offering as well as other information that is associated with the context. Interrelated with this mental activity is the customers’ behavioural activity in terms of taking communication initiatives, searching for information, responding to company communication, and communicating with peers. In contrast, a passive customer is one that is seen as merely the target of the marketer’s communication activities and is assumed to respond to the specific activity by accepting the message as intended.

The current categorization of marketing communication sources

Several researchers have advocated a broad view of what can be defined as messages (Duncan and Moriarty 1997, Grönroos 2000b, Fortini-Campbell 2003). Building on Duncan and Moriarty (1997) and Calonius (1989), Grönroos suggests five kinds of messages: planned marketing communication, product messages, service messages, unplanned communication, and absence of communication (Grönroos 2000a, and 2000b). Planned marketing communication consists of traditional marketing
communication such as advertising, brochures, sales promotion, and personal selling, in which the company can control the content of the message. Product messages are messages that the customer perceives when using the product, such as usefulness, design, raw materials, and pricing. Service messages consist of messages received from interactions with service processes or other customers, deliveries, and claims handling. Unplanned communication encompasses for example word-of-mouth, news in various media, and gossip.

In addition, Grönroos (2000b) has introduced a fifth source of communication: absence of communication, arguing that Duncan and Moriarty’s (1997) sources are all so called inputs in an ongoing dialogue. Referring to Calonius (1989) Grönroos proposes that the absence of communication sends messages too, and therefore contributes to the communication process as a whole. Examples of the absence of communication are for example silence after a service breakdown, or lack of information about a process in progress (Calonius 1989, Grönroos 2000b).

The traditional way of describing sources of communication focuses solely on the company. In contrast, we introduce a different view of marketing communication by constructing a communication matrix that also includes the customer’s point of view. We will next focus more closely on the customer by examining the concept of silent communication. The term refers to what the customer perceives when no communication seems to take place from the company’s point of view. The point of silent communication is that the currently suggested categories can be divided into explicit and implicit silence. For example, there may be absence of communication that is deliberate from a company perspective, but there may also be absence of
communication that is not recognized by the company, and this is silent communication, too.

**Different types of silent communication based on marketer/customer activity**

We will next examine the company’s and the customer’s communication activities in order to offer a deeper understanding of the different types of silent communication occurring in a relationship context. In contrast to the traditional view where the company initiates communication, we propose that the customer may actively ask for, look for or listen to information without noticing any communication activity from the company. This active customer may perceive the marketer’s passivity as a message in itself. It can also be the other way around, i.e. the customer does not bother to listen actively even though there is a message from a company to see or hear.

Traditionally communication has been based on the notion of an active sender. The receiver has been considered as an object in the communication process. However, when seen as equal parties in the process, both marketer activity and customer activity have to be taken into account. This can be done by using a two-dimensional matrix, here called the *activity matrix*, where both the marketer and the customer in the relationship can be either active or passive (Table 1). The activity matrix facilitates a discussion of different types of communication and gives a nuanced picture of the communication process. It also helps to define and understand the concept of silent communication. We propose four categories of silent communication from a marketer’s perspective: 1) miscommunication (A), 2) marketer monologue (B), 3) marketer non-response (C), and 4) tacit communication or no communication (D).
In a relationship setting the ideal kind of communication, i.e. the dialogue represents the norm. Both parties in the communication process are active. There should be good conditions for effective communication. Still silent communication may occur (upper left field in Table 1). The key question is how the customer perceives the message. Miscommunication can be caused for example by distortion, disruption, confusion, and misunderstanding (see Mortensen 1997, Russo, Medvec and Meloy 1996, 1998, Svenson 1996).

When the marketer is active but the customer is passive a *marketer monologue* (lower left corner in Table 1) emerges. Jacoby and Hoyer (1990) estimate that at least 21.4% of advertising in magazines is totally misunderstood, and as much as 96.5% of the TV-viewers misunderstand at least part of a TV-commercial. If no contact and connection can be reached between the participants in the communication process (Lindberg-Repo 2001), the communication can be categorized as silent, even if the marketer claims the opposite. The silence is invisible to the marketer. Customers’ reasons for not participating can for example be based on lack of involvement, or the perception of being the wrong target group or simply being out of reach.

The opposite situation can, however, also occur. By moving to the right column in the activity matrix, we encounter another type of silent communication: *marketer non-response* (upper right corner in Table 1), partly described by Calonius (1989) and Grönroos (2000b). In this type the activity has become reversed, i.e. the customer is active but the marketer remains passive. When Calonius (1989) presented the concept of
absence of communication, he described a passive marketer but did not discuss an active customer. Such situations are for example the customer’s requests for complementing specification, price details, delivery or technical information, service inquiries, and requests for compatible additional equipment, when the company does not respond by sending the requested information.

The fourth type of communication is labelled *tacit communication* (lower right corner in Table 1) and this has not been previously discussed in the marketing communication literature. In tacit communication both parties are passive, but the structure for communication is present because of an existing relationship. Even if no explicit messages are sent, shared meaning might nevertheless be created, and this should therefore be seen as a type of relationship communication. Seen from a traditional communication perspective this is uninteresting because nothing appears to take place. However, when aware of these types of communication which result in appreciation and value creation, the marketer can both save money and show respect for customer integrity. For example, the annual renewing of a subscription can be done without extensive communication, perhaps only by means of SMS or e-mail. The company might remain passive until communication is really necessary, and even then it could be on a minimum level. This can be based on tacit knowledge in communication (Lindberg-Repo 2001), resulting in mutual silence for example when the customer knows that a subscription continues unless otherwise indicated.

To sum up, marketer monologue (B), marketer non-response (C) and tacit communication (D) are all classified as silent communication. In all three meaning is created, but no dialogue occurs. Miscommunication (A) represents a similar situation
even though both parties are active in the communication and this can thus be seen as a fourth type of silent communication.

The communication matrix: a broader scope for marketing communication

Next, we will turn to a model of how different communication forms and practices are related to silent communication. In this paper, we advocate for an extended view that goes beyond the traditional sender focus. We suggest a model, the communication matrix, which combines theories from marketing communication with service logic and insights from relationship marketing. We do this by elaborating silent communication along two dimensions (Figure 1) covering mode of communication and outcome of communication. The resulting communication matrix depicts four different archetypical fields of communication. All fields may be simultaneously active and relevant in practice.

Insert Figure 1 here

On the horizontal axis we portray message explicitness labeled mode of communication on a continuum ranging from explicit communication to embedded communication. In a somewhat similar way Grönroos (2000b) proposed that communication can be divided into distinct communication and interactions resembling our categorization. He suggested that distinct communication tends to give promises while in the interactions promises are fulfilled.

Explicit communication denotes what companies explicitly say or do in their marketing communication. Different traditional and new media can be used to do this. These
actions are discussed in detail in the marketing communication literature. In practice the marketing and sales functions in companies are responsible for a large part of the explicit communication, for example, advertising or promises in sales interactions. *Embedded communication* is not as direct as explicit communication even if it might be deliberate and planned. It is embedded in the product, service or company itself and is revealed when the customer uses the product or service. This type of communication, which corresponds to the value-in-use view, might take place over long periods of time and might be detached from company control. Such communication is often not the responsibility of marketing and is not called marketing, but is rather seen as an aspect of what other functions in the company control. For example, product and service design, the servicescape, the conduct of the personnel, corporate social responsibility actions, and the handling of complaints contain embedded communication. If we accept the notion that everything connected with the company communicates and is the responsibility of management, this does not mean that everything can be controlled to the same degree by management. Communication where the sources are embedded in the market context, such as other customers, competitors, or the press, represents a still more uncontrollable form of communication about the company.

On the vertical axis we describe *type of communication outcome* which is divided into immediate meaning and emerging meaning. Outcome is considered to be the result of how the customer has processed and used the communication and constructed meanings about the company: *Immediate meaning* refers to a communication outcome that is formed instantly in a purchasing or service episode. *Emerging meaning* is more relationship-oriented and indirect and is based on value-in-use experiences. In this case the outcome is largely unpredictable from the company’s point of view, as the emerging
meaning is contextual and is based on the interplay between many influencing factors, including historical factors (Rindell 2007). The customers construct their image of the company partly based on elements outside the company’s control. Again, when moving upwards in Figure 1, the whole outcome dimension can be seen as a continuum representing decreasing company control.

The resulting four archetypical situations represent different challenges in terms of silent communication. In the lower left hand field, combining explicit communication and immediate meaning, the communication process is solely based on a marketer/company focus. Miscommunication in planned marketing campaigns (A) belongs to this field, as does communication that does not reach the target consumer. In Table 2 some examples are presented to illustrate silent communication in the four different situations.

Insert Table 2 here

In the lower right hand field, representing embedded communication and immediate meaning, the communication is more implicit. Product design, package planning, raw material selection, service scripts and servicescapes as well as the behavior and appearance of the personnel represent sources that may bring about immediate meaning construction. However, including only those factors that the company can control would give too narrow a view. Some of the processes are largely uncontrollable, but from a customer perspective they are still part of communication about the company, for example, the behavior of associated business partners, and the company’s presence in the media.
The upper left hand field portrays the combination of explicit communication and emerging meaning. This refers to communication that creates a meaning over time in the customer relationship or as consistent brand messages. For a customer this corresponds to emerging value-in-use in the relationship. Also here silent communication may be a managerial challenge.

The upper right hand field, embedded communication and emerging meaning, represents a field that is largely beyond the control of the company. Still communication about the company and the brand occurs. Traditionally, the company/marketer perspective has not covered these issues, as the company has little power to influence these kinds of communication processes and communication outcomes. However, the significance for the customer might be high. Word-of-mouth, customer communities, and customers’ own experiences over time might be very powerful sources of information, when the customers construct their image of a company. The absence of a message from the company can be evident for the customer, even when the company is unaware of this. Critical incidents may pass unnoticed. We suggest that a significant part of the meaning created by customers belongs to this category.

To summarize, the curved line in Figure 1 that covers the lower left hand corner represents communication that is often visible to the marketer. Thus, the curve in the figure represents a visibility line for the communication from a management point of view. Still, silent communication may be present in all situations but with different characteristics, as suggested by the letters in the figure corresponding to different types of silent communication. According to our definition, silent communication is silent in the sense that no communication seems to take place from the marketer’s point of view.
but it still does so from the customer’s perspective. We suggest that marketing communication strategists can address these challenges by considering marketing communication in a broader and more strategic sense than traditionally. This requires new approaches and techniques in order to more fully understand the customers’ viewpoint. Although in practice it would be impossible to completely cover the customer’s perspective, an explicit interest in silent communication would improve companies’ understanding of their brand equity and customer equity as well as clarify their real strengths and weaknesses in the market.

Discussion and implications

The aim of this paper was to present a new framework for marketing communication management by combining traditional marketing communication research, service management research, and insights from relationship communication research. This extended marketing communication framework offers a contribution to the emerging service logic. Applying service logic gives a reason and need for the marketing management to extend their perspective from being based on traditional information transfer to a focus on customers’ meaning creation. Thus, the focal point here is the customer-integrated communication perspective. Compared to earlier views on the interaction between the service company and the customer presented, for example, by Grönroos (2006. p.2), where he argues that customers should be seen as a resource participating as co-producers in the service production process, we would shift the focus even further to center on the customer and the customer’s activities. Consequently, we propose that the service company should see itself as a resource participating as a co-producer of services in the customer’s tasks and everyday life. This shift in perspective has profound consequences. When the customer is in the driver’s seat, it becomes
necessary to understand more holistically how the service fits into the customer’s activity pattern and life. Information needs to be gathered with a new scope and probably using new methods (see for example Korkman 2005). Without such insights, both explicit and silent marketing communication will be less effective or may even be completely misplaced. The marketing information should support the customer’s processes, activities and life. The aim should not be to sell but to make it easy to buy.

This paper provides a conceptual framework for understanding different forms of marketing communication from a customer’s perspective, which is still related to the company’s perspective, and thus illustrates managerial challenges to marketing communication practices.

In the service literature it has often been proposed that a key characteristic for managing services is the need to focus on the interactions with the customer. We do not argue that this should not be the case, as long as it is understood to include all interactions. In this paper, we have put forward the suggestion that those interactions that are not seen by the service company might be equally or even more decisive in shaping the customer’s image of the company than those that are seen. Even when an interaction is planned and managed, the outcome in terms of meaning constructed in the mind of the customer may be different from what was intended. Consequently, there is a need to start from how customers structure their image of a company, what factors they pay attention to (not what the service company pays attention to) and why, as well as how these images may change over time.
Managerial challenges

At all levels in the company there is a need to shift from delivering messages to receivers to a strategy which includes a deeper understanding of how customers create meaning according to their context and communication history. This involves moving towards creating a true dialogue between company and customer, which leads not only to better market understanding but also to greater customer knowledge resulting in long-lasting customer relationships and higher profitability. The communication and activity matrices presented in this paper can be used as tools in shaping such a communication strategy. A key managerial challenge is to be able to collect relevant information about the customer. Such information cannot be collected without being able to pose the most relevant questions. What questions seem relevant to managers (and researchers) is again related to which perspectives are used. We believe that our models enable new perspectives which will lead to a better understanding of what questions need to be answered in marketing communication.

From a managerial point of view the paper suggests that, if we accept the assumption that everything about the company communicates, we need to understand communication more broadly than has been done in traditional planned communication. It is important to acknowledge that different forms of explicit communication may lead not only to achieving planned results but also to yielding unplanned outcomes. A shift from traditional focusing on opportunity-to-see communication activities and explicit customer behavior to focusing on customer activities and meaning creation necessitates a broader view on communication activities. Common practice in marketing communication has been to focus on the quantity of contacts with the customer. What this paper sees as essential is, however, the need to recognize the quality of the contacts
as well.

We have stressed the importance of looking at created meaning rather than simple attention or immediate behavioral response, and thus we consider the customer to be an active creator of meaning rather than a passive target for communication. In practice, this means that the effect of communication activities should be studied more in-depth, not only after the fact but also in the planning process. The real challenge is to not only pay attention to traditional communication activities, such as planned media campaigns and publicity campaigns (explicit communication creating deliberate intended meaning), but to take into consideration activities outside the visibility line of communication. Silent communication is not only silent in the sense that it communicates when it is not supposed to; it is often also invisible to the management.

This challenge has been expressed by Schultz and Schultz as follows:

“The company is the brand and the brand is the company. Anything and everything that sends a message, provides an experience, or relates to the product or service, is something that must be considered, managed, and measured.” (Schultz and Schultz 2003)

This suggestion is in line with the Nordic School thinking and recent approaches to the role of marketing in companies.

To sum up, the challenges to established marketing communication practice are as follows: the ability to see marketing communication in all its forms with the customer’s eyes, the capability to collect relevant customer information, and based on these data the ability to create the means to gain influence over contact points that represent silent communication. The key issue appears to be that marketers generally believe that the current marketing activities (marketing campaigns) influence customer behavior when in fact there is a multitude of contacts over time that create the response.
The perspective proposed in this paper gives rise to several interesting implications for research. The increasing customer focus calls for the development of new research methods (cf. Trosslöv Aronsson 2001). As at present there is too little knowledge about what customers actually perceive as messages. Modeling concepts from a customer viewpoint would be a welcome contribution (cf. Mick and Buhl 1992, Fortini-Campbell 2003). Further insights can be achieved by connecting the customer outcome of these messages with both relationship history and future expectations and culturally situated and personally driven contexts (cf. Mick and Buhl 1992, Edvardsson and Strandvik 1999, 2009). However, relationship communication is a concept in progress and therefore there is still much to be done to develop the concept’s implications and applications. The customer-dominant view presented in this paper is only one possible approach.

The perspective suggested in this paper challenges established research and practice in both marketing communication and service management. Service research could profit from marketing communication research and vice versa. This suggestion is in line with emerging discussions that service logic should include interactions in the customer relationship process (Grönroos 2006, 2008). Advertising and other marketing communication activities can have a major impact on service interactions, and product and service messages can have a major impact on meaning creation in the communication process. The communication matrix presented here offers a tool for combining both research traditions.
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Figure 1. The Communication Matrix representing a consumer-integrated view of marketing communication
Table 1. Activity matrix: Different modes of silent communication from a marketer perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer active (has been presumed in the communications literature)</th>
<th>Customer passive (has not been discussed in the communications literature)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer active</strong></td>
<td><strong>Customer passive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketer active and customer active</td>
<td>Marketer passive but customer active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscommunication</td>
<td>Marketer Non-response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer passive</strong> (has not been discussed in the communications literature)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketer active but customer passive</td>
<td>Marketer passive and customer passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketer Monologue</td>
<td>Tacit Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Examples of silent communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer active</th>
<th>Marketer active</th>
<th>Marketer passive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer active</td>
<td>• The message is interpreted in a non-intended manner&lt;br&gt;• Service failure that the company is not aware of&lt;br&gt;• Symbols with varying cultural meaning&lt;br&gt;• Misplaced humor&lt;br&gt;• A customer unintentionally exposed to message and media (customer does not belong to the target group) leading to misinterpretation</td>
<td>• Customer complaint&lt;br&gt;• Customer inquiries&lt;br&gt;• New information on the market&lt;br&gt;• Customer in contact with other individuals on line, word-of-mouth&lt;br&gt;• Customer in contact with other customer in situ, word-of-mouth&lt;br&gt;• Other users of a product, reference groups&lt;br&gt;• Product or service failure that the company is not aware of&lt;br&gt;• The way other companies behave&lt;br&gt;• Unconscious product placement&lt;br&gt;• Pictures/videos on YouTube&lt;br&gt;• Insufficient information in instructions and manuals&lt;br&gt;• An expected feature is missing from the product&lt;br&gt;• Product owners that behave badly&lt;br&gt;• A customer unintentionally exposed to message and media (customer does not belong to the target group) leading to misinterpretation&lt;br&gt;• Arrogant or uninterested personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer passive</td>
<td>• Push-advertising&lt;br&gt;• Advertising one cannot recall, but has received&lt;br&gt;• Service misfit that the company is not aware of&lt;br&gt;• Product exposure in unfavourable situations&lt;br&gt;• Competitors’ advertising mistakenly ascribed to the focal company&lt;br&gt;• Information that does not connect to the original sender&lt;br&gt;• Customers’ associations of company names, signs, forms or logos misinterpreted&lt;br&gt;• Disposal of direct mail&lt;br&gt;• Misplaced humour</td>
<td>• Company uses practices disliked by the customer&lt;br&gt;• Other users of a product&lt;br&gt;• Service failure that the company is not aware of&lt;br&gt;• Competitors’ advertising mistakenly ascribed to the focal company&lt;br&gt;• Other companies’ behaviour&lt;br&gt;• Company not aware of customer communication preferences&lt;br&gt;• Consequences of stereotypical target group thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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