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TOWARDS A DYNAMIC COMMUNICATION MODEL: A USEFUL TOOL IN RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION

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TOWARDS A DYNAMIC COMMUNICATION MODEL: A USEFUL TOOL IN RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION
Towards a Dynamic Communication Model: A Useful Tool in Relationship Communication

Key words: Relationship communication, IMC, meaning creation, relationship marketing, marketing communication

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ABSTRACT

In order to bring insight into the emerging concept of relationship communication, concepts from two research traditions will be combined in this paper. Based on those concepts a new model, the dynamic relationship communication model, will be presented. Instead of a company perspective focusing on the integration of outgoing messages such as advertising, public relations and sales activities, it is suggested that the focus should be on factors integrated by the receiver. Such factors can be historical, future, external and internal factors. Thus, the model put a strong focus on the receiver in the communication process. The dynamic communication model is illustrated empirically using it as a tool on 78 short stories about communication. The empirical findings show that relationship communication occurs in some cases; in some cases it does not occur. The model is a useful tool in displaying relationship communication and how it differs from other communication. The importance of the time dimension, historical and future factors, in relationship communications is discussed. The possibility of reducing communications costs by the notion of relationship communication is discussed in managerial implications.

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TOWARDS A DYNAMIC COMMUNICATION MODEL: A USEFUL TOOL IN RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Based on the discussion about the emerging concept of relationship communication this paper will offer a new way of thinking in marketing communication. This will be done by combining models and concepts from two research traditions, relationship marketing and marketing communication. Common for both traditions is the call for a stronger focus on the consumer in the communication process.

Marketing communication research has long traditions and from time to time heavy criticism against the common practice and academic research occurs (Jones, 1996; Schultz, 1996; Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). Since that criticism was published very little drastically has happened. A comparison with the latest textbooks confirms the lack of a strong focus on the consumer (e.g. De Pelsmacker et al., 2005; Fill, 2005; Percy and Elliott, 2005; Pickton and Broderick, 2005). One concept suggested is the concept of meaning (Buttle, 1995; Gayeski, 2000). Instead of the traditional concept of marketing communication, where a sender through coding, noise and decoding transports a message to a receiver (e.g. Schramm, 1971; Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999), marketing communication should be focusing more on the receiver and the meaning in the communication process.

One notion is that communication does not take place in vacuum. A direction to broaden the scope of marketing communication can be found in the integrated marketing communications literature including not only the traditional media, but other communication efforts and product and service encounters (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997). (Gronroos and Lindberg-Repo, 1998) define IMC as: “Integrated Marketing Communications is a strategy that integrates traditional media marketing, direct marketing, public relations and others distinct marketing communication efforts as well as the communications aspects of delivery and consumption of goods and services, and of customer services and other customer encounters. Thus, Integrated Marketing Communications has a long-term perspective.” As in most of the IMC literature this view has a company perspective, whereas we in this paper advocate a consumer perspective. A look at the latest IMC text books (Duncan, 2005; Pickton and Broderick, 2005; Shimp, 2002) confirm, that such a company perspective is prevailing. In these books the
integration in made by the company. However, if the focus switches to the consumer, the question arises what is integrated. Hence, we focus on such factors in this paper.

Amongst researchers focusing on meaning there has been a practice to combine the message with another factor that has an impact on meaning creation. This is another approach than the IMC approach because instead of integrating outgoing messages the focus has switched over to the consumer. This practice takes a broader view than a focus on the message only. Such researcher are Domzal and Kernan (1992), Friedmann and Zimmer (1988), Mick and Buhl (1992), and Padgett and Allen (1997), who combine the message with historical factors, McCracken (1987), McCracken (1986), and Stern (1996), who combine the message with external factors, and Grier and Brumbaugh (1999), and Scott (1994), who combining the message with internal factors. To our knowledge no one has so far included future factors in a more distinct way in this academic discussion. However, such a discussion can be found in the relationship marketing literature (Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000; Ojasalo, 1999). Thus, our intention is building on concepts from both marketing communication and relationship marketing research traditions, to combine the four above mentioned factors – historical, future, external and internal factors – in a marketing communication model.

The time dimension has been essential in relationship marketing. In this research tradition the service encounter and interactions between the company and the customers have been well recognized. However, marketing communication has been less discussed in that research tradition. Lately relationship communication has evolved within the paradigm of relationship marketing. Researchers representing communication research within the Nordic School have most recently addressed the concept of meaning and the involvement of both parties in the communication process (Finne, 2004; Lindberg-Repo, 2001).

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to draw together different factors in meaning creation into one conceptual model. Then we will illustrate the model empirically using the model as a tool. The conclusions bring insight into the new concept, relationship communication.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Previous research in marketing communication has traditionally focused on information transportation, message transfer and hierarchical sequence models (e.g. AIDA)(Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). This tradition has had a focus on an active sender and a receiver who has been
considered a passive object in the communication process (Percy and Elliott, 2005). In relationship marketing, where both parties in the process should meet on more equal terms, the view of a passive customer has been considered inappropriate (Finne, 2004; Gronroos and Lindberg-Repo, 1998; Lindberg-Repo, 2001). One concept that can tie marketing communication and relationship marketing is meaning.

Meaning as a concept is frequently used in many disciplines, which means that the concept has at least as many interpretations as disciplines (Osgood et al., 1961). According to Friedmann and Zimmer (1988) meaning can be described as follows: "Meaning is one outcome of perception; meaning formation is a process within the perceptual process" (Friedmann and Zimmer, 1988: 31). In their opinion meaning cannot be seen as a sequence model as AIDA, but rather as a descriptive frame of reference relating to a person as a subjective being. According to Williamson (1987) meaning as a concept becomes interesting because it does not focus on the transaction per se but on what the product means to the customer. The stimuli in combination with experience (Domzal and Kernan, 1992) and expectations (Friedmann and Zimmer, 1988) form a whole. Thus, combining the experiences from the past in combination with expectations about the future can form a time dimension.

Situational factors in the marketing communication literature has been introduced by McCracken (1987; 1986). In 1986 he presented the Meaning Transfer Model, which describes how meaning is transferred from the society, an external factor, to the individual, an internal factor, via consumer goods. In his model marketing communication plays a central role. Meaning occurs at different levels: in the society, in products, and in individuals. Other researchers discussing situational factors are Grier and Brumbaugh (1999) who depicted differences in planned and actual meaning. In their model the company communicates a planned meaning, whereas the consumer perceives actual meaning. They found differences in perceptions between target groups and non-targets groups, where target groups understood elements in ads better than non-target groups (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999). When the creation of the communication process is a shared meaning, e.g. overlapping in planned and actual meaning of what has been communicated (Gayeski, 2000) prerequisites for a relationship exists. Thus we advocate the importance of shared meaning, i.e. when planned and actual meaning correspond to each other. However, shared meaning does not have to be totally shared, but a sense of match should occur whether it is for example 30 or 60 %. Such shared meaning can be an agreement about the price or quality, values or a joint interest in continuing a relationship.
The need to focus on the consumer instead of the sent message only has been pointed out by several researchers who have studied the importance of meaning in marketing communication (Mick and Buhl, 1992; Scott, 1994; Stern, 1996). According to Mick and Buhl (1992) the individual meaning of a communication process for a given consumer does not have to be a surprise to a company, if the life history of that consumer is known. Thus, the focus should be on the person who receives a message and his/her individual meaning.

A common issue for all research quoted above is that they combine the communicated message with one factor – a historical, a future, an external or an internal factor – in order to understand the individual meaning. These factors can be characterized in two dimensions – a time dimension and a situational dimension. The time dimension can be categorized in historical factors (Friedmann and Zimmer, 1988; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Padgett and Allen, 1997) and future factors (Friedmann and Zimmer, 1988; Mick and Buhl, 1992), and the situational dimension can be categorized in external factors (McCracken, 1987; McCracken, 1986) and internal factors (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999; Scott, 1994; Stern, 1996). However, in the marketing communications literature future factors have only been dealt with quite superficially. Here the concept of relationship marketing can offer interesting insights. A model about critical incidents in relationships has been presented by Edvardsson and Strandvik (2000) with time and situational dimensions. Future factors and their impact on expectations has been discussed by Ojasalo (1999). However, to our knowledge no concept or model has combined all the factors mentioned above into one single model.

We define relationship marketing as: "Relationship marketing is the process of identifying and establishing, maintaining, enhancing and when necessary terminating relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met, where this is done by a mutual giving and fulfilment of promises" (Gronroos, 2000). In a similar way as in shared meaning the sense of the mutual giving and fulfilment does not has to be total, but a sufficient sense of mutuality should occur. Since a relationship develops over time based on historical and future factors the time dimension forms one of the corner stones in relationship marketing (Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000; Gronroos, 2000; Holmlund, 2004). Edvardsson and Strandvik's situational dimension is based on research by Layder (1993). He describes the situational dimension as levels including context, setting, situated activity and self. These levels describe a continuum of varying factors both outside and inside the individual. Russell and Mehrabian (1976) define the line between these factors in the
following way: External factors are everything outside the person and internal factors are those factors independent of external factors (Russell and Mehrabian, 1976). In this paper this dimension has been categorized in two main groups, vis. external factors and internal factors.

Mick and Buhl’s Meaning-based model (1992) have similarities with Edvardsson and Strandvik’s model, because it also describes time and situational dimensions. Mick and Buhl interviewed three Danish brothers about five ads. Essential in the Meaning-based model is that each person sees the world in a subjective way, and therefore, meaning cannot be transported by an ad, only created from one. Despite the fact that these brothers had the same history and social background, e.g. represented the same segment, the ads resulted in quite diverse creations. The researchers concluded that the creation from the ads where influenced by personal interests, ambitions and goals driven by themes and life projects. Edvardsson and Strandvik’s suggestion of time and situational dimensions are close to these elements. However, Mick and Buhl’s model lack the relational perspective, whereas Edvardsson and Strandvik’s model lack the communication perspective.

To our knowledge relationship communication occurs hardly ever in the marketing communication literature. Lindberg-Repo discusses the idea saying that it represents a holistic perspective focusing on both parties in the communication process. She defines it in the following way: "Relationship communication is defined as the sum of all actions that convert the message and meaning in a mutually beneficial way and affects the knowledge base between parties" (Lindberg-Repo, 2001: 19). Key issues are that two parties take part in the process, it has a long time perspective and it is a sum of actions. We argue that the consumer makes the sum of the actions alone.

To sum up the discussion of previous research (see table 1): A substantial amount of research can be found discussing meaning and communication. Some of the research combines the discussion with one factor: a historical, a future, an external or an internal factor. Only a few combine the discussion with a relationship marketing perspective. However, none have a coverage we advocate, which are a combination of all the issues listed in table 1. A model can be generated connecting these pieces of research into a holistic whole. Thus, next we will present a new model, labelled the dynamic communication model. It is purpose is to deeper the insight of relationship communication.
Table 1. A summary of research from the fields of marketing communication or relationship marketing and their coverage of key concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Meaning in communication</th>
<th>Relationship perspective</th>
<th>Historical factors</th>
<th>External factors</th>
<th>Internal factors</th>
<th>Future factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domzal and Kernan, 1992</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedmann and Zimmer, 1988</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindberg-Repo, 2001</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCracken, 1986</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>McCracken, 1987</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mick and Buhl, 1992</td>
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<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Padgett and Allen, 1997</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, 1994</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stern, 1996</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION

The dynamic communication model builds mainly on models by Mick and Buhl and Edvardsson and Strandvik (table 2). By drawing on these two models both the individual and the relationship can be notified. The new model has two dimensions: a time dimension and a situational dimension, which both influence the customer’s meaning creation in communication.

Table 2. Similarities between the Meaning-based model (Mick and Buhl, 1992), the CIRC-model (Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000), and the Dynamic Communication Model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Meaning-based Model</th>
<th>The CIRC-model</th>
<th>The Dynamic Communication Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual life history</td>
<td>Relationship history</td>
<td>Historical factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life themes: goals and means</td>
<td>Future of the relationship</td>
<td>Future factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally situated</td>
<td>External context</td>
<td>External context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal life projects</td>
<td>Internal context</td>
<td>Internal context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The outcome of meaning</td>
<td>Critical incident</td>
<td>The creation of meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The time dimension consists of historical factors and future factors. In historical factors all kind of messages from the past have an impact on the individual meaning. These can be found in the personal life history (Mick and Buhl, 1992) or in the relational history (Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000). These past factors can be experiences, memories, but also stories heard somewhere before. Future factors can be embedded in the future of the relationship (Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000) or in the person’s life themes (Mick and Buhl, 1992). These factors can be expectations, goals or visions (Gronroos, 2000; Ojasalo, 1999; Zeithaml et al., 1990). These time factors together formulate a continuum from the history to the future.
Traditional marketing communication has usually been situated in the present, only. However, in relationship marketing the time factor is a central aspect. An individual’s perception of a relationship is constructed over time (Holmlund, 2004). Thus, the time element is important.

The situational dimension consists of external and internal factors. According to Belk (1975) both external and internal factors has to be taken into consideration. The external factors can be culturally situated factors (Mick and Buhl, 1992) or the context where the person is (Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000). Such external factors can be trends, traditions, economical situation, the family, and alternative choices including advertising from competing companies and other marketing communication. The internal factors are life projects related to the self (Mick and Buhl, 1992) or the internal context (Edvardsson and Strandvik, 2000). Such internal factors can be attitudes, capabilities, identity, or personal interests.

![The dynamic communication model.](image)

To understand how meaning is created in a relationship one has to take the above-discussed dimensions into account. However, the sum of the various factors – the created meaning – can be different as compared to the impact of the factors separately taken out of context. The idea is to discover if the suggested factors are part of meaning creation, or if the ad alone is a part of the process. Therefore an assumption is that some communication messages are blended with one or several of the factors in meaning creation, some messages are not. Hence, the dynamics between these factors has to be acknowledged. If the meaning is based on many
factors relationship communication is created. Thus, both time and situational factors have to be taken simultaneously into consideration in order to discover relationship communication. The dynamic communication model (figure 1) is an answer to that call.

Using the dynamic communication model as a tool
The dynamic communication model can be used as a tool in analysing meaning creation. Differences in meaning can be found by categorizing the perceptions of consumers, who create meaning initiated by a marketing communication message. In this study ads are used. Some consumers might create meaning based on the message in an ad only; some might create meaning based on several factors simultaneously. The factors to look for in the analysis of the perceptions of an ad are historical, future, external and/or internal factors. Historical factors can include a perception consisting of earlier experiences or memories and future factors can include an ongoing strong relationship, expectations or visions. External factors can include a mention of important relevance for a whole region or a personal project in the family and internal factors can include a positive or negative attitude against the ad, the spokesman or the brand, but also a difficulty in understanding a message. After the categorization a summary is made checking the covering of the factors. If the meaning is created of many of the factors, and a final judgement results in that shared meaning is created, then the communication is classified as relationship communication. A mutual knowledge base in a relationship context can form successful platform for such communication. If the final judgement results in that shared meaning is not created, for example based on negative attitudes or difficulties in interpretation, the communication is not classified as relationship communication.

APPLYING THE FACTORS ON MEANING CREATION IN 78 SMALL STORIES
To investigate how the four factors occur in the consumers’ meaning creation in marketing communication the following exploratory study was executed to illustrate the usefulness of the model as an analytical tool. A convenience sampling of 13 people, 9 female and 4 male, in the age of 14 to 52 from the Helsinki region in Finland was chosen. These people were exposed to six different full-page advertisements (table 2) from magazines. The interview was merely open ended, but follow-up questions about how the informants perceived the ads, what they thought influences them and how they reasoned about the ads were added. The study resulted in 78 stories about communication, enough to illustrate the model as a useful tool. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded in N’Vivo.
Table 2. A detailed description on the advertisements in use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Advertiser</th>
<th>Product/Service Description</th>
<th>Headline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Paulig</td>
<td>Branding a well known Finnish coffee (Maailman parasta kahvilaaduista)</td>
<td>Impossible to imitate (Jäljittelemätön)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfume</td>
<td>Hugo Boss Red</td>
<td>Hugo Boss Deep Red perfume</td>
<td>A girl in sexy pose with lamp between her legs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>The Crash</td>
<td>Launching new album Wildlife 21.9</td>
<td>The Crash on white bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone</td>
<td>Nokia</td>
<td>Presentation of model</td>
<td>A kissing girl, small insert with model Nokia 8210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betting</td>
<td>Veikkaus</td>
<td>Promoting betting on football/soccer (Vakioveikkaus)</td>
<td>Yellow banana on blue bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food / grocery chain</td>
<td>Pirkka</td>
<td>Promoting store brand (Panosta tuotteisiin joiden laatu on ...)</td>
<td>A orange golf ball and 5 egg in a egg box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) The coffee ad
The interviews resulted into the following result:

- “Have been existing my whole life” (AK)
- “The coffee brand we use – I combine with good food and nice company” (AJ)
- “The same campaign has been running as long I can remember” (MB)
- “Have been working on a café so I have experiences of my own” (JaJ)
- “I think of Larissa” [a member of the family who owns the company] (WN)
- “The coffee I drink every day” (AG)
- “They have been running the same for long – unambiguous – good coffee – an old friend” (MyJ)

The mention of earlier experiences suggests that historical factors have an impact on the meaning creation (AK, MB, JaJ, MyJ). The long-term strategy in communication seems to have power (AK, MB, MyJ). The ongoing relationship indicates a direction to the future (AK, AG). According to the personal connections external factors also influence the meaning (AK, AJ, JaJ, WN, AG). Internal factors appear in liking the coffee (AJ, AG, MyJ). All four factors are present and the creation gives an impression of shared meaning. Therefore this is classified as relationship communication.

2) The perfume ad
The interviews resulted into the following result:

- “I have been using these perfumes, I like the brand, but I don’t see the product [in this ad] because I get so angry when I see the picture – it’s a way they [advertiser] think it should be done” (AK)
- “The light is annoying … but [the ad is] smart” (LG)
- “She [the model] tries to promote” (FJ)
- “The lightning … almost a pain in my eyes … however I don’t have to think” (MB)
- “I don’t know what to think about the lamp” (JaJ)
- “Playing with sex … after reading I think I understand” (WN)
- “Provocative, but striking” (CN)
- “Typical … selective … one cannot understand” (EI)
- “Same category as underwear – aggressive and colourful” (MyJ)
- “I don’t understand” (AJ)
- “The position of the lamp puzzles me” (AG)
- “I definitely miss something” (MaJ)
- “Slightly queer” (JoJ)

The time dimension is almost lacking except for one person. However, her meaning creation is negative rejecting the message (AK). External factors are lacking, too. Irritation and negative meaning is obvious (AK, MB, EI, MyJ, AJ, AG, MaJ, JoJ), even if some interpretations do not end up with negative meaning (LG, WN, CN). Because the factors are not present and the meaning does not seem shared this is not classified as relationship communication.

3) The music ad
The interviews resulted into the following result:

- “You can get it all wrong even if this little text state what it is about” (FJ)
- “I don’t understand a thing – a kind of album?” (AJ)
- “It [the ad] says nothing … I see the product” (LG)
- “Not very plain … a CD” (MaJ)
- “I don’t know what that Crash stands for” (AK)
- “Not a slightest idea – negative” (MB)
- “First I thought a tattoo, then I read New Album” (CN)
- “Bad message … no message” (JaJ)
- “I don’t know what this is – a CD – no message” (WN)
- “[The ad] doesn’t say much – I have no interest” (AG)
- “It has to be a record …kind of silent … no product or service” (EI)
- “No idea what it’s about … it’s silent … it gives me nothing” (MyJ)

This ad is troublesome. No historical factors support meaning creation. Neither can future or external factors be found. The receiver has difficulties in perceiving the message (FJ, AJ, MaJ, AK, CN) and the creation is irritation (MB) and an unwillingness to cooperate (JaJ, WN, AG, EI, MyJ). The meaning is unlikely sheared meaning. This is not classified as relationship communication.

4) The mobile phone ad
The interviews resulted into the following result:

- “Nokia is all over [the society], you just observe it” (AJ)
- “I have one – we know each other” (LG)
- “An important thing you certainly possess and feel for” (MyJ)
- “I’m putting a big emphasis on Nokia, but not based on this ad, but despite it” (MB)
- “Nokia – close my heart” (JaJ)
- “Nokia generally speaking [not the ad] … I have one myself” (WN)
- “I use one … important to have …I feel free” (EI)
- “[Nokia] is very present in this country” (AK)
- “The product is well known and the company quite essential, but not based on this ad … it’s more a connection to the company” (FJ)
- “We have a relationship” (AG)
- “The company Nokia in our daily lives” (MaJ)
- “I can’t combine the message with the phone” (JoJ)
- “I like it, but cliché-like … [the model] irritates me … Nokia is Nokia and you combine with a hundred things – always” (CN)

The time dimension is very present in these quotes. Own experiences represent historical factors and the company’s future is very wrapped up with the future of the country as a whole (LG, WN, EI, AG). The presence of the company in people’s daily lives are obvious (external factors)(AJ, LG, MB, AK, FJ, MaJ) and people feel for Nokia (internal factors)(MyJ, JaJ, JoJ, CN). All four factors is present in the meaning creation. However, the ad itself is formed in a way that causes trouble. These people share things with the company and in that sense shared meaning is created. All four factors are present and the meaning give an impression of shared meaning. Therefore this is classified as relationship communication. However, the ad itself plays a minor role in this meaning.

5) The betting ad
The interviews resulted into the following result:

   - “A banana kick [a real spinner], a free kick – quite clever – but I have never bet” (JoJ)
   - “Symbolize the sports … Pahlman’s banana kicks [a soccer player famous for his spinners] … in the line with the rest of the communications … well known product” (FJ)
   - “You are not supposed to see the banana kick, I think … I’, confused (MB)
   - “[The ad] is about some kind of service … the banana ?? … I’m not interested … their boss had some hanky-panky” (CN) ¹
   - “Somewhat odd … I get it, but it doesn’t make sense” (JaJ)
   - “I thought it was Chiquita – slightly unclear” (WN)
   - “I don’t get it … completely stupid … associations to Chiquita” (AG)
   - “The message make cross-purposes … kiosks and old farts” (EI)
   - “Funny … promoting Chiquita … a free kick … I don’t understand one bit” (MaJ)
   - “I don’t see why [the company] uses a banana … not interested” (MyJ)
   - “I don’t get it … the product is missing … but the picture is nice” (AK)
   - “Silence! I did not get it” (AJ)
   - “No message for me … it does not talk to me … the hanky-panky boss” (LG) ¹

¹ At the time for the interview the executive president was subjected to suspicions about sexual harassment on an employee
The time dimension is missing. Consequently factors are missing and those present seems to give a mixed contribution. Scandals (see footnote 1) (CN, LG) and contrasts in the external context (e.g. mixing Chiquita with this advertiser) (WN, AG, MaJ, MyJ) result in blurred meaning creation. The ad is difficult to understand, the humour seems to be misleading carrying out various meanings (MB, JaJ, EI, MaJ, AK, AJ, LG). Because all the factors are not present and the meaning does not seem shared, it is not classified as relationship communication.

6) The food ad
The interviews resulted into the following result:

- “I have simply been growing up with these [store brands] … never got disappointed, they are good, available” (MB)
- “I have a relationship with [this store brand]” (AG)
- “This is a favour – do not buy the pig in a sack” (JoJ)
- “Service … you know precisely what you get when you pick a product … no surprises” (FJ)
- “Not a specific product, but the service [e.g. the store brand] … supplying quality … you can trust [the store brand]” (JaJ)
- “Experience – on a daily basis” (AJ)
- “Good product at reasonable prices” (EI)
- “You have the right to know what you get” (MyJ)
- “[The store brand] are ok staple products, but a golf ball in an egg box? … I’m puzzled” (LG)
- “I don’t see what they want to tell me, but experience – well, I guess I have that … I’m confused” (WN)
- “You know what you get … but only amateurs use orange golf balls … so I turn my back to this one” (CN)
- “An inverse message for me … instead of getting eggs you get a golf ball … confusing” (AK)
- “I don’t see what the picture has to do with the text … they are not connected … I’m puzzled” (MaJ)

The historical factors, e.g. experience, are present (MB, AJ, EI) and ongoing relationships can be detected (MB, AG, AJ), which can indicate weak future factors. However, contradictories in external factors make confusing creations of meaning (LG, WN, CN, AK, MaJ), even if the reception (e.g. internal factors) seems positive (MB, JoJ, FJ, JaJ, EI, LG). The result is somewhat inconsistent, which might be due to that some individuals have relationships, some do not. Because the confusing results the meaning does not seem shared, and therefore this is not classified as relationship communication.
DISCUSSION

In the first case, the coffee ad, shared meaning is created clear as a bell. This company has been faithful to the same strategy for years and the result – relationship communication – is distinct. The second case, the perfume ad, provokes consumers and the creation of meaning is negative: no shared meaning. In the third case, the music ad, the least happen, there is nothing to fall back on: no shared meaning either. The fourth case, the mobile phone ad, is interesting. It seems that the role of the ad itself is very modest. In fact the shared meaning is created despite the ad, not caused by it. It may be questioned whether such an ad is useful. The fifth case, the betting ad, is contradictory. The creative solution puzzles people and some associate – e.g. integrate – with entirely other messages. The sixth case, the food ad, also puzzle people because a peculiar creative solution. None of these two last cases show shared meaning. However, some individuals indicated such creation in the last case.

The situational dimension is present in all cases. Typical internal factors are liking the ad and personal capabilities to understand the messages (see table 3). A message in an ad can be understood per se, but in combination with factors presented here the perception make no sense. External factors normally mentioned are their personal lives, the relationship context or a company as a significant actor in the society. The time dimension arises in some of the cases. Historical factors normally mentioned are personal experiences, memories and a past relationship. Future factors exist less often as a part of meaning creation. However, in some cases they do and the impact seems noteworthy. Such factors can be a continuous relationship, i.e. with a future of an unexpressed, tacit nature.

Table 3. An example of categorizing individual meaning into the four factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Some examples to look for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical factors</td>
<td>Earlier experiences, Memories</td>
<td>I have experiences, I have been using, never been disappointed, you can trust, as long I can remember, growing up with these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors</td>
<td>Ongoing relationship, Expectations, Visions</td>
<td>I drink every day, an old friend, I have one, an important thing, close to my heart, a connection to the company, we have a relationship, experience on daily basis, a remarkable weight to X, important to have, I feel free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors</td>
<td>Important relevance, Personal project, Other communication, Family</td>
<td>X is all over, the company is essential, I use one, in our daily lives, only amateurs use, in the line of the rest, scandal, the hanky-panky boss, food and company, Larissa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors</td>
<td>Attitudes, Understanding</td>
<td>I get angry, a pain in my eyes, light is annoying, negative, not interested, stupid, striking, smart, I like it, quite clever, funny, cannot understand, the lamp puzzles me, I miss something, queer, get it all wrong, not a slightest idea, I don’t know, no idea, confused, no message, says nothing, kind of silent, gives me nothing, no interest, inverse message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The dynamic communication model appears to be a useful tool in analysing the meaning of communication. In two cases, the ads about coffee and mobile phone, relationship communication occurred. In the last case, the food ad, the creation of meaning is quite close to relationship communication, because the four factors are represented, but it falls short for the reason that shared meaning is not created. In three cases, in the perfume, music and betting ads, only factors from a few of the four categories are part of the meaning creation and further, no shared meaning is created.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The combination of the two research traditions has been fruitful. The dynamic communication model brings insight into the emerging concept of relationship communication. A degree of shared meaning in communication together with a degree of mutual giving and fulfilment in a relationship can create relationship communication. This is far from delivering a planned message unmodified by any factor to a consumer.

In this paper advertisements was used. However, other types of messages, from advertising and news to service and product encounters, can be included in the communication process. It is demonstrated that this type of communication differs from other types, in the sense that more factors influence meaning creation in communication. Characteristics for relationship communication are that two parties take part in the communication process as active participators in the creation of meaning. The time perspective is essential and several factors are included in the creation by the consumer. Using the dynamic communication model relationship communication can be showed. This is a general contribution to the literature on traditional communication, integrated marketing communication and relationship marketing.

The specific focus on the receiver as an active part in the communication process is central. Instead of a traditional focus on one message at a time several factors have been taken into consideration. Compared with other broader views, e.g. integrated marketing communications or analysing messages in combination with one of the factors (Domzal and Kernan, 1992; Duncan and Moriarty, 1997; Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999; McCracken, 1986; Padgett and Allen, 1997), the concept introduced here linking communication messages with consumer-specific historical, future, external and internal factors into one model broadens the view on marketing communication even more. Further, an integration of these factors can be done by
the consumer only. Therefore relationship communication cannot be planned and created without such a specific focus. Moreover, it works as a conceptual bridge-builder in linking two research traditions together.

The analysis was based on the stories on an aggregate level, i.e. several stories bundled together. The next step would be to develop the interview instrument so relationship communication can be captured on an individual level. One of the factors, the future factor, has not been discussed in the communications literature so far. Nevertheless, especially in relationship communication the impact of this specific factor seems to be relevant. If the future factor is embedded in relationships, there is a call for new measurements. However, this suggestion has to be a task for further research. Another task for further research follows from the fact in one case relationship communication seems to occur despite the ad. Such a suggestion represents an extreme, but a challenging idea in marketing communication. Based on such ideas concepts about silence in marketing communication can be developed.

The idea of silence in marketing communication and creating relationship communication without advertising leads to interesting implications for managers. If parts of expensive campaigns can be omitted with savings as a result and relationship communication still can be created the concept can have an impact on firms’ communications strategies. The notion of the difference between planned meaning and actual meaning can be fruitful for managers, because an increase in the sense of shared meaning can influence the sense of mutuality in the relationship. However, such sense cannot be created by just clamming the relationship in a message, but it might be generated by identifying and establishing, maintaining, enhancing the four factors in relationship communication.

The dynamic communication model can also function as a useful practical tool for the operative management in the company. By using the model as a guideline for sorting knowledge and data already existing in the company new sources participating in the communication process can be tracked and coordinated. One thing that the company can implement immediately is a summary about their existing customers. Historical factors can be tracked in customer databases, loyalty programmes, but also outside the marketing department as among front personnel and accounting books. External factors can be found in economic cycles, technical development, fashion trends and competitor analyses. Internal factors can be listed from consumer attitudes, customer satisfaction surveys, and data from complaint handling and customer response. Future factors can be traced in expectations and
visions on several levels (customers, personnel and shareholders) and future prospects. However, such a summary has to be built across functions and departments in the organisation in an unprejudiced way, because shareholder visions, information about economic cycles, customer complaint and accounting seldom are drawn together. Building such a summary can be a challenge for many companies. Such a summary can form a base for future relationship communication between the company and its customers.

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