

2 State of Research

2.1 The academic debate on the relationship between marketing and PR

The academic debate on the relationship between marketing and PR started in the late 1970s (Kotler & Mindak, 1978)⁴. That was about the time when PR departments and agencies became serious partners – or rivals – of marketing professionals. Since the late seventies both the academic debate and the relationship between both functions in business practice have experienced different phases and foci. Today, we can identify three main lines of research which are certainly not exclusive but overlap and interact at several points. However, they can be grouped according to the fixed set of scholars involved in the discussion and by their main strands of argumentation (Zerfass & Dühning, 2012).

1. *The organizational relationship between marketing and public relations*: This is the oldest strand of research. The focus here is mainly on the relationship between marketing and PR departments within an organization and different models on how to coordinate and organize both functions are suggested. Depending on the background of the respective scholars, the argument is either in favor of an integration of the PR function into the overall marketing function or for two strictly separate functional departments (Broom, Lauzen, & Tucker, 1991; Dozier & Grunig, 1992; Ehling, White, & Grunig, 1992; Grunig & Grunig, 1998; Kotler & Mindak, 1978; Lauzen, 1991; Spicer, 1991; van

⁴ This chapter relies in parts on Zerfass & Dühning (2012) and on Süss, Zerfaß, & Dühning (2011).

Leuven, 1991a, 1991b; Varey, 1998). Critical analyses have been offered by Cornelissen and Lock (2000a), Hallahan (2007), and Hutton (1996, 2010).

2. *Concepts of integrated (marketing) communication and related concepts of corporate communication(s)*: The declared aim of these approaches, which are mostly advocated by marketing scholars, is to integrate, coordinate, and orchestrate all communication instruments, channels, and messages of the corporation. By aligning symbols, messages, procedures, and behaviors, the organization hopes to appear consistent and coherent across different audiences and media channels. The advantage of this perspective is that it tries to combine and integrate all forms and functions of communication and thus aspires to overcome functional and disciplinary thinking. The disadvantage is that due to the marketing backgrounds of the authors, the diversity of different forms of communication are diluted and become incorporated in a managerial, marketing oriented perspective. The concept was and is almost exclusively propagated by Schultz and related scholars at the Northwestern University, Medill School, USA (Kitchen, Kim, & Schultz, 2008; Kitchen & Schultz, 2009; Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn, 1993, 1996; Schultz, Kerr, Kim, & Patti, 2007). Closely related concepts of corporate communication are proposed, for instance, by van Riel and Fombrun (2007) and Argenti (2009). Influential concepts in Germany which promote the same line of argumentation come from Bruhn and colleagues (Ahlers, 2006; Bruhn, 2006, 2014; Bruhn & Ahlers, 2009). A different line of argumentation is offered by Zerfaß (2010a), who shares the goal of the integration and coordination of market(ing) communication, internal communication, and PR, but assigns each function a different but equal area of responsibility.

3. *Interdisciplinary and critical approaches to corporate communications:* These are proposed by a small but influential circle of European scholars (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011; Christensen, Cornelissen, & Morsing, 2007; Christensen, Firat, & Cornelissen, 2009; Christensen, Morsing, & Cheney, 2008; Torp, 2009) who have been influenced by organizational studies, organizational communication, cultural studies, and the arts. These scholars criticize the conventional doctrines of integration and orchestration, and in contrast to their US colleagues stress the importance of contradictory and ambiguous messaging by the organization. They argue that multiple interpretations of organizations exist and cannot be ignored. Proactively communicating them creates the space for different identities and different audiences to coexist within the confines of the organizational unit and provides creative freedom, potential for innovations, and strengthens employees' loyalty and identification.

The following chapters will introduce all three strands of research and highlight their respective strengths and weaknesses. At the end of this chapter fundamental problems in the academic discussion of the relationship between marketing and PR are discussed and the need for a reassessment is explained.

2.2 Turf wars and power struggles: the organizational relationship between marketing and PR

From an organizational standpoint, it is obvious that marketing and PR have much in common: they are the two functions that are most focused on external constituencies. Both deal with communication, persuasion, and relationships. Both deal with messages and media, and are increasingly focused on digital technologies including social media and mobile marketing. Both

deal with public opinion and segmentation of audiences. Ideally, both are strategic management functions that are anchored in research (Falkheimer & Heide, 2014; Hutton, 2010, p. 510). However, we still find some major differences. In terms of their scope of operation, marketing is also concerned with product development, distribution, location analysis, retailing, pricing, and customer management, while PR is more concerned with the news media, various government entities, community relations, investor relations, and internal communications. Marketing practitioners need to be better versed in break-even analysis, competitive analysis, package design, and queuing theory, whereas PR practitioners must know the ins and outs of journalism, how to best manage the organization's social engagement, write CSR programs and executive speeches, and manage and optimize internal communication processes.

Throughout most of their histories, the differences between marketing and PR have outweighed their similarities, causing them to tread generally divergent paths. This led many scholars to conceptualize different roles and functions for both departments within the organization.

However, in the 1970s roles and functions began to merge and scholars shifted their attention towards the relationship between marketing and PR departments. The first attempts at academic discussion were made by Kotler and Mindak (1978) who depicted several possible models of the marketing-PR-relationship (1978, p. 17; see fig. 1). They were the first to consider the relationship between marketing and PR from a contingency perspective. Observing increased dependencies and an overlap between both departments, Kotler and Mindak argued for a new perspective on the functional relationship between public relations and marketing departments depending on external factors such as organizational size and business sector.

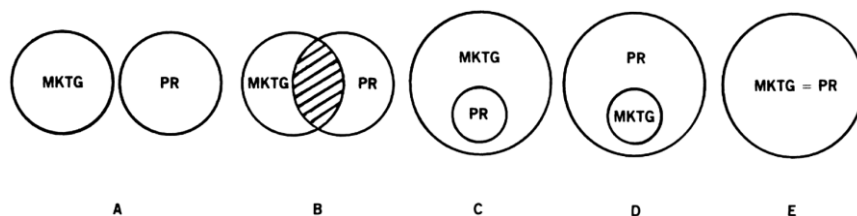


Figure 1: Models of the possible relationship between marketing and public relations (Kotler & Mindak, 1978, p. 17) Legend: A: Separate but equal functions; B: Equal but overlapping Functions; C: Marketing as the dominant function; D: PR as the dominant function; E: Marketing and PR as the same functions.

Their work has been taken further by a number of authors (van Leuven, 1991a; Hutton, 1996; Varey, 2005). Van Leuven (1991a) looked at the fit between the departmental structures in organizations and its PR units. Adopting a 'system-structural' perspective, he held that relationships within a system vary or are contingent regarding the relationships between the system and its outside environment. Van Leuven's (ibid.) sought to examine issues of organizational strategy and the organizational basis for bringing PR, marketing and other related functions into closer alignment. He emphasized that the structuring of departments should follow a functional or vertical and horizontal structure. Vertical structures emphasize the similarity of specialized skills and tasks responsibilities, irrespective of particular goals, and entail the advantages of efficiency, autonomy and economy. The possible disadvantage of vertical structures is that they may create overspecialized technical personnel and compartmentalized structures, where practitioners are not enabled or encouraged to cooperate with other areas. In contrast, product or market based structures mean that jobs are grouped together into patterns that place more of an emphasis on co-operation and interdependence with related functions. The advantages here are seen to be a faster response time and the shifting of decision-making to lower levels. The major differences between these two departmental systems thus de-

pend on the amount of coordination required and the ability to respond to new opportunities, issues induced by an organization's (internal and external) environments such as the particular business sector, dynamism in the environment, and the size of the organization (Cornelissen & Lock, 2000a, pp. 235-236).

Relying on Kotler's and Mindak's initial systematization, Hutton suggested to base the decision on how to choose between the five possible relationships between marketing and PR on two simple questions: (a) "What proportion of the marketing tasks confronting the organization is communication related"; and (b) "What proportion of the organization's communications tasks is marketing related?" (Hutton, 1996, p. 159). Hutton furthermore describes several possible constellations of the marketing-PR-relationship in different organizations (Hutton, 1996, pp. 159-160). For example, if communication issues are a relatively small part of marketing and vice versa, an organization might opt for the 'separate but equal' model A. This model might be well suited for public institutions given the importance they place on community, government, and media relations, and the fact that media representatives, community interest groups, and government agencies are generally more comfortable dealing with a separate corporate communications, PR or public affairs departments rather than marketing departments. If a moderate proportion of the marketing issues confronting an organization are communication related, and vice versa, the 'overlapping model' B is probably appropriate. Most large corporations likely fall into this category, given the size, complexity, and frequent independence of the marketing and public relations issues confronting such organizations. Typically, day-to-day marketing activities such as product publicity, promotion, and sales-force communications would be handled by the various line operations of the company. A corporate public relations or communications department, meanwhile, would handle financial communications, employee communications, the corporate identity and brand pro-

gram, and other global communications, because each of those functions touches stakeholders. In any case, cooperation between the two functions is still essential, but can be accomplished through staff meetings between the departments as well as through personal relationships and other informal means. The 'marketing dominant' model C is probably appropriate for a multibrand consumer-products company whose brands are more visible to the public than its corporate persona. In such cases, care must be taken not to slight other key audiences, but it may be appropriate to operate with a skeleton corporate communications staff and let marketing supervise almost all public relations activities as a line function, because of the importance of product publicity, crisis communication (e.g., product recalls), sponsorships, special events, and other marketing-related public relations activities to developing and maintaining brand loyalty. The 'public-relations dominant' model D would probably be appropriate for most professional services, hospitals, universities, and assorted nonprofit organizations, which typically have fewer pricing and distribution-channel issues than consumer- or industrial-product manufacturers. The public-relations-dominant mode would be more appropriate for such organizations because, at least conceptually, it focuses on longer-term issues of organizational culture, identity, and community outreach, befitting the nature of those institutions. In addition, it is generally more appropriate and effective for such organizations to engage in a subtler form of marketing, making greater use of 'softer sell' tactics such as sponsorships and institutional advertising, rather than hard-sell techniques such as price-related advertising. Finally, the 'marketing = public relations' E would be appropriate to most situations where a high percentage of marketing issues are communication related, and vice versa, typical of a small business where there is great overlap between the two areas and neither is likely to be very sophisticated or highly developed (ibid.).

In many contributions both marketing and PR scholars draw a rather stereotypical picture of the different purposes of marketing and PR in order to create and legitimate the organizational separation of both functions (Broom et al., 1991; Bruhn & Ahlers, 2009; Ehling et al., 1992; Kotler & Mindak, 1978;). In 1989 four distinguished marketing and PR scholars (Ehling, Jackson, Jones, & Kotler) met to clarify the concepts underlying both functions. They agreed that the strategies, techniques, and theoretical base are the same. Marketing and PR both deal with organizational relationships and employ similar processes. Thus, they concluded, the two functions have to be differentiated by mission or assignment; the major difference lies in the outcome they seek to achieve (Broom et al., 1991, p. 223). Accordingly, they settled on the following definitions, which clearly reflect the traditional, oversimplified conceptualizations prevailing at that time. PR is thus defined as

the management process whose goal is to attain and maintain accord and positive behaviors among social groupings on which an organization depends in order to achieve its mission. Its fundamental responsibility is to build and maintain a hospitable environment for an organization. (Broom et al., 1991, p. 223)

Vice versa, marketing is conceptualized as

the management process whose goal is to attract and satisfy customers (or clients) on a long-term basis in order to achieve an organization's economic objectives. Its fundamental responsibility is to build and maintain a market for an organization's products or services. (ibid., pp. 223-224)

Empirical research in both marketing and PR has shown that both conceptualizations are constantly confuted by reality. In fact, a lot of PR activity is market and consumer oriented and oftentimes PR is employed to support promotional activity. This had to be acknowledged even by the most fervent supporters of the above-noted definitions (Ehling et al., 1992, p. 366). Even PR grandees like Cutlip, Chase, and Grunig himself could not help to

acknowledge that the majority of PR practitioners concentrate on tools, devices and techniques, trying to set the public agenda through the dissemination of news or information, and trying to advance the interest of the employer by spotlighting the institution's favorable news and softening or suppressing what would be unfavorable to the employer if it became known (Grunig, 2006, p. 4). In the 1980's and 1990's most PR practitioners neither did have the education, being usually trained in schools of journalism (Johnson & Rabin, 1977; Kalupa & Allen, 1982; Walker, 1982), nor the experience to address their task more strategically. Therefore, particularly PR agencies "see as their concern that of providing clients with cheap mode of advertising their product or service by means of free publicity in the guise, or more appropriately, the disguise, of news stories" (Ehling et al., 1992, p. 366).

While marketing scholars usually favor the convergence of both functions, going along with an incorporation of the PR function, PR scholars have always been very eager in their search for "a clear justification for the establishment and departmentalization of the public relations function and for separating public relations management from marketing management" (Ehling et al., 1992, p. 366). As Hallahan (2007) observed, the debate about integrated communications began in earnest among PR scholars in 1989 when it was the focus of a symposium at San Diego State University (p. 301). One of the triggers had been emerging concepts of *integrated marketing communications* (IMC) or *integrated communications* (see ch. 2.3) proposed by marketing scholars and understood by PR scholars as an attack on their turf. As will be described in chapter 4.4, during the 1970s and 1980s a number of marketing scholars shifted their focus from a microeconomic to a macroeconomic perspective and recognized the potential contributions of public relations within the marketing mix (ibid., pp. 300-301). Although PR scholars generally acknowledged the importance of integrated communications, they came to the conclusion that marketing and PR had distinct missions, philosophies, theories, and turfs. Any attempts, especially by market-

ing scholars, to integrate the PR function within an overall communication function were interpreted and attacked as hostile takeovers and labeled with catch-words such as 'imperialism' and 'encroachment' (Ehling, 1989; Lauzen, 1991, 1993; Spicer, 1991). PR scholars criticized that marketing scholars perceive PR merely as a technique rather than a strategic management function and focused on working out the differences between both functions. Oftentimes, though, they had to acknowledge that the similarities outnumbered the differences.

In the early 1990's, a number of special issues appeared in PR journals and heated debates characterized scholarly meetings and symposiums (Hallahan, 2007, pp. 301-302). James Grunig himself was quoted as saying, "I perceive integrated communication as a threat to my profession" (quoted in Gronstedt, 1994, p. 29). It comes with no surprise then that he and his colleagues incorporated their need to distinguish PR as a distinct, separate management function in its own right, which can only function properly – and excellent – when being organized separately from the marketing function, in the 'excellence study' that started just at that time (Broom et al., 1991; Ehling et al., 1992; Grunig & Grunig, 1991, 1998). The main argument of the authors was that "the public relations and marketing function as structured within an organization have different missions to fulfill and, therefore, appeal to different paradigms or models of the organization's social environment and of the complex communications systems that are constructed and utilized in that environment" (Ehling et al., 1992, p. 358). They argued that when PR practitioners are reduced to the technician role, the organization loses a valuable mechanism for managing its interdependence with its strategic publics (ibid., p. 357). In previewing the 'excellence study', Grunig and Grunig (1991) laid out their theoretical distinction between marketing and PR by stating that the marketing function "is concerned with products, services and customers markets", while the PR function in contrast, "is concerned with all relevant publics of that organization"

(Grunig & Grunig, 1991, p. 263). "Whereas marketing's purpose it to make money, public relations strives to save money for the organization by managing threats to its mission or mobilizing support for it" (ibid.). It is especially important to the authors that PR is organized as a separate function from marketing. Only then do PR practitioners have the autonomy and mandate to define publics and channels of communication dynamically. Only in such a setting can they focus on strategic problems instead of being too occupied with routinized communicating (Grunig & Grunig, 1992, p. 402). The authors relied on a combination of systems theory and power-control theory. The arguments rooted in the former were that PR must have access to management decision making and must be located in an integrated single unit with flexible horizontal structures in order to work effectively as part of the adaptive (boundary spanning) subsystem of the organization. The power-control argument focused on the fact that dominant coalitions determine organization structures to satisfy organizational needs and their own interests, preferring centralization, formalization, and simplicity. Grunig and Grunig stress the importance of ready access to key decision makers so PR can contribute to the strategic management process of the organization. Instead of PR being subsumed under the marketing function, they suggested that all communication programs, including marketing communication, shall either be integrated into or coordinated by the public relations department or that PR and marketing shall co-exist as equal partners, equivalent in terms of expertise, respect, and salary (Grunig & Grunig, 1998).

Thus, in one way the excellence study strengthened the position of the PR function within organizations, in another way, however, it led to an isolationism and insularity. Grunig et al. isolated PR practice and research from other fields of professional communication, especially from integrated marketing communications (IMC) and other fields of marketing research. With denying obvious similarities and overlaps in concepts and ideas, Grunig et al. deprived both sides from fruitful exchanges and cooperation.

2.3 The IMC approach and related concepts of corporate communication(s)

2.3.1 Integrated marketing communications (IMC)

This line of research has first been brought to the agenda by US scholars with a background in marketing or marketing communications in the late 1980's (Hallahan, 2007; Torp, 2009, p. 192). For a variety of reasons, the traditional marketing approach that placed advertising at the center of promotional activities had come under siege. Before marketing and PR were regarded as distinct functions with different objectives and target groups. In the 1980s, however, it was increasingly acknowledged that the two functions shared a number of common features while being at the same time complementary. Thus the separation of the two functions was increasingly abandoned in favor of a model in which the two functions would ideally be integrated, coordinated, aligned and in some cases completely fused. This ideal and the efforts to achieve it came to be known under the unspecific buzzword of *integrated marketing communication (IMC)*. The concept was almost exclusively propagated by Schultz, Kitchen, and related scholars at the Northwestern University, Medill School, USA⁵ (Caywood & Ewing, 1991; Kitchen et al., 2008; Kitchen & Schultz, 2009; Mulhern, 2009; Schultz et al., 1993, 1996; Schultz et al., 2007). The definition of IMC has undergone a development and elaboration, leading to both greater precision and a broadening of scope. The first formal definition of IMC was developed at the Northwestern University in 1989. This definition was used in a survey of

⁵ In 1991 the Northwestern University, Medill School, USA, merged their separate graduate degree programs in corporate public relations, advertising, and direct marketing into an integrated marketing communications program. The five quarter program included a core of new marketing communications planning and management classes, professional specialization classes in corporate public relations, advertising, and direct marketing along with a cluster of MBA-level business classes (Caywood & Ewing, 1991).

major advertisers and advertising agencies in the US, jointly sponsored by the *American Association of Advertising Agencies*, the *Association of National Advertisers*, and *Northwestern University*. The definition is still the most widely used by academics and practitioners (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, pp. 17-18; Kliatchko, 2005, p. 14). The definition states that integrated marketing communications is

a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact. (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, p. 18)

In 2004 Schultz suggested the following definition:

Integrated marketing communication is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communications programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, employees, associates and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences. (Schultz, 2004, p. 9)

Thus, he broadens the scope of IMC including multiple stakeholders and target groups and presenting IMC as a strategic business endeavor. Mulhern states that one of the most important distinctions of IMC compared to traditional marketing is the inclusion of multiple stakeholders in communication planning: “IMC accommodates internal audiences such as employees, as well as business partners and professionals such as retailers, vendors, franchisees, regulators and reporters. Cross-stakeholder integration incorporates the interests and desires of different stakeholders in the way organizations manage communications” (Mulhern, 2009, p. 95).

Although IMC was not a particularly new idea, it was quickly adopted, especially by agencies that saw new business opportunities and touted their ability to orchestrate integrated campaigns including both marketing and PR instruments. The main ideal of IMC is to achieve consistency both in the external, formal integration of the various visual forms of expression in the organizational, such as design, dress codes, logos, fonts and so on, and in the more content related elements of communication. It is also a matter of consistency between what the company says through its communication messages, what the company does, and what others confirm about the brand. This does not necessary mean that the messages must be completely identical, but they must be complementary and non-contradictory. Thus, the ideal of consistency does not necessary imply total uniformity, though the less sophisticated versions of IMC often seem to suggest this (Torp, 2009, pp. 198-199).

The concept has been confronted with many obstacles. First of all, scholars could never find consensus on the definition of IMC and remained indecisive about whether IMC was a sales tool for PR and advertising agencies, or a complete communications discipline in its own right (Torp, 2009, p. 193). The concept has never been truly accepted, neither in the marketing community where it was often claimed to be nothing but another management fad (Cornelissen & Lock, 2000b; Hutton, 1996, 2010) and especially not in the PR community where it was interpreted as an attempted hostile takeover (Broom et al., 1991; Lauzen, 1991; Spicer, 1991; Varey, 2005). Schultz and his colleagues considered the concept a new 'marketing paradigm' (Schultz et al. 1993, p. iv), but in fact it just took up general trends of the time: the renunciation of the traditional inside-out-perspective, a holistic stakeholder approach (Freeman, 1984), and the increasing importance of concepts like image, reputation (van Riel, 1995). As the term IMC indicates, the concept does not promote integration in the sense of an equal integration and coordination of marketing and public relations activities, but rather

as the absorption of former PR specific goals, instruments and target groups within the marketing function. Torp observes that

In a number of cases the authors of textbooks on the subject have kept up with the fashion merely by changing the title of their works and the terminology used, so that whatever went under the term 'marketing communication' in previous editions is now referred to as 'integrated marketing communication' with no significant change in the actual content of what is referred to. (Torp, 2009, p. 195)

Not astoundingly, the PR community harshly criticized the concept. However, there were critics within the marketing discipline, too (Cornelissen & Lock, 2000b; Wolter, 1993; Wightman, 1999). So far, despite a continuous stream of international research and publications covering that theme, the scientific debate has produced but little results. Recent studies still draw a chaotic picture concerning the theory and practice of IMC. Scholars criticize the lack of theory building and the inconsistent educational programs (Kerr, 2009; Schultz et al., 2007). Many of the texts are primarily application oriented without any significant theoretical foundation (Kliatchko, 2005, p. 13). So today even the initiators of the concept acknowledge that it has to be revised and adopted to new challenges in the marketplace and changes in the interpretation of roles and function of marketing and public relations (Kitchen & Schultz, 2009). Despite this, the approach is still very much alive, especially at US and Australian universities⁶ (Blakeman, 2007; Belch & Belch, 2009; Percy, 2008).

⁶ Undergraduate and graduate courses with the IMC title are e.g. found at West Virginia University, Northwestern University, Florida State University, San Diego State University, Swinburne University, and Queensland University.

2.3.2 *US American concepts of corporate communication*

The IMC school of thought also lives on in the US American concept of *corporate communication*. The term has become very popular among US authors, most of them with a background in marketing communications, who use it as an umbrella term for a field of practice that draws on multiple types of communication activities like crisis communication, employee communication, media relations, investor relations, advertising, public affairs, and traditional public relations which is usually interpreted as media relations (Argenti, 2009; van Riel, 1995; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Corporate communication shall integrate, coordinate and orchestrate all instruments, channels and messages of the corporation. By aligning symbols, messages, procedures, and behaviors, the organization hopes to appear consistent and coherent across different audiences and media. According to Christensen and Cornelissen, this interpretation of corporate communications differs from other types of communication management not simply because it claims to include a broader range of communication activities or to address more audiences across formal organizational boundaries, but because its *raison d'être* is to organize the organization's communication activities as one coherent entity (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011, p. 4). This mindset is shaped by images of unity, wholeness, and totality. In practice this vision unfolds into a goal of projecting a consistent and unambiguous image of what the organization is and stands for. Many authors also rely on concepts of corporate branding and corporate identity as they share the focus on the organizational as a whole. The advantage of this perspective is that it tries to combine and integrate all forms and functions of communication and thus tries to overcome functional and disciplinary thinking. The disadvantage is that this way all concepts dilute and become incorporated in a very manage-

rial, marketing oriented perspective (*ibid.*). This can be illustrated by reference to the corporate communication approach of van Riel and Fombrun⁷.

Van Riel and Fombrun rely on Jackson (1987), who deliberately used ‘communication’ as a singular in order to distinguish the concept from those forms of communication that are included here, like marketing communications, managerial communications and telecommunications. Corporate communication is considered a management function, which controls strategically instead of acting operational. Van Riel und Fombrun (2007) identify three main types of communication. These are: (a) management communications as the communication that take place between the management level of the organization and its internal and external audiences; (b) marketing communications as the market-related forms of communication, that support sales of products, services, and brands; and (c) organizational communications which encompass public relations, public affairs, investor relations, corporate advertising, environmental communication and internal communication (pp. 13-21). Thus, they implicitly integrate diverse fields of research like managerial communication (Smeltzer, Glab, & Golen, 1983), organizational communication (Mumby & Stohl, 1996), and marketing communications. Although the authors claim to have a holistic, interdisciplinary perspective, their approach is nonetheless influenced by traditional IMC thinking. This becomes apparent when discussing the implementation and instruments of corporate communication. Here we find rather operational, ‘hands on’ suggestions how corporate communication can become a

⁷ Corporate communication is here defined as “the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organization, with the common goal of enhancing the organization’s ability to retain its license to operate” (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 25).

success. Techniques and procedures that are suggested are for instance the application of visual identity systems (sometimes referred to as 'house style'), the use of integrated marketing communications, the reliance on coordinating teams, and the adoption of a centralized planning system (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 27). Thus, exactly those three forms of integration which characterize all approaches in the IMC tradition: (a) the aspect of visual identity, a consistent appearance and corporate design, (b) the integration of instruments and channels of marketing communications, and (c) the organizational integration of those via common or centralized structures and processes.

At the strategic level, integration is achieved via a common 'reputation platform' and the resulting common 'corporate story' (ibid., p. 182). Reputation platform is defined as "the root positioning that a company adopts when it presents itself to internal and external observers. It is a strategic choice. A strong reputation platform rests on rendering of the company's history, strategy, identity, and reputation that rings true internal and external observers" (ibid., p. 136). The main goal is the consistence of the corporate story, although it should be adapted to the respective stakeholders. Reputation is understood by van Riel and Fombrun as the outcome of a continuous repetition of key messages and the right framing of these messages through the corporate story⁸. The main obstacles of integrated corporate communication are the fragmentation and specialization of the diverse communication functions within an organization. In order to overcome these obstacles

⁸ „A corporate story is a structured textual description that communicates the essence of the company to all stakeholders, helps strengthen the bonds that bind employees to the company, and successfully positions the company against rivals. It is build up by identifying unique elements of the company, creating a plot that weaves them together, and presenting them in an appealing fashion" (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 144).

they suggest five mechanism, of which the last one mainly applies to communication campaigns (ibid., p. 274):

- *Rules and directives*: consist of procedures, rules, standardized information, and communication systems;
- *Sequencing*: involves organizing a process so that the input of a specialist is logically and sequentially linked to the inputs and outputs of other specialists;
- *Organizational routines*: the application of replicable actions automatically, making use of implicit mental scripts for handling situations;
- *Group problem-solving*: personal interactions and communications customized to the situation;
- *Planning process*: integrating corporate communication campaigns through a defined planning process.

All in all, their approach is not able to solve the problems of integration. On the contrary, through the redefinition of terms and concepts and the broadening of their approach towards adjacent fields like managerial communication and organizational studies, they contribute to the existent confusion. Although they try to overcome their roots in marketing communications, their approach is much too influenced by the IMC perspective to bear new insights.

2.3.3 *European concepts of integrated (corporate) communication*

The concept of IMC is discussed in Europe under the term *integrated communications* or *integrated corporate communication* (Ahlers, 2006; Bruhn, 2014; Cornelissen, 2014; Kirchner, 2001; Holm, 2006; Vos & Schoemaker, 2008; Zerfaß, 2010a) which equally encompass a broad range of approaches

from both marketing and PR scholars. The concepts differ depending on the disciplinary background of the respective author and his or her interpretation of what constitutes and contains the concepts of PR and marketing. They also differ immensely in depth of analysis. Some taking integration for granted, some focusing simply on organizational matters of integration and coordination, many concentrating on media related problems, ignoring the fact that PR and marketing communications have long broadened their fields of activity.

A very popular, theoretically and empirically well-grounded approach in German speaking countries is Bruhn's concept of *integrated communications* (Bruhn, 2006; 2014). Bruhn takes as his starting point the communicative activities that can be empirically observed in business practice. He started to analyze the relationship of diverse communication activities within an organization in the 1990s and continued to further develop his approach to today. In the last years he conducted several large scale empirical research projects in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Bruhn & Boenigk, 2000a, 2000b; Bruhn, 2006).

He defines integrated communications as

the strategic and operational process of analysis, planning, organization, conduct, and control, which is focused on aligning the diverse sources of internal and external communication of corporations, in order to convey a consistent image of the corporation, or another reference object respectively, for all target groups. (Bruhn, 2014, p. 38; own translation from German original)

Integrated communications according to Bruhn incorporates the integration and coordination of all communication instruments and channels in five dimensions: *content* (thematic alignment of messages); *formal* (all communication activities shall be combined in order to create a consistent image of the corporation), *temporal* (temporal coordination in order to reinforce the

perception of a consistent corporate entity), horizontal (alignment and coordination of different communication instruments according to different target groups) and *vertical* (integration across different markets) (Bruhn, 2014, pp. 119-160). Bruhn's approach is, like many marketing approaches, characterized by a rather mechanistic (stimulus-response) and sender-oriented understanding of the nature of communication and by the lack of a sociological and psychological foundation (Zerfass, 2008, p. 66). The question, why organizations communicate at all is not answered. The focus is on the steering and influencing of attitudes, opinions, expectations, and behavior of target groups. Furthermore, differences between marketing communications and public relations both in long and short-term aims, stakeholder groups, and communication instruments are not specifically addressed. PR is considered to be one among many instruments of marketing communications (Bruhn, 2014, pp. 161-186).

An alternative to Bruhn's approach is offered by Zerfaß, (2010a) who grounds his *theory of corporate communication* both in business economics as well as in social and communication theory and thus tries to overcome the fundamental differences between both approaches and the evident shortcomings of former theories of practice.

According to Zerfass,

the point of departure for any theory of corporate communication must be *the company itself* and the role played by the latter in society as whole This inasmuch as corporate communication is in every case a commissioned communication which derives the meaning which it creates and establishes from the organization in which it is anchored. (Zerfass, 2008, p. 66; emphasis in original)

Communication in this sense is consciously shaped and partially delegable, e.g. to communication departments or agencies. Based on the different

modes of integration within typical stakeholder relationships, Zerfaß (2010a) initially identified three subsections of corporate communication⁹:

- *Internal communication* among owners, executives and employees within the organization for the common purpose of providing goods and services,
- *Market(ing) communication* with customers, partners and competitors with the aim of opening up or preventing economic contracts and transactions,
- *Public relations* communication with stakeholders in the social and political sphere for legitimization and assuring room for maneuver.

Later on, he added a fourth, financial communication, to the set

- *Financial communication* (investor relations) with stockholders and in the capital market, which, strictly speaking, may be assigned to the two areas mentioned first, but which is often considered independently on the basis of very strongly regulated relationships (Zerfass, 2010b).

⁹ Zerfass provides the following definition of corporate communication: "Corporate Communication embraces all communication processes which contribute to the definition of tasks, and to said task's realization, within profit-oriented economic organizations, and which, in particular, contribute to the internal and external coordination of actions and to the clarification of interest defining the relation between companies and their specific stakeholders. The basis and substance of these processes are symbolic actions which are initiated either by members of the organization (management, communication specialists) or by organizations commissioned with those tasks (agencies). Corporate communication is aimed the first instance at informing and constructing meaning. Building upon this initial activity, it aims at influencing stakeholders. Corporate communication thereby serves both to support the ongoing provision of goods or services (success) and to create intangible assets (potential for future success) within companies" (Zerfass, 2008, p. 66).

This study focusses on marketing communication and public relations and the lines of distinction Zerfass draws between them. Zerfass distinguishes the immediate external environment of a company in (a) the sphere of the marketplace in which economic relations with suppliers, customers, and competitors are formed, and (b) the sphere of society (socio-political sphere) which comprises the totality of non-economic stakeholders from which a company needs acceptance and legitimacy for its products and processes of doing business.

Marketing communication addresses the sphere of the marketplace and supports coordination of action based on contractual arrangements. It comprises all communicative actions by companies which manage relationships involving transaction and competition and is essentially persuasive communication, intended to produce in their addressees a certain type of behavior namely the purchase of products or services (Zerfass, 2008, pp. 83-84).

Public relations, in comparison, aims at managing relationships with stakeholders in the socio-political environment of a company. The socio-political environment comprises the arenas of politics, science, art, etc.; all of them defined by certain concepts of meaning and rationality which differ quite sharply from those dominant within the organizational sphere and the sphere of the market. In the socio-political environment companies encounter a variety of stakeholders – for example, government authorities, political parties, residents' groups, pressure groups, and NGOs – who can either influence corporate strategy or are themselves affected by the company. Companies strive for support from this stakeholder groups to secure room for maneuver and gain legitimacy for concrete strategies. Zerfass acknowledges that it is illusionary, of course, to strive for absolute acceptance by all stakeholders. But PR can contribute to building up structural reserves of legitimacy, such as orders of prestige, of values, and legal orders. These normative structures can be 'tapped' when controversial interpretations of a situation occur and a corporate strategy needs legitimation in a case where it

appears to negatively affect some issue of social relevance (Zerfass, 2008, pp. 84-85).¹⁰

In contrast to other authors, Zerfass stresses the necessary openness and flexibility of PR communication, the nature of which requires areas of freedom and latitude for pro-active structuring action, innovative forms of interactive communication and the dynamic positioning of entire companies. The pluralization of society brings it about that PR must deal with ever new stakeholders and ever new types of claim raised. Social integration can only succeed here if a broad spectrum of communication strategies adequate to each specific situation is applied.¹¹ This makes it extremely difficult to establish longterm structures (Zerfass, 2008, pp. 86-87).

When it comes to the integration of communication activities, Zerfass provides a sophisticated concept of different levels and depths of integration. He argues that the specialization and differentiation of communication functions may result in the loss of a common point of reference. Therefore, the various component parts and aspects of corporate communication shall be properly adjusted vis-à-vis one another. Two approaches to solve this problem are suggested: (a) the integration of communication activities per se, and (b) integration through the underlying process of communication management (Zerfaß, 2008, pp. 87-92; 2010a, pp. 307-316, pp. 389-424). On the first level, relying on Bruhn and preceding approaches of IMC which have

¹⁰ At this point Zerfass addresses the dual role of companies in modern society (Zerfass, 2010a, pp. 262-269). Companies communicate with stakeholders in social spheres first and foremost with the aim of achieving their particular goals in respect of profit. PR can, however, also be used in order to make an original contribution to public welfare. This is the case if companies initiate problem-solving processes involving all sectors of society or if they settle conflicts that have arisen with stakeholders regarding certain strategies by means of argumentative dialogues.

¹¹ Here Zerfass is very close to the concept of polyphony (Christensen, Morsing, & Cheney, 2008; see ch. 2.3.4).

been en vogue when he first published his theory of corporate communication in the 1990's, Zerfass suggests four modes of integration (Zerfass, 2008, pp. 88-89):

- 1) *Content integration* means the mutual adjustment of communication activities via lines of thematic association – for example, via the use of common motifs, slogans, key messages, and key images. Although marketing communication and public relations might emphasize certain aspects differently, it is important that they all contribute to a common idea and strategy.
- 2) *Formal integration* means the alignment of design, sound, and architecture for all communication activities – a concept that is usually discussed under the umbrella terms ‘corporate identity’ or ‘corporate design’. The integration especially applies to colors, typefaces, and logos which shape a company’s visual appearance. The immediate recognition effect aimed at here is intended to ensure that stakeholders associate positive experiences or images from various spheres of action with one another.
- 3) *Temporal integration* of communication activities means that a certain temporal continuity of information delivered by a company. Messages, to be effective and appear trustworthy, cannot just appear once in a short-term campaign but must rather be communicated repeatedly over the long term and in as many arenas as possible. Above all, however, mistakes such as the simultaneous announcement of job-losses and increases in directors’ salaries must be avoided. Even when two such issues have causally nothing to do with one another and concern different stakeholders, they will inevitably be linked in the public mind and can cause permanent damage to company reputation.
- 4) *Dramaturgical integration* concerns the mutual adjustment of all communication activities in regard to their total effect within the

emerging and dynamic context of campaigns. Communication campaigns start with a clear conception of the positioning of the company that is aspired, but in fact their concept and appearance constantly evolves during the process of their practical realization (Zerfaß, 2010a, p. 413). Campaigns are, in distinction from classical communication programs, non-linear, cross-media, limited in time, thematically narrowly focused, and, above all, dramaturgically designed. Dramaturgical integration presupposes above all a consistent process of cross-media organization during the course of a communication campaign.

Although this approach is very close to the IMC approach, Zerfass differs in that he stresses the importance of an overall management system that supports the mutual adjustment and coordination of all communication measures. To achieve this, he introduces the concept of *communication controlling* (Zerfass, 2008, pp. 89-92; 2010a, pp. 401-416; 2010b; 2014, pp. 59-69).

Zerfass also differs from former approaches in that he distinguishes but equates the domains of internal communication, marketing communication, and public relations which serve different goals but often make use of the same means or methods. Despite their different spheres of influence Zerfass stresses that all three still remain obliged to serve a single common goal: the creation, realization, and execution of company strategies (Zerfass, 2008, pp. 79-80). It should be ensured that these activities are mutually adjusted to, and coordinated with, one another in the dimensions of content, formal design, temporal flow, and dramaturgy. Finally, a basic element of the theory outlined here is an understanding of management which looks on the integration of the company into both market and wider society and thus acknowledges the tensions and complementary relations between economic effectiveness and legitimacy as a constitutive element of modern societies.

2.4 Interdisciplinary and critical approaches to corporate communications

While the North American and Australian research landscape is very much dominated by the IMC approach and the related concept of corporate communication, this interpretation is increasingly challenged by European PR scholars. Here the debate is very fragmented, characterized by individual approaches and lack of conceptual clarity. In recent years approaches of Scandinavian and North European authors have become very popular (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011; Christensen et al., 2008; Christensen et al., 2009; Simcic Brønn & Berg, 2005). Their approach to *corporate communication(s)* is strongly influenced by organizational communication thought and theory. Their interpretation of the concept of corporate communication differs from those of scholars referred to above, sometimes strongly so. In addition to their grounding in organizational communication, they are influenced by concepts from sociology and the cultural sciences and take on a rather critical stance towards the prevailing concepts of IMC and corporate communications. While former PR and marketing scholars worked out the different functions of marketing communications, internal communication, public relations, and other communication functions available within the company and focused on managing their interplay (e.g. Bruhn, 2006, 2014; Zerfass, 2010a), it is the declared aim of those scholars to highlight the crucial intersections and connections of those research traditions and to strive for greater integration and cross-fertilization (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011, pp. 1-2).

Christensen et al. (2008) consider “the ambition to demarcate, enclose and manage everything the organization says and does within a unifying corporate expression remains the essential weakness of the [IMC] perspective” (p. 194). Instead, they introduce a concept of corporate communications which acknowledges the value of diverse, even ambiguous voices within one corporation. They name their concept *polyphony of voices*, a term that is lent

from music. It means that two or more independent melodic parts (or voices) are combined into a coherent musical entity. The distinctive quality of polyphonic music is its utilization of diversity and complexity within a coherent unit (ibid., p. 195). Thus, instead of delivering one consistent and uniform message across all channels, they argue to allow many voices within one company even if this leads to contradictions and ambiguity first. Organizational and management theory has shown that it is illusionary to think that there will only be one opinion, motivation and interest in large organizations. Instead, we find multiple and diverse cultures, groups, interest and attitudes. To try to synchronize all of them and enforce conformity will inevitably lead to a loss on creative freedom, potential for innovation, loyalty and motivation (ibid., pp. 196-217). Christensen et al. adopt the concept of 'strategic ambiguity' from Eisenberg (1984). Eisenberg used the term to describe the practice of managers to generate support for their ideas by employing an ambiguous and imprecise rhetoric. According to him, many communication researchers ignore the fact that communicators often have multiple conflicting goals when communicating inside and outside the organizational setting. The use of strategic ambiguity promotes what Eisenberg calls 'unified diversity', the ability of difference to co-exist within the unity of the organization (Eisenberg, 1984, p. 231). Undoubtedly, Eisenberg's approach is more relevant today than ever. Thinking of the diverse stakeholders groups affecting the organization, consistency seems indeed to be an illusionary goal – and presumably not even successful. A homogeneous communication with all stakeholders would only make sense if all of these had the same interest and expectations towards the organization – which will certainly never be the case.

Christensen et al. state that

the impossibility of satisfying all goals and demands from stakeholders simultaneously implies that organizations cannot escape some level of hypocrisy. . . . Organizations, in order to manoeuvre in

a world of conflicting demands, need to compensate action in one direction with talk and decision in the opposite direction. . . . Hypocrisy may be a necessary transitional practice that helps organizations experiment and adjust to new situations. (Christensen et al., 2008, p. 201)

They proceed from a (post)modern stakeholder, who realizes that there are many truths about one company and are fully aware of the fact that most of them are neither acceptable nor consistent. (Post)modern stakeholders also realize that an organization has to choose and highlight one description amongst other possible descriptions and that this choice inevitably involves a certain amount of idealization. This, according to Christensen et al., is not an apology for deceit, but a reminder that “organizations – like human beings – sustain themselves to some extent through idealizations” (ibid., p. 203). Organizations necessarily produce hypocrisy when they seek to be responsive to differing and incompatible demands (ibid., p. 202). Only through accepting this state, an organization leaves its members the creative freedom to cultivate new meaning, to explore, experiment and change. Therefore, the ideal of a shared corporate identity is both illusionary and counterproductive.

In addition, we do not know whether all those consistent and orchestrated messages really reach the stakeholder in a clear and unequivocal way. As Christensen et al. point out,

acknowledging the creativity of reception does not imply that consumers and other audiences necessarily see corporate messages as inconsistent or fragmented – only that the organization loses its ability to orchestrate its own messages once they enter the universe of the receiver. Still, organizations often hope to influence or control this universe, too. As a consequence, consistency becomes more a question of being in a position to deliver an authoritative interpretation of corporate symbols than a question of discovering a neces-

sary and logical connection between and among those symbols. (Christensen et al., 2008, p. 206)

In addition, consistency in corporate communication is linked to the ability of the organization to create involvement of its members, the willingness to grant them participation and lend them a voice (*ibid.*). As Christensen et al. rightly point out, many organizations subscribe to such a philosophy, but few do implement it in practice. Most of them are too concerned that delegation and responsibility erodes the clear and consistent story (*ibid.*, p. 207). But by giving employees a voice in external and internal media, organizations can instill pride, stimulate identification and potentially enhance commitment (*ibid.*, p. 210). Christensen et al. adopt the standpoint of Deetz (2007) who argues that commitment is more important than shrewdness and agreement, good communication is thus not a matter of defining a common ground or securing consensus between different interests, but of allowing and cultivating a variety of perspectives in order to make sure that established positions are challenged on a continual basis (Christensen et al., 2008, p. 210). This theoretical approach is empirically substantiated by the findings of the 6th European Communication Monitor¹² (Zerfass, Verčič, Verhoeven, Moreno, & Tench, 2012). The study confirmed that organizations are interacting with more stakeholders through more media in more directions. 82 per cent of the respondents say that, compared to five years ago, their organization has more ‘touchpoints’ with its publics (Zerfass et al.,

¹² The European Communication Monitor (ECM) is a longitudinal transnational survey in strategic communication/communication management. It has been organized annually since 2007 by lead researcher Prof. Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, University of Leipzig, Germany. All surveys focus on current practices and future developments of communication management and PR in corporations, non-profits, governmental organizations, and communication agencies. The ECM 2012 was based on the responses from 2,185 communication professionals in different sectors and of different hierarchical levels from 42 European countries (Zerfass et al., 2012, p. 8).

2012, p. 44). According to comparative data from the GAP VII study¹³, conducted by the Annenberg School of Communication, the situation is even more extreme in the United States: the figure there is almost 93 per cent (ibid., p. 45). In Europe, three out of four communication professionals agree that the corporate or organizational voice is created by all organizational members interacting with stakeholders, and 43.2 per cent think they have less control over their messages (ibid., p. 44). So it is not surprising that the concept of polyphony is continuously gaining ground within the communication profession (Zerfass & Tench, 2012, pp. 25-26). Polyphony also requires to enable every member of the organization to communicate him- or herself with various stakeholder groups. In a nutshell, this means that communicators should increasingly look to stop communicating themselves and start enabling others to do so (Zerfass & Franke, 2013).

2.5 In need of new perspectives

So far, the main lines of scholarly discussion and research on the relationship of marketing and PR have been reviewed. It is obvious that the main lines of argumentation did not change much since the 1990's. Scholarly reflection continues to stay organization-centered and revolves around questions of integration, coordination, and hierarchy, and the alignment of com-

¹³ The Communication and Public Relations Generally Accepted Practices (GAP) studies are conducted annually by the USC Annenberg Strategic Communication and Public Relations Center (SCPRC). The purpose of the GAP studies is to provide practitioners with data they can use today to better manage the PR/Communication functions in their organizations; point out trends they must be aware of; and identify best practices against which they can benchmark their own organizations. Participants included the most senior communications professionals in corporations, government agencies and non-profit organizations. GAP is generally considered to be the largest, most comprehensive study of its type in the U.S. In the GAP VII study 620 senior communicators participated (Swerling, Thorson, & Tenderich, 2012).

munication tools and messages. As outlined above, this often happens with a lack of understanding what the respective other function is about. Authors usually ignore the depth and diversity of the disciplines and conceptualizations are often based on outdated and abridged understandings of their theoretical and practical scope. The reasons for this are manifold.

Generally, PR scholars and practitioners have always been very ineffective in educating businesspeople and business schools about PR (Hutton, 2010, p. 516). Although many key topics of PR research have become increasingly important for businesspeople in general, they are usually ignored by these. PR courses are seldom part of business or management education, although certain topics like stakeholder management and social media communication are discussed but usually not with reference to PR research. This may also be due to the fact that the PR disciplines still appears as a hotchpotch of theoretical concepts and approaches with no central tenet or core concept (Cropp & Pincus, 2001; Dühring, 2015; Hutton, 1996, 2010; Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2011; for detailed discussion see ch. 5.6). PR continues to fail to formulate a consistent body of core knowledge and formulate a unanimous definition to which at least a majority could agree to. Although this can be considered a normal process of academic maturation, it still prevents PR from gaining academic respect and recognition. The fact that PR research continues to be rather isolated from the rest of the social sciences and economics, results in the ongoing problem that most marketing scholars have a rather outdated, abridged understanding of what encompasses PR practice and PR scholarship. Their usual encounter with PR in the course of their education is rather short and superficial. Marketing and management handbooks – if they treat PR at all – usually introduce it as media relations with an emphasis on practical and tactical aspects. The evolution and professionalization of PR both in business practice and in academia in the last decades are mostly ignored.

However, this misconception goes both ways. Unsurprisingly, PR scholars and practitioners, too, often have a fragmentary, superficial understanding of marketing studies and business in general (Hutton, 2010, p. 516). Despite defining PR as a management function, PR practitioners and researchers seldom possess profound understanding of business procedures and managerial aspects, often equating 'management' with 'business administration' (Nothhaft, 2011). Although management theory slowly enters the field and curricula, it will take some time to achieve fundamental change both in theory and practice. It is definitely true that many PR scholars work with a rather simplistic, abridged idea of what marketing is about and thus base their conceptualization of PR and marketing's relationship on shaky grounds. Marketing is often equated with marketing communications or advertising only. Additionally, PR scholars usually pride themselves with a more sophisticated, reflective concept of communication theory. The prejudice still exists that marketing communicators adhere to Shannon and Weaver's transmissive model of communication who described communication as a linear, one-way process from sender to receiver. While this is still true for the mainstream of marketing communications thought, critical scholars have long addressed this unsatisfying status quo and proposed alternative communication theories for marketing communication (Christensen, Torp, & Firat, 2005; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Grönroos, 1994, 2004; Ozuem, 2005).

Neither marketing nor PR scholars often cross the borders of scholarly activity on the other side. Common publications or conferences are the exception rather than the rule. This mutual ignorance is all the more surprising as we can observe an obvious convergence of marketing and PR research not only on communication related topics. None of the approaches outlined above acknowledges the fundamental developments and reorientations both fields experienced in the last decades. Today, many traditional points

of differentiation between marketing and PR have become obsolete as both have long broadened their spheres of interest.

From a meta-theoretical perspective, the revival of critical and macromarketing approaches within marketing thought forced the relationship between an organization and its environment as well as the responsibility of organizations on behalf of their environment back on the agenda of marketing scholarship. A revival that comes with no surprise considering the megatrends of environmentalism and the growing criticism of western lifestyle and its consumer society (Klein, 2010, 2015; see ch. 4.5.6). In addition, digitalization is changing the ways companies do business and interact with their stakeholders all over the world. The mantra of 'value co-creation' is redefined and put into action by more and more businesses (see ch. 4.5.2). Organizations have to engage in dialogical, two-way communication, taking into account the views and interests of their stakeholders. While PR scholars have long cherished this idea, even before these ways of communication were made possible on a large scale through technical advancement, marketing scholars only begin to adopt their theories and procedure to a changing world with new challenges.

At the same time, the PR discipline is redefining and differentiating itself, including many former domains of the marketing field. The growing focus on managerial aspects starting with *Managing Public Relations* (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and buttressed by *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (Grunig, 1992a) led to an adoption of business management approaches and models based largely on rationalistic strategic management literature such as strategic planning, issues management, scenario planning, or methods of evaluation and accounting (Sandhu, 2009). In the last decades, the dominance of the 'excellence theory' faded giving way to new perspectives (see ch. 5.4.5; 5.4.6; 5.5). PR research today finds itself torn between two epistemological poles. The emerging *strategic communication school of thought* (SCST) (see ch. 5.5.6) pursues PR's alignment with

business management and continues Grunig's vision, to position PR as a strategic management function. Vice versa, a growing number of critical scholars fundamentally question former conceptualizations of PR and the mission of the PR discipline. They put into focus PR's role vis-à-vis society as a whole and criticize the functionalist, positivist orientation of the mainstream of PR research (see ch. 5.5.5).

As has been laid out in the introduction (ch. 1), this study attempts to reassess the relationship of marketing and PR by introducing new perspectives from the philosophy of science and history of thought. The former focus on organizational/business practice has led to a standoff in the debate. Thus, this study adopts a different angle by concentrating on their relationship as academic disciplines instead. This refocussing allows a new perspective on the relationship of the marketing and the PR discipline with goes beyond former conceptualizations.

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