

Preface

Anyone dealing with the theory and practice of organizational communication will be well aware of disciplinary struggles that shape the field. Concurrent phenomena are dealt with by different sciences. Public relations research as a part of communication studies and marketing research in the field of business are the main proponents in this endeavor. An interchange and fertilization of both perspectives is often called for, but hardly takes place. On the contrary, widely isolated education programs at universities as well as disparate scientific and professional communities have grown around the world. This leads to confusion among students, graduates and employers.

In this book, Lisa Dühring uncovers the background of these developments and demonstrates alternative routes for future research. She reconstructs the development of marketing and public relations research in academia since their beginnings about one hundred years ago. The author links advancements in the bodies of knowledge to general developments in the philosophy of sciences. Key phases of theory development are disclosed, parallels between the two disciplines are highlighted, and the relation between public relations and marketing research is clarified. The book deliberately takes a different stance than the well-known debate about the influence of different communication departments in organizations or the benefits of moderating concepts like integrated communications. It is also not concerned with an inventory of prevailing themes, for example, through a citation analysis. Rather, it is reflective and interpretive, deliberately supporting critical and hermeneutical perspectives. These are underrepresented in the current debate. Lisa Dühring encourages her readers to open up their minds to these alternative perspectives and shows how they might help to overcome current struggles and limitations.

The broad research question and the focus on approaches beyond the mainstream require a profound knowledge of the literature. At the same time, the criticism of prevailing concepts asks for a great sovereignty of interpretation – something seldom found in many small-scale empirical studies dominating today's academic discourse. The author fulfills these expectations. The book is a worthy contribution to the international academic discussion in the field.

More specifically, the study deserves a broad readership because it serves three goals. It reconstructs the relationship between public relations and marketing research on a metatheoretical level, and thus sheds new light on a field of tension that has been discussed for many years. It presents a concise systematization of the theoretical discourse in both disciplines since the beginning of the twentieth century by differentiating key phases of development and evaluating current research approaches. Last but not least, it argues for a stronger connection of both disciplines and a better profiling within the mother disciplines of communication and business studies by fostering critical and interpretative approaches. The book convinces through thought-proving questions, pointed statements and inspiring conclusions. Above all, Lisa Dühning takes an independent position beyond the mainstream and research traditions at her own institute – this makes the work even more valuable for the international discourse. It is strongly recommended to everybody interested in understanding the communication of organizations.

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Reassessing the Relationship between Marketing and
Public Relations

New Perspectives from the Philosophy of Science and
History of Thought

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2017, XVII, 318 p. 2 illus., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-658-18033-1