Strategic Communication in International Business and Foreign Affairs Paper Draft

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Abstract

This paper examines how strategic communication has become a key mechanism through which multinational business enterprises, institutions, and governments navigate an increasingly uncertain and politicized global environment. This paper argues that corporate social responsibility (CSR) and frameworks such as institutional, stakeholder, and resilience theories, explain why organizations engage in communication beyond merely profit-based incentives. By examining international case studies across Africa, Europe, and North America, this paper demonstrates that strategic communication influences foreign direct investment (FDI), public perception, and policy outcomes, but is only effective when supported by credible institutions and regulatory support. This analysis highlights both the advantages of communication and limitations of strategic communication to ultimately conclude that such communication is not merely a supporting function, but a critical tool that links business, government, and international relations through the management of perception, trust, and legitimacy.

Introduction

In the existing global environment, multinational enterprises operate in conditions that are defined less by predictable economic expansion and more by structural uncertainties. Things such as trade tensions, anti-globalist movements, techno-nationalism, and/ or the rippling effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly slowed the trajectory of globalization along with decreased foreign direct investment (FDI) growth in recent years (Napier, 2022). At the same time, the rapid evolution of the digital environment has changed how information spreads and ultimately how said information is interested by the public. Online platforms circulate large amounts of fragmented, and in some cases contradictory information, which potentially influence the public opinions quickly, often before that information can even be verified (Happer). Because corporate reputation is directly influenced by national institutions, whether or not stakeholder participation is stable can greatly affect the outcome of the success of a business (Gaganis). As a result, economic performance alone is no longer enough to solidify a business trajectory in a genie market; instead firms must also manage political risk, public perception, and institutional differences across different countries.

Over the past five years, these factors which are relevant to a business's success have only intensified and become more explicitly political. Multinational enterprises continue to face what is commonly referred to as the "liability of foreignness," meaning that they are often naturally viewed with skepticism in host countries forcing them to directly compete with strong local firms to be competitive (Napier, 2022). Simultaneously, businesses have also begun to place emphasis on positioning themselves as actors in social and political discourse, with a significantly large majority of public executives acknowledging that firms now possess platforms powerful enough to address major societal issues (Overton). Because reputation varies vastly across national environments, having to conform to different regulatory frameworks and/ or cultural expectations, forms cannot assume that one communication strategy will be applicable in all political and economic environments (Gaganis). Additionally, crises that are centralized on online platforms often necessitate a quicker and more transparent response, as the new digital age frames proper communication as the standard for risk management and stakeholder engagement/ trust (Nuortimo).

Over the past decade, these changes have reflected broader structural shifts in both globalization and governance. While global FDI has expanded significantly over the long term—especially into emerging and middle-income countries (Cohle)—confidence in political institutions has declined in many regions. Scholars have described this trend as "democratic recession," which can be marked by failing political participation along with overall decreased trust in democratic institutions (Westman). This combination of both deep economic integration and weakening domestic institutional trust has made legitimacy and perception the forefront in any decision making related to international business. In this context, strategic communication is no longer just a marketing tool; it's become a main mechanism through which firms and governments attempt to garner credibility, stability and maintain positive perceptions of economic viability across borders.

Strategic communication refers to the intentional and purposeful development and usage of communication by various organizations in order to achieve specific goals, whether it be for reputation, partnerships, policy, profit, or other motives. Strategic communication occupies several forms, such as public relations (PR), marketing, advertising, and messaging. In several cases, businesses and states alike recognize that successful communication between partners requires consultation, mutual adaptation, and constructive dialogue between parties (Westman), ultimately providing value and strengthening stakeholder engagement (Nuortimo). In crises, strategic communication is regarded as a critical cornerstone for managing and mitigating the impact of unexpected events on corporate reputation, operations, and stakeholder trust (Mills and Morrish 2023).

Despite the prevalence of strategic communication, there is academic discourse regarding the degree to which such communication impacts the beliefs and opinions of stakeholders. Research indicates that while some individuals that had been exposed to new subjects were most open to adjusting their views, polarized and biased coverage often led viewers to develop firm positions of the opposite position (Happer). As such, the effect of strategic communication on stakeholder perception may be influenced by past behavior, current associations, and emerging information in addition to subjective, unreported factors (Happer).

This paper aims to outline the nuances of strategic communication in both theory and practice, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of engaging with stakeholders via curated messaging, and explore international case studies that ultimately highlight the implications of communication development across business, foreign policy, and global affairs. This paper argues that although strategic communication faces barriers rooted in cultural relativism, institutional restrictions, and audience receptiveness, it is an endeavor worth undertaking for firms looking to expand their reach and engagement.

Strategic Communication In Theory

Academics have dedicated effort to identify the theoretical frameworks by which strategic communication is bound. It is argued that corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays a critical role in motivating businesses and organizations to partake in pro-social strategic communication. Aristotle's theories of citizenship provide the foundation that justifies treating businesses as distributive agents and participants in political processes should they engage in "rule-setting interactions" or "rule-finding discourse" (Westman). In doing so, corporations move beyond purely economic functions and assume a quasi-civic role, contributing to the shaping of societal norms, policies, and collective values. CSR thus becomes not merely a reputational tool, but a mechanism through which firms engage in dialogue with stakeholders, influence public discourse, and legitimize their participation in governance structures.

In order to be considered to have genuine social impact, scholars have outlined four criteria that organizations must meet; the activity must be substantive, unequivocal, inclusive, and comparatively efficient (Napier). Said activity must deliver meaningful benefits that are not offset by detrimental actions in order to ultimately provide a net positive impact to all stakeholders involved. Similarly, CSR may be outlined by its three pillars of principles, processes, and outcomes (Napier). While CSR must be rooted in values that emphasize public responsibility, the methods by which those values are exercised must be principles and ethical.

Institutional Theory: Institutional Theory (IT) argues that organizations operate as a result of their institutional environment of social, cultural, and political pressures (Gaganis). Operating under the assumption that stakeholders develop their own perceptions of the organization in accordance with sociocultural norms, IT motivates groups to align themselves with a position that mirrors the goals, values, behaviors, and expectations of both stakeholders and institutions themselves (Deephouse, Newberry and Soleimani, 2016).

Stakeholder Theory: Stakeholder Theory posits that institutions and businesses ultimately communicate with the purpose of engaging and connecting with stakeholders (Napier). Considering that the stakeholder is so critical to the success and continuance of the organization itself, messaging and communication is meant to increase favor among stakeholders and address their concerns.

Strategic Choice Theory: Strategic Choice Theory (SCT) refers to the idea that corporations take actions following careful deliberation over the external and internal conditions that contribute to the decision-making landscape and its parameters (Napier). In doing so, the organization is considered a voluntary, autonomous entity that demonstrates proactive and strategic intent.

Organizational Resilience Theory: Organizational Resilience Theory (ORT) argues that corporations leverage strategic communication in order to preemptively increase their resilience should an adverse event take place in the future (Nuortimo). ORT emphasizes stakeholder trust and a safeguarded reputation so that the organization may not suffer as severe of a reputational blow should an unforeseen conflict arise (Chen et al. 2021).

Crisis Communication Theory: Crisis Communication Theory (CCT) outlines that corporations must act with transparency, trustworthiness, and accountability should they expect stakeholders to engage and interact with the organization (Sellnow and Seeger 2021). As such, the success of post-crisis efforts rests upon the ability of the corporation to effectively demonstrate its capacity for responsibility and its acceptance of resulting liability.

Sensemaking Theory: Sensemaking Theory attempts to explain the underlying connection between stakeholders and their association of groups with events, potential causes, narratives, and perceptions (Maitlis and Sonenshein 2010).

Media Richness Theory: Media Richness Theory (MRT) suggests that provocative and "rich" media are more suitable and increasingly effective for emotionally charged messages that rely on impact, clarity, and emotional output (Kottink).

Despite the wide array of theories regarding why organizations participate in strategic communication, it can be argued that several of these theories are not mutually exclusive and instead, can coexist with one another. For example, a business can carefully choose to engage in select communication (strategic choice theory) in order to increase its internal resilience against future crises (organizational resilience theory) that simultaneously incorporates robust visual imagery and messaging (media richness theory and sensemaking theory)—all ultimately occurring as a byproduct of the cultural and political environment (institutional theory) and for the benefit of stakeholders (stakeholder theory). To assume that an organization is only engaging in strategic communication using the means of a single theory is to discount the various socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional factors that undoubtedly pull business management in several directions.

Strategic Communication in Practice

Companies leverage several methods in order to implement strategic communication, such as online information-gathering, published messages, and narrative storytelling that adapts to the population it seeks to influence. The aforementioned definition of strategic communication, the intentional development and deployment of communication by organizations in order to achieve specific goals, is often primarily supplemented by engagement with stakeholders through social media, in which companies respond to feedback and gauge consumer and investor sentiment (Vuori 2012). In turn, the company creates messaging that simultaneously interacts with their stakeholders and demonstrates leadership, empathy, and transparency. Similarly, such engagement with stakeholders allows a company to leverage communication avenues for knowledge transfer and community building (Nuortimo).

For organizations that endeavor to scale across countries or regions, strategic communication is often standardized prior to replication in order to ensure that the messaging aligns with the organization's key pillars. However, that is not to say that local adaptations of said messages are unwise—although tailoring of messages based on locality is more resource-intensive, it allows for a greater external fit between the business model of the organization and the community that it is looking to expand into. (Henderson & Mitchell, 1997). Additionally, narrative storytelling may be employed to better convey a group's pro-social mission, as the method leverages the fact that humans are more likely to process information in a narrative format rather than a semantic format (overton). As such, narrative messages allow viewers to engage with the emotion and storyline of the information, thereby reducing counterarguments, message scrutiny, and possible negative reactions. When companies employ narrative techniques, public perception of the organization is likely to increase, with more individuals viewing the group favorably (overton).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Strategic Communication

In the 21st century, the rapid digitalization has both enabled and accelerated the accessibility and global spread of information, and with it, businesses' communications. With the low barrier to entry enabled by the internet given its speed and low marginal cost, companies have been able to scale their messaging to international markets with less investment, offering a more convenient and affordable method by which to connect with existing and prospective customers (Tippmann). Moreover, the advent of the internet has made the rapid dissemination of news possible, opening up companies to more reputational risk should they be featured in a negative context or should they not respond to current events that stakeholders believe warrant a corporate response. As companies deploy techniques such as advocacy and megaphoning, they are more likely to increase perceived authenticity among stakeholders (Overton). Similarly, increased corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication increases perceptions regarding the activities that a firm engages in, suggesting that individuals view the company as taking on a more active role within the community (Viererbel). A sample of over 600 firms across 19 European countries highlighted the long term benefit in engaging with public opinion; as the public perceives the firm to be more environmentally friendly, future reputational exposure decreases (Gaganis). Ultimately, strategic communication accelerates cross-border scaling, opens access to international markets, and reduces reputational exposure at a cheaper cost for firms.

Strategic communication is not without its drawbacks; institutional forces, cultural differences, public criticism, and suboptimal information markets obstruct a business organization from conveying and engaging with stakeholders. Primarily, multinational enterprises (MNEs) must juggle business environments that vary from country to country, as each has different regulations and bylaws that affect how companies may engage with the public. Currently, institutional mandates regarding corporate social responsibility and climate change policy are pluralistic and heterogeneous, which may be difficult to reconcile from a corporate perspective (Napier) given that MNEs must follow the laws and regulations of both their home country and every country they operate in, creating conflicts and extra pressure. In unique cases, what is acceptable in one country directly conflicts with what is acceptable in another, making consistent ethical behavior nearly impossible. Additionally, as aforementioned, companies must reconcile maintaining strict standards of replication when expanding to new countries and territories with the advantage of tailoring the business model to fit within local expectations—a phenomenon known as "the replication dilemma" (Reuber et al., 2021). Pressure for local responsiveness must be balanced with the alignment of messaging with the organization's central goal in order to meet growth objectives, which is a precarious balance to strike (Tippmann).

Moreover, flaws in the information market may distort information gathering initiatives, ultimately hurting the messages and materials produced from said information. Demand, irrational investors, and supply issues misconstrue market-level phenomena and create a feedback loop that perpetuate incorrect information and biases (Ayza). Should a company be unable to maintain their own informative independence while still obtaining correct market insights, they risk containment within a financial bubble that could impede their processes.

International Case Studies in Strategic Communication

African Case Studies

Across Africa, governments have increasingly used strategic communication to shape international economic perceptions and attract foreign investment. This reflects the growing importance of perception in global markets, where investors rely on signals to evaluate risk in uncertain environments. Foreign direct investment (FDI) plays a critical role in economic development by bringing capital, technology, and managerial expertise to emerging economies; it serves not only as a source of funding, but also as a way to transfer knowledge and integrate countries into global value chains (Madondo and Dhoba). However, investment decisions are heavily influenced by perceived stability and trustworthiness, meaning that how a country is viewed can be just as important as its actual economic conditions. As a result, governments across the region have increasingly turned to public relations campaigns and national branding strategies to shape their global image. Strategic communication therefore functions as a tool to signal economic reform, political stability, and openness to international markets.

Rwanda provides one of the clearest examples of strategic communication being used successfully to attract foreign investment. The Rwanda Development Board promotes the country as an investment destination through coordinated public relations efforts, international partnerships, and global events (Uwera). National branding initiatives, such as the “Remarkable Rwanda” campaign launched in 2018, have increased tourism revenue and helped secure partnerships with major global sports organizations, including Arsenal FC, Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), and Bayern Munich, generating millions of dollars. Rwanda has also strengthened its global presence by participating in international forums such as the World Economic Forum on Africa, reinforcing its reputation as a stable and business-friendly environment (Uwera). Importantly, these communication strategies are supported by policy reforms, including streamlined business registration and targeted incentives for investors. This alignment between messaging and policy increases credibility, reduces perceived risk, and builds investor confidence. As a result, Rwanda experienced significant growth in foreign direct investment, reaching approximately $2.56 billion in 2019 (Uwera). In addition, social media and digital platforms have become important tools for directly engaging investors and providing real-time information, further improving transparency and accessibility.

Zimbabwe provides a contrasting case in which strategic communication has been used primarily to repair a damaged international reputation. Following the resignation of President Mugabe in 2017, the new government under President Emmerson Mnangagwa launched the “Zimbabwe is Open for Business” campaign to signal economic reform and renewed openness to foreign investors (Madondo and Dhoba). The government used diplomatic outreach, national branding, and media messaging to communicate policy changes and attract investment. These efforts were designed to address long-standing concerns about corruption, political instability, and expropriation risks that had discouraged investors during the Mugabe era (Madondo and Dhoba). However, unlike Rwanda, these strategies have been less effective because they are not fully supported by consistent economic and political reforms. While the campaign promoted a new narrative, ongoing instability and limited institutional change have weakened its credibility. As a result, investors remain cautious, showing that communication alone cannot overcome deeper concerns about governance and risk. This highlights a key limitation of strategic communication: its effectiveness depends on whether it is supported by real and sustained policy change.

Together, the cases of Rwanda and Zimbabwe show that strategic communication can play different roles in international economic strategy. In Rwanda, communication reinforces existing stability and reforms, strengthening investor confidence and supporting sustained FDI growth. In contrast, Zimbabwe shows how communication can attempt to reshape perceptions after instability, but its success depends on whether real reforms support the message. These cases suggest that while strategic communication can influence how countries are perceived, its overall impact depends on the credibility of the underlying political and economic environment.

European Case Studies

Across Europe and its surrounding regions, both political and economic developments show that strategic communication plays an important role in shaping how countries attract investment, manage their international reputation, and pursue foreign policy goals. Governments have increasingly recognized that economic competitiveness is not determined only by internal conditions, but also by how those conditions are communicated to external audiences. Even if a country has strong economic fundamentals, investors may hesitate if they are unaware of opportunities, lack trust in the system, or perceive reputational risks. As a result, countries often combine investment promotion with national branding strategies to increase their attractiveness, reduce uncertainty, and signal stability to international investors.

Kazakhstan provides an example of a country that actively uses strategic communication to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) play a key role in building trust with investors by explaining investment procedures, identifying opportunities, and providing credible information about the country and its markets (Kersan-Škabić). Research shows that IPAs are most effective when they focus on specific industries rather than promoting all sectors broadly. For example, when agencies target a limited number of priority industries, FDI inflows have increased by as much as 41% in those sectors. This is because industries such as energy, technology, and infrastructure tend to have stronger reputations and are easier for investors to evaluate (Kersan-Škabić). These findings show that a country's ability to attract investment depends not only on economic conditions, but also on its ability to communicate clearly and strategically with potential investors.

In Southeast Europe, strategic communication is generally less effective due to weak institutional coordination and underdeveloped investment promotion systems. Governments often lack strong agencies, such as Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs), to effectively attract investors. While national and regional agencies exist in many countries, they often play a limited role because they lack funding, clear strategies, or the capacity to communicate effectively with investors (Kersan-Škabić). As a result, foreign investors frequently rely on their own networks or external consultants to gather information instead of trusting government communication. This suggests that strategic communication alone is not enough to attract investment; it must be supported by strong institutions and consistent policy. Without these foundations, communication efforts are less likely to reach their intended audience or improve a country's economic reputation.

The United Kingdom differs from the other cases in that it uses strategic communication not only to attract investment, but also to advance foreign policy goals and expand its global influence. In the UK, communication is integrated into overall government strategy rather than serving only as a marketing tool. It is used in areas such as diplomacy, national security, and global influence. For example, the UK uses news outlets, public media networks, and digital platforms to promote its values and counter misinformation, which helps strengthen perceptions of legitimacy and stability. These efforts also extend internationally. Campaigns such as the "GREAT" initiative have promoted the UK as a destination for trade, tourism, and investment, generating an estimated £4 billion over a decade (Strategic communication as a tool of global influence...). In addition, the UK has developed coordinated efforts to counter foreign disinformation, particularly during geopolitical conflicts such as the Russia–Ukraine War, through initiatives like the Government Information Cell. Overall, the UK shows that strategic communication can be used not only to attract investment, but also to shape international narratives, strengthen alliances, and maintain national credibility.

North American Case Studies (Canada and the US)

In North America, strategic communication plays a significant role in shaping the relationship between businesses, governments, and the public. Unlike some developing regions where communication is used mainly to attract foreign investment, in North America it is deeply integrated into political processes, lawmaking, and public opinion. Firms are not only economic actors but also political participants that influence regulations and expectations through public relations, lobbying, partnerships, and public campaigns. At the same time, media systems strongly influence how people perceive foreign investment, globalization, and international economic agreements. As a result, policy decisions are shaped not only by economic facts, but also by public perception.

Canada shows how businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), use strategic communication to engage with political systems and influence social and environmental policy. Many firms participate in advocacy groups, collaborate with civil society organizations, and hold advisory roles in government-related bodies to raise awareness about issues such as climate change and poverty reduction (Westman). These activities reflect a shift away from traditional lobbying toward more flexible, network-based forms of engagement. Because SMEs tend to be more adaptable, they can adopt innovative communication strategies and respond quickly to emerging issues. This allows businesses to connect their economic activities with broader political and social processes, showing that strategic communication can be used not only for reputation management, but also for active policy influence.

The United States provides a clearer example of how strategic communication and political engagement can directly influence economic outcomes. Foreign firms operating in the U.S. often establish political action committees (PACs) to contribute to political campaigns, which increases their access to government contracts and funding (Ayyagari). Research shows that firms with PACs receive more contracts and higher contract values, and even small increases in contributions can lead to measurable financial gains (Ayyagari). In this context, political communication functions as a strategic investment that helps firms overcome the challenges of operating as foreign entities. At the same time, media coverage plays a major role in shaping public opinion about international economic policies. When media outlets frame international disputes as foreign threats, public support for investment agreements decreases (Brutger). Public attitudes are also influenced by perceptions of fairness, as individuals are more likely to oppose foreign investment when other countries do not provide equal market access (Chilton). Together, these findings show that communication—through both political contributions and media narratives—can directly influence policy decisions, public opinion, and access to markets.

Overall, the cases of Canada and the United States show that strategic communication in North America operates at multiple levels, from grassroots advocacy to high-level political influence. In Canada, communication is used to build relationships and shape policy through collaborative, network-based approaches. In contrast, the United States shows how communication and political engagement can produce direct economic benefits and influence government decisions. Both cases demonstrate that strategic communication is closely tied to the relationship between business and government, and that public perception—shaped by media and political messaging—plays a central role in determining the success of international business activities.

Findings

Intersection with Business

Strategic communication plays a central role in shaping how firms interact with both markets and stakeholders in international business environments. Across the case studies, corporations do not operate only as economic actors, but also as participants in broader social and political systems. Firms use communication strategies—such as public relations campaigns, corporate social responsibility (CSR) messaging, and political engagement—to influence how they are perceived by investors, governments, and the public. In many cases, these efforts are directly linked to economic outcomes. For example, in the United States, foreign firms that engage in political communication through political action committees (PACs) are able to secure more government contracts and funding, showing that communication can function as a strategic investment rather than just a reputational tool (Ayyagari).

At the same time, firms interact closely with local groups, including civil society organizations, communities, and advocacy networks. The Canadian case shows that businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), often use collaborative communication strategies to influence policy and raise awareness about social and environmental issues (Westman). These interactions show that strategic communication is not only top-down, but also relational, involving ongoing dialogue between firms and local stakeholders. However, the effectiveness of these efforts depends on credibility and consistency. When communication aligns with actual business practices—such as ethical behavior, transparency, and responsible supply chain management—it can build trust. When it does not, it can lead to skepticism and reputational risk.

Intersection with Foreign Policy

Strategic communication also shapes how businesses interact with national governments and policy environments. Laws, regulations, and institutional quality influence how communication is received and whether it is effective. For example, perceptions of corruption and institutional reliability play a key role in determining whether investors view a country as stable and trustworthy (Kozubikova). In countries with strong institutions, communication strategies—such as investment promotion campaigns—are more likely to be seen as credible and attract foreign investment. In contrast, in countries with weaker governance structures, communication efforts are often viewed with skepticism, which limits their impact on investor behavior.

In addition, national politics plays a major role in shaping the relationship between communication and economic outcomes. Governments and firms often use strategic communication to influence policy decisions, including trade policy and investment regulation. Evidence from the United States shows that political contributions and lobbying can directly affect policy outcomes, such as lowering trade barriers or increasing access to government contracts (Cohle; Ayyagari). At the same time, public opinion—shaped by media narratives—can influence political decisions. When media coverage presents foreign investment negatively, public support for international economic agreements decreases, which can lead to more restrictive policies (Brutger). This shows that strategic communication operates within a feedback loop between firms, governments, and the public.

Intersection with International Relations/ Foreign Policy

At the international level, strategic communication plays a key role in shaping how states interact with allies, adversaries, and global institutions. Countries use communication strategies to strengthen alliances by promoting shared values, reinforcing trust, and coordinating responses to global challenges. For example, the United Kingdom's coordinated communication with NATO and EU partners to counter disinformation shows how communication can support collective action and strengthen international cooperation (Strategic Communication as a Tool of Global Influence). In this context, communication helps align perceptions among allied countries and maintain stability within international partnerships.

At the same time, strategic communication is increasingly used in competition between states. Governments use media, messaging, and digital platforms to influence how events are interpreted globally, especially during conflicts or geopolitical tensions. The spread of disinformation and competing narratives shows that communication is not neutral, but a tool of influence and power in international relations. These dynamics shape how countries are perceived by investors and other states, which can directly affect economic relationships.

Finally, international organizations and global frameworks also play a key role in shaping communication strategies. Efforts to address global challenges, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, require coordination across borders and rely on effective communication to scale impact and align stakeholders (Tippmann). At the same time, global norms around corporate responsibility, sustainability, and governance influence how firms communicate and operate internationally. This creates a system in which strategic communication is embedded within broader international structures, linking business behavior, government policy, and global cooperation. Together, these findings show that strategic communication is a key mechanism connecting economic, political, and international systems.

Implications

The findings of this paper suggest that strategic communication has become a central feature of the modern global order, shaping how economic, political, and institutional systems interact. In today's environment, power is no longer determined only by material factors such as economic size or military strength, but also by the ability to shape perceptions of legitimacy, stability, and credibility. This reflects a shift toward a more perception-driven global system, where reputation and narrative framing act as important forms of influence. Governments and firms that manage communication effectively can shape investor confidence, public opinion, and policy outcomes, while those that do not may struggle to maintain trust and competitiveness. As a result, information, signaling, and narrative control have become key components of both international business strategy and foreign policy.

Looking ahead, these trends suggest that strategic communication will become even more important as globalization remains politically contested and the digital information environment continues to expand. Firms will need to build resilience not only through operational strength, but also through their ability to manage reputational risk and respond to rapidly changing information flows (Napier). This reflects a more uncertain and fast-moving environment, where credibility and responsiveness are essential for maintaining a competitive advantage. At the same time, stakeholders—including investors, governments, and the public—are placing greater emphasis on transparency, ethical behavior, and social responsibility, increasing the importance of clear and consistent communication (Chukwu). As a result, organizations must ensure that their messaging aligns with their actual practices, since gaps between communication and reality can damage trust and weaken long-term performance.

These developments also have important implications across different levels of the global system, showing that strategic communication operates at multiple levels. At the international level, it can strengthen cooperation among allies, coordinate responses to global challenges, and shape shared narratives around issues such as sustainability and economic development. At the regional and national levels, governments can use communication strategies to attract investment, signal policy stability, and build confidence in their institutions. At the organizational level, firms must integrate communication into their core strategy, using tools such as CSR initiatives, ESG reporting, and crisis communication to maintain legitimacy and manage stakeholder relationships. At the individual level, managers and decision-makers play a key role in interpreting information, responding to stakeholder expectations, and ensuring that communication aligns with organizational actions. Overall, these implications show that strategic communication is not just a supporting function, but a key part of how modern global systems operate.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how strategic communication plays a central role in the shaping and development of international business and foreign affairs. Through both theoretical discussions as well as numerous case studies, it is clear that communication is not simply a supporting function, but rather a strategic tool that influences investor behavior, public opinion, and even foreign policy. Firms and governments rely on communication to manage their reputations, signal stability, and operate within complex political and institutional environments However, it's important to understand that these strategies are only effective when they are credible and paired with strong institutions, as well as real alignment between messaging and actual practices. As globalization becomes more politically contested and information continues to spread more quickly, the ability to influence perception will remain an important factor in economic success and international influence. In this way, strategic communications serve as a connection between business, government, and the broader international system.

As globalization and the ease at which digital communication is able to be transmitted from person to person increases, it is inevitable that strategic communication will evolve with it. Future research should consider the way in which artificial intelligence is contributing to the curation of messaging given that it derives its content algorithmically rather than organically. Should AI merely produce content based on previously AI generated content, then strategic communication may be plagued by a bot-led feedback loop that ultimately alienates the target audience. Moreover, further research may want to explore specific cultural differences on a community level, especially with polarization and increased international and ethnic tensions– surveys regarding consumer sentiment across different identity groups may be helpful in identifying key messaging tactics that better convey the sentiment and intention behind a communication campaign. This paper is limited by the scope of research currently available, and it is worth noting that all research regarding strategic communication may provide valuable insight into the communication generation and reception process.

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