

Corporate Strategy External Communi- cation Practices in Research Organisa- tions

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AFFIDAVIT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines current practice of research organisations in communicating their strategies to external stakeholders. The aim of the research is to use a qualitative methods approach to explore strategy communication practices in research organisations. Existing research on strategy, communications, and the role of communications and strategy was reviewed and synthesised. A gap was identified in relation to the external communication of research organisation strategies as existing research has tended to focus on the importance of internal communications when implementing corporate strategies.

Two case studies of strategy communication practices were developed using two research institutes (the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and the International Science Council), and interviews were undertaken with leading communication practitioners from four research organisations based on purposive sampling. The case studies included document and content analysis reviewing how the organisations currently communicate their strategy and identified areas for development or improvement. The interview data was coded and thematic analysis techniques applied.

The analysis provides a detailed picture of how research organisations communicate their strategy and how communication practitioners view their role in strategy communications. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that there was no consensus on who is responsible for communicating the strategy or how the strategy is communicated. The results also revealed that within the research sector, communicating the scientific outputs of the organisation was the main focus of communication efforts above strategy communication, which was in some cases deemed unnecessary.

The results contribute to the identified gaps in the literature and can form a further basis to explore the relationship between external communications and strategy implementation. This study contributes to theory by elaborating the ways, means and methods of strategy communication in an under-researched sector. Secondly, the analysis can also be used to help communication practitioners improve activities in strategy communication and contribute to organisational goals. This is significant because it can increase the effectiveness of efforts, improve return on investment of activities, and broaden the dissemination of the organisation's objectives.

Keywords: Strategy, Corporate Strategy, Corporate communication, Strategy communication.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECM	European Communications Monitor
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
ISC	International Science Council
IST	Institute for Science and Technology Austria
NMO	National Member Organization (IIASA specific)
PIK	Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany
SRC	Stockholm Resilience Centre, Sweden
TERI	The Energy and Resources Institute, India

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and previous research

The review of literature showed three main threads of relationships between communications and strategy namely: 1) The role of communications in the strategy process and relevance of communication for implementation of the strategy; 2) How the communication strategy can be aligned with the corporate strategy to contribute to the overall success of the company; and 3) Communication of the corporate strategy – multiplying, interpreting, and conveying the company’s strategic objectives for internal and external stakeholders (Köhler & Zerfass, 2019).

While most of the research focused on the first two areas, there are at present limited studies focused on the communication of corporate strategy, and of those, none have addressed non-profit or research-based organisations. Aaltonen & Ikävalko (2002) showed there is much to be done with regards to communicating strategies. Most existing research focused on the importance of internal communications of an organisation strategy (Köhler & Zerfass, 2019), despite external communication being crucial in maintaining relationships with key stakeholders (Mcnamara et al 2017; Zerfass et al 2017; Jones 2008).

Moss & Warnaby (1998) stated that more emphasis is put on the role of internal communications in facilitating the implementation and control of strategy, than on the external role of building or maintaining relationships with key external stakeholder groups – whose support may be crucial. This study, therefore, focuses on reviewing the current practices of how non-profit research organisations communicate their strategies. These organisations are heavily dependent on key stakeholders who provide funding either through membership or contracts and grants. The study uses case studies to explore the different tools and channels used in externally communicating the strategy and interviews with communication practitioners in research organisations to gain further detail on the views and the role of communication professionals in strategy.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The study explores how research organisations communicate their corporate strategy to external stakeholders. The aim is to investigate how strategy is communicated externally in research organisations and the role that the communication function plays in strategy communications. The aim will be achieved by answering the following four research questions:

- RQ1: How do research organisations define and externally communicate their corporate strategy?
- RQ2: What methods and channels are used in externally communicating the strategy?

- RQ3: What role does the annual report play in communicating strategy?
- RQ4: How do communications professionals in research organisations view strategy communication?

The literature review clearly confirms the importance of communicating strategy from both the organisational perspective, and from communication professionals who believe it to be a key part of their role. The intention of this study is to explore in depth the strategic communication practices of research organisations. The intended contribution is twofold. First the study will contribute to theory by elaborating the ways, means and methods of strategy communication in an under-researched sector. Second, the study also helps practitioners improve activities in strategy communication and contribute to organisational goals. This is significant because it can increase the effectiveness of efforts, improve return on investment of activities, and broaden the dissemination of the organisation's objectives.

1.2.1 RQ1: How do research organisations define and externally communicate their strategy?

It is first important to understand if the organisation has a strategy. The study explores if the strategy is clearly defined, specifically for external stakeholders, and how it is communicated.

1.2.2 RQ2: What methods and channels are used in externally communicating the strategy?

The study reviews the different channels used to communicate the strategy to external stakeholders.

1.2.3 RQ3: What role does the annual report play in communicating strategy?

The study explores to what extent and with what visibility the strategies are publicly communicated through the organisations' annual report.

1.2.4 RQ4: How do communications professionals in research organisations view strategy communication?

The study analyses the views of communications practitioners in research organisations in relation to how they communicate their organisation's strategy, and how they align their communications activities to the organisation's objectives.

1.3 Background information on the research organisations

There are many research organisations across the globe, some national, regional, and international. They often have a specific research focus, while some attempt to address global issues across a range of disciplines. As an example, the Austrian Academy of Sciences lists 27 separate

institutes covering areas from life sciences, maths, historical sciences, social sciences and classical studies (Austrian Academy of Sciences, n.d.). This study developed two in-depth case studies for the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the International Science Council (ISC), both of which are operating in a specific sub-area of global challenges and sustainability. A list of similar institutes to the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis can be found in the Appendices. Appendix A1 shows other organisations with a similar international scope and set up – regardless of their scientific domain. Appendix A2 shows organisations conducting research in the area of global sustainability, integrated modelling, and systems analysis.

1.3.1 International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)

IIASA is a scientific research institute that conducts policy-oriented research into problems of a global nature that are too large or too complex to be solved by a single country or academic discipline. As a leader in applied systems analysis, IIASA research covers issues such as climate change, energy security, population aging, and sustainable development.

Established in 1972 during the Cold War to build scientific bridges between East and West, the institute is located in Laxenburg, near Vienna, Austria. It is currently funded partly by 22 National Member Organizations from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe and partly by competitive contracts and grants. The IIASA mission is to provide scientific guidance to policymakers by finding solutions to global problems through applied systems analysis in order to improve human wellbeing and protect the environment. (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, n.d.).

1.3.2 International Science Council (ISC)

The ISC was formed in 2018 as the result of a merger between the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC). It is a non-governmental organisation with a global membership of 40 international scientific unions and associations and over 140 national and regional scientific organisations including academies and research councils. The council has headquarters in Paris, France and regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The vision of ISC is to advance science as a global public good and its mission is to act as the global voice for science. The council convenes scientific expertise and resources in order to catalyse and coordinate international action on issues of major scientific and public importance. These activities span a broad range of issues, from global sustainability, poverty, urban health and wellbeing and disaster risk reduction, to data, observing systems and science advice to governments. (International Science Council, n.d.).

1.4 Structure of thesis

The thesis starts with a review of existing literature on strategy, communications, and the role of communications and strategy. This literature review concludes with a summary of the key points and gaps that have been identified and how this study aims to contribute to the field. The Methodology gives an overview of the methods used to conduct the research, explaining the choices made in the selection of the research instruments, the sampling, and how the data is analysed. It explains the two-stage approach, namely the case studies and interviews. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the case studies on the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and International Science Council, with a short comparison of the two cases. It also contains key findings from the interviews presented by themes. The final chapter includes the conclusion, summary of contribution to research, and limitations. References and appendices can be found at the end of the document.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In order to address the research aims and objectives as detailed in 1.2 a thorough review of existing literature was conducted. This chapter summarises the key definitions and ideas that have been used as a basis for this study, starting with a review and selection of the definition of what a strategy is and its different aspects. It will also explore the different roles of communication related to strategy, identifying where there are gaps that this study can help to address.

2.2 Strategy

2.2.1 Definition

There are a multitude of definitions of strategy in prior research, and this section will examine definitions of strategy over time and present the definition used for this study. According to the dictionary, the basis behind the definition is conflict and is “the art of planning and directing military activity in a war or battle” (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). However, Fairbanks & Buchko (2018) used the following definition:

“Strategy is an integrated set of resource commitments and actions that position an organization within the competitive environment so as to generate superior results over time.”

This differs from definitions from the 1960s, when the term strategy was first defined. For example, Chandler (1962) stated that strategy is:

“The determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of course of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals.”

While Ansoff (1965) addressed corporate strategy as a number of questions for senior managers:

“What are the firm’s objectives and goals; should the firm seek to diversify, in what areas, how vigorously; and how should the firm develop and exploit its present product market position?”

However, both of these definitions date back to the 1960’s. Since then the field of strategic management has developed significantly, which has also included the need for a more dynamic view of theory. In addition, there have been revolutionary changes such as the introduction of

disruptive technologies and expansion of global trade which have affected how business and organisations operate.

Similar to the Chandler (1962) definition, Grant (2016) describes strategy as: “focused on achieving goals... it involves allocating resources and it implies some consistency, integration or cohesiveness of decisions and actions.”

Fairbanks & Buchko (2018), Chandler (1962), and Grant (2016) all put the ownership of the strategy on the organisation, whereas MacIntosh & Maclean (2014) state that it is the responsibility of a collective to accomplish the strategy. In the MacIntosh & Maclean (2014) definition they state that:

“Strategy is the craft of collectively rising to a significant challenge and accomplishing more than might be reasonable expected as a result of self-knowledge, resolve, foresight, creativity and genuine capabilities cultivated over the medium to long term.”

MacIntosh & Maclean (2014) focus on capabilities as opposed to Fairbanks & Buchko (2018), Chandler (1962), and Grant (2016) who base their definition of strategy around resources. The objectives also vary in each of the definitions, Fairbanks & Buchko (2018) focus on positioning, Chandler (1962) and Grant (2016) on achieving goals, Ansoff (1965) on the environment, and MacIntosh & Maclean (2014) on overcoming challenges.

As this project focuses on non-profit organisations it is also important to note that while organisations compete for market share, revenue, and customers, non-profit organisations compete for funding, grants, clients, or services (Fairbanks and Buchko, 2018)

It is important also to clarify the difference between strategies and implementation plans. A strategy should focus on what should be done (Steyn, 2003) and not the how – which should be addressed in functional business plans.

Based on their literature review Köhler & Zerfass (2019) define three different levels of strategy:

- the overall corporate strategy sets the general direction for the company and provides a starting point for deriving strategies for individual business unit and functional areas;
- business strategies decide how to compete in a specific business unit and how to position the company in a market; and
- functional strategies inform how the functional areas (e.g. marketing, corporate communications, human resources) should work together to support the overarching strategies.

Given its importance to an organisation, this study focuses on framing and communication of the overall corporate strategy as defined by Köhler & Zerfass (2019) above.

2.2.2 Aspects of strategy and implementation

Pettigrew (1987) splits strategy into different aspects, namely the content of the strategy, the outer and inner contexts of an organisation, and the process of carrying out the strategic change. Men & Hung (2012) describe the four aspects of strategy to be; strategy analysis, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategic control. Aaltonen & Ikävalko (2002) add that in order to understand the implementation the content of the strategy and the context must be understood. This argument could also be used regarding the communication of the strategy, that for communication practitioners to communicate the strategy successfully they need to be involved in the content and context.

Aaltonen & Ikävalko (2002) state that goals and objectives for different units within the organisation are an important part of strategy implementation, despite the fact that transforming a strategy into concrete objectives is challenging.

A number of studies stress that implementation is the most important part of strategic planning and that too much time is invested in formulating and launching the strategy and ignoring this important phase (Bhimavarapu et al, 2019). Aaltonen & Ikävalko (2002) confirm the importance, stating that without implementation strategy is useless, but that transforming strategy into action is complex. In their study the authors list a number of issues that have been identified in the implementation of strategies which includes; lack of communication, lack of commitment to strategy, unawareness or misunderstanding, unaligned systems and resources, poor coordination, inadequate capabilities, competing activities, and external uncontrollable factors.

Strategy aspects		Implementation aspects
<i>Pettigrew (1987)</i>	<i>Men and Hung (2012)</i>	<i>Noble (1999)</i>
Content	Analysis	Communication
Outer context of organisation	Formulation	Interpretation
Inner context of organisation	Implementation	Adoption
Process of carrying out strategic change	Control	Action

TABLE 2-1 DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF STRATEGY

Strategy implementation can also be split into four aspects; communication, interpretation, adoption, and action (Noble, 1999). These aspects are all integrated, however the Aaltonen &

Ikävalko (2002) study showed there is much to be done with regards to communicating strategies.

This study will consider the four aspects of strategy to be; analysis, formulation, implementation and control, and the four aspects of implementation to be communication, interpretation, adoption, and action.

2.2.3 Implementation issues

As discussed in 2.2.2, implementation – also referred to as execution – is considered to be a critical part of the strategy process, and implementation should be considered during the strategy formulation. Studies have shown that over two thirds of organisations struggle to implement their strategies (Sull et al, 2015), and that drawing a line between strategy and execution almost guarantees failure (Martin, 2010).

Aaltonen & Ikävalko (2002) highlighted specific issues with regards to communication during strategy implementation such as a lack of shared understanding of the strategy from within the organisation. The authors found that a large amount of information does not guarantee an understanding of the strategy. However, there was not an analysis done on the types of communication materials used or methods for communicating an organisation's strategy. Sull et al (2015) reiterated the fact that communication does not equal understanding. Their study shows that communications are often measured in terms of inputs, and not how well people understand what is communicated.

Leonardi (2015) explores the line between strategy formulation and implementation and implies the implementation and communication/materials used to implement and communicate the strategy should be considered as part of the strategy formulation process, which would then in turn help make the strategy implementable.

Several studies have shown that communication is a key area for aiding understanding and awareness of the strategy. The research also highlighted that some of the issues regarding strategy implementation were related to communications. Research also confirmed that implementation is critical, however is often poorly executed (PMI, 2013). Therefore, this study will focus on the communication part of implementing strategy.

2.2.4 Strategy in non-profit organisations

As stated in 2.2.1 non-profit organisations compete for funding, grants, clients, or services (Fairbanks and Buchko, 2018). Grant (2016) states that strategy is as important in non-profit organisations as it is in businesses, and actually may be even more important. The tools of strategy analysis that are identified as being especially important are those that relate the role of strategy

in specifying organisational goals and linking goals to resource allocation. Grant (2016) also identifies that goals in non-profits are typically complex, making it harder to align the mission, goals, resource allocation, and performance targets.

Frumkin & Andre-Clark (2000) show that non-profit organisations are not well equipped to engage in competition with corporations, and instead need to develop a strategy to emphasise their uniqueness and value. The authors add that a non-profits most critical work is to clarify the organisational strategy, defining the mix of activities and values that differentiate the organisation from others. However, Bhimavarapu et al (2019) claim that while formulating a strategy in the public sector is critical it is not as vital as realising the overall strategic objectives.

The need to survive and break even for non-profits means that their strategies do not differ significantly from for-profit organisations. The non-profit organisations compete for funding, in terms of donations, obtaining grants or contracts, which is a key area of strategy for them (Grant, 2016). Therefore, the external communication of strategy may be particularly important in the context of non-profit organisations.

Prior strategy research also claimed that many studies show that strategy implementation in the public sector are consistently poor and that there is inadequate academic research on strategy execution in public sector organisations (Bhimavarapu et al, 2019). This is why the current study will focus on addressing the execution of strategy in terms of communications for non-profit organisations.

2.3 Corporate Communications

2.3.1 Definition

The terms ‘Corporate Communications’ and ‘Public Relations’ can be used interchangeably, however communications is preferred by scholars because of some negative connotations with the term public relations (Van Ruler & Körver 2019; Steyn 2003; Van Riel 1995; Kitchen 1997; Wilcox et al 2014). According to the literature the purpose of corporate communications is “building and maintaining relationships with stakeholder/publics” (Steyn, 2003) or “building long-term relationships with an organization’s strategic constituencies” (Grunig & Repper, 1992).

Further definitions are all along a similar line; “the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Broom et al, 2013) or “a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals” (Long & Hazleton cited by Wilcox et al, 2014). The latter of these definitions is broader and implies that corporate communications should also allow two-way communication, with the organisation also changing its attitude and behaviour.

This study will refer to the term communications as a function or activity to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders for the purpose of achieving organisational goals.

2.3.2 Role

The role of the communications function is varied, and therefore the way it is described in studies is also diverse. Köhler & Zerfass (2019) state that communication practitioners should know how to identify stakeholder needs and suitable channels for communicating to them. Hallahan et al (2007) refers to strategic communication as being focused on improving organisational performance, selling more products, motivating donors, or building relationships. In contrast Falkheimer et al (2016) propose that the main aim of corporate communications is to contribute to drivers of success, and prepare for an uncertain future, instead of prioritising efforts that support the daily business. However, this is contradicted in further research which clarifies that communications is both a function for supporting reaching out to stakeholders, and a valuable resource for listening and learning from the environment (Robinson & Simmons, 2018). This implies that the communications function is a key driver for creating a supportive framework for corporate activities (Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017). Communication teams have to deal with operational and strategic work, even if their primary task is to strategically manage and measure the positioning of the organisation in the market, and social and political environments, by using communicative means (Zerfass & Viertmann 2017; Volk et al 2017).

What is unclear from communications research, and a key topic of debate for communication practitioners is how to demonstrate the value of the communication function to senior leaders. Volk et al (2017) attempt to address this in their communication value circle (Figure 2-1), which shows four dimensions of what corporate communications does to support an organisation. These four dimensions are; enabling operations, ensuring flexibility, building intangibles, and adjusting strategy, and have 12 types of communications value that fits into these dimensions. This shows corporate strategy at the centre of the value circle, which is why this study focuses on the connection between communications and corporate strategy, the different aspects of which are discussed in 2.4.

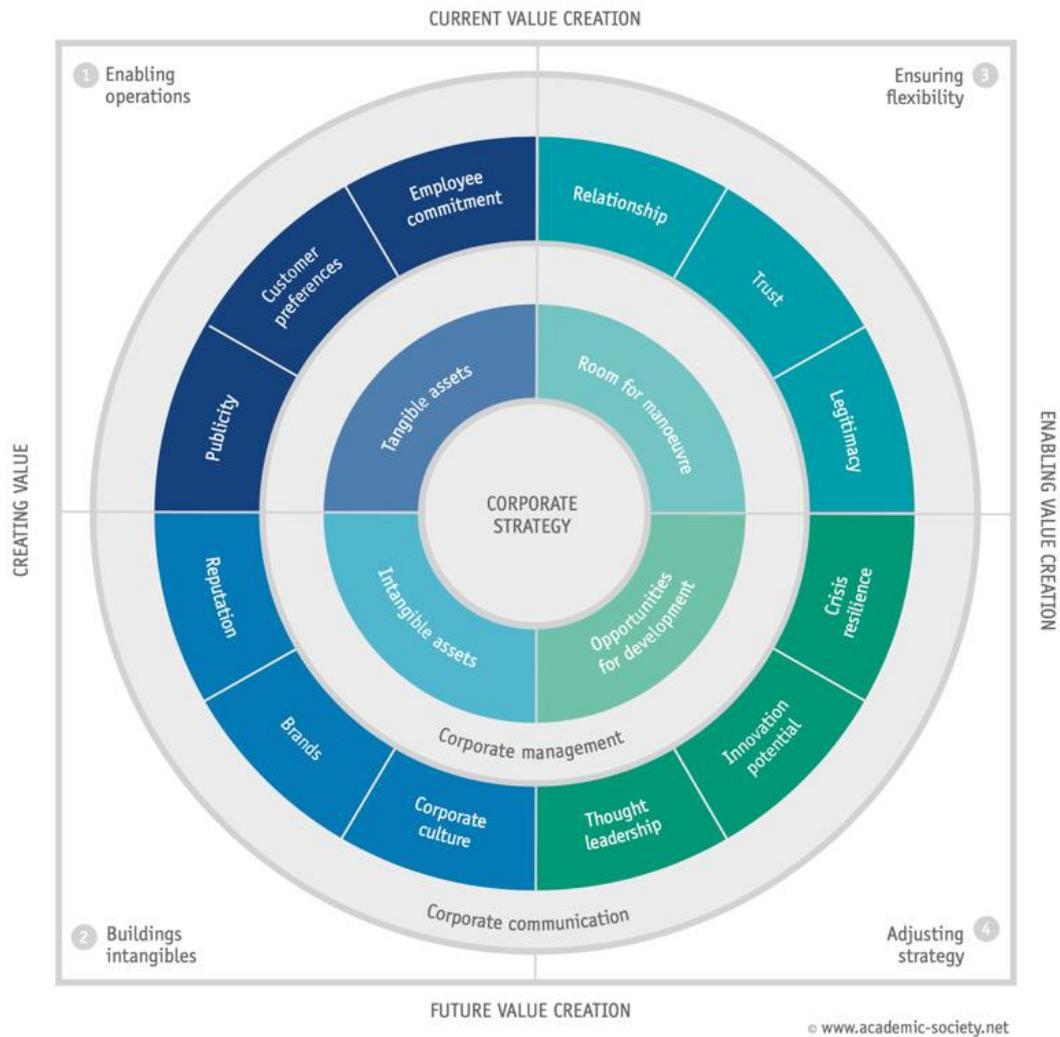


FIGURE 2-1 THE COMMUNICATION VALUE CIRCLE (VOLK ET AL, 2017)

2.4 Role of communications in strategy

Köhler & Zerfass (2019) claim that the area of looking at the communication of corporate strategies to internal and external stakeholders is rarely explored. The authors say that the role of communications is neglected however it is unclear on what basis this statement is formed. They refer to the role of communications in strategy development and formulation and in terms of the potential communication functions have in conveying messages.

Köhler & Zerfass (2019) do however clearly define three types of strategy and communications:

1. The role of communications in the strategy process and relevance of communication for implementation of the strategy
2. The role of strategy in corporate communications - focusing on how the communication strategy can be aligned with the corporate strategy to contribute to the overall success of the company

3. Strategy communications is the communication of the corporate strategy – multiplying, interpreting, and conveying the company’s strategic objectives for internal and external stakeholders.

2.4.1 Communication’s role in the strategy process

The communications function can play a contributing role in the different stages of the strategy process including the formulation and implementation. However, communication studies highlight that communication practitioners do not have a proactive role in the strategy formulation. Steyn (2003) suggests that this may be down to the fact that few communication practitioners are in a position to affect strategy formulation, and that the practitioners either align the communications strategy to the corporate strategy or communicate the corporate strategy. The study concludes that communication practitioners operate “one step removed” from the process of strategy formulation, that they provide advice and counsel on communication related issues to senior management but do not directly participate at the business level. Steyn (2003) adds that corporate communication should support the implementation of the corporate strategy but not assist in its formulation. Zerfass et al (2017) adds that the perception from senior management is that they are more interested in the traditional communication function of the department and seem to doubt a role for communication in the strategic development of the organisation. As mentioned in 2.2.2 in order to successfully communicate the organisation’s strategy, which will be discussed further in 2.4.3, and support in its implementation, it would benefit the communications function to be involved in the strategy formulation. In addition, due to their experience in communicating corporate strategy, and considering communications should involve two-way engagement with key stakeholders, communication practitioners could also add value during the formulation process.

2.4.2 Strategic communications management

Strategic communications involves aligning the communications strategy and activities to the organisation’s goals and objectives and overall corporate strategy (Falkheimer et al 2016; Halahan 2007; Holtzhausen & Zerfass 2015; Zerfass & Viertmann 2017). This is done by breaking down business goals to communication goals and activities (Falkheimer et al, 2016) which makes the communications function relevant in strategic management as their goals are aligned to the organisational mission (Steyn, 2003). Van Ruler & Körver (2019) add that the organisation needs a clear strategy for the communications function to work from. For the purpose of this study the practise of aligning communication activities and strategy to the organisation’s strategy will be referred to as strategic communications management.

As well as being aligned with the corporate strategy the communications strategy determines where corporate communications are heading (Wilson & Ogden 2015; Van Ruler & Körver 2019). Steyn (2003) expands on this by saying that the communications strategy helps the organisation

to adapt to its environment by balancing between commercial endeavours and socially acceptable behaviour; identifies and manages stakeholders and issues; and builds relationships with those who the organisation needs to meet its goals. The author also states that the corporate communications strategy is the vital link between the corporate/business strategy and the corporate communications function and adds that senior practitioners also provide inputs into the organisation strategy. This last statement however contradicts an earlier claim by the author that communications do not have input into the strategy process.

Hallahan et al (2007) defines strategic communication as “communicating purposefully to advance mission”. Steyn (2003) states that the communications strategy “provides focus and direction for the organisation’s communication, building relationships with strategic stakeholders”. Holtzhausen & Zerfass (2015) add that the strategic communication process typically is a communication process that follows from an organisation’s strategy. However, a clear distinction should be made between a communications strategy and communication plans (Volk et al, 2017). The strategy determines what should be communicated – but not how – which is the function of communication plans. Communication plans should provide the methods and tactics for how to carry out the strategy.

2.4.3 Strategy communications

The area of communicating strategy is covered in different aspects in strategy and communications literature, such as the need for communicating, understanding of the strategy, and its effects on implementation of the strategy. The breakdown of strategy into different elements used in the present study, as proposed in 2.2.2, categorises communications as a core aspect of strategy implementation.

Köhler & Zerfass (2019) state that strategies can only be effective if they are well understood by employees, and that the support of stakeholders is dependent on the company’s strategic positioning. Investors rely on the information about an organisation’s strategy when evaluating the business. Yet for stakeholders to be familiar with strategy – it has to be communicated (Jones, 2008).

Fairbanks & Buchko (2018) claim that a commitment of resources is needed to operationalise the strategy, and not just statements made by the organisation. However, Köhler & Zerfass (2019) say that “Explaining the corporate strategy can stimulate understanding among internal and external stakeholders” and build their support for the strategy direction of the organisation.

Mcnamara et al 2017; Zerfass et al 2017 show that communication practitioners rate the communication of organisational strategy as an important contribution to the success of the organisation.

For this study I will use the interpretation of strategy communication as defined by Köhler & Zerfass (2019)

“Strategy communication is a field of corporate communications that encompasses all communication processes that aim at securing long-term support for an organization by conveying and framing key aspects of the corporate strategy to all relevant stakeholders. Thus, it contributes to the realization of strategies through messaging and listening on all channels, and this in turn helps to achieve organizational goals and serves value-creation of the corporation.”

An organisation’s stakeholders consist of both internal and external parties to which the organisation and communications function communicate the strategy to. This is explored in the following sections. The communications literature focuses on the importance of communicating strategies to an internal audience as part of the successful implementation of an organisation’s strategy.

2.4.3.1 Internal strategy communications

Despite internal communication of an organisation’s strategy being studied comprehensively, surprisingly Geighardt (2006) says that employees know the organisation’s strategy in only one out of ten companies. Of those, Kaplan & Norton 2005; Müller-Stewens & Brauer 2009 say only 5% of them understand the strategy.

Aaltonen & Ikävalko (2002) found that middle managers have a pivotal role in communicating the strategy, and that the flow of strategic information internally between superiors and subordinates was considered more important than formal communication of an organisation’s strategy. The authors also highlight the importance of two-way communication between employees to aid in understanding, which includes offering the option of commenting, querying, questioning, and reacting to bottom up messages.

Research also points to the importance of employees understanding of an organisation’s strategy. Fairbanks & Buchko (2018) claim that if employees can clearly state what the organisations strategy is, it is a good indication that the organisation has a strategy, where on the other hand if they cannot – despite what official documents state – it is likely that the organisation does not really have a strategy, as the individual’s actions are not working towards a common shared objective.

Moss & Warnaby (1998) say that more emphasis is put on the role of internal communications in facilitating the implementation and control of strategy, than on the external role of building or maintaining relationships with key external stakeholder groups – whose support may be crucial. In contrast to the corporate sector and businesses who are funded by sales and market opportunities, research organisations are heavily dependent on a small number of influential

external stakeholders who supply funding, either via membership or contracts and grants. Therefore, support from external stakeholders is even more significant in this sector. For this reason, this research project will focus on the external communication of an organisation's strategy – specifically in research organisations.

2.4.3.2 External strategy communications

Compared to the internal communication of an organisation's strategy, the communication to external stakeholders has not been studied as comprehensively (Köhler & Zerfass, 2019). This is despite the fact that numerous studies have highlighted that external strategy communication is important for trying to raise the value of a company (Köhler 2015; Meckel et al 2010; NetFederation 2018).

The European Communications Monitor Report (see 2.5) consistently show that linking business strategy and communication is one of the top two issues that communication practitioners face (Zerfass et al, 2017) but Köhler & Zerfass (2019) claim that the role of the communications function in communicating the strategy externally and the different modes used are not discussed in literature.

This is contradicted in NetFederation (2018) which highlights annual reports and corporate websites as the most important channels for communicating strategy externally. The European Communications Monitor Report shows that social media, social networks, and online communication via websites, email, and intranets and the more important channels for strategic communication (Zerfass et al, 2017). Followed by press and media relations with online media, mobile communication, face to face communication, events, press and media relations with tv and radio, owned media, and then non-verbal communication.

2.4.3.3 Channels of communication

There are many different channels that communications practitioners use to effectively execute their communication strategies and that are available to communicate an organisation's strategy.

Publicity – information about an activity or product that appears in mass media in the form of a news story – is called earned media. The material is used but the organisation does not pay for it. On the other hand, advertising is defined as paid media. Content that is produced and distributed by organisations on their own platforms that they own or control is referred to as owned media. This includes annual reports, websites, newsletters, brochures, blogs, and the organisations own social media handles. (Wilcox et al, 2014).

Shared media is content that is published on social media platforms by followers, fans, employees, or organisation representatives (Zerfass et al, 2019). The 2019 European Communications Monitor Report found that shared media has gained importance over the last three years in

terms of distributing content, followed by earned and owned media. However, for non-profit organisations shared media is followed first by owned media and then earned media in terms of importance (Zerfass et al, 2019).

This study will focus entirely on owned media, such as annual reports and corporate materials that have been produced directly by the organisation. This focus on owned media eliminates the need to account for effects caused by external influences such as journalists or influencers.

As mentioned in 2.4.3.2, online channels such as websites and social media are constantly ranked by practitioners in Europe as the most important channels to address stakeholders (Figure 2-2). The question to survey participants asked, “How important are the following methods in addressing stakeholders, gatekeepers, and audiences today?” and does not specifically refer to the communication of an organisation’s strategy. The survey respondents are asked to rank on a scale from 1 to 5 (from not important to very important) for a list of selected mediums. However, annual reports are not included on this list, despite NetFederation (2018) claiming that they, along with websites are the most important tools for communicating an organisation’s strategy, and that communication practitioners say that communicating the organisational strategy is important for the success of the organisation (Mcnamara et al 2017; Zerfass et al 2017).

Importance of strategic communication channels/instruments in Europe

Perceived importance for addressing stakeholders, gatekeepers and audiences today

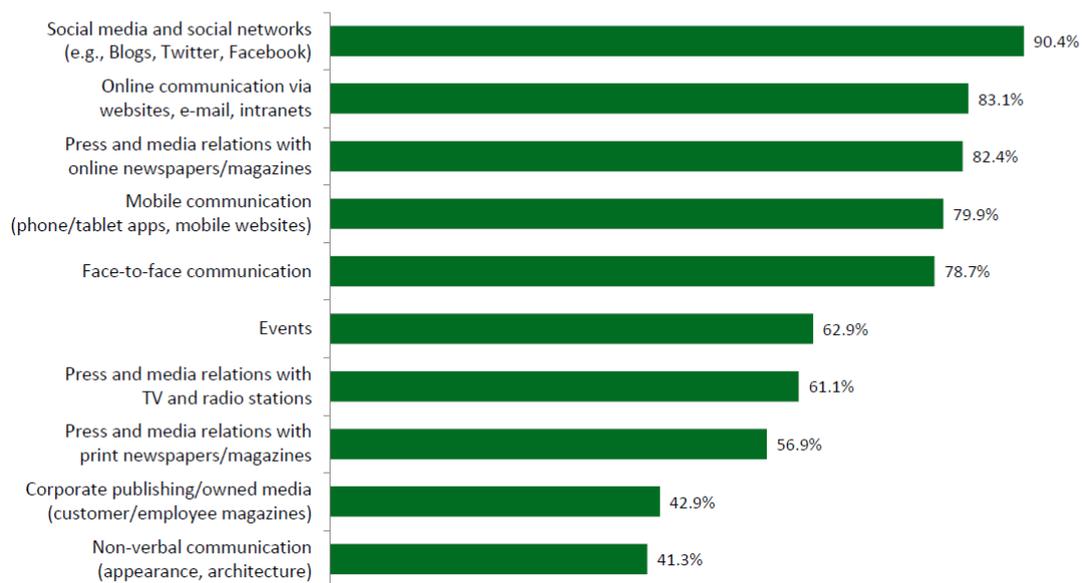


FIGURE 2-2 IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION CHANNELS (ZERFASS ET AL, 2017)

Köhler & Zerfass (2019) claim that corporate websites are often the first point of contact for interested stakeholders and offer communication practitioners the chance to present the organisation’s strategy in an appealing way.

Köhler & Zerfass (2019) go on to describe what design criteria and elements are important for communicating strategy on company websites, and that the use of visual elements increases the attention and memory (but not understanding) of corporate strategy.

As part of their review of how organisations communicate their strategy on corporate websites, Köhler & Zerfass (2019) looked at the level of detail and which elements of the strategy were communicated. In their methodology the authors created a quality criteria of strategy communication so that they could identify best practise and give organisations a point ranking for different elements (Figure 2-3). A study of 60 websites is not sufficient enough to identify best practice, nor is the literature review clear enough to define that these are the elements that indicate the quality level of strategy communication. There is also no inclusion of evaluation or how the different communication methods are received by stakeholders. Without the evaluation it is not possible to identify which methods are more successful than others. It is not the intention of this study to define best practice for communication methods or tools in communicating strategy. However, elements from the quality criteria from Köhler & Zerfass (2019) are used in this study to identify the different methods in use, but the elements are not ranked or rated.

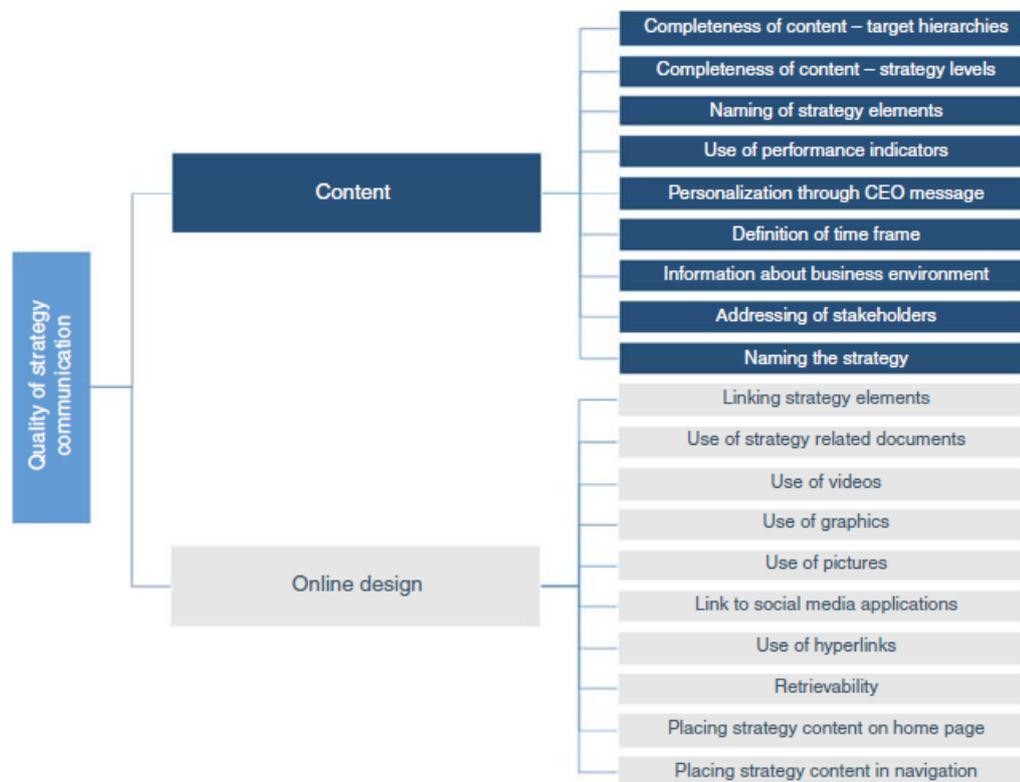


FIGURE 2-3 QUALITY CRITERIA OF STRATEGY COMMUNICATION FOR BENCHMARKING CORPORATE WEBSITES (KÖHLER & ZERFASS, 2019)

2.5 European Communications Monitor reports

The section is concerned with literature from practitioners in the field of communications. The European Communication Monitor (ECM) is an annual survey of communications practitioners across Europe. Conducted since 2007, it aims to explore practices and developments in strategic communications. The most recent report in 2019 was based on 2,689 responses from communication professionals in 46 European countries (Zerfass et al, 2019).

The 2017 European Communication Monitor report (Zerfass et al, 2017) found that 86.8% of communication practitioners said supporting operational goals and processes through communication activities is a frequently performed task, and 84.5% said that translating the organisational strategy into a fully aligned communication strategy was. However, managing and steering the department itself was considered the most important, followed by aligning communication to organisational strategy and supporting business processes.

The report also identified an expectation gap between what the perceived contributions of communications departments are and the demands of top management. This expectation gap was particularly significant in non-profit organisations where 73.1% of respondents said convincing key stakeholders of the organisational strategy was a key contribution to the overall success of the department but only 40.7% said it was a demand from top management. Similarly, only 57.9% of respondents said communicating the organisational strategy to stakeholders was a demand from top management compared to 76.7% believing it is a contribution to the success of the department. In non-profit organisations the respondents identified supporting operational goals and processes through communication activities to be the highest demand from management, which they also believed to be the highest contributing factor to success of the communications department. (Zerfass et al, 2017)

In the 2019 edition, linking business strategy and communication, which was been one of the top three issues reported by communications professionals since the survey began, dropped to number eight in terms of the most important strategic issues for communications management (Zerfass et al, 2019). In non-profit organisations this was replaced with enhancing trust, content creation and distribution, and the need to manage more audiences and channels with limited resources, which were listed as top issues.

Despite this change in trend, strategy communication is still considered to be an issue for communication practitioners which, as shown in the previous sections is not sufficiently covered in either communications or strategy research studies. As discussed above communication practitioners believe that convincing stakeholders of the organisational strategy is key to contributing to the success of the communications function, therefore this study can have practical implications and provide further knowledge for those practitioners.

2.6 Organisations and geographical context of study

The previous studies on communicating an organisation's strategy have focused on internal communications, or for the one study on external communications it focused on one specific tool (websites) for 60 organisations (20 each of the largest listed companies in the UK, Germany, and the US). There have not been any studies that specifically investigate the non-profit research sector. While research institutes do not have the same motives as commercial enterprises – such as maximising revenues or profits – they do have to satisfy funders and remain competitive in terms of competing for grants and attracting top talent. In fact, often the stakeholders for research organisations are even more influential due to their small number and because they provide the core funding for the organisation's existence. This is why this study focuses on this sector.

The two organisations – the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the International Science Council (ISC) – chosen for case studies have a similar structure, both are international institutes that are member-based, and are conducting research into global problems. The study also includes interviews with communication practitioners from the Institute for Science and Technology (IST), Austria; Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), Germany; Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC), Sweden; and IIASA. While all of these except IIASA are not international organisations in structure, they conduct global research and have findings that are relevant to a wide and global audience, therefore have a very similar set of stakeholders to IIASA and ISC. A full list of organisations that were considered for the study can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

2.7 Study rationale and intended contribution

It is clear from the literature review that communicating the organisations strategy is important not only from the organisation's perspective in terms of strategy implementation, but also from the perspective of communication professionals who believe it to be a key contributing factor to the success of their function. Despite this there are some gaps in previous research that this study is well positioned to address.

Existing studies identified communications as one of the areas of strategy implementation (2.2.2) but additionally highlighted issues specifically related to communications of an organisation's strategy. The role of communications in strategy formulation and implementation is unclear. It is implied that involving communications in the strategy formulation could benefit the implementation – however there are no studies to substantiate this.

When reviewing the role of communications, section 2.2.2 shows corporate strategy at the centre of the value circle for communications, and communication practitioners rate the communication of organisational strategy as an important contribution to the success of the organisation.

This reinforces the importance of this study in investigating how communications currently communicate strategy with the potential to identify practical benchmarks for communication practitioners.

Most of the communications and strategy research focused on the importance of internal communications of an organisation's strategy, yet it was also acknowledged that external communication may be crucial in maintaining relationships with key stakeholders. Of the studies that looked at the external communication of an organisation's strategy, the focus was on corporate websites. While the literature review found that a large amount of information does not guarantee an understanding of the strategy, there was no analysis on different types of communication materials or methods for communicating an organisation's strategy. There has been no clear analysis on strategy communications for non-profit organisations, despite it potentially having even more relevance. This has highlighted an opportunity to explore the different methods and channels used to communicate the strategies of non-profit organisations to an external audience, with a focus on owned media – which no other study has addressed so far.

2.8 Conclusion

Given the outcome of the literature review and the gaps in current knowledge identified above (2.7) this study focuses on reviewing the current practises of how a non-profit organisation communicates its strategy, with case studies to explore the different tools and channels utilised in communicating to an external audience, and specifically reviewing owned media to see to which extent they reflect the organisation's strategy.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In addition to the communications and strategy research that was discussed in Chapter 2, further literature in the field of qualitative research and research methods was explored. The results of this review aided in the selection of suitable methodologies for this study, which are detailed in the chapter. This chapter gives an overview of the methodology and instruments used and summarises how the case studies were conducted in order to best answer the research questions. The development of the interview guide and sampling process is also explained, along with how the data was analysed.

3.2 Selection of methodology

This study is based on qualitative research. There are four theoretical purposes of qualitative research, theory elaboration, theory generation, theory testing, and critical theory (Bluhm et al, 2010). It is aim of this study for the research to aid in theory elaboration.

This study focuses entirely on owned media, such as annual reports and corporate materials that have been produced directly by the organisation. This eliminates the need to account for effects caused by external influences such as journalists or influencers.

The study conducts multiple case studies using a variety of data collection methods to try to improve the validity of the study (Eisenhardt, 1989). Because case studies cannot be treated as a sample of one (Bryman & Bell, 2011), the study also involves interviews with representatives from a wider group of organisations. The goal of the case studies is to concentrate on the uniqueness of each case and understand the particular communication tools in use rather than to attempt to generalise. However, there is also an element of comparative research between findings from the different organisations studied. The organisations chosen for the case studies have been selected due to the availability and access to information, and their similarities in terms of structure and funding. The wider collection of data via interviews is conducted with organisations of a similar type – albeit without the international nature – but non-profit research institutes.

As part of the case studies content analysis of the organisation's annual reports was conducted to ascertain to what extent they are used for communicating the organisation's strategy.

3.3 Research instrument

3.3.1 Case studies

To review how ISC and IIASA present and communicate their strategies the study first reviewed the websites of both organisations. The website review focused on searching for the strategy, where and how they can be found, and how they are presented in terms of content and design. Websites are owned media, meaning the organisation has ownership and control over the content displayed and many organisations publish their annual reports on their website. After ascertaining what channels have been used to document the organisations strategy, these methods were further analysed, with a particular focus on brochures or publications that specifically communicate the strategy. The strategy publications were also reviewed in terms of content, design, and accessibility.

As mentioned in 2.4.3.3, the quality criteria framework from Köhler & Zerfass (2019) as shown in Figure 2-3, was used to identify the different elements of communicating a strategy. In Kohler & Zerfass (2019) each element was given a point score, with some elements being weighted more than others, however the paper did not list all the gradings. Applying a points system to these elements is subjective and not appropriate for this study with a sample size of two case studies. In addition, the purpose of this study is not to decide which elements are good or not, it is to identify the different methods used. Therefore, the elements from the framework were reviewed in respect of the two case studies, and the study reviews and discusses to what extent each element is used without ranking them. Minor adjustments have also been made to the framework to make it appropriate for this study. The two sections on completeness of content have been merged into one, and 'online design' has been changed to 'design' in order to review design in general and not only in relation to the organisation's website.

Bryman & Bell (2011) state that organisations are significant producers of visual documents, which are important for an organisation's image and identity. Visual elements also have the advantage of being publicly available and widely disseminated which is why this study also reviews to what extent these elements have been used.

If other channels such as newsletters or videos are identified as being used as part of the communication of the organisation's strategy this is documented, and the particular elements reviewed. In addition to the strategy documents, the last available published annual reports for both ISC and IIASA have been analysed.

3.3.2 Interviews

A structured interview is designed to answer a specific set of questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011), however as there is interest in the interviewee's point of view, this study conducts qualitative interviews. Unstructured interviews are similar in characteristics to conversations (Burgess

1984), but this study uses a semi-structured approach with a list of questions on certain topics prepared in advance as a guide. While a set of questions is used for all interviews, there is a degree of flexibility so there is room to explore specific topics of interest as they arise. Having some structure aids in the analysis and comparing the separate cases.

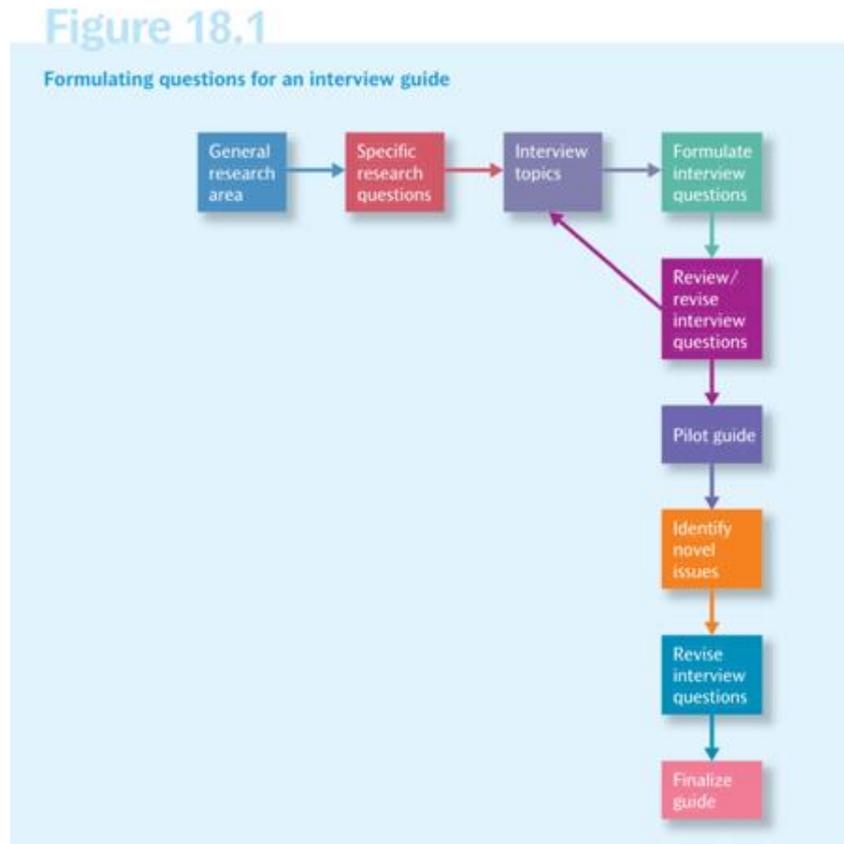


FIGURE 3-1 FORMULATING AN INTERVIEW GUIDE (BRYMAN & BELL, 2011)

The questions were first piloted and pre-tested prior to the interview, and all interviews were conducted via the phone and recorded. The interviews were conducted by the same person and followed the tips from Kvale (1996) on being a successful interviewer. This includes providing a purpose for the interview, allowing the interviewee to ask questions, asking clear and simple questions without jargon, listening attentively, and being critical where needed. The interview guide was prepared based on Figure 3-1 from Bryman & Bell (2011), and includes a mix of different question types such as introducing, follow-up, probing, specifying, direct, indirect, structuring, and interpreting questions, along with silence (Kvale, 1996).

Initially six interviews were planned but due to the COVID-19 pandemic only four were conducted. The interviews were conducted by phone due to the location of participants (across Europe). Research suggests that there may be little difference in the quality of data collected by conducting face-to-face interviews and phone interviews (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). While it is not possible to observe body language in order to see how interviewees responded to questions, conducting interviews by phone does allow the participants the ability to be in their own

– more familiar – surroundings, therefore potentially they will feel more comfortable and open for discussion (Novick, 2008). Each participant was provided with an information sheet and consent form prior to the interviews being conducted (see Appendix 6).

Following each interview, the recordings were transcribed along with any notable comments on how the interview went. The participants of the interviews were sent a report from the interviews for the purpose of confirming the validity of the data. The transcribing was done as soon as possible after the interviews so that any analysis could be used as input for further interviews based on emerging themes.

The interview guides and schedule can be found in Appendices 4, 5 and 6.

3.3.3 Pilot test

Prior to the interviews with the data subjects a pilot interview was conducted with a member of the IIASA communications team. The objective of this test was to practise the interview techniques, ensure the questions were understandable, and review the type of answers received to ensure they are helpful in addressing the research questions of the study. The test interview lasted 23 minutes and resulted in some changes to the interview guide.

It was identified to be necessary to first introduce the three strands of communications in relation to strategy and then explain that the study – and therefore interview – is focused on exploring the third strand which is specifically related to the external communication of the organisation's strategy. This is because many of the answers received in the pilot referred to how the communication activities are aligned with the organisation's strategy and therefore communicate it. There were a couple of further amendments made to the guide for clarity, including stipulating that the years in role referred to their present position, and that the communication methods referred to external communications. An additional optional probing question was added to the guide to ask about challenges encountered when communicating the strategy.

The feedback from the test subject was that the questions were clear and easy to understand, and that the interview style was open and conducive for discussion.

The original and revised interview guides can be found in Appendices 4 and 5.

3.4 Sampling

3.4.1 Sampling procedures

The sample is defined by Bryman & Bell (2011) and Jennings (2001) as the subset of the population chosen for the investigation of the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011) which is what has been used for this study. The sample research participants have not been selected on a random basis; they were selected in a strategic way in

order to select those who are most relevant to the research questions of this study. This does, however, mean that the results cannot be generalised to a population.

3.4.2 Selection of case organisations and interview respondents

As explained in the literature review, communicating an organisation's strategy has more importance for research organisations due to the influential stakeholders and funding sources. This study therefore focuses on research organisations as its sample. The initial study site of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) was chosen on the basis of convenience sampling. It is a non-profit research institute – which is the focus of the study, and information about its strategy is either publicly available or possible to obtain through the interview process. As convenience sampling can introduce bias and does not allow for generalisation (Bryman & Bell, 2011) purposive sampling has also been applied to select the other organisations used for the study.

Appendices 1 and 2 show an overview of institutes that are similar to IIASA, either in terms of being an international research institute (regardless of domain), or research institutes active in the area of global sustainability research, integrated modelling, and systems analysis.

The International Science Council (ISC) was then selected for a case study due to its similarity to IIASA in terms of its external stakeholders and membership base. In addition, the ISC had only recently (in 2019) launched a new strategy and action plan. Information on which had been received by all its members.

The Institute for Science and Technology (IST) Austria, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), Germany, Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC), Sweden, and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), India, were chosen to approach for interviews due to their similarity in terms of research. A comparison of these institute's communications teams was also conducted (see Appendix 3) to ascertain that all the organisations had a similar amount of resource and capacity in the communications function.

The head of communications (or equivalent position) for each of these institutes was contacted to request participation in an interview (as detailed in 3.3.2). Despite numerous attempts to arrange and reschedule, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were not possible with all participants. Out of the intended six interviews, only four were conducted.

3.5 Research ethics

To abide by best practise in research ethics all interview respondents were provided with an information and consent form (see Appendix 7). The information form included a summary of the aims and objectives of the research, the reason for the interviews, and how the data would be used. It also gave contacts for any questions or complaints about the use of a participant's

data. The consent form clearly stated how the data from the interview would be used and required the respondents to positively confirm that they agreed to this use.

After transcribing the interviews each participant was sent a copy of the interview records and given a chance to comment and provide feedback. In all four cases no changes were received, and respondents requested a copy of the final study when published.

During the data analysis stage, the respondent's answers were coded and anonymised, all quotes in the conclusions section are attributed to anonymised organisations (Organisation A, B, C, and D). While participants were happy for their organisations to be named in the study, and respondents completed the consent forms to agree to their name and organisation being used, during the interviews respondents asked for specific comments not to be individually attributed. This allowed respondents to perhaps speak more freely about both the positive aspects and their perceptions of shortcomings in strategy communication than they would in a public setting.

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Case study analysis

First a review of the two study sites' – IIASA and ISC – websites was conducted to document and define the organisation's strategy and how it is presented. This included noting the timeframe, elements of content, availability, and accessibility. This content analysis was extended to the strategy brochures and annual reports

As described in 3.3.1, the quality criteria framework from Köhler & Zerfass (2019) as shown in Figure 2-3 **Error! Reference source not found.**, was adapted for this study. The revised elements were then used while reviewing the quality of strategy communication in the owned media from the two case study sites. The strategy documentation for both case study sites was reviewed and compared to the framework, with notable exceptions documented.

The latest available annual reports for both IIASA and ISC were then reviewed with the purpose of identifying themes and recording the frequency of occurrence with a traditional content analysis method (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Each mention of the term 'strategy' was counted and reviewed to see in which context it appears. As part of the earlier part of the case study the organisation's strategy was identified, and the annual report was reviewed for mentions and reference to this strategy – without the use of the specific term 'strategy'. The frequency of occurrence of the terms 'mission' and 'vision' were recorded, along with any mentions on how the organisation has or will communicate their strategy.

3.6.2 Interview analysis

The data from the interviews was analysed according to the six phases of thematic analysis from Braun & Clarke (2006). These are; familiarisation, coding, ‘searching’ for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report.

First the interview transcripts were read and re-read, and the audio-recordings repeated, while making notes of any initial observations. Then a systematic process of identifying relevant features of the data was used (coding) to look for patterns. An example of how the coding was applied to the interview transcripts is shown in Appendix 8. Similar data segments were then clustered together and reviewed to ensure the themes fit the data and entire data set, an example of how this was done is shown in Appendix 9. The themes and codes were then used to create a thematic map. The themes were defined and used to compose an analytic narrative. An example of an early thematic map is shown in Figure 3-2 and the final version is discussed in 4.5 (Figure 4-3).

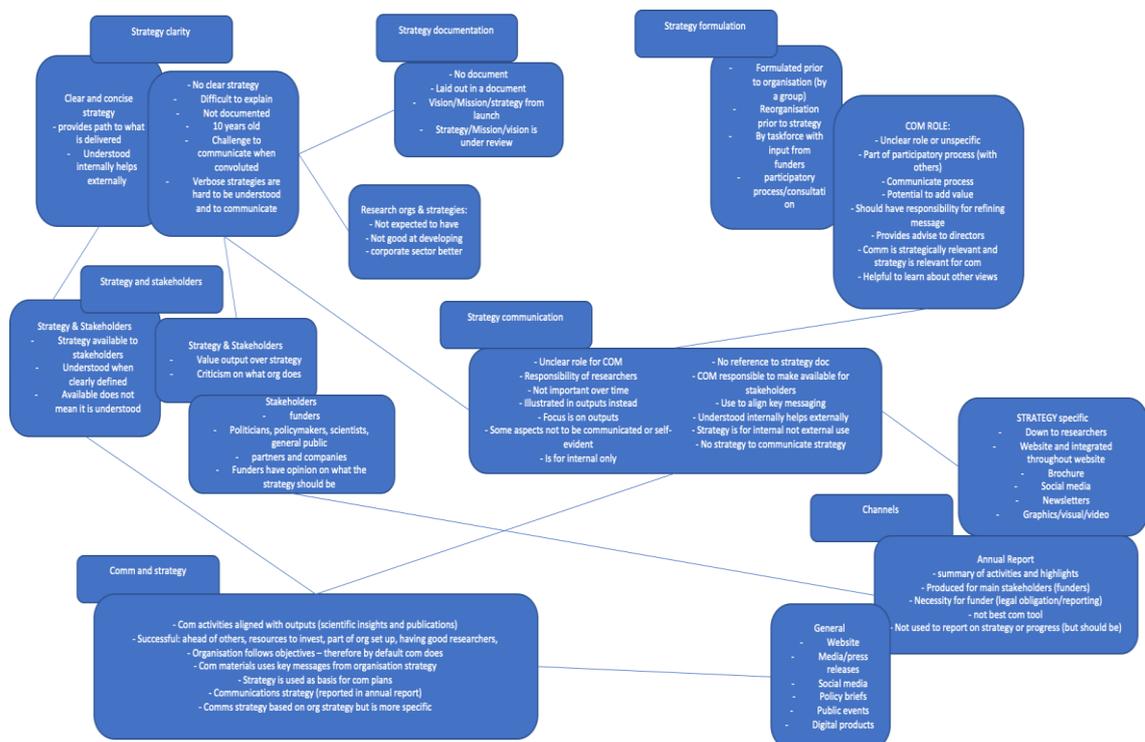


FIGURE 3-2 EARLY THEMATIC MAP

3.7 Conclusion

The study used qualitative data in the form of primary data from the interviews, and secondary data from the case study document analysis. The methodology therefore focused on qualitative research methods and analysis. Two case studies were conducted for the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis and the International Science Council by reviewing the information

about their strategy available on their websites, in specific strategy documents, and in their annual reports. The interview guide was tested, and then interviews were conducted with four organisations, the results of which were coded and analysed and will be discussed in the next chapter.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The methodological process described in Chapter 3 provided the basis for the analysis and interpretation of the data acquired. This chapter presents the results and findings of this analysis. It first describes the findings from the two individual case studies, then briefly compares the two. The results and analysis from the interviews are then laid out by themes. The results are discussed in the text and are supported by tables giving a brief visual overview.

4.2 Case study – International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

IIASA is a scientific research institute that conducts policy-oriented research into problems of a global nature that are too large or too complex to be solved by a single country or academic discipline. As a leader in applied systems analysis, IIASA research covers issues such as climate change, energy security, population aging, and sustainable development. It is currently funded partly by 22 National Member Organizations from Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe and partly by competitive contracts and grants (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, n.d.).

4.2.1 How the strategy is presented

IIASA has a strategy entitled “Research for a Changing World”, which is presented in an 18-page brochure that can be downloaded as a PDF from the organisation’s website (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 2009). It is easy to find using either the search box or looking under the main navigation menu under ‘About IIASA’ or ‘Research’ menus. It is also additionally found on the side menu on many other web pages, acting as a constant reminder of the organisation’s goals. The strategy has a timeframe of 2011-2020 and was approved and published in 2009. It is accompanied by two research plans of five years each, the current one running from 2016 to 2020 (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 2015).

On the strategy webpage the IIASA mission is stated as:

“The IIASA mission is to provide scientific insight and guidance to policymakers worldwide by finding solutions to global problems through applied systems analysis. In this way, the work helps to improve human wellbeing and protect the environment.” (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 2019)

However, in the strategy pdf the mission is worded slightly differently and is accompanied by a vision:

“IIASA will be the world leader in systems analysis to find solutions to global problems for the benefit of humankind.” (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 2009).

The remainder of the strategy web page discusses the need for global solutions and focuses on the Research Plan 2016-2020 and the research framework which is visualised in graphical form (Figure 4-1).

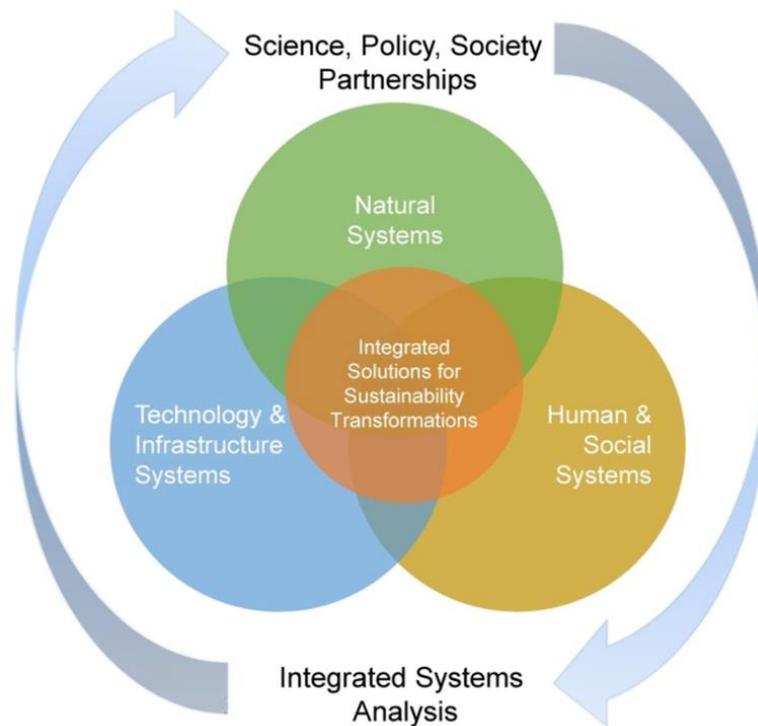


FIGURE 4-1 IIASA RESEARCH PLAN FRAMEWORK (INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED SYSTEMS ANALYSIS, 2019)

While there is no clear summary of what the strategy is on the website – other than the mission – the strategy PDF contains a two-page executive summary. The summary – from the IIASA Director and Chair of the IIASA Council – includes some background on global challenges, states the IIASA vision and mission, and lists some of IIASA’s core strengths. It also gives some details on why specific research areas were chosen, and then describes the focus ‘problem areas’. In addition to the scientific priorities the executive summary also lists other areas of priority, in particular increasing capacity building activities, increasing collaborative activities with research institutes in member countries, increasing work with developing countries, and seeking to achieve higher visibility. This last point refers to communication activities in the areas of raising awareness of IIASA’s scientific achievements, achieving a clearer identify, and extending the reach and recognition of the institute’s work.

The remainder of the brochure – in terms of content – is varied, the structure is not entirely clear in terms of headings, and content on IIASA’s history, current global environment, scientific achievements, and future priorities are mixed across the remaining pages.

The design is text heavy, supplemented with a few photos and stock imagery, with no figures, tables or visualisations. In addition to the mention of communications in the executive summary, further reference is made towards the end of the document on how the institute plans to achieve a clearer identity and higher visibility and that the future communications strategy will emphasise the value to IIASA members.

The IIASA website is not mobile friendly and no special accessibility options seem to have been implemented. There also appears to be no use of other channels or medium such as videos. A summary of how the IIASA strategy is presented can be found in Table 4-1.

Overview	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
Strategy name	Research for a Changing World: IIASA Strategic Plan 2011-2020
Timeframe	10 years (2011-2020)
Implementation plan	Research Plan
Timeframe	5 years (2016- 2020)
Summary of strategy	Executive summary of 2 pages (in brochure). Strategy webpage describes the re-search plan.
Inclusion on website homepage	Menu item under "About" to strategy No link to research plan.
Website subpages	Page on IIASA strategy with links to research areas and brochure for both strategy and research plan No mention of Vision on site Mission stated on strategy and research overview page. Link to IIASA strategy page and research plan is on many other IIASA pages throughout site.
Strategy availability	PDF brochure for both Strategy and Research Plan
Website search results for 'strategy'	1) IIASA strategy webpage 2+3) unrelated 4) Strategy pdf
Download versions	Strategy and Research Plan - PDF brochure
Web Visual elements	Figures used to portray research framework
Strategy content	Background information on IIASA's strengths and history, summary of process Selection of 3 problem areas
Mention of communications	P16 section on clearer identity and higher visibility P17 reference to communications strategy
Brochure content	Text based with images
Brochure visual elements	Photos and stock images
Length	18 pages
Accessibility	Not mobile friendly
Other channels used: Video, newsletters etc	No

TABLE 4-1 OVERVIEW OF IIASA STRATEGY PRESENCE

4.2.2 Quality of strategy communication

The framework from Köhler & Zerfass (2019) shown in Figure 2-3 was adapted to be suitable for this study (as detailed in 3.3.1). It was then used to review how the various elements were used and to what extent in the strategy communications in the case studies. A summary of these findings for IIASA are shown in Table 4-2.

The IIASA strategy brochure does not seem to utilise basic content hierarchies, while there is a contents page and a clear executive summary, the remainder of the headings contain content that is mixed between the current situation, historical achievements, IIASA strengths and weaknesses, and plans for the future. Even within these pages important elements are at the end of the text, such as the Vision and Mission which come at the end of the section on ‘Global transformations’. The strategy elements are not clearly named. The brochure uses capitalisation and bold for a number of headings within the text, but it is unclear if these are to be identified as the strategic priorities. There are also no performance indicators used or definitions as to how the impact will be measured or evaluated.

The strategy does however have a clear name ‘Research for a Changing World’, and time frame – 2011-2020. It also opens with a personal message from the CEO in the form of an executive summary from the IIASA Director and Chair of the IIASA Council. The strategy gives information about the current business environment in terms of the global challenges, and current strengths and challenges. There is not a clear breakdown of stakeholder groups, however the strategy does say it has considered the interests of IIASA’s National Member Organizations in selecting the future priority areas.

In terms of design, the strategy is presented in a PDF format that is heavily branded with the IIASA logo. The webpage links to this PDF and related documents such as the Research Plan, IIASA Charter, and annual reports. Within the brochure the strategy elements are not linked to anything, and they are not mentioned on the website. The use of visual elements is limited. The brochure contains grey-scale photos and some stock graphics, and overall the colour palette is extremely restricted. On the website there is one figure used (Figure 4-1) to present the framework, but no use of videos or links to social media accounts.

There is no strategy content on the home page, but it can be found via the navigation and search function (as described in 4.2.1).

Quality of strategy communication		International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
Content	Completeness of content hierarchies	Not clear
	Naming of strategy elements	No
	Use of performance indicators	No
	Personalisation through CEO message	Yes
	Definition of time frame	Yes
	Information about business environment	Yes
	Addressing of stakeholders	NMO interest considered in priority selection
	Naming the strategy	Yes
	Linking strategy elements	No
	Use of strategy related documents	On web yes, in brochure no
Brochure Design	Use of videos	No
	Use of graphics	Yes
	Use of pictures	Yes
	Link to social media applications	No
	Use of hyperlinks	On web yes, in brochure no
	Placing strategy content on home page	No
	Placing strategy content in navigation	Yes

TABLE 4-2 QUALITY OF STRATEGY COMMUNICATION - IIASA

4.2.3 Strategy communication in the annual report

The purpose of the analysis of annual reports was to review how the organisations strategy (as identified in 4.2.1) is communicated in the annual reports of the respective organisations. This is done by recording how often the strategy is mentioned in the annual reports, either in direct terms or in reference to the objectives and reviewing the context in which it is referenced.

The findings from the content analysis are summarised in Table 4-3. The word strategy was used 18 times throughout the IIASA Annual Report however in only one of those instances was it in regard to the IIASA strategy. On all other occasions it was used as part of the scientific achievements, for example “A groundbreaking IIASA study demonstrated the benefits of following an end-use, low energy demand (LED) strategy that does not rely on so-called negative emissions technologies.” (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 2019b).

The IIASA strategy was referenced in the executive summary and sections about Governance and Compliance – without specifically using the term strategy. Instead the organisation’s objectives were referred to in terms of how the organisation regulates and evaluates these objectives. The IIASA Annual Report also used the terms vision and mission more often than strategy (in the context of its own strategy), and there was no reference to monitoring impact against the strategy, or how it is communicated.

Annual report content analysis	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) – 2018 Report
Number of times ‘strategy’ is used	18
Number of times strategy is mentioned in reference to the organisation’s strategy	1
Number of times reference to the organisation’s specific strategy is made (without using the term strategy)	1 (in exec summary) 2 in governance 1 in compliance
Number of times the terms vision or mission are used	5
Mentions of reporting on communicating the strategy	0

TABLE 4-3 ANNUAL REPORT CONTENT ANALYSIS - IIASA

4.3 Case study – International Science Council

The ISC was formed in 2018 as the result of a merger between the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC). It is a non-governmental organisation with a global membership of 40 international scientific unions and associations and over 140 national and regional scientific organisations including academies and research councils. The council convenes scientific expertise and resources in order to catalyse and coordinate international action on issues of major scientific and public importance (International Science Council, n.d.).

4.3.1 How the strategy is presented

The ISC strategy ‘Advancing Science as a Global Public Good’ was published in July 2018 at the same time that the ISC was formed from a merger of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC). The title of the strategy is the same as the vision: “The vision of the Council is to advance science as a global public good.” (International Science Council, 2018), which makes the objective of the strategy clear. The mission is also a short clear sentence: “The mission is to act as the global voice for science.” Both the vision and the mission are stated on the ISC website under the ‘About us’ section.

The strategy however does not have a clear timeframe – nor is it available on the ISC website. The website has a section titled ‘What we do’ which includes the vision and the Action Plan – a separate document that details the implementation of the strategy between 2019 and 2011 (International Science Council, 2019). The Action Plan is available as a PDF to download (in mobile and desktop versions) and the content is available as text directly on the website.

Searching for the strategy on the ISC website returns results that include articles on the ICSU-ISSC merger and a link to a page that includes only the introduction to the high-level strategy.

The high-level strategy brochure is a 50-page document which is text based, in a clean design with icons used for imagery. The content is clearly divided into an Executive Summary, background, vision and mission, priorities, and implementation. Communications is mentioned in the section on implementation and there is a subsection on visibility and the need for an improved communications and outreach strategy in order to realise the Council’s vision and mission. It is also mentioned again in terms of capacity, that journalistic/communication capabilities will need to be enhanced. A summary of how the ISC strategy is presented is shown in Table 4-4.

Overview	International Science Council (ISC)
Strategy name	Advancing Science as a Global Public Good: High level strategy
Timeframe	unclear
Implementation plan	ISC Action Plan: Advancing Science as a Global Public Good
Timeframe	2.5 years (2019-2021)
Summary of strategy	4-page exec summary to strategy but essence is clearly explained in a sentence
Inclusion on website homepage	No link to high level strategy. Link to Action plan on homepage (towards bottom)
Website subpages	“About ISC Overview” contains Vision and Mission “What we do” contains link to Action Plan 2019-2021
Strategy availability	Strategy – introduction only online (through publications section) Action plan - Individual web pages and PDF brochure download
Website search results for ‘strategy’	1) ISC High level strategy) 2-5) Articles on ISCU-ISSC merger and draft strategy
Download versions	Strategy – not available Action plan brochure as PDF (full and mobile versions)
Web Visual elements	No (except from images)
Strategy content	Content split into vision, mission, values, priorities, activities, and implementation.
Mention of communications	P49 section on communication and raising profile and communicating vision and mission P50 Communications capacity
Brochure content	Text based with icons
Brochure visual elements	icons
Length	50 pages
Accessibility	Full strategy not accessible. Action plan is available on web and adaptive for mobile devices, mobile version of pdf available
Other channels used: Video, newsletters etc	No

TABLE 4-4 OVERVIEW OF ISC STRATEGY PRESENCE

4.3.2 Quality of strategy communication

The ISC has two strategy related documents – the high-level strategy and the action plan – as detailed in 4.3.1. For the purpose of reviewing the quality of strategy communication this section will focus specifically on the high-level strategy document – as this details the organisation’s strategy.

The content structure to the strategy brochure is very clear. It is possible to read the Executive Summary and gain an understanding of the vision, mission, and key priorities. In addition, it is possible to skip to the different numbered sections and read at a glance the key points. Each heading and sub-section is numbered, with the key explanations in the first paragraph, followed by more detailed descriptions below. After the executive summary there follows; 1) introduction; 2) background on current business environment; 3) vision, mission, and core values; 4) priorities and how the mission will be realised; 5) how success will be achieved. This makes the document very easy to navigate and read. Each of the strategy elements are also clearly named, and the document as a whole is very well written. While the strategy itself has no time frame or key performance indicators (KPIs), section 4.3 details how activities will be planned and evaluated – including the need for KPIs.

There is no personalisation of message from ISC leadership, the executive summary is not attributed to anyone. However, the strategy does give a background and context to the strategy in terms of the environment in which it operates. The stakeholders are also considered within certain strategy elements.

In addition to the well written, clear structure, the strategy also has a very clean, clear, and modern design. There are no multimedia or graphical elements used, but each section is coloured coded with a simple icon to illustrate it.

As mentioned in 4.3.1 the strategy document or content is not available on the ISC website. The brochure also does not use any hyperlinks or links to related documents however it does contain details of the ISC social media channels. A summary of these findings are listed in Table 4-5.

Quality of strategy communication		International Science Council (ISC)
Content	Completeness of content hierarchies	Clear
	Naming of strategy elements	Yes
	Use of performance indicators	No – but mentioned in planning (4.3)
	Personalisation through CEO message	No
	Definition of time frame	No
	Information about business environment	Yes
	Addressing of stakeholders	Not directly – in elements yes
	Naming the strategy	Yes
	Linking strategy elements	No
	Use of strategy related documents	No
Brochure Design	Use of videos	No
	Use of graphics	No
	Use of pictures	Yes
	Link to social media applications	Yes
	Use of hyperlinks	No
	Placing strategy content on home page	No
	Placing strategy content in navigation	No

TABLE 4-5 QUALITY OF STRATEGY COMMUNICATION - ISC

4.3.3 Strategy communication in the annual report

The annual report content analysis showed that the ISC mentioned the term strategy 12 times in their 2019 report (International Science Council, 2019b). Of these, 10 of the mentions were in direct reference to the organisation's strategy. A number of these are because the report has a 2-page spread on the formulation of ISC in relation to the merger and subsequent approval of the new strategy.

The strategy is also used in a form of tagline in the report, which is possible due to the clear and concise vision that ISC have developed. In addition to the 10 mentions of the word strategy (in the context of the ISC strategy) the document contained a further 9 mentions of the strategy itself i.e. 'Advancing Science as a Global Public Good' or in terms of its objectives, and 17 mentions of the terms vision or mission. One of the reasons for the high frequency of use could be that the strategy was only published in 2018 (and the action plan in 2019). There were no mentions of evaluating the strategy or in how it has been communicated. Table 4-6 provides an overview of the analysis.

Annual report content analysis	International Science Council (ISC) – 2018 Report
Number of times 'strategy' is used	12
Number of times strategy is mentioned in reference to the organisation's strategy	10
Number of times reference to the organisation's specific strategy is made (without using the term strategy)	1 (Inside front cover tag line) 4 (in exec summary) 3 (page on vision and mission including use of language in tag line and reference to high-level strategy and action plan. 1 (section on future)
Number of times the terms vision or mission are used	17
Mentions of reporting on communicating the strategy	0

TABLE 4-6 ANNUAL REPORT CONTENT ANALYSIS - ISC

4.4 Comparison of cases

The two case studies showed a number of similarities in terms of approach of how the organisations present and communicate their strategy. Both strategies have a name and were accompanied by implementation plans – albeit for different timeframes. The ISC had a very clear and concise method of explaining their strategy that was also used as a tagline.

Neither organisation had strategy content on their homepages, so a user would need to use the navigation or search function to find information on the strategy. For both organisations there were inconsistencies. Despite having a web page about the strategy, IIASA did not have their vision included on the site. While ISC clearly stated their vision and mission on the website the full high-level strategy is not accessible. The ISC website also focusses more on the action plan as opposed to the strategy.

When comparing the strategy documents, the ISC brochure is much easier to navigate, read, and understand. The strategy elements are structured, numbered, colour coded, and concisely explained. The IIASA document, in comparison, mixes different content elements throughout the document, there are pages where the future priorities and previous scientific highlights sit next to each other. There are no use of content hierarchies and it is unclear to the reader which headings refer to the strategy elements. Both organisations include information on the environment within which they operate as a background to their strategic choices, and some detail on the strategic process. They both start with an executive summary, which in the case of IIASA is personalised from the director and chair of the council. Both strategies have a vision and mission, and both partially mention their stakeholders, however the future priorities are clearer in the ISC strategy. The two strategy documents also include a reference to communications in terms of the need to enhance visibility and communication capabilities and strategy.

The two documents are very different in terms of design. The ISC strategy has a clean and clear look that follows the simple structure and navigation, title pages are used to break up the sections and icons are used which give it a modern feel. The IIASA strategy uses a very limited colour palate with greyscale images. More text per page is used than in the ISC document, and overall the design feels quite dated. It should however be considered that the ISC strategy was published nearly 10 years after the IIASA one, in 2018 compared to 2009. This could also explain why the ISC brochure includes information on the organisation's social media channels. However, neither organisation used multimedia such as videos to communicate their strategy, and the use of visual elements was limited. Further comparisons and a summary of the above can be found in Table 4-7.

	Both IIASA and ISC	Differences
Strategy name	Yes	
Timeframe		IIASA yes ISC no
Implementation plan	Yes	
Summary of strategy	Yes	ISC strategy is understandable in one sentence
Website		IIASA strategy accessible through top navigation to a strategy page, with links to pdf. ISC strategy not available on website. Mission and vision clear on ISC website, vision not found on IIASA webpages
Placing strategy content on home page	No	
Placing strategy content in navigation		ISC no, IIASA yes
Strategy availability		PDF available for IIASA, only Action plan available for ISC (not strategy)
Web Visual elements		IIASA uses one figure for framework, ISC nothing
Completeness of content hierarchies		IIASA no clear structure or hierarchy, ISC very clear
Naming of strategy elements		IIASA no ISC yes
Use of performance indicators	No	
Personalisation through CEO message		IIASA yes, ISC no
Mention of communications	Yes	
Information about business environment	Yes	
Addressing of stakeholders	partially	
Brochure content	Text based	
Brochure visual elements		IIASA – photos and stock, ISC Icons
Length		IIASA 18 pages, ISC 50 pages
Use of videos	No	
Use of graphics	No	
Use of pictures	Yes	

Use of hyperlinks	No
Link to social media applications	ISC yes, IIASA no
Other channels used: video, newsletters etc	No

TABLE 4-7 COMPARISON OF IIASA AND ISC CASE STUDIES

The content analysis on the annual reports from IIASA and ISC showed stark differences in how it is used to communicate the organisation's strategy. While the term strategy was used the most times in the IIASA Annual Report – 17 of these mentions were not about the organisation. The IIASA Annual Report had very limited reference to the organisation's strategy in contrast to ISC which had the strategy as an underlying theme throughout the whole document. It was mentioned as part of the introduction to the organisation, there was a page dedicated to the vision and mission, and two pages on the founding of the ISC and formulation of the strategy. The tagline 'advancing science as a global public good' was also used in numerous places. As mentioned previously the stark contrast may be due to the fact the ISC strategy was launched within the last few years, and the IIASA strategy is nearly 10 years old. Figure 4-2 shows the comparison of the content analysis on the IIASA and ISC annual reports.

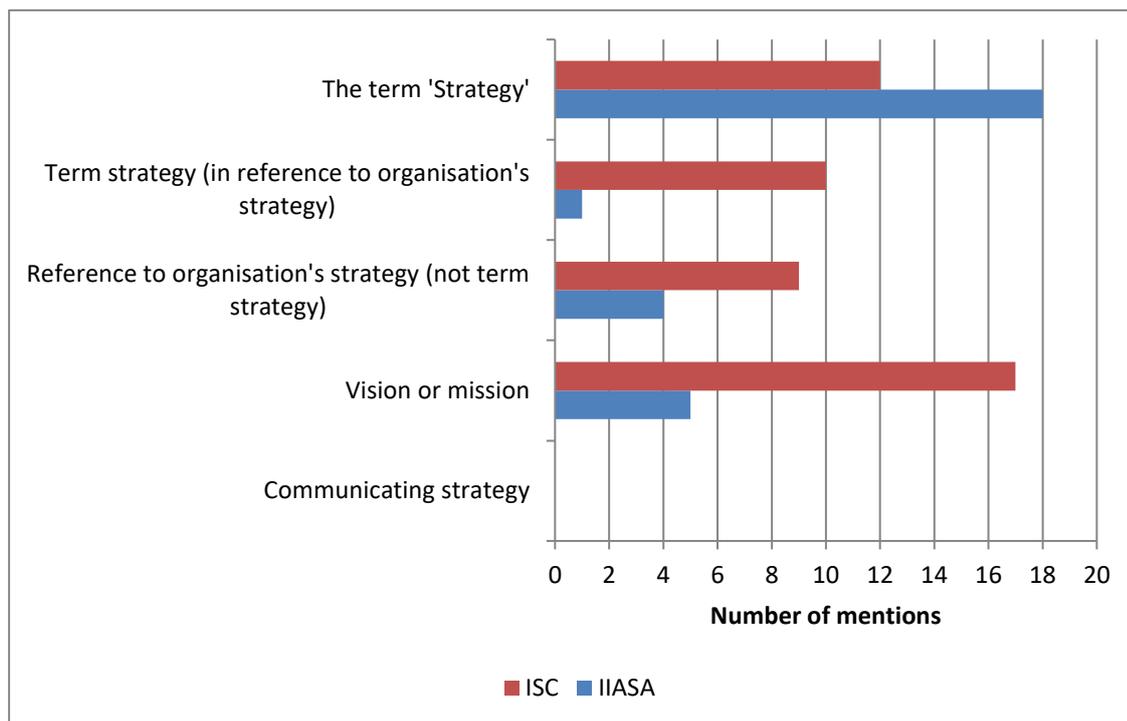


FIGURE 4-2 COMPARISON OF ANNUAL REPORTS CONTENT ANALYSIS FOR IIASA AND ISC

4.5 Interview analysis

The data from the interviews was analysed as described in 3.6, using the codes to identify themes. After the review of all the codes, the early thematic map (shown in Figure 3-2 **Error! Reference source not found.**) was used to refine and define the themes as follows: Strategy clarity, stakeholders, strategy formulation, strategy communications, communications alignment,

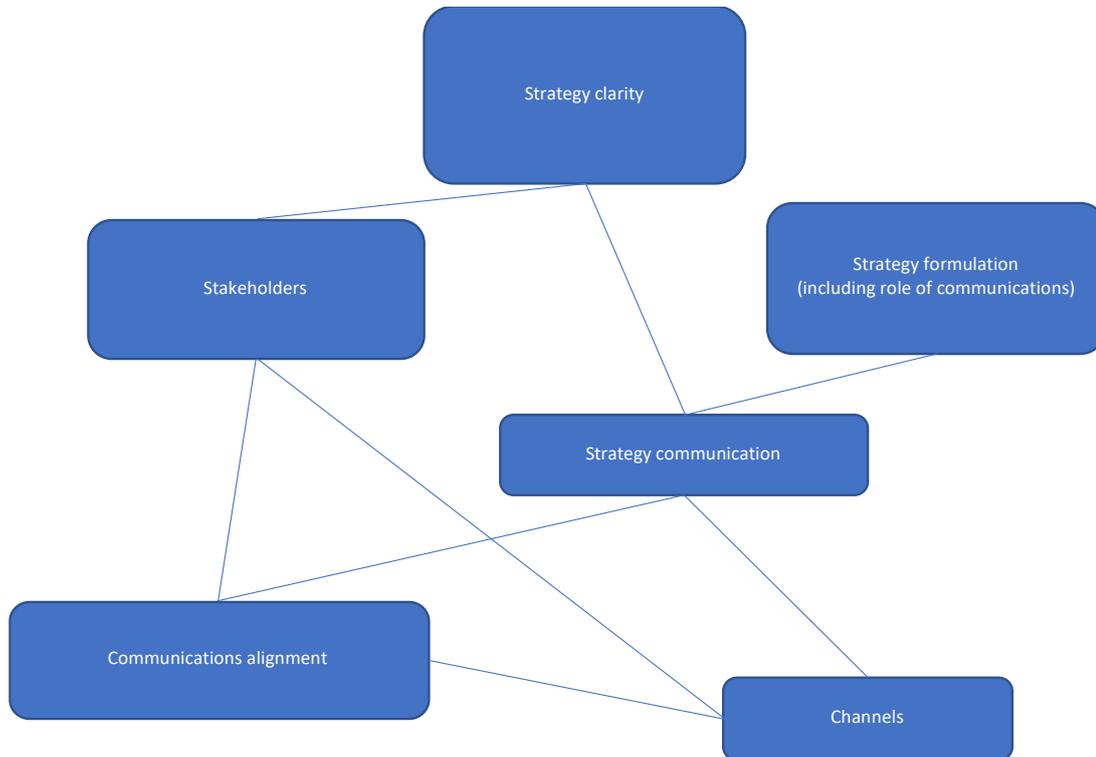


FIGURE 4-3 THEMATIC MAP
ment, and channels (shown in Figure 4-3).

4.5.1 Strategy clarity

Strategy clarity refers to the ability of the respondents to concisely communicate the organisation's strategy, the existence of the strategy, how easy it is to understand, and documentation that exists.

The majority of respondents were able to summarise the organisation's strategy in a sentence or two. In the case where the respondent was unable to (Respondent A) – they also explained that the organisation does not have a strategy. The strategy for Organisation A was instead explained as what the organisation does. This is despite it being mentioned that a vision and mission exists.

For those able to concisely define their strategy, the organisations have their strategy documented and these documents varied in terms of when the strategies were launched (on establishment of institute, before being founded, and with set timescales). For three of the four organisations, there is currently a process in place to develop a new strategy.

The strategies that existed consisted of a definition to what the organisation should deliver and was explained as providing a path as to what is delivered.

“The strategy of [Organisation B] is to do excellent basic research and to train excellent scientists on a global level.” Respondent B

“[Organisation C] uses systems analysis to try and find solutions to some of the world’s most complex problems, we conduct interdisciplinary research and aim to give policy advice on how to solve these problems.” Respondent C

There were also several comments about the need for the strategy to be clear, including that being understood internally helps with external communication, and that verbose strategies are more difficult to understand and be communicated. An element of time was also discussed, but came across in two different ways, the first being that the strategy is old and therefore not necessarily remembered anymore, the second being that despite the strategy being old, it was remarkably accurate and easy to follow meaning that it is still true.

An interesting discussion came out of one of the interviews, with comments regarding the need for strategies. There was a comparison to the corporate sector, and it was stated that research organisations are not expected to have strategies, and that they are not good at developing them. Note that the respondent in question requested these comments were non-attributable.

“I don’t think it’s necessarily sort of expected or normal that a scientific or academic institution has a corporate strategy in itself”

“I don’t think research institutions are particularly good at developing strategies, it’s partly a very individually based place to work because you get funding from different sources and researchers are focused on their own work.”

In summary, most communications professionals were able to articulate their strategy clearly, but some have reservations about the need for strategy practices in the research sector.

4.5.2 Stakeholders

The theme regarding stakeholders defines who the main stakeholders are and to what extent they understand or care about the organisation’s strategy.

The stakeholders were defined as politicians, policymakers, scientists, general public, partners and companies, but funders were stressed as the main stakeholders in most of the interviews. In answer to the question “do you think your stakeholders understand the strategy?” the response was yes in all cases. In light of the fact that it is the communication professional’s job to communicate to stakeholders no respondent was likely to say no in this situation and in hindsight the question should have focused on any difficulties or challenges in communicating the strategy.

There were some connections to the previous section on clarity. Where the strategy was clearly defined and documented – the respondents said that the strategy is available to stakeholders, it is easy to understand when it is clearly defined, but that being available does not necessarily mean it is understood. Respondent A – whose organisation did not have a clearly defined strategy said that the output of the institute is more important which was reiterated by other respondents and shown in examples below:

“Key stakeholders are interested in what we can deliver, the strategy provides pathways on how we deliver but it is what we deliver that stakeholders are interested in.” Respondent D

“the partners and organisations and companies that we work with want to work with us because our reputation and scientific work is highly recommended.” Respondent A

Respondent A went on to explain that some stakeholders had criticised what Organisation A is doing strategically.

“...what we do in their minds or in their point of view is far beyond what a research institute should possibly be doing.” Respondent A

This is interesting, as this criticism could come from the lack of understanding of what the institute does, because it is not clearly defined. Potentially this criticism could be avoided with better stakeholder engagement. Overall, all the main stakeholders were identified to be the funders of the organisations, and even those organisations that have clearly defined strategies, recognised that just because it is available it does not mean it is understood. Therefore, this has highlighted a gap – which the communications professionals are aware of – between communications and understanding.

4.5.3 Strategy formulation

Strategy formulation refers to the organisation’s process on how the strategy came about or is being formulated, including the role of communications in this process.

As mentioned in 4.5.1, some of the organisations interviewed are in the process of formulating or reformulating their strategies. Therefore, many of the answers to these questions referred to

the current process and provide a useful insight into communication professionals' perception of an ongoing process in which they were participating.

The strategy for Organisation B was formulated prior to the establishment of the institute by a group of international scientists. The founding document was described as a blueprint of the organisation and despite being nearly 15 years old, the respondent stressed that the quality of this initial plan should be appreciated as it is remarkably accurate still today.

“we have a defined strategy as laid out in a report of the international committee, published in 2006, which is basically the blueprint and the founding document of [Organisation B] in itself, and if you go through this document... [] ...if you look at this now like 14 years later its actually surprising how precise it was at that point, and how exactly we were able to follow this. I mean normally there is a certain gap between a plan and then realisation [but] in this case it's pretty close so praise goes to the authors of this report because it turns out that this report was so close to the reality of founding a research institute... But basically, the strategy, the report of the international scientists, still works until today.” Respondent B

Several participants stated that their organisations are currently going through the formulation process for a new strategy. The respondent from Organisation D explained that the review of the strategy was initiated after a scientific committee approved the idea. It began with a reorganisation which was followed by a participatory process for input on the strategy plans. Respondent A and Respondent C also stressed that the current formulation process was highly participatory with consultations taking place with all staff in the organisations. For Organisation D this included staff retreats involving approximately 15% of staff.

“that has been a very long process over at least 18 months where a taskforce of different members of the scientific community, so the scientific staff, researchers, have been working on a proposal for a new strategy and it's been consulted with all of the staff and consulted with science advisory committees and with our member organisations.” Respondent C

For Organisation A it was unclear what the role of the communications function was in the formulation process, however for Organisation C and D, the communications function input was explained as input into the consultation process (along with other parts of the institute).

“[at a] retreat we discussed the [strategy] white paper and the comms team has been part of that, again it's not just the research domain it's many if not all future lab leaders, and also representatives of the PhDs and IT, and so on, so it's rather a broad approach and so the comms team is part of this, we have a total number of staff of what 300 plus, so it's been 40-50 people [involved], [this] shows that it's led and its participatory and the comms team is part of this.” Respondent D

The lack of involvement from the communications function in the strategy process was also identified as a missed opportunity, that the communications function could be adding more value by helping to refine the content and messaging before the strategy is finalised.

“I think it’s a shame because I think communications could add an awful lot of value, in terms of what the content could be, or at least refining it to make it as easily understandable and communicable as possible.” Respondent C

Being part of the consultative process was described as useful because it helped the communications function learn about other views across the institute, and that it is strategically important:

“...but obviously communications is also strategically relevant and the other way round strategy is relevant for communication.” Respondent D

In summary, the communications function has been playing a role in the formulation of new strategies where they are being developed. However, this is as part of a wide consultation with all internal staff – there is no particular emphasis on communication activities in the formulation process, and only one participant raised this as a missed opportunity for the communications function to be able to better communicate the strategy.

4.5.4 Strategy communications

This theme specifically looks at how the strategy is communicated. It also had the most diverse set of answers, with practises varying significantly between organisations.

Organisation A placed the responsibility of communicating the strategy firmly with the researchers and scientists directly in contact with the stakeholders, this was partly confirmed by Organisation D who said it is also down to the scientists or directors in their work.

“...when it comes to actually communicating the strategy that’s more something that is done by the individuals or the researchers involved in any given project” Respondent A

Respondent C contradicted this and said is the responsibility of the communications function to make the strategy available to stakeholders and detailed some of the channels used (discussed in 4.5.6).

The majority of respondents stressed that communicating the outputs and scientific insights is more important than communicating the strategy itself, it was also stated that some elements of the strategy are self-evident and do not need to be communicated as such. The timeframe was also raised again, and that over time it is less important to communicate the strategy.

“over time this has become less important in actually communicating the strategy itself, what it comes down to now is to illustrate the aspects of the strategy in the daily work”
Respondent B

Respondent D stated that the strategy is for an internal audience to guide the direction of the institute, and while it is available externally it is for internal use only. Respondent C stressed the importance of the strategy being understood internally to help with externally communicating it.

“...first the strategy gets developed and then because it’s not really something that gets developed for the outside world, it’s something that guides our efforts within the institute ... things that are urgent to communicate like new findings that are relevant for decision makers or broader public this is different of course... We do not have a strategy to communicate the new strategy. No. because it is more of an internal guiding document.” Respondent D

“...it’s not like any of us could summarise the strategy in a sentence. Which I think other organisations really can do, and if you can do that, then it makes it so much easier for everyone to live and breathe that tagline – that mission – and if you can internally live and breathe it then I think it makes it that much easier to externally communicate it.”
Respondent C

As noted previously all the organisations interviewed were either reformulating their strategies or had a strategy from over 10 years ago, it would have been useful to discuss with an organisation who had recently launched a new strategy, which is a limitation of this study.

There is no clear outcome to how communications professionals perceive the role of the communications function in communicating the strategy, other than the views were varied. This included that the responsibility of communicating the strategy lies with the researchers, the communications function has a role to play in communicating the strategy, the strategy is only for internal use, and having an understanding internally helps with external communications. This inability to reach a consensus could be a reason as to why organisation’s strategies are not communicated to external stakeholders in the same way.

4.5.5 Communications alignment

The communications alignment theme refers to how the communications function ensures that their activities are aligned with the organisation’s strategy.

All respondents stressed that as research institutes the main communication activities are to highlight scientific insights. It was implied that by communicating the scientific results – the

communication activities are therefore aligned with the organisational goals, it was also suggested in one case that because the organisation follows the strategy, the communications function then does by default.

“everything we do [in communications is based on] the science that we do... the fact that we are an academic institution means that we produce scientific insights primarily through publications, so that’s a key part of our outreach.” Respondent A

Respondent C and Respondent D made reference specifically to a communications strategy, and both explained how the organisation’s strategy is a basis for the communications strategy, but that the communications strategy is more specific. Key messages and yearly plans are derived from these strategies and are used to align communications collateral.

“I’m very much looking forward to when the new strategy comes out, because then I will analyse it and I will pull out the points relevant to communications and then I will form the communications strategy... so that would build our communications strategy around the basis of the new strategy.... [points from the old/existing strategy I] have been using those for the basis of my yearly communication plans.” Respondent C

“we do have a communications strategy which has been written about in the annual report and its obviously more specific in comparison to the overall strategy.” Respondent D

Elements for successful communication activities were also mentioned and included; being ahead of other organisations, having the resources to invest in communication activities, having good communicative researchers, or those who want to communicate their work, and having outreach stressed as an important part of the institutional set up.

“we are quite ahead of other similar institutions ... When it comes to the emphasis and focus on the value and benefits of doing outreach and communication... we have had the opportunity and we had the resources from day one to invest in communications.” Respondent A

Respondent A – whose organisation did not have a clearly defined strategy – also explained that outreach was a key part of the organisation’s goals when the organisation was established. This was given as the reason for the success of its outreach activities.

The goals and objectives of all the organisations interviewed are related to performing science, and all of the communications practitioners stressed that the communication activities highlight the scientific work. Two of the organisations specifically refer to a communications strategy that is based on the organisation’s strategy, but all of the respondents believe that their work is

aligned to institute goals. This would imply that whether or not the organisation has a defined strategy, the communication function's priority is to communicate the organisation's output.

4.5.6 Channels

The last theme on channels includes all channels used to communicate the organisation's strategy and those used to as part of general communications activities, with a focus on annual reports.

Respondent C and Respondent D explained the channels specific to communicating the organisation strategy, which included the website, a brochure, and social media. As discussed in 4.5.4 some respondents emphasised that it is the responsibility of researchers to directly communicate the strategy, and that the communications teams communicate the outputs of the institute as part of their strategy communications. The channels used for this are; website, media/press releases, social media, policy briefs, and public events. Digital products were mentioned as being important to invest in (but this is constrained by resources). No interview participant mentioned the annual report without being prompted.

After being specifically asked about the annual report, the general consensus is that they are produced out of necessity for the main stakeholders – funders and as a legal obligation. It was highlighted that the reports contain a summary of activities and highlights of the organisation (in all cases), but that it was not used to report on the strategy, or progress towards the organisation's goals or objectives. It was also stated that the annual reports are not the most useful tool for communications, however Respondent C did highlight this as a missed opportunity.

“I think there are some legal obligations that we have to produce something like an overview, but apart from that [*pause*] maybe it's good to have a kind of reference? [*questioning tone*] In terms of communication it is not the most essential tool of communication.” Respondent B

“The annual reports that we produce are more a summary of a variety of work that we produce over the year, more than working towards sort of targets.” Respondent A

“the annual report theoretically should in my mind report on the progress that Organisation C is making against its strategic goals ... in reality the annual report is a summary of scientific highlights and institutional updates, and currently it doesn't revert back to what our strategic objectives, or goals, or vision and mission is.” Respondent C

The range of channels used for communicating the strategy did not differ materially from those used to communicate other activities of the organisations interviewed. The communications practitioners do not place high value on the annual report as a communication tool, the consen-

sus was it is compiled only to satisfy funders, and in no cases was it used as a tool to communicate the strategy or progress towards it. Interestingly as mentioned in 4.5.5, Organisation D reports about the communication strategy in the annual report, but not the organisation's strategy. Only one of the respondents felt the annual report could be an opportunity to communicate about the strategy to external stakeholders.

4.5.7 Cross theme observations

Based on the data from the interviews, the definition of what the organisations do were all very similar, focusing on the fact they produce scientific insights for policy makers. All respondents said that the stakeholders understood the strategy, even those who were unable to define it clearly themselves or without it being documented or available.

When the respondent was able to clearly communicate the organisation's strategy in answer to the first question, it was much easier for them to answer the remainder of the questions.

Throughout the interviews all respondents seemed to be put off when asked about how they communicate the strategy specifically, and most answered this question by talking about how they communicate the outputs of the institute.

The annual report was identified as only being for the main stakeholders (funders), and the strategy was also identified as being for funders. However, in all but one case, there was no identification of how the annual report could be better used to communicate the strategy (or progress on it) to the funders. One organisation even mentioned that progress towards the communications strategy is written about in the annual report, but the organisation strategy is not.

Outreach activities are deemed to be important, specifically in one of the organisations who said the importance of outreach was stressed from its establishment, however that same organisation did not have a clear strategy where this was included.

All the organisations interviewed were either reformulating their strategies or had a strategy from over 10 years ago, it would have been useful to discuss with an organisation who had recently launched a new strategy, which is a limitation of this study.

4.6 Summary of findings

The aim of the study was to review how research organisations communicate their corporate strategy to external stakeholders. By conducting case studies and interviews with practitioners from research organisations the study addressed the following questions:

- RQ1: How do research organisations define and externally communicate their corporate strategy?
- RQ2: What methods and channels are used in externally communicating the strategy?

- RQ3: What role does the annual report play in communicating strategy?
- RQ4: How do communications professionals in research organisations view strategy communication?

This section summarises the findings related to each of these sub questions.

4.6.1 RQ1: How do research organisations define and externally communicate their corporate strategy?

How research organisations define their strategy varies by organisation. The responses from the interviews showed that the organisations define their strategy as what the organisation should deliver and in some cases with a path to how they should deliver it. The strategy was explained in a sentence or two, and in the case of the ISC in a short and catchy tagline. Only one of the organisations studied did not have a clearly defined strategy.

The case studies showed that the two organisations had strategy documentation in the form of a brochure, explaining in detail what the strategy entails. They were both accompanied by implementation plans. For IIASA both of these documents were easily available on the organisation's website, and the action plan was prominently displayed for ISC. The strategy brochure for ISC was well written with a modern design and had a clear structure and strategy elements.

The interview findings confirmed that having a clearly defined strategy that is understood internally helps with external communication, however the organisations interviewed do not all actively communicate their strategy. The priority for the communications function is to communicate scientific insights or activities by the institute instead of the strategy itself. The respondents stressed that by promoting the work of the institute they are de facto promoting the strategy and organisation's goals, and that this is what the stakeholders are more interested in.

The study also showed that research organisations believe that to some extent the responsibility of communicating the strategy lies with the researchers or directors of the organisation.

4.6.2 RQ2: What methods and channels are used in externally communicating the strategy?

As mentioned in 4.6.1, the research organisations rely on the researchers and directors to communicate the strategy to stakeholders. When the communications function is communicating the strategy, they use the organisation's website, a brochure, and social media.

The case studies confirmed this finding as both IIASA and ISC used the website to communicate their strategy and have separate brochures for both the strategy and research/action plans.

The interviews showed that when communicating output from the organisation or institute activities, the communications function uses their website, media/press releases, social media,

policy briefs, and public events. Digital products were mentioned as important but are restricted by resources. Digital products and visual elements were not widely used in the case studies' communication of strategy, with the exception of stock imagery and photos in the design of the brochure.

Successful communication was described by the communications practitioners as having sufficient resources, having communicative researchers, and having the importance of outreach stressed as a part of the organisation's goals.

4.6.3 RQ3: What role does the annual report play in communicating strategy?

Of all the interviews conducted, no organisation is using the annual report to communicate their strategy or progress towards the organisation's goals and objectives. It was not listed as a channel for external communication for the strategy or scientific highlights without prompting. The consensus from the communications practitioners was that the annual report is purely produced for reporting purposes to funders and is currently used to highlight scientific activities. Only one respondent saw this as a missed opportunity to communicate the strategy to external stakeholders.

In the IIASA case study, the content analysis of the annual report confirmed the above finding, that the annual report is not used to communicate the organisation's strategy. Where the term strategy was used it was mostly in the context of a research activity. The ISC case study on the other hand showed that the annual report was used to communicate the strategy and provided comprehensive information on the strategy process. This could be because the strategy was only recently launched, and reviewing the annual report over future years, or analysing other cases who have recently launched their strategy could be beneficial.

4.6.4 RQ4: How do communications professionals in research organisations view strategy communication?

The communications professionals interviewed expressed some reservations about the need for strategy practices in the research sector. The respondents to the interviews stressed that communicating the strategy becomes less important over time, is more for an internal audience than external, and is less important than communicating research results and scientific outputs of the organisations.

Of the organisations studied that are currently going through a new strategy formulation process, the communication professionals explained that communications are part of the participatory consultation process, but there is no specific emphasis on strategy communication during this phase, which could be a missed opportunity.

The study also found that the communication practitioners believe the researchers are responsible for externally communicating the strategy. The views of practitioners were varied in terms of the importance or responsibility regarding communicating the organisations strategy, which could be the reason that the communication practises are so varied.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the key findings from case studies with the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and the International Science Council, and interviews with four communication practitioners from the Institute for Science and Technology (IST) Austria, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), Germany, Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC), Sweden, and IIASA. The analysis conducted was linked back to the research questions with interesting insights highlighted that will be further discussed in the final chapter.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter consists of a conclusion of the findings of this study, limitations and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Discussion

How research organisations define their strategy varies by organisation. The responses from the interviews showed that the organisations define their strategy as what the organisation should deliver and in some cases with a path to how they should deliver it. This correlates with how previous studies defined strategy (Köhler & Zerfass 2019; Chandler 1962; Grant 2016). This research project also showed that research organisations believe that to some extent the responsibility of communicating the strategy lies with the researchers or directors of the organisation.

The interview findings confirmed that having a clearly defined strategy that is understood internally helps with external communication, however the organisations interviewed do not all actively communicate their strategy. Prior research had stressed that strategy was potentially more important for non-profit organisations than commercial businesses (Grant, 2016), however Bhimavarapu et al (2019) highlighted that while formulating a strategy in the public sector is critical it is not as vital as realising the overall strategic objectives. This was to some extent confirmed by the communication practitioners interviewed, who stressed that the priority for the communications function is to communicate scientific insights or activities by the institute instead of the strategy itself, which was described as what the stakeholders are more interested in.

The interviews from this study showed that when the communications function is communicating the strategy, they use the organisation's website, a brochure, and social media. The case studies confirmed this finding as both IIASA and ISC used the website to communicate their strategy and have separate brochures for both the strategy and research/action plans. NetFederation (2018) had claimed that along with websites, the annual report is one of the most important tools for communicating an organisation's strategy. However, this project showed that the annual report was identified as a product specifically produced for stakeholders, and the communication practitioners did not place high value on the report as a communication tool. The annual report was not used for communicating the strategy in all but one of the study sites. The consensus from the communications practitioners was that the annual report is purely produced for reporting purposes to funders and is currently used to highlight scientific activities. Only one respondent saw this as a missed opportunity to communicate the strategy to external stakeholders. While the IIASA case study confirmed this finding, the ISC analysis showed that the ISC Annual Report clearly detailed the ISC strategy and formulation process.

The communications professionals interviewed expressed some reservations about the need for strategy practices in the research sector. This is contrary to the findings from the European Communications Monitor Report (Zerfass et al, 2017) that showed linking business strategy and communication as one of the top two issues that practitioners face. It also contradicts the studies that highlighted strategy as being more important in the non-profit sector (Grant 2016; Frumkin & Andre-Clark 2000). Prior research had highlighted the importance of implementation of strategy, and in particular a number of communication issues related to implementation (Sull et al 2015; Martin 2010; Aaltonen & Ikävalko 2002; PMI 2013). However, the respondents to the interviews stressed that communicating the strategy becomes less important over time, is more for an internal audience than external, and is less important than communicating research results and scientific outputs of the organisations.

Of the organisations studied that are currently going through a new strategy formulation process, the communication professionals explained that communications are part of the participatory consultation process, but there is no specific emphasis on strategy communication during this phase, which could be a missed opportunity.

5.2 Contribution to knowledge

The findings from the interviews conducted in this study concurred with the three threads of the relationship between communications and strategy as documented in the literature review (Köhler & Zerfass, 2019). Namely that: 1) communications plays a role as part of the formulation and implementation of the strategy, 2) the communication strategy is aligned to the organisational strategy, and 3) there is a role in communicating the organisation's strategy. Respondents to the interviews were happy to discuss aspects 1) and 2), however there was no consensus on the responsibility of communicating the organisation's strategy, or how it is done. This correlates with the research gap that was identified in this area, and the lack of studies on externally communicating an organisation's strategy in the non-profit sector could be a contributing factor to the differing processes in practise.

The communications literature showed that communicating the organisation's strategy is important not only from the organisation's perspective in terms of strategy implementation, but also from the perspective of communication professionals who believe it to be a key contributing factor to the success of their function (Zerfass et al, 2017). In contrast, however, this study found that the communication practitioners interviewed did not believe that communicating the strategy was a priority and communicating the scientific outputs of the organisations was the main focus of their communication efforts.

Communications research showed corporate strategy at the centre of the value circle for communications (Volk et al, 2017). Despite this study identifying that practitioners do not believe

communicating the strategy is of utmost important, they did however confirm that the communication activities and outreach efforts are focused on highlighting scientific activities and achievements, are aligned to the institute goals, and therefore contribute to the success of the organisation.

The thematic analysis of this project also confirmed the views of previous studies that a large amount of information does not guarantee an understanding of the strategy. The analysis showed that internal understanding of the strategy is important and that employees have a pivotal role in communicating the strategy, which further confirmed the results of previous studies. (Fairbanks & Buchko, 2018; Aaltonen & Ikävalko, 2002).

5.3 Implications for relevant stakeholders

5.3.1 Communication practitioners

The analysis conducted in this study can be used to help communication practitioners improve their activities surrounding strategy communication and therefore better contribute to organisational goals. The case studies can be used as benchmarks for the various criteria that were reviewed. The interviews provided useful insights into how other communication practitioners operate and view the priorities and activities of the communications function. This is significant because it can increase the effectiveness of efforts, improve return on investment of activities, and broaden the dissemination of the organisation's objectives. The findings can also provide communications practitioners a way to demonstrate the value of the communication function to senior management, by adding value to the strategy formulation process and implementation of corporate strategy in terms of communication.

5.3.2 Senior management

The study identified a gap between the communication of the organisation's strategy and understanding. If senior management who are responsible for the formulation of the strategy content are also aware of this gap, it could provide an opportunity for the formulation team and communication professionals to work together on the making the content as accessible and understandable as possible, prior to implementation and communication.

5.3.3 Research organisations

The study highlights areas where communications are involved in strategy formulation and can add value in terms of strategy communication. Placing emphasis on these points provides an opportunity for research organisations to have clearly defined and articulated strategies that are communicated to stakeholders, therefore maintaining critical relationships with their funding sources.

5.3.4 Stakeholders of research organisations

By providing the communication practitioners with benchmark information on how other organisations communicate their strategy, this could improve the quality of strategy communication. This in turn means that stakeholders would receive clearer communication materials with regards to strategy, aiding their understanding of what the organisation does. It could also prevent the type of criticism that was identified as part of the thematic analysis in this study, where stakeholders were critiquing what the organisation was doing strategically.

5.3.5 Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. The study focuses specifically on the communication from research organisations but does not factor in how these communications are received by external stakeholders. An element of evaluation, or expansion of the study to include the opinion of key stakeholders could have substantiated the findings.

The organisations that were interviewed all had strategies that were many years old, or in the process of being reformulated. It would have been beneficial to have also spoken to a representative from an organisation that had only recently launched a strategy. An interview with ISC would have definitely helped in this regard. It would have been interesting to understand if the disparity of how a strategy is communicated externally is due to the time frame and age of the strategy or the changes in communication practices – such as online publishing and the increased use of digital tools and channels.

Another limitation is the sample size, as explained in 3.3.2, due to the COVID-19 pandemic only four of the six planned interviews were conducted.

5.4 Future research

This study has identified some potential areas for future research. As mentioned in the limitations section (0), the current study did not incorporate feedback or views from stakeholders. A potential future study could explore the stakeholder's views on the organisation's strategy, if they know what the strategy is, if they understand the strategy, and how they want to be informed about developments towards the organisation's goals and objectives. A study in this area would also be useful in evaluating different communication channels. The findings from the interviews in this study showed that the communication practitioners believe that the stakeholders are more interested in scientific findings than the organisational objectives, by conducting a study that includes the views of stakeholders it allows for this to be analysed from both sides.

The ISC case study in this project showed that the annual report was used to communicate the strategy and provided comprehensive information on the strategy process, which was a stark

contrast to how all the other organisations viewed or used the annual report. As highlighted in the findings, a reason for this could be because the strategy was only recently launched. A possible area for future research would be to review the annual report over future years or analyse other cases who have recently launched their strategy to identify if there is a connection between activities around communicating the strategy and time from the strategy launch date. Revisiting the study sites from this project who were in the process of reformulating their strategies would also be an option.

There was no clear outcome from this project on how communications professionals perceive the role of the communications function in communicating the strategy other than the views were varied. Expanding this research project to analyse a larger sample size would be beneficial to generalise views regarding the responsibility of communicating the strategy, the role the communications function plays in communicating the strategy, whether the strategy is only for internal use, and if having an understanding of the strategy internally helps with external communications.

5.5 Conclusion

The intention of this study was to explore in depth the strategic communication practices of research organisations. The study addressed how research organisations communicate their corporate strategy to external stakeholders by reviewing the practises of two organisations in the form of case studies and conducting interviews with lead communication professionals from four research organisation. The research identified how each organisation defined its strategy and then reviewed the different methods used to communicate the strategy.

The results of the analysis not only confirm some of the findings from previous studies in communications research but provide further insight into how strategy communications is performed and perceived from the research sector – which was a previously under-studied field. The project also provides a basis for further studies in this area.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Comparison of organisations (International research institutes, regardless of scientific domain)

TABLE 0-1 COMPARISON OF ORGANISATIONS (INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTES, REGARDLESS OF SCIENTIFIC DOMAIN). SOURCE: IIASA / ORGANISATION'S ANNUAL REPORTS

Acronym	Name	Sites	Setup	Founda- tion	Members	Funding	Total staff
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis	Laxenburg (AT)	Austrian not for profit association	1972	Member organisations from 22 countries	12 M EUR from members 10 M EUR from contracts	450 (350 researchers)
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research	Geneva (CH)	European intergovernmental organization	1954	22 member states (+6 associate members)	1045 M EUR from member states	2,560 (1,170 researchers)
CIGAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research	Montpellier (FR), Abidjan (CI), Rome (IT), Bogor (ID), Beyrouth (LB), Cali (CO), Patancheru (IN), Washington DC (US), Ibadan (NG), Nairobi (KY), Mexico DF (MX), Lima (PE), Manila (PH), Colombo (SL), Penang (MY)	CGIAR Consortium as international organization + CGIAR Fund as not for profit foundation	1971	27 Members incl. countries, international organisations (e.g. World Bank) + private sector members (e.g. Gates Foundation)	240 M Euro (via funder contributions) 650 M Euro from contracts	8,000
EMBL	European Molecular Biology Laboratory	Heidelberg (DE), Hinxton (UK), Hamburg (DE), Grenoble (FR), Montebiondo (IT), Barcelona (ES)	European intergovernmental organization	1974	23 Member States (+ 2 Associate Members)	113 M Euro from member states 117 M Euro from contracts	1,615 (1,400 researchers)
ICTP	Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics	Trieste (IT)	Part of UNESCO as "category 1" institute, no legal entity on its own	1964	Legally speaking Italy, UNESCO and IAEA (indirectly all members of UNESCO and IAEA)	24 M Euro from the Italian government and UN agencies. 2.5 M Euro from contracts	305 (170 researchers)
ISC	International Science Council	Paris (FR), Regional Offices—serving Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean	Non-governmental	2018	40 international scientific unions and associations and 140 national and regional academies and research councils	3 M Eur from membership 5 M from grants	21 in HQ
JRC	Joint Research Centre	Brussels (BE), Geel (BE), Ispra (IT), Karlsruhe (DE), Petten (NL), Seville (ES)	Established by the Eatom Treaty, part of the European Commission, no legal entity on its own	1957	28 Member States (via their membership in the EU)	365 M Euro (via Horizon 2020). 74 M Euro from contracts	3,000 (2,070 researchers)

Appendix 2: Comparison of organisations (Research institutes active in the area of global sustainability research, integrated modelling, and systems analysis)

TABLE 0-2 COMPARISON OF ORGANISATIONS (RESEARCH INSTITUTES ACTIVE IN THE AREA OF GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH, INTEGRATED MODELLING, AND SYSTEMS ANALYSIS). SOURCE: IIASA / ORGANISATION'S ANNUAL REPORTS

Acronym	Name	Sites	Setup	Founda- tion	Funding	Total staff
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis	Laxenburg (AT)	Austrian not for profit association	1972	12 M EUR from members 10 M EUR from contracts	450 (350 researchers)
IASS	Institute for Applied Sustainability Studies	Potsdam (DE)	German not for profit association	2009	8.5 M Euro (via German Science Ministry and Land Brandenburg) 1 M Euro from contracts	150 (125 researchers)
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies	Hayama, Tokyo, Kobe, Fukuoka (JP)	Public interest foundation	1998	11 M Euro (via Japanese Government) 20 M Euro from contracts	190 (110 researchers)
IST	Institute of Science and Technology	Klosterneuburg (AT)	Public corporation	2006	121 M from contracts	600 (413 researchers)
PBL	Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency	Den Haag (NL)	Government Agency	2008	20 M Euro (via the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment) 5 M Euro from contracts	200 (160 researchers)
PIK	Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research	Potsdam (DE)	German not for profit association	1992	11 M Euro (via Leibniz Association and Land Brandenburg) 11 M Euro from contracts	270 (215 researchers)
SFI	Santa Fe Institute	Sante Fe (US)	Charity	1984	2 M Euro (via government grants) 18 M Euro from contracts	30 (resident faculty) + 110 external faculty
SRC	Stockholm Resilience Centre	Stockholm (SE)	Part of Stockholm University	2007	4 M Euro (via Stockholm University and Mistra Foundation). 10 M Euro from contracts.	135 (95 researchers)
TERI	The Energy and Resources Institute	New Delhi, Bengaluru, Guwahati, Mumbai, Panaji, Nainital (IN).	Not for profit research institute	1974	275 M Euro (via the Indian government)	1200 (950 researchers)
WRI	World Resources Institute	Washington DC (US), Sao Paulo (BR), Beijing (CN), Den Haag (NL), Mumbai (IN), Jakarta (ID)	US not for profit association	1982	No core funding. 66 M Euro from contracts	450

Appendix 3: Communication teams

TABLE 0-3 COMMUNICATION TEAM SIZE AND COMPOSITION

Acro- nym	Name	Budget (EUR)	Total staff	Number in communi- cation team	Communications staff
IIASA	International In- stitute for Ap- plied Systems Analysis	22 M	450 (350 re- searchers)	8	Communications Manager Press officer and science writer Communications officers x2 Web editor Graphic designer Web administrator Network and alumni officer
SEI	Stockholm Envi- ronment Insti- tute	22.4 M	294	12 at HQ and 7 in sat- ellite offices	Press officer Web developer Communications officers x3 Head of Project partnering Graphic designer Science writer Web editor Communications director Publications manager
SFI	Santa Fe Insti- tute	20 M	30 (resident faculty) + 110 external faculty	8	Manager, events and visits Social media specialist Editorial coordinator Events coordinator Communications manager Manager for community outreach pro- grams Manager for SFI press and visual design Web developer
IST	Institute of Sci- ence and Tech- nology	121 M	600 (413 re- searchers)	11	Head, Media Relations Visits Officer Assistant to Head Academic Events Science Writer Media Relations Manager Public Outreach Science Writer Alumni Relations Manager Deputy Head, Teamleader Events Web Editor
PIK	Potsdam Insti- tute for Climate Impact Research	22 M	270 (215 re- searchers)	7	Head of Press and Public Relations Press and PR advisors x2 Press and PR trainee Artistic Director Visualisation & Technical support officer Webmaster
ISC	International Sci- ence Council	8 M	21	3	Senior Communications Officer Communications Officer Junior Digital Communications Officer

Appendix 4: Interview guide – Original version

1) Introduction to purpose for interview and background on MBA Thesis.

Why I have asked for their time, part of study program, and the main research question I am trying to answer. (RQ1: Are the organisation's strategies clearly defined and communicated (consistently)? RQ2: What methods and channels are used in communicating the strategy? RQ3: What role does the annual report play in communicating strategy?)

2) Confirmation of face sheet information.

Name, job title, number of years in role.

- 3) Please tell me your organisation's strategy in as few words as possible.
- 4) Do you think your key stakeholders understand the organisation's strategy and objectives?
- 5) How was the strategy formulated and launched?
 - a. And when?
- 6) What role did a) the communications team b) you personally play in the formulation of the strategy?
- 7) What role do a) the communications team b) you personally play in the communication of the strategy?
 - a. If involved in formulation, did being involved in formulation help with the communication?
- 8) What different medium or channels were used to communicate the organisation's strategy?
 - a. annual report
 - b. website
 - c. visual elements?
- 9) What methods are used for communicating the strategy to different stakeholders?
 - a. Was there a structured plan?
 - b. Could you say more about ...?
 - c. What do you mean by...?
 - d. Can you give me an example...?
- 10) How do you align the activities of the communications team with the organisation's strategy?

Appendix 5: Interview guide – Revised version

1) Introduction to purpose for interview and background on MBA Thesis.

Why I have asked for their time, part of study program, and the main research question I am trying to answer: How do research organisations communicate their corporate strategy to external stakeholders?

Give an explanation to the different roles of communications and strategy from literature used in study and explain focus is on 3rd point:

1. The role of communications in the strategy process/formulation of strategy and relevance of communication for implementation of the strategy
2. The role of strategy in corporate communications - focusing on how the communication strategy can be aligned with the corporate strategy to contribute to the overall success of the company
3. The communication of the corporate strategy – multiplying, interpreting, and conveying the company’s strategic objectives for internal and external stakeholders.

2) Confirmation of face sheet information.

Name, job title, number of years in current role.

- 3) Please tell me your organisation’s strategy in as few words as possible.
- 4) Do you think your key stakeholders understand the organisation’s strategy and objectives?
- 5) How was the strategy formulated and launched?
 - a. When?
- 6) What role did a) the communications team b) you personally play in the formulation of the strategy?
- 7) What role do a) the communications team b) you personally play in the communication of the strategy (externally)?
 - a. If involved in formulation, did being involved in formulation help with the communication?
 - b. What challenges did you encounter in communicating the strategy?
- 8) What different medium or channels were used to communicate the organisation’s strategy externally?
 - a. annual report
 - b. website
 - c. visual elements?
- 9) What methods are used for communicating the strategy to different stakeholders?
 - a. Was there a structured plan?
 - b. Could you say more about ...?
 - c. What do you mean by...?
 - d. Can you give me an example...?
- 10) How do you align the activities of the communications team with the organisation’s strategy?

Appendix 6: Interview schedule

16 March 2020	Pilot interview
25 March 2020	Sturle Hauge Simonsen, Head of Communications, Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC)
26 March 2020	Oliver Lehmann, Head of Stakeholder Relations, Institute for Science and Technology Austria (IST)
8 April 2020	Rachel Potter, Communications Officer, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)
14 April 2020	Jonas Viering, Head of Press and Public Relations, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

Unavailable

Alison Meston, Senior Communications Officer, International Science Council (ISC)

Dr Annapurna Vancheswaran, Senior Director, Communications Outreach and Advocacy Unit, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

Appendix 7: Consent form

Information sheet and consent form

How do research organisations communicate their corporate strategy to external stakeholders?

Philippa Baumgartner, Modul University, Vienna

Information for participants

Thank you for considering participating in this study which will take place between March and April 2020. The study is for a Master Thesis as part of an MBA with Modul University. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant, if you agree to take part.

1. What is the research about?

The aim of the research is to review how research institutes communicate their corporate strategy to external stakeholders. The study will be comprised of two in depth case studies using content analysis and will be supplemented with interviews with communication professionals from 5-6 organisations.

2. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part, please sign the consent form and return it in advance of the interview.

3. What will my involvement be?

You will be asked to take part in an interview that should last approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions regarding your organisation's strategy and how it is communicated to stakeholders.

4. How do I withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw from the study at any point until 11 April 2020 without having to give a reason. After this date the analysis of the data will be finalised. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you do not have to answer them. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you. If you withdraw from the study, I will not retain the information you have given thus far, unless you are happy for us to do so.

5. What will my information be used for?

I will use the collected information for this research project only. The interviews will be transcribed and analysed, with sections of the interviews used as needed in the findings of the report.

6. Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will it be anonymised?

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only myself and my supervisor Craig Robinson of Heriot Watt University, UK will have access to audio recordings and transcripts. Your name, position, and organisation may be used in the thesis in the methodology, findings, and conclusion. In the case of the thesis receiving a distinction the document will be publicly available on the Modul University website, for all other cases the document will be available from the Modul University Library.

7. Data Protection Notice

The legal basis used to process your personal data will be "Legitimate interests".

To request a copy of the data held about you please contact: baumgartner@iiasa.ac.at.

8. What if I have a question or complaint?

If you have any questions regarding this study please contact the researcher, Philippa Baumgartner at baumgartner@iiasa.ac.at. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the supervisor of the study: Craig Robinson, Heriot Watt University, C.V.Robinson@hw.ac.uk

If you are happy to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet attached.

CONSENT FORM

How do research organisations communicate their corporate strategy to external stakeholders?

Philippa Baumgartner

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

I have read and understood the study information. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES / NO
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw from the study at any time up until 11 April 2020, without having to give a reason.	YES / NO
I agree to the interview being audio recorded	YES / NO
I understand that the information I provide will be used for the thesis of Philippa Baumgartner, and excerpts from the interview along with my name, position, and organisation may be used in the document.	YES / NO
I agree that excerpts of the interview can be quoted in research outputs.	YES / NO
I agree that my real name, position, and organisation can be used.	YES / NO
I understand that the audio recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone beyond the study team and myself.	YES / NO

Please retain a copy of this consent form.

Participant name:

Signature: _____ Date _____

Interviewer name:

Signature: _____ Date _____

For information please contact Philippa Baumgartner, baumgartner@iiasa.ac.at

Appendix 8: Coding example

Interview extract	Coding
<p>Interviewer: ...how was the strategy formulated and can you just repeat when it was launched.</p>	
<p>Answer: Yes, so the <u>current strategy</u> that is in place is um from <u>2011 to 2020</u> um and I wasn't around when it was launched but from what I understand is – this is a very similar process to what is happening now – so there was a <u>taskforce who looked at what our new strategy should be</u> and did a whole load of <u>consultation with our member countries</u>. But um I, it might be better to focus on the formulation of the current strategy so at the moment we are <u>working on our strategy for 2021 to 2030</u> um and that has been a very long process over at least <u>18 months</u> where a <u>taskforce of</u> different members of the scientific community at IIASA, so the <u>scientific staff</u>, researchers, have been working on a <u>proposal for a new strategy</u> and it's been <u>consulted with all of the staff</u> at IIASA and consulted with <u>science advisory committees</u> and with our <u>member organisations</u>.</p>	<p>Current strategy is from 2011-2020</p> <p>Current strategy formulated by taskforce and in consultation with funder</p> <p>New strategy process for 2021-2030</p> <p>Process to formulate strategy been going on for 18 months</p> <p>Formulation of strategy by taskforce made up of scientists.</p> <p>New strategy process includes consultation with staff, science committees, and funders.</p>

TABLE 0-4 EXTRACT FROM INTERVIEW WITH CODING

Appendix 9: Example clustering of themes

Explanation of strategy	Research orgs and strategies	Strategy and stakeholders	Strategy documentation	Communications part of strategy process OR strategy formulation	Communicating the strategy	Channels	Annual Report	Aligning COM with strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization strategy difficult to explain Strategy was explained as to what organization does as opposed to what strategy is Vision and mission were not explained or identified as the organization strategy Very difficult to explain short and concise explanation to strategy Described organization first before strategy Strategy is short and clear Verbose strategies are unclear to staff Strategy has too many elements - which makes it confusing No consensus internally on organization strategy Organization strategy is not summarized easily When strategy is easy to summarize and clear, it is easier to understand it When a strategy is understood internally it is easier to externally communicate it Work clearer messaging the understanding of a strategy to external audiences would be improved Biggest challenge is communicating a complex strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It isn't expected of normal for scientific institutions to have a strategy Scientific institutions are not good at developing strategies Corporate sector is better practiced at sticking to strategies they will Scientific institutions don't work towards targets or have concrete strategies as such Strategies may be created and soon forgotten Research organizations develop strategies and then forget them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy is understood by stakeholders Stakeholders value reputation and scientific work (as opposed to strategy) Criticism from stakeholders on what organization does as it is beyond traditional research institute Stakeholders are partner organizations and companies Key stakeholders defined as scientists, funding sources, partners, and sometimes key stakeholders Stakeholders are funded by funders and are not on organization strategy Funders have opinions on what strategy should be Stakeholders include policymakers, general public, scientists Strategy is on website but does not mean people understand it Strategy is not understood by all stakeholders Strategy is 30 years old which is why it might not be clear Policymakers understand strategy Stakeholders understand the organizations strategy Stakeholders are interested in what organization delivers Strategy provides the pathway on how things are delivered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization has document which defines the strategy Organization has guidelines on how to create and interact Organization has a vision and mission from launch in 2007 Vision and Mission is currently audited New vision and mission for adoption launched in 2020 Strategy is the current strategy formulated in 2018 Strategy is the support of the funding of the institution Normally there is a gap between goal and realization New strategy process includes consultation with staff, science committees, and funders Forming plan was very difficult Current strategy is from 2011-2020 Mission is on the website Communications has helped communicate the process Graphic design has helped with visualization No input from communications in content of strategy Communications could add value to strategy Communications could improve content to help communicate strategy clearly Communications lead provided comments on strategy on behalf of communications team Communications should be responsible for refining the message in the strategy Strategy was discussed in a retreat with members of staff New strategy will be public in autumn New leadership first did a reorganization Reorganization was led by an idea that was approved by the scientific advisory board Reorganization was steered by a strategic proposal White paper that is in progress is a broader version of strategic proposal Communications advises the directors Communications were part of retreat to discuss strategy process Retreat to discuss strategy process included representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications are part of strategy formulation process but identified low Strategy was formulated prior to establishment of the institute Establishment group of trustees had role to formulate and implement the strategy Not government approved strategy otherwise they would have been approved Strategy does not contain a lot of operational, checked, and ready to go items Current strategy formulated in 2018 New strategy process for 2020-2028 Process to formulate strategy been going on for 18 months Formulation of strategy by taskforce made up of scientists New strategy process includes consultation with staff, science committees, and funders Communications provided input during staff consultation No specific communications role or input into formulation of strategy Communications has helped communicate the process Graphic design has helped with visualization No input from communications in content of strategy Communications could add value to strategy Communications could improve content to help communicate strategy clearly Communications lead provided comments on strategy on behalf of communications team Communications should be responsible for refining the message in the strategy Strategy was discussed in a retreat with members of staff New strategy will be public in autumn New leadership first did a reorganization Reorganization was led by an idea that was approved by the scientific advisory board Reorganization was steered by a strategic proposal White paper that is in progress is a broader version of strategic proposal Communications advises the directors Communications were part of retreat to discuss strategy process Retreat to discuss strategy process included representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear on Communications role to communicate the strategy Because of being scientific institution responsible is down to the researchers and not communication Communicating strategy is the responsibility of individuals and researchers Not formalizing the strategy is less important Formulation of strategy is important Strategy has founding principles Some strategy aspects are not discussed Some strategy aspects are not explicitly explained Example of strategy element that does not need to be communicated - the formation of independent trust One strategy principle is to avoid benefits review Some strategy elements were not planned Very beginning of establishment of institute, but they were thought of and advanced and apply today What is communication required for the level of developments of the institute and the necessary Strategy document Communications are responsible for making strategy available for stakeholders Communications are not responsible for making strategy available for stakeholders Communications uses the organization strategy to align key messaging and communications work Communications lead oversees that strategy is used across different channels Communications lead responsible for making strategy available Communications lead responsible for making sure collateral produced is aligned to organization strategy Communications does not know yet how new strategy will be communicated Strategy is not for external use Strategy is to guide efforts internally Focus is to communicate new findings that are relevant for decision makers Mission statement will be short Mission statement will be on the website Organization is in the progress of designing a new website There is no strategy to communicate the strategy Strategy is an internal guiding document It was helpful for communications to be part of formulation process Being part of process was helpful because communications got to learn about views of others in the institute, reduces efforts of scientists telling communications about work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Channels used to communicate strategy are down to the researcher engagement with partners Channel used: Website, media presence, LinkedIn Over last 18 months have developed a proper social media presence, LinkedIn Communications follows a newroom principle, to assist the news and events and what channel fits best Channels used to communicate strategy: website, brochure, social media, newsletter Mediums used to communicate strategy: graphics and visual material, movie video The website is used to display future plans include integrating the strategy throughout the website Key messages from strategy are used in different communication channels Communication channels used are press releases and policy briefs, social media, website Different channels are targeted to different audiences Website is categorized by audience groups Mission statement will be presented on the new website Press releases are used to generate media impact in science insights Press releases are a valuable tool, and so in responding to media enquiries Social media and twitter are used to communicate to policymakers Organization has a lack of resources to produce short science animations Organization does briefings to policymakers Organization has events for a general public Instead of a newsletter organization makes sure website is up to date Website gets good traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report is a summary of activity over the year Annual report does not report on progress towards targets/objectives/strategy Annual reports are produced in 2020 Annual report set produced in 2020 Annual reports are produced monthly Annual reports are not the best external communication tool Annual reports are only produced for standing operations Annual report should be used to report on progress on strategy Organization annual reports a summary of scientific highlights and updates on projects Annual Report does not refer or link to organization strategy Using the Annual Report to communicate the strategy could be a missed opportunity Organization has an annual report produced in German Main stakeholders are the government, and representative from ministerial Annual report is produced for the main stakeholders (funders) Purpose of annual report is to show what was done with the taxpayer money Annual report is available on website Communication activities are based on the science Scientific insights and publications are key part of outreach Organization is ahead in terms of outreach and communication Successful in communications due to having the resources to invest in communications From beginning was a scientific institute that engaged Success due to having good communication scientist Organization works with Social Media Organization invests in digital products Researchers who want to communicate combined with good communication activities = success Institute works to the objectives of the work coming and related to the objectives, and that what is communicated There are no explicit marketing stories against the principle because all of the output from the institute is aligned to the principle In addition to the main strategy brief, sub-projects have and developed Don't plan to get the opportunity to brief Institute has become a role model for science and research Organization has become more interested in outreach activities Organization is not interested in science outreach Subpages were not mentioned in the strategy, and are not in opposition to main strategy goals that have developed an opportunity Communications material uses key messages and aligns to organization strategy New strategy will be used to formulate a communications strategy New strategy will be basis of key messaging Key points from current strategy are used as basis of yearly communication plans Yearly communication goals and evaluations are done against key messages from current strategy Communications follow the institute strategy Communications puts forward scientific insights to inform decision makers Communications do not organize talks with decision makers, that is the directors 	

TABLE 0-5 EXAMPLE CLUSTERING OF THEMES