International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Linking Strategic Corporate Communication and Organizational Strategy: An Integrative Theoretical Review

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Abstract

Strategic corporate communication guides organizations, engages stakeholders, builds legitimacy, and fosters long-term value creation. Nevertheless, research linking corporate communication and organizational strategy remains fragmented across disciplines, including strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, internal communication, sensemaking, strategy-as-practice, legitimacy, and communication-constitutes-organization studies.

This article synthesizes recent research to demonstrate how communication influences the creation, execution, evaluation, and renewal of organizational strategy. The review examines literature published between January 2021 and July 2026. The analysis draws on 18 peer-reviewed articles and four methodological sources identified through Google Scholar, publisher archives, reference checks, and DOI verification.

This study identifies four interrelated strategic roles for corporate communication: supporting strategy through explanation, enabling strategy through relationships and capabilities, shaping strategy through communication practices, and transforming strategy by leveraging stakeholder insights and organizational learning. These roles are integrated into a seven-stage model that spans environmental listening, strategic interpretation, strategy formulation, communicative translation, coordinated enactment, stakeholder response, and strategic renewal.

The review contends that aligning communication and strategy extends beyond matching plans with messages. Rather, it constitutes a dynamic capability distributed among leaders, communication professionals, managers, employees, technological systems, and external stakeholders. The article concludes by presenting key findings, practical implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research in areas such as longitudinal studies, multilevel analysis, cross-cultural contexts, and technological advancements (Andersson, 2024, 2025; Hoffjann, 2024; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

Keywords: Corporate Communication, Strategic Communication, Organizational Strategy, Stakeholder Engagement

1. Introduction

Organizations formulate and implement strategy in environments marked by rapid technological change, fragmented digital media systems, stakeholder activism, institutional scrutiny, hybrid work, and evolving expectations of organizational accountability. In these contexts, strategy should not be viewed solely as a technical plan crafted by senior executives. Strategic choices gain organizational significance when individuals understand, interpret, negotiate, support, resist, or enact them through everyday decisions and relationships. Language, narratives, meetings, texts, technologies, and informal conversations are therefore integral to strategic work, rather than secondary mechanisms applied after strategy development (Hoffjann, 2024; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

Corporate communication operates at the intersection of organizational intent and stakeholder interpretation. It articulates strategic priorities to employees and external stakeholders, facilitates participation, monitors environmental developments, and advises decision-makers on reputational and legitimacy implications. Communication also influences whether stakeholders perceive strategic claims as understandable, credible, appropriate, and consistent with organizational conduct. Its tactical significance extends beyond producing media content, managing corporate channels, or distributing messages approved by senior management (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024; Andersson, 2025).

Despite its significance, communication is often incorporated into organizational strategy through a sequential model. Senior leaders formulate strategy, approve objectives, allocate resources, and subsequently instruct communication professionals to prepare announcements or campaigns. This approach treats strategy as finalized before communication commences and positions the communication function primarily as an implementation service. While this arrangement may facilitate message distribution, it prevents stakeholder intelligence, employee knowledge, legitimacy concerns, and communication expertise from informing the strategic decision itself (Andersson, 2024; Hoffjann, 2024).

A transmission-oriented model assumes that organizational senders can control strategic meaning. However, employees and external stakeholders interpret communication through prior experiences, identities, professional assumptions, interests, cultural expectations, and observations of corporate behavior. They may accept, modify, resist, or disregard the meaning preferred by management. Consequently, the communicated strategy may differ significantly from the interpreted and enacted strategy, particularly during complex organizational change (Madsen, 2022; Scheuer & Thaler, 2025).

Recent strategy scholarship reinforces this concern by showing that communication is integral to strategizing. Strategy is developed through the language used to define problems, compare alternatives, establish organizational identities, justify decisions, and assign responsibility—strategic accounts and categories shape which issues receive managerial attention and which responses are considered legitimate. Communication is therefore not merely a neutral channel carrying strategic content; it helps construct the content, boundaries, and meaning of strategy (Edlom & Skålén, 2024; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

At the same time, contemporary stakeholder research shows that organizations depend on ongoing cooperation with employees, customers, investors, suppliers, regulators, communities, partners, and other affected groups. Communication supports this cooperation by creating information visibility, opportunities for voice, relational trust, and methods through which stakeholders may influence organizational understanding. Stakeholder dialogue becomes strategically meaningful when it affects organizational interpretation and choice rather than merely increasing the volume of messages directed toward stakeholders (Fu & Wang, 2024; Kujala et al., 2022).

Existing research, however, remains theoretically fragmented. Strategic communication research examines purposeful communication and professional practice; internal communication research focuses on employee relationships and organizational coordination; stakeholder scholarship emphasizes participation and value creation; strategy-as-practice examines strategizing activities; and constitutive perspectives explain how organizations are produced through communication. An integrated theoretical account is needed to clarify how these perspectives jointly explain the relationship between corporate communication and organizational strategy (Andersson, 2024; Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022; Hoffjann, 2024).

This article addresses the following research question: How does strategic corporate communication influence the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and renewal of organizational strategy? The article helps by identifying four strategic roles of communication, integrating them into a cyclical model of communicative-strategic alignment, and developing propositions for future empirical testing. It therefore moves beyond asking whether communication supports strategy and examines the means through which communication may shape what strategy becomes (Andersson, 2025; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Strategic Corporate Communication

Corporate communication encompasses the organization-level processes through which an organization expresses its identity, explains its conduct, coordinates internal activity, develops stakeholder connections, and participates in the creation of social meaning. It includes formal areas such as internal communication, public relations, investor relations, public affairs, executive communication, crisis communication, corporate branding, and sustainability communication. Its scope also includes communication embedded in organizational regulations, technologies, leadership practices, and stakeholder experiences (Hoffjann, 2024; Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024).

Corporate communication becomes strategic when it is linked to consequential organizational decisions. Planning alone does not make an activity strategic. A communication activity may be carefully planned yet have little connection to organizational direction, funding distribution, stakeholder cooperation, legitimacy, risk, or capability development. Conversely, an informal conversation between a communication adviser and a senior executive may be strategically important when it changes how a major organizational issue is understood (Andersson, 2024; Edlom & Skålén, 2024).

Strategic corporate communication is therefore defined in this article as the purposeful, relational, and partly emergent management of communicative processes that affect organizational choices, stakeholder connections, coordinated action, legitimacy, value formation, and modification. This definition recognizes organizational intentionality but rejects the assumption that an organization can completely determine stakeholder interpretations or communication outcomes. Strategic communication involves efforts to influence meaning under conditions of uncertainty, interdependence, and limited managerial control (Andersson, 2025; Hoffjann, 2024).

The definition also recognizes that communication goes beyond verbal or written statements. Budgets, incentive systems, recruitment practices, technological platforms, governance arrangements, executive conduct, and operational decisions can convey strategic meaning. Stakeholders assess what the organization says alongside what it consistently does. Corporate communication is therefore most credible when formal accounts and observable organizational behavior agree on priorities (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024; Fu & Wang, 2024).

2.2 Organizational Strategy

Organizational strategy refers to a pattern of significant choices that reflect organizational goals, positioning, capabilities, stakeholder engagement, preferences, and the allocation of human and other organizational resources. This definition concentrates on a premeditated directive and position, and on the need to select among competing alternatives. Strategy has practical significance because committing resources to one objective ordinarily reduces the organization’s ability to follow other plans with equal vigor (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

A complementary viewpoint considers strategy as something organizational actors continuously do. Strategy-as-practice research explores activities such as engagements, presentations, reporting, analysis, negotiation, storytelling, data interpretation, and informal discussion. These activities shape which issues become strategic, who participates in strategic work, how strategic authority is established, and how abstract objectives are translated into corporate practices (Andersson, 2024; Edlom & Skålén, 2024).

This practice-based view does not negate the existence of formal strategy. Instead, it differentiates planned strategy from communicated, interpreted, and enacted strategy. An intended strategy is the direction determined by organizational directors. A communicated strategy is how that direction is expressed. An interpreted strategy includes the meanings assigned by different organizational and stakeholder groups. An enacted strategy is the pattern of activities that emerges during implementation. The differences among these forms are produced and negotiated communicatively (Madsen, 2022; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

2.3 Communication–Strategy Alignment

Communication–strategy alignment is often described as the consistency between communication strategies and organizational objectives. This interpretation is valid but insufficient because it highlights the slipped flow of strategic priorities into communication activities. A more thorough concept must also assess whether stakeholder information moves upward and across the organization, whether communication practices influence strategic interpretation, and whether implementation feedback can lead toward strategic revision (Fu & Wang, 2024; van Ruler, 2021).

Alignment is thus treated as a dynamic capability that continually relates strategic choices, communicative meaning, and conformed action. It demands environmental sensitivity, interpretive capacity, managerial dialogue, behavioral character, and organizational learning. Because these needs alter over time, alignment must be constantly produced rather than achieved once via a single communication campaign (Moqaddamerad & Ali, 2024; van Ruler, 2021).

3. Methodology

3.1 Review Design

The article uses a structured integrative theoretical-review design. An integrative review is appropriate when the purpose is to connect concepts and evidence from theoretically diverse bodies of literature rather than to estimate a pooled statistical relationship. The present review was designed to identify explanatory mechanisms, reconcile conceptual differences, and construct an integrated model of the communication–strategy relationship (Kraus et al., 2022; Paul et al., 2021).

The review was guided by the principles of clarity, clear selection criteria, traceable analytical decisions, and theory-oriented synthesis. The logic of SPAR-4-SLR for collecting, organizing, and assessing informed the review's organization, while PRISMA 2020 principles informed the reporting of source identification and eligibility decisions. The review does not claim exhaustive systematic coverage or meta-analytic entirety because its objective is theoretical integration and conceptual saturation across several research practices (Page et al., 2021; Paul et al., 2021).

3.2 Search Period and Sources

The search focused on publications issued between January 2021 and July 2026. This period was picked to ensure a current evidence base and to capture recent developments in digital internal communication, stakeholder participation, strategic communication practice, organizational legitimacy, and

communicative approaches to strategy. Earlier basic theories were included only indirectly, through their treatment and extension in recent publications (Kraus et al., 2022; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).
The article search of this current study was conducted in July 2026 using various search engines, including Google Scholar, Crossref-linked publisher records, and searchable archives from Emerald, Elsevier, SAGE, Wiley, Springer Nature, and Frontiers.
The researcher used the primary search expression combined like, “strategic corporate communication,” “corporate communication,” or “strategic communication” with “organizational strategy,” “strategy formulation,” “strategy implementation,” “strategizing,” or “strategy-as-practice.” The researcher also used Supplementary searches that combined the communication terms with “stakeholder engagement,” “organizational listening,” “sensemaking,” “legitimacy,” “internal communication,” “digital transformation,” “value creation,” and “communication constitutes organization” (Kraus et al., 2022; Paul et al., 2021).

3.3 Eligibility and Selection

The eligibility of publications was determined by whether they were written in English, published from 2021 onward, peer-reviewed, and reflected strategic communication at the organizational or stakeholder level. Eligible publications also had to explain a relationship involving strategic formulation, implementation, stakeholder cooperation, organizational legitimacy, strategic practice, organizational learning, or capability development.
Finally, the 18 substantive refereed articles and four methodological sources were considered for analysis. The substantive corpus included conceptual articles, systematic reviews, qualitative studies, quantitative studies, and mixed-methods research.

3.4 Coding and Synthesis

An analytical matrix was developed to document each publication’s conceptualization of communication, understanding of strategy, theoretical perspective, level of analysis, stakeholder assumptions, proposed strategic mechanisms, organizational consequences, treatment of participation, and identified research limitations. This matrix enabled comparison across bodies of literature that often use different terminology for related organizational processes.
We hence first conducted an initial coding cycle using five deductive categories derived from the research question: strategy formulation, strategy communication, strategy implementation, strategy evaluation, and strategic renewal. Secondly, an inductive cycle identified recurring mechanisms that traversed these categories. The analysis observed reflexive thematic principles and treated themes as interpretive constructions developed through repeated comparison rather than as categories automatically extracted from the publications.

4. Findings

4.1 Communication as Support for Strategy

The most conventional role of corporate communication is to support strategy by explaining strategic choices. Organizations must clarify what is changing, why action is required, which objectives have been selected, and what stakeholders should expect. Strategic explanation can reduce uncertainty and create a common point of reference, particularly when organizational members are geographically dispersed or affected differently by a strategic initiative (Falkheimer et al., 2022; Madsen, 2022).
Supporting strategy entails translation rather than merely transmitting executive language. Strategies are frequently expressed through broad terms such as transformation, innovation, sustainability, resilience,

efficiency, or customer centricity. These terms remain ambiguous until they are connected to operational choices, resource commitments, performance expectations, and specific stakeholder consequences. Communication professionals contribute by translating abstract direction without removing the strategic trade-offs that give the strategy substance (Vaara & Fritsch, 2022; van Ruler, 2021).

Internal communication is particularly important because employees implement strategy through decisions that cannot all be directly controlled by senior leaders. Employees require sufficient strategic understanding to determine which activities should receive attention, how competing objectives should be balanced, and when to escalate problems. Research on internal communication indicates that communication quality, managerial accessibility, organizational trust, and opportunities for dialogue shape employee–organization relationships during uncertainty and change (Falkheimer et al., 2022; Pološki Vokić et al., 2023).

The assisting role nevertheless has an important limitation. When communication professionals enter the process only after strategic decisions are finalized, they can influence presentation but not strategic quality. They may be expected to make a decision that is acceptable even when employee concerns, stakeholder expectations, execution constraints, or legitimacy risks were not sufficiently considered during formulation. Communication support is therefore necessary for implementation but insufficient for full strategic assimilation (Andersson, 2024; Hoffjann, 2024).

4.2 Communication as an Enabler of Strategy

Communication enables strategy when it creates the relational and organizational conditions required for implementation. These conditions include stakeholder reliance, access to information, commitment, legitimacy, knowledge sharing, digital capability, and interdepartmental coordination. The enabling role shifts attention from what communication says to what communication allows the organization and its stakeholders to do together (Andersson, 2025; Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022).

Stakeholder connections are key to this role because organizations depend on contributions from groups that possess knowledge, resources, authority, legitimacy, and implementation capacity. Employees contribute expertise and effort; customers provide revenue and market knowledge; regulators provide authorization; communities affect social acceptance; and partners contribute complementary capabilities. Communication enables cooperation by clarifying expectations, establishing reciprocal commitments, and creating forums through which disagreements can be identified and negotiated (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022; Kujala et al., 2022).

Stakeholder engagement should be distinguished from stakeholder messaging. An organization may communicate frequently while giving stakeholders little opportunity to influence its interpretation or actions. Engagement becomes strategically consequential when stakeholder knowledge can enter decision-making processes and change how an issue is framed, prioritized, or addressed. Contribution without visible influence may create frustration and weaken trust rather than generate legitimacy (Fu & Wang, 2024; Kujala et al., 2022).

Legitimacy is another enabling condition because organizations require a degree of social acceptance to mobilize resources and implement controversial choices. Strategic communication can contribute to legitimacy through purposefulness, transparency, and participation. Purposefulness relates communication to recognizable organizational commitments, transparency makes decisions and their consequences visible, and participation offers stakeholders opportunities to influence meaning or action (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024).

Legitimacy cannot, however, be manufactured independently of conduct. Stakeholders compare organizational claims with visible policies, resource decisions, and behavior. Candid communication may improve credibility by acknowledging limitations and negative consequences, whereas excessively promotional communication may increase skepticism. Research on two-sided change messages suggests that acknowledging both benefits and drawbacks can influence employees' credibility assessments, legitimacy judgments, and commitment to change (Scheuer & Thaler, 2025).

Digital internal communication also enables strategy by supporting information exchange, collaboration, participation, and capability development across organizational boundaries. Electronic platforms may connect dispersed employees and allow knowledge to circulate more quickly, but technology does not automatically create dialogue or inclusion. Its tactical effects depend on leadership practices, digital skills, access, trust, governance, organizational culture, and the design of participation processes (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024; Wuersch et al., 2024).

A digital messaging strategy is therefore most valuable when treated as a sociotechnical capability rather than a platform deployment project. Employees require training, managerial support, credible rules, and confidence that speaking through organizational channels will not expose them to unreasonable risk. Where these conditions are absent, digital channels may reproduce hierarchy, information overload, silence, or functional fragmentation rather than improve strategic coordination (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024; Wuersch et al., 2024).

4.3 Communication as Constitutive of Strategy

The constitutive role makes a stronger theoretical claim: communication does not simply represent strategy but helps bring it into organizational existence. Formal approval does not ensure that a strategy will influence behavior. A strategy becomes organizationally real when it is repeatedly invoked in decisions, meetings, budgets, performance measures, narratives, routines, and stakeholder connections (Hoffjann, 2024; Schwing & Pitt, 2024).

Communication-centered organizational theory rejects the assumption that an organization exists as a stable container within which communication subsequently takes place. Organizational relationships, identities, authority structures, and boundaries are continually produced through communicative activity. From this perspective, strategy is constituted as organizational actors define priorities, authorize projects, allocate responsibilities, interpret data, and establish which actions are compatible with corporate direction (Hoffjann, 2024; Schwing & Pitt, 2024).

Strategy-as-practice research provides a complementary account by examining the activities through which strategizing occurs. Communication practitioners and other organizational actors engage in meetings, office work, data gathering, storytelling, collaboration, planning, and improvisation. These activities influence how formal strategy is adapted to emerging issues and how tensions amid control and flexibility are managed in everyday work (Andersson, 2024; Edlom & Skålén, 2024).

The constitutive perspective expands the category of strategist. Senior executives possess formal decision authority, but managers, communication professionals, employees, consultants, technologies, and stakeholders may all influence the enacted strategy. A communication professional becomes strategically consequential when their research, framing, advice, facilitation, or intervention changes how an issue is understood or acted upon, regardless of whether the person holds a formally strategic job title (Andersson, 2024; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

Corporate narratives are important constitutive mechanisms because they connect organizational history, present challenges, and desired futures. Narratives identify actors, assign responsibility, define causality, and provide reasons for collective action. They can make strategy more understandable, but they can also privilege particular interests, suppress alternatives, or conceal unresolved contradictions. Strategic narratives should therefore be evaluated not only for clarity but also for whose knowledge and experiences they include (Scheuer & Thaler, 2025; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

Communication technologies and material antiques also participate in comprising strategy. Dashboards decide which indicators become visible, presentation templates structure strategic discussion, digital platforms influence who can contribute, and performance systems stabilize particular definitions of success. Strategic communication is therefore sociomaterial: meanings are produced through the interchange of language, human actors, technologies, documents, and organizational routines (Schwing & Pitt, 2024; Wuersch et al., 2024).

4.4 Communication as a Transformer of Strategy

Communication alters strategy when stakeholder intelligence, employee experience, and implementation feedback influence how strategy is interpreted and adjusted. This role starts with corporate listening, which involves more than monitoring media coverage or collecting stakeholder comments. Strategic listening requires the organization to recognize relevant signals, interpret their outcomes, and connect them to actors with authority to change decisions (Fu & Wang, 2024; Kujala et al., 2022).

Communication functions are often well positioned to support environmental sensing because they maintain relationships across organizational boundaries. Internal communication teams interact with employees and managers; public affairs professionals monitor political and regulatory developments; media relations teams observe public discourse; and community or sustainability teams engage affected groups. These relationships can reveal emerging risks, contested assumptions, and strategic-related opportunities that may not be visible in conventional financial or operational reports (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024; Fu & Wang, 2024).

Listening creates little strategic value when information remains isolated within communication reports. Stakeholder intelligence must be interpreted and connected to strategic forums, governance processes, and resource decisions. An organization that invites stakeholder participation but repeatedly fails to explain how contributions were assessed may create only symbolic inclusion. Strategic responsiveness does not require accepting every stakeholder demand, but it requires visible consideration and reasoned organizational response (Fu & Wang, 2024; Kujala et al., 2022).

Sensemaking describes how communication converts information into strategic discernment. Organizational actors select cues, construct plausible explanations, and update their interpretations as new information becomes available. During strategic change, employees similarly interpret management messages through existing experiences, professional roles, and local conditions. Their questions and resistance can reveal implementation difficulties or flaws in the assumptions underlying the strategy (Madsen, 2022; Moqaddamerad & Ali, 2024).

Sensegiving refers to efforts by organizational leaders and other actors to shape how people understand strategic circumstances. Executive narratives, managerial discussions, strategic themes, visual frameworks, examples, and performance indicators are sensegiving devices. Effective sensegiving is reciprocal instead of purely directive because stakeholder responses provide information that may improve both explanation and strategy implementation (Madsen, 2022; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

The relationship between communication and intended learning is therefore cyclical. Communication supports action, action generates stakeholder and employee responses, responses create new information, and interpretation of that information may change communication, implementation, or strategy. Recent research linking strategic prediction, sensemaking, and organizational learning stresses the importance of interpretation as a mechanism that connects environmental information toward strategic innovation and change (Moqaddamerad & Ali, 2024).

Communication also transforms strategy through value formation. The strategic value of communication is not fully determined when an organization sends a message or launches an engagement process. Value emerges as stakeholders use, reinterpret, support, resist, or redirect communicative interventions. The organization may realize some anticipated value, some may benefit other actors, and some may be lost because organizational assumptions do not correspond with stakeholder experience (Andersson, 2025).

5. The Communicative-Strategic Alignment Model

The findings can be integrated into a seven-stage model of communicative-strategic alignment. The model consists of environmental listening, strategic interpretation, strategy formulation, communicative translation, coordinated enactment, stakeholder response, and strategic learning and renewal. The stages are analytically distinct but may overlap or occur recursively in practice (Andersson, 2025; van Ruler, 2021).

The first stage, environmental listening, entails gathering information on stakeholder expectations, employee experience, technological development, political change, public discourse, operational challenges, and emerging social norms. Listening systems may include surveys, stakeholder forums, customer research, regulatory monitoring, public discourse analysis, employee channels, and frontline conversations. Their strategic significance depends on whether they surface relevant developments before organizational commitments become difficult to revise (Fu & Wang, 2024; Kujala et al., 2022).

The second stage, strategic interpretation, translates information into potential strategic meaning. Organizational actors determine which developments merit attention, whether they pose threats or opportunities, and how they relate to organizational identity and capability. Communication professionals can enrich interpretation by presenting competing stakeholder frames and showing how different descriptions of the same issue elicit different responses (Moqaddamerad & Ali, 2024; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

The third stage, strategy formulation, entails decisions about objectives, positioning, capabilities, stakeholder relationships, resource allocation, and organizational priorities. Communication expertise contributes by assessing stakeholder consequences, interpretive ambiguity, identity coherence, legitimacy risks, participation requirements, and likely implementation challenges. Early involvement enables communication expertise to shape strategy rather than merely inform its later presentation (Andersson, 2024; Hoffjann, 2024).

The fourth stage, communicative translation, aligns organizational direction with stakeholder-specific meaning. Translation should clarify the context for action, the choices made, the implications for affected groups, the resources supporting implementation, and the indicators used to assess progress. Effective translation preserves strategic trade-offs rather than replacing them with vague aspirational language (Falkheimer et al., 2022; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

The fifth stage, coordinated enactment, occurs when managers, employees, partners, and other actors apply strategic priorities to practical situations. Communication supports enactment through dialogue, collaboration, knowledge sharing, problem escalation, and local adaptation. Managers play a particularly important role by linking organization-level direction to the specific tasks, constraints, and identities of their teams (Madsen, 2022; Pološki Vokić et al., 2023).

The sixth stage, stakeholder response, recognizes that stakeholders assess formal messages alongside organizational behavior and personal experience. Responses may include cooperation, commitment, trust, indifference, skepticism, resistance, or demands for accountability. Because interpretation is distributed across stakeholder networks and digital environments, the organization can influence but not fully determine the meaning attached to its strategy (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024; Fu & Wang, 2024).

The seventh stage, strategic learning and renewal, compares intended outcomes with stakeholder interpretation, implementation experience, and changes in the external environment. The organization may determine that the strategy remains appropriate but requires clearer communication, that implementation processes or resources require adjustment, or that the strategic choice itself needs revision. This stage reconnects evaluation with environmental listening and begins a renewed strategic cycle (Andersson, 2025; Moqaddamerad & Ali, 2024).

The model is not a rigid sequence. Listening may prompt a strategy's revision before formal approval; stakeholder responses may require immediate adjustments to implementation; and local enactment may generate practices that later become formal organizational strategy. The model's central claim is therefore relational rather than chronological: strategy and communication are connected through recurring movements among information, interpretation, choice, meaning, action, and learning (Edlom & Skålén, 2024; van Ruler, 2021).

6. Discussion

The review done in this study demonstrates that corporate communication should not be limited exclusively to the end of the strategic management process. A post-decision communication role remains operationally important, but it is only one component of the communication–strategy relationship. Communication also creates stakeholder and organizational conditions for implementation, constitutes strategy through organizational practices, and provides information that may prompt reconsideration of strategy (Andersson, 2024, 2025; Hoffjann, 2024).

The four identified roles are nested rather than mutually exclusive. Communication supports strategy by clarifying organizational direction. It enables strategy when explanation and engagement build trust, legitimacy, knowledge, commitment, and capability. It constitutes strategy when communicative processes are embedded in decisions and practices. It transforms strategy when responses generated through enactment and engagement alter organizational assumptions or choices (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024; Edlom & Skålén, 2024).

This synthesis also clarifies the relationship between intentionality and emergence. Organizations intentionally set objectives, design communication activities, assign responsibilities, and seek to influence stakeholder interpretation. Yet meanings and outcomes remain partly emergent because stakeholders exercise interpretive agency and communicate within networks that extend beyond organizational control. Strategic effectiveness should therefore not be equated with complete control over the message (Andersson, 2025; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

Power is central to communicative-strategic alignment. Communication practices determine which actors receive information, whose knowledge enters strategic deliberation, which interpretations are treated as legitimate, and whether disagreement reaches senior decision-makers. An organization may maintain extensive participation mechanisms while retaining highly centralized control over interpretation and decision-making. Research should therefore evaluate participation by its consequences for decisions rather than by its visibility or frequency (Kujala et al., 2022; Schwing & Pitt, 2024).

The analysis further demonstrates that alignment does not require universal agreement. Constructive disagreement can reveal strategic risk, ethical tension, implementation difficulty, or environmental change. A communication system that produces uniform language by suppressing uncertainty may create the appearance of alignment while weakening organizational learning. Resilient alignment combines sufficient shared direction for coordinated action with protected opportunities for questioning and revision (Edlom & Skålén, 2024; Madsen, 2022).

Finally, the review reframes the value of communication as a process rather than an output. Media reach, content volume, attendance, and digital engagement may indicate communication activity, but they do not establish strategic contribution. Communication creates strategic value when it improves organizational interpretation, stakeholder cooperation, implementation, legitimacy, capability, or adaptation. The value may emerge gradually and be distributed across the organization and its stakeholders (Andersson, 2025; Fu & Wang, 2024).

7. Managerial Implications

Organizations should formally integrate communication into strategic governance. Senior communication professionals should participate in environmental analysis, strategic issue framing, transformation planning, risk review, and stakeholder impact assessment. Their involvement should occur before commitments are finalized so that communication intelligence can improve organizational choices rather than only explain them afterward (Andersson, 2024; Hoffjann, 2024).

Organizations should also establish a coherent listening architecture. Employee surveys, stakeholder panels, customer feedback, public-affairs monitoring, community consultation, media analysis, investor questions, and frontline experience should be connected through agreed processes for interpretation and escalation. Listening systems should specify which decision-making forums receive the information and how organizational responses will be communicated (Fu & Wang, 2024; Kujala et al., 2022).

Managers should be equipped to facilitate sensemaking rather than repeat approved talking points. They require strategic context, evidence, discretion, examples, and reliable routes for returning questions to senior leadership. Communication functions should provide principles and dialogue resources rather than excessively rigid scripts that prevent managers from responding to local concerns (Falkheimer et al., 2022; Madsen, 2022).

Organizations should conduct regular strategic-consistency audits that compare corporate narratives with budgets, incentives, human resource practices, executive conduct, performance indicators, technology systems, and stakeholder experiences. When organizational behavior communicates a priority that conflicts with the formal strategy, revising the message alone is unlikely to restore credibility or alignment (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024; Scheuer & Thaler, 2025).

Communication evaluation should be connected to a multilevel theory of change. Organizations may examine communication outputs, stakeholder reach, interpretation, relationship effects, behavioral changes, and eventual contribution to strategic outcomes. Because communication is normally one influence among several, evaluation should demonstrate plausible contribution rather than claim unsupported sole causation for organizational performance (Andersson, 2025; Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024).

Communication capability should be treated as distributed across the organization. Communication specialists retain responsibility for research, standards, facilitation, advice, channel governance, and professional expertise, but leaders, managers, employees, and digital systems also shape strategic meaning. The communication function's strategic role is therefore partly to improve the organization's overall capacity to listen, explain, deliberate, coordinate, and learn (Hoffjann, 2024; Wuersch et al., 2024).

8. Limitations and Future Research

This review is limited by its recent publication window. Restricting the corpus to literature published from 2021 onward strengthens currency but reduces direct engagement with foundational works in stakeholder theory, organizational sensemaking, institutional theory, dynamic capabilities, and communication-constitutes-organization scholarship. The manuscript consequently relies on recent studies and reviews to represent and extend earlier theoretical developments (Kraus et al., 2022; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

The search was structured but not exhaustive. It used Google Scholar, publisher archives, reference chaining, and DOI verification rather than a fully reproducible export from subscription bibliographic databases. The review should therefore be interpreted as an integrative, theory-building synthesis rather than a comprehensive, systematic review of all relevant publications (Page et al., 2021; Paul et al., 2021).

The model should be tested through longitudinal research that follows strategic initiatives from environmental scanning through formulation, translation, implementation, stakeholder response, and revision. Such research could identify when communication changes only stakeholder understanding, when it alters implementation, and when it produces substantive strategic renewal (Andersson, 2025; Moqaddamerad & Ali, 2024).

Multilevel research is also required because communication–strategy alignment involves individual interpretation, team interaction, managerial practice, organizational systems, stakeholder networks, and institutional discourse. Studies examining only executive messages or employee attitudes may overlook the processes through which strategic meaning travels across levels and changes during that movement (Schwing & Pitt, 2024; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022).

Future research should examine how artificial intelligence, communication analytics, enterprise platforms, and algorithmic systems influence strategic visibility, participation, authorship, and accountability. These technologies may strengthen sensing and translation but may also reproduce bias, encourage generic narratives, intensify surveillance, or obscure responsibility for strategic claims. Their influence should be examined within the sociotechnical organization of communication rather than as a channel effect alone (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024; Wuersch et al., 2024).

Cross-cultural and cross-sector research is equally important. Assumptions concerning transparency, participation, managerial authority, employee voice, stakeholder legitimacy, and organizational purpose differ across institutional environments. Comparative research could establish which elements of the proposed model are broadly transferable and which depend on cultural, regulatory, sectoral, or organizational conditions (Aggerholm & Thomsen, 2024; Kujala et al., 2022).

9. Conclusion

This article examined how strategic corporate communication is connected to the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and renewal of organizational strategy. The review shows that communication supports strategy through explanation, enables strategy through relationships and organizational capabilities, constitutes strategy through everyday communicative practices, and transforms strategy through stakeholder intelligence and organizational learning (Andersson, 2024, 2025; Hoffjann, 2024).

These four roles are connected through a recurring cycle of environmental listening, strategic interpretation, strategy formulation, communicative translation, coordinated enactment, stakeholder response, and strategic renewal. The model challenges linear approaches in which communication begins only after executives have completed strategic decision-making. It instead treats communication and strategy as mutually influential organizational processes (Vaara & Fritsch, 2022; van Ruler, 2021).
The principal theoretical implication is that communication–strategy alignment is not a fixed match between messages and a strategic plan. It is a dynamic capability connecting organizational choices, meanings, relationships, practices, technologies, and learning. The principal managerial implication is that organizations should position communication as a distributed strategic capacity for listening, interpretation, coordination, legitimacy, and adaptation rather than merely as a specialized content-production function (Fu & Wang, 2024; Wuersch et al., 2024).

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