

# THE ELGAR ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION: A DUAL REVIEW

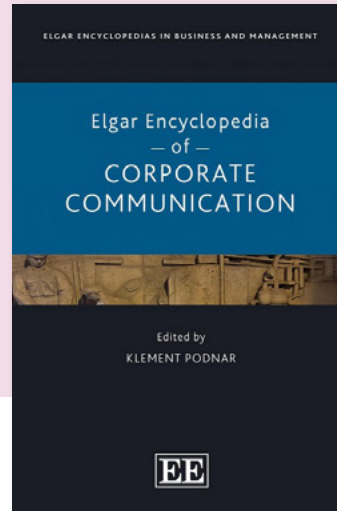
*REVIEWERS: STEPHEN WADDINGTON, LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY & SORA KIM, THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG*

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This 587-page reference work, edited by Klement Podnar, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, describes itself as a comprehensive resource that captures the intricacies of corporate communication. The encyclopedia offers 87 short articles presenting key concepts and terms in corporate communication, marketing, business, and public relations, each including a concise definition and an overview of current research insights.

This review presents two different perspectives on the publication: a practitioner's view by Stephen Waddington from the United Kingdom and an academic assessment by Professor Sora Kim, Hong Kong.



## THE PRACTITIONER'S VIEW (STEPHEN WADDINGTON)

The Elgar series of encyclopedias in business and management set out to be the definitive reference works in their fields. It's a bold claim, but the *Elgar Encyclopedia of Corporate Communication* delivers on the promise and is quite unique.

The scale and breadth of the content is unlike any other contemporary book on corporate communication or public relations. It covers 87 topics across 11 broad themes over 578 pages, providing a comprehensive overview of modern corporate communication theory and practice. It is a tightly edited and well-produced book. The book leads with corporate communication theory but also provides bridges to other domains, notably management, psychology, sociology, and systems theory.

Each chapter is five or six pages long and follows a highly-structured format. It begins with clear definitions, discusses key theoretical arguments and implications for practice, and anticipates future developments. The sheer breadth and range of topics and editorial design have not compromised the quality or integrity of the content. The referencing is robust, providing an overview of the current literature and various arguments on each topic and theme. Each chapter provides a jumping-off point for further reading to gather a deeper perspective.

It's a firmly theoretical book, not practical one, written by an international community of more than 80 academic subject matter experts who research and write about corporate communications. The authors have a Western perspective, with most working in institutions in Europe and the US.

## A closer look at the structure and focus of the book

The *Elgar Encyclopedia of Corporate Communication* provides a comprehensive overview of modern corporate communication. Its 11 interconnected themes cover theoretical foundations to practical applications and outcomes:

- **Theme I:** The encyclopedia begins with foundational theories, establishing the intellectual framework through key concepts like stakeholder theory and social constructionism.
- **Theme II:** This theoretical base leads naturally into Theme II, which explores the fundamental nature of organizations as entities, examining how they develop their identity, values, and culture.
- **Theme III:** Building on this understanding of the organization, Theme III delves into corporate branding – the process by which organizations present themselves to the world.
- **Theme IV:** This connects closely with Theme IV's focus on corporate responsibilities, reflecting the modern imperative for organizations to consider their broader societal impact through social responsibility, transparency, and sustainable practices.
- **Theme V:** The narrative then takes a critical turn, examining corporate misbehavior and ethical challenges, from marketing myopia to corporate psychopaths.
- **Theme VI:** shifts to the practical challenges of managing change and crisis, offering insights into how organizations can navigate turbulent times and maintain their reputation.
- **Theme VII:** The encyclopedia's middle sections focus on the mechanics of communication, exploring communication processes.
- **Theme VIII:** Specific communication tools are detailed in Theme VIII.
- **Theme IX:** These technical aspects are then put into practice through examination of stakeholder engagement, showing how organizations build relationships with various audiences.
- **Theme X:** combines these elements by examining corporate communication outcomes and measuring the success of various communication strategies.
- **Theme XI:** The encyclopedia concludes with Theme XI, which explores negative corporate associations. This final section provides a balanced view by acknowledging the challenges and potential pitfalls organizations face in their communication efforts.

## Connecting theoretical understanding with practical application

The encyclopedia maintains a coherent narrative that connects theoretical understanding with practical application whilst acknowledging the positive potential and inherent challenges of corporate communication. The structure allows readers to understand not just individual concepts but how they fit together in the larger context of corporate communication practice.

Practitioners interested in the science and theory of corporate communication should add the *Elgar Encyclopedia of Corporate Communication* to their bookshelves. It provides an accessible starting point to a broad range of corporate communication issues and topics, as any good encyclopedia should.

## THE RESEARCHER'S VIEW (SORA KIM)

The *Elgar Encyclopedia of Corporate Communication* serves as a comprehensive resource that captures the breadth and depth of corporate communication, addressing its significance in a globalized and interconnected world. Authored by leading scholars and practitioners from diverse disciplines, including marketing, communication, public relations, and management, this encyclopedia underscores the interdisciplinary nature of corporate communication.

The diversity of contributors, spanning multiple countries and fields, enriches the work, offering a broad understanding of the subject. As a scholar in communication studies, I approached this encyclopedia with the goal of as-

sessing its relevance, inclusivity, and theoretical and practical implications for addressing contemporary challenges – such as stakeholder engagement, crisis management, and sustainability – in corporate communication.

### **Key themes and emerging trends in corporate communication**

Authored by contributors from varied academic contexts, the encyclopedia reflects a well-rounded perspective on organizational challenges. Themes are presented through concise definitions of critical concepts, key findings that review existing scholarship, and identify research gaps and outlooks suggesting future research directions. The work emphasizes the strategic importance of corporate communication in building corporate identity, reputation, and stakeholder trust while mitigating negative corporate associations. Emerging issues like social influencer marketing, consumer complaining, and job disengagement highlight its relevance to addressing current global challenges.

### **Bridging theory, practice, and perspectives**

The book stands out for its depth, breadth, and interdisciplinary focus. Its greatest strength lies in its ability to bridge theory and practice, making it a valuable resource for both academics and practitioners. The inclusion of recommended readings enhances its utility by guiding readers toward deeper exploration of specific topics. The thematic organization provides clarity, allowing readers to navigate complex subjects effectively. Topics such as corporate misbehavior, corporate responsibilities, and crisis communication resonate strongly in today's context, offering practical guidance for addressing real-world challenges.

An inspiring feature of the encyclopedia is its integration of institutional and stakeholder-centric perspectives. Corporate communication is presented not as an isolated function but as a strategic element interwoven with organization-stakeholder relationships. For instance, institutional perspectives are evident in discussions on themes like communication processes, tools, and outcomes, while stakeholder-centric perspectives are well presented in themes such as stakeholder engagement (e.g., pressure groups,

brand communities) and negative corporate associations (e.g., consumer complaining, skepticism). By addressing both perspectives, the encyclopedia provides a holistic view of corporate communication, encompassing the management of corporate reputation, identity, and image, alongside building positive relationships with stakeholders and incorporating their feedback.

### **A reflection on regional representation**

While the encyclopedia demonstrates an admirable breadth of interdisciplinary and regional perspectives, its authorship does lean heavily toward European contributors. This focus highlights strong expertise in the region but limits representation from other areas, such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Notable contributions from scholars based in Asia, the United States, and Canada add valuable perspectives; however, a broader representation of scholars from diverse regions could further enhance the encyclopedia's global applicability and address culturally distinct communication practices.

Nevertheless, the encyclopedia aligns well with ongoing discussions in academic and professional circles, offering a robust framework for understanding the strategic and operational dimensions of corporate communication. It invites readers to think critically about how communication shapes organizational success and stakeholder relationships. Its emphasis on corporate social responsibility, digital transformation, and ethical communication aligns with current global priorities, making it a pivotal resource for advancing the field.

### **A vital resource for communication professionals**

The Elgar Encyclopedia of Corporate Communication is a vital resource for scholars and students seeking a comprehensive understanding of corporate communication. Its interdisciplinary insights and theoretical and practical relevance make it a valuable reference. Future editions could benefit from greater cultural and regional diversity to enhance its global inclusiveness further. In sum, the encyclopedia is highly recommended for those seeking to understand and navigate the complexities of modern corporate communication.

## REVIEWERS



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

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