

Chapter 7

Communication of Innovation: Marketing, Diffusion, and Frameworks

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In the innovation economy, communication of innovation can encompass all market-related activities in technology and innovation management on a strategic and operational level (Trommsdorff and Steinhoff 2007) to commercialize innovation successfully. This implies a need for management frameworks, for instance, regarding integrated marketing communication (e.g., Bruhn 2006, 2008, 2009) to communicate consistently and continually about innovations and innovation-related issues. Moreover, innovation communication in corporate communication focuses on the presentation of innovations and the organization’s innovative capability to establish long-term stakeholder relationships and constructs, such as corporate reputation, on the organizational level (e.g., Mast and Zerfaß 2005; Mast et al. 2005; Zerfaß and Möslein 2009). However, communication can also be examined from a social process perspective (e.g., Rogers 1995, 2003). The communicative perspective in innovation diffusion research concentrates on three different types of communication in social systems (Peres et al. 2010) and points out managerial implications, for instance, word-of-mouth communication may represent an effective marketing tool for enterprises to systematically facilitate an individual’s decision-making processes to invest in innovation (Mazzarol 2011).

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Hence, communication of innovation is an emerging issue in different research areas, which are presented in this second part of the book. The main objectives of Part II “Communicative Perspectives on Innovation” are

- To provide an overview of different key aspects in innovation marketing, communication in innovation diffusion and organizational communication related to innovation and
- To encourage further progress in basic research as well as empirical study research

This part of the book therefore presents the status quo in literature, conceptual frameworks, and empirical results to understand the underlying mechanisms, drivers, and limitations of managing communication of innovation from an organizational perspective.

In the field of interest *communication of innovation*, six key issues can be stated to provide an overview of specific research topics.

7.1 Innovation Marketing

Innovation success is not guaranteed, which is shown in empirical studies and success factor research (e.g., Jahrfeld 2005; Trommsdorff and Steinhoff 2007). A variety of impact factors determine the market-related activities of innovation management on the operational and strategic level. These can be understood as innovation marketing (Steinhoff and Trommsdorff 2011). Innovation marketing can be considered to be its own research field in innovation management (e.g., Trommsdorff 1991, 1995; Trommsdorff and Binsack 1997; Trommsdorff and Steinhoff 2007) or an isolated field within marketing research (Trommsdorff and Steinhoff 2007; von Hippel 1988, 2005).

The understanding of marketing innovations implies that the customer focus is one central factor and, as a result, professional innovation marketing can lead to a competitive innovation advantage (CIA) (Steinhoff and Trommsdorff 2011). Steinhoff and Trommsdorff (2011), focus on the description of CIA and the elimination of the bottleneck factor *customer focus* in innovation marketing.

New market research methodologies provide opportunities to facilitate CIA (Trommsdorff and Steinhoff 2007) and main findings in research can result in new methods, management concepts, and application scenarios, such as marketing of innovations throughout the adoption process (Hofbauer et al. 2009); integrated marketing communication tools for radical innovations (Mohr et al. 2009); and specific aspects of innovation marketing in different industries and markets (e.g., Böhm 2004; Wolf 2008).

7.2 Diffusion of Innovations from a Communicative Perspective

The spread of innovations is affected by several determinants. Researchers identify these influencers acting on prosperous innovations by analyzing how individuals adopt new products, services, ideas, stories, and brands, and how new technologies

spread in a social system (e.g., Pae and Lehmann 2003; Rogers 1995, 2003). Diffusion of innovation is a social and psychological process and can be defined as “communication of an innovation through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (Rogers 2003: 11). The social and psychological processes, rather than economic processes, are considered in diffusion research to explain the dissemination of ideas, new issues, technologies or products, as well as the media influence, forecast and managerial consequences from a communicative perspective (e.g., Balnaves et al. 2009; Mazzarol 2011; Peres et al. 2010). Three research fields are concerned with communicative aspects of diffusion in social systems (1) word-of-mouth communication (e.g., Martilla 1971; Mazzarol 2011), (2) network externalities (e.g., Rohlfs 2001; Tomochi et al. 2005), and (3) social signals (e.g., Van den Bulte and Stremersch 2004; Berger and Heath 2008).

In particular word-of-mouth communication, as a kind of inter-personal communication in social systems, can be used as a potential marketing tool in the commercialisation process of innovation to positively influence decision-making to invest in innovation, which is described by Mazzarol (2011).

Regarding future directions, research may take into account online communities, web services and complex types of product-service categories and consider the shift from forecasting focus to a managerial diagnostic focus (Peres et al. 2010).

7.3 Communication Process in Collaborative Innovation

Regarding knowledge sharing and building a common understanding of innovation in collaborative innovation networks, communication serves as a coordinating function and research takes into account the information flow and system structure in knowledge exchange between constituencies (e.g., Argenti 2007, 2009; Donaldson et al. 2011). Communication in collaborative innovation is “in the process but also in the dialogue between partners” (Donaldson et al. 2010).

As a result, dialogues between members of collaborative innovation can lead to new knowledge through interaction, such as idea sharing, as well as internal and external dialogs in open innovation processes (e.g., Daschkovska et al. 2010; Donaldson et al. 2011). Collaborative networks can thus benefit from communication in terms of knowledge creation and knowledge exploitation. This might have an effect in particular in the innovation economy, where tacit knowledge can represent an intangible asset for organizations, for instance, in technology clusters (e.g., Schilling 2008).

7.4 Innovation Communication in Corporate Communication

Innovation communication represents a managerial concept in corporate communication and a constitutive element in innovation communication (e.g., Zerfaß et al. 2004; Zerfaß 2009). Internal and external communication activities are used to

systematically initiate communication processes with internal and external stakeholders to support technical, economic and social novelties (Zerfaß 2009). Framing, campaigning, and storytelling are examples of tools for innovation communication (Huck 2009). Pfeffermann (2011), mentions several strategy-oriented and operational tools in a management concept of innovation communication that exploits the potential of innovation management as a communication field in organizational communication.

In fact, communication management takes into account the planning, monitoring, and evaluating activities of innovation communication (e.g., Zerfaß et al. 2004; Zerfaß 2009; Zerfaß and Möslein 2009). In this context, innovation communication research focuses on new management concepts to integrate all communication processes and activities over a company's lifetime and new approaches to link innovation communication to the current concepts of corporate communication, such as reputation, issues management and international communication.

7.5 Integrated Marketing Communication and Innovation Communication

Due to changing environments and their effects on the development of media market structures, communication has become a "strategic factor for a company's success" (Bruhn 2007: 34; for value creation through communication see also Pfannenbergl and Zerfaß 2005, 2010). The constantly changing competitive market situations and the need for professional communication can be addressed by applying a systematic approach of integrated marketing communication. "Integrated marketing communications is a process of analysis, planning, organization, implementation and monitoring that is oriented toward creation unity from diverse sources of internal and external communication with target groups to convey a consistent impression of the company or the company's reference object." (Bruhn 2006: 17; Bruhn 2008, 2009). Research has investigated and deeply discussed the phenomenon *integrated marketing communication* (e.g., Cornelissen 2003; Duncan and Everett 1993; Esch 2006; Fill 2001; Moore and Thorson 1996; Schultz et al. 1993) and several conceptual approaches have been developed (for an overview see: Bruhn 2009: 71–72).

Related to open innovation, integrated innovation communication can be understood as "a process that aims to identify internal and external contact points in the development and implementation process of an innovation, as well as to develop and implement communication measures that guarantee the alignment of these interaction points in order to achieve a maximum level of development efficiency and effectiveness internally as well as optimal market saturation externally" (Bruhn and Ahlers 2011).

Thus, research in integrated innovation communication can develop and discuss new approaches and can conduct empirical studies to analyze planning and coordinating of integration tasks of communication instruments in open innovation processes.

7.6 Management Communication and Innovation Communication

One emerging field in innovation communication is management communication (e.g., Zerfass and Huck 2007; Mast 2011). Management communication can be understood as a part of organizational communication (e.g., Zaremba 2006). In the context of innovation management, the so-called promoters are “... key persons who help a matter or a topic to get into the focus of selected stakeholders and spread the benefits of the innovation within the boundaries of an organization and beyond”. Five types of promoters can be identified: expert promoters; authority promoters; process promoters; relationship promoters; and communication promoters (Zerfass and Huck 2007: 112). They play a key role in communication of innovations, for instance, to support the collaboration, bring expertise into the innovation project, involve people, shape innovations, and also provide resources based on their management position in the organizational structure. These types of promoters exemplify the important role of managers in communicating innovations (Mast 2011). Mast (2011), states that management communication is crucial in innovation communication and thus manager roles and functional tasks have to be analyzed in more detail in future research related to innovation communication (Fig. 7.1).

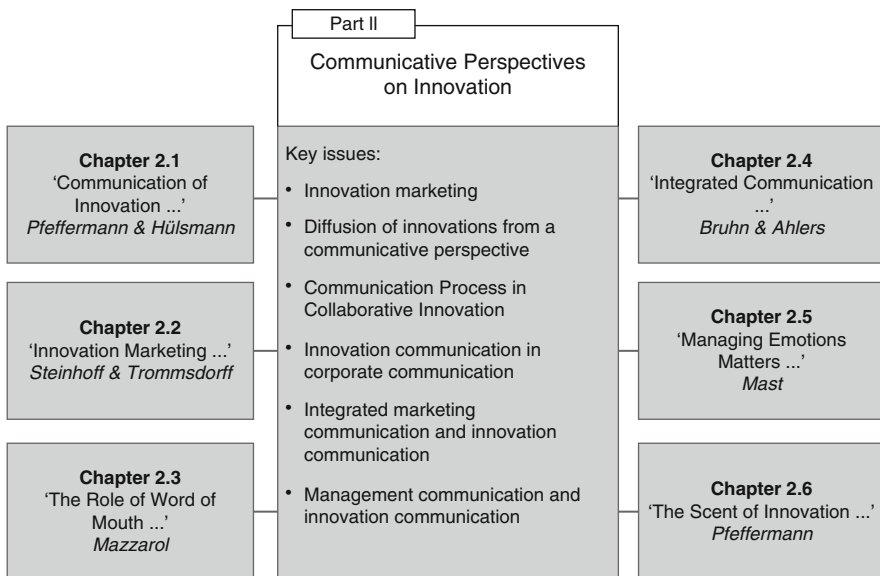


Fig. 7.1 Structure of Part II “Communicative Perspectives on Innovation”

Source: authors

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