

The narrative as an organisation's DNA in strategic communication: The case of Matonjeni

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Abstract

The chapter examines the use of the narrative paradigm as the foundation on which organisational strategic communication efforts and organisational culture are built upon. The narrative paradigm has largely been construed as more of a persuasion target at external stakeholders, especially buying customers. The chapter explores the holistic use of the narrative by Matonjeni, an organisation that emerged in a crumbling Zimbabwe economy dominated by bigger and more established competitors. Matonjeni appropriated a 'back-to-the-source' narrative based on legends to simultaneously targeted both internal stakeholders (employees) and external stakeholders (retailing/wholesaling and buying customers). This was achieved using cheap traditional media instead of the more conventional mass media used in persuasion. Matonjeni's success in a difficult and shrinking economy not only calls for a paradigm shift in the use of media in strategic communication by small and emerging organisations in developing and struggling economies but it also necessitates a rethink of ways of motivating employees. Its success in three Southern African countries is also of huge interest to strategic communication theory. Fisher's narrative theory is used to engage the use of legends, their incorporation on product packaging, pop-a-balloon shows, as well as 'nativised' product job titles and hampers.