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From ad-man to digital manager – the institutionalization of strategic communication. A study of job advertisements between 1960 – 2010

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## ABSTRACT

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### **FROM AD-MAN TO DIGITAL MANAGER – THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION. A STUDY OF JOB ADVERTISEMENTS BETWEEN 1960 – 2010**

**Keywords: communication profession, institutionalization theory, strategic communication, job advertisements, historical study**

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The aim of this paper is to describe and analyze how job advertisements within the communication profession in Sweden have changed from 1960 to 2010. The study will bring new insights to the historical development of how the communication profession has been changed regarding both content and expression. The content analysis will also be placed in a theoretical framework that consists of the main arguments about the institutionalization of strategic communication.

***Theoretical framework***

Even though job advertisements are outmost accessible, being published almost every day in print media and on web portals, they are seldom of interest in academic literature (Frandsen, 2012). One could also argue that how job advertisements are constructed reflects rules, norms and conceptions that could reveal the story about how communication went from being a necessary condition to a value that could solve social and cultural problems (Brenton & Proulx, 1989). This has been understood as the *process of institutionalization of strategic communication* and it is the framework from which the change of the job advertisements will be understood (Frandsen, 2012). In neo-institutional theory organizations strive to create a legitimate relationship, not only towards individual actors but also the professional industry (Fredriksson, 2009; Fredriksson & Pallas, 2011). As the process of institutionalization happens over time, studying job advertisements could be an attempt to trace that process in order to discuss the rise of the discourse about strategic communication (Frandsen, 2012; Selznick, 1957).

***Materials and methods***

For this study, three Swedish newspapers have been selected. The job advertisements have been collected every day during one month (the month of August, which is immediately after the summer holidays in Sweden and traditionally is an intense period of recruitments). The years between 1960 and 2010 were selected, with ten-year intervals. During the fifty-year time period, 196 job advertisements have been collected.

The job advertisements have been categorized in SPSS [Statistical Package for the Social Sciences], and the content is divided in more than 100 different categories. By using SPSS, the content could be systematically ordered and compared between the years of study. The quantitative analysis was also combined with a qualitative method of content analysis where the more general trends could be outlined and placed into the theoretical body of knowledge.

### ***Results***

The first results of the study show that there is a significant difference between the areas of practice from which the job advertisements derive. In 1960 the majority of the collected job advertisements were mainly focused on marketing, a trend that continues until 2010 when the business of communication expanded and became the dominant scope of practice. This trend also reflects the job sectors from which the employers descend. In the first period of research, the profession of communication was founded in either the industrial sector or the advertising business. In the job advertisements, the communication profession was described as the link between the organization and the marketplace and were therefore viewed upon as discrete from the organization itself. This, however, changes during the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the required applicant are described as someone who should have a academic education within communication in order to manage the work tasks that were described as both more qualified and more specific, and definitely on more strategic level. During the fifty years of scope, the titles go from “market analytics” and “assistant” in 1960 and 1970 to “public relations officer” and “digital manager” in 2000 and 2010. How this focus from operational to strategic relates to the process of institutionalization of strategic communication will be further developed in the full paper.

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