LITERATURE REVIEW

Rationale for Existence of Profit Sector Organisations

Organisations exist primarily to generate profits through providing a preferably unique combination of products and services for their customer base. This has been the raison d'être of organisations over centuries. Of course there have always been organisations and brands that appear to be profitable (and therefore successful) on financial parameters by focusing more on short-term results and less on innovative products and services, but rarely do such organisations strengthen or consolidate over a period of time. As David A. Aaker (2005) enumerates that the one solid path for any organisation or brand to achieve and sustain real growth is to regularly develop new product and service offerings which are so beneficially innovative to the customer that they create new categories and sub-categories. These innovative products and services will ensure that competitors are sidelined because they lack a ‘must-have’ unique feature or benefit which provides customers with an advantage which is essential for organisations to win the brand relevance competition. The alternative to this, which is engaging in 'my brand is better than your brand' advertising rarely works in the long run. Aaker explains that the road to long-term brand sustainability is through finding shared interests with customers, going beyond mere functional benefits, sustained innovation, superior implementation and thus creating a super brand.

Customer Retention is Critical to Sustained Organisational Success

If organisations are to achieve long-term success through the brands they have created and built, the most important activity that should then be the focal point of such an organisation with a long-term philosophy would be to concentrate on creating a customer, and then as the next logical activity in the organisational process, take steps that would ensure retention of and positive word-of-mouth publicity from that customer. According to Christian Schulze, Bernd Skiera and Thorsten Wiesel (2012), customers are the most important assets of most companies, such that customer equity has often been used as a substitute for shareholder value.

There are multiple advantages that the process and philosophy of attaining Customer Retention has over that of generating mere Customer Attraction. A few of the many advantages include building a loyal and profitable customer base, getting vital customer feedback which results in product and process innovation, etc. Lawrence A. Crosby and
Sheree L. Johnson (2004) the authors enumerate the multiple advantages of securing customer retention and loyalty. Some of these varied advantages are helping to ensure alignment in the organisation, and a common focus on organisational strategy. It also energizes the organisation and gives a focus to the entire organisational efforts.

Of course, while dealing with this critical topic of Customer Retention, it is important that one first understands the true meaning of the term ‘customer’. It is often a term which is loosely used to imply a buyer or a purchaser or a user of the goods and services that a firm produces or delivers. But in professional parlance, the term has a dual connotation. The term 'customer' refers to both Internal as well as External customers. (‘Internal Customer’ being the term used to refer to the employees of an organisation.) The term ‘customer’ means either someone who uses your output as his input, or, it could refer to the next person in the process. There are many other terms available to identify employees. Why then, are they called as ‘Internal Customers?’ As an example, all employees of the organisation receive their pay at the end of the week / month, and that has been processed by the payroll department. For the payroll department, these employees become ‘customers’ as they are receiving the output of the payroll department as their input, or they are the next persons in the process. It is often found that management invests substantial time in communicating with external customers, but not enough time communicating with internal customers. The article by Mike Exon (2002) deals with this vital subject, The article commences with the author stating that communicating a business and brand internally can be done using similar methods which are used to market the company and brand to its target market and clients. He says that organisations have been pretty comfortable with the idea of external communications. Similarly, internal communications need to be sharpened to educate staff about the business and its products. It will more than repay the investment if this activity is done comprehensively and well. The author quotes Imagination Marketing and Strategic Planning Director Ralph Ardill as saying - "One of the biggest challenges is the challenge of alignment - the alignment between companies-to-consumers and companies-to-themselves." As the author continues, client organisations have gradually come to realise the tangible benefits of maintaining a dialogue between their people - particularly the ones at the top and bottom of the pile. The author furthers mention the findings of a recent US study by the Communications group Fleishman-Hilard (which polled 30 global organisations including 18 Fortune 500 companies). The study found that the two most sought after benefits of employee communications programmes were the creation of bottom-line results and cost-cutting opportunities.
Importance of Internal Customers (Employees)

Both internal as well as external customers are key stakeholders for any organisation. Sustained revenues only accrue from external customers who are directly served and nourished by internal customers. I refer to a study done by Chun-Min Kuo (2007). This study takes a customer perception approach and emphasises the critical elements of service attitude affecting the satisfaction of international tourists. Different nationalities have different expectations, and especially in a globalised environment, it is employees who deliver satisfaction to customers which is the source of them coming back. As an example, the author explains that American tourists emphasise on elements such as the employees being able to solve their problems, and expect the service staff to have a good command over English language. Taiwanese customers stress the importance of employees treating customers politely regardless of their attire. Thus the sustainability of organisations depends to a substantial extent on the ability of internal customers to satisfy varied customer needs.

Employees Need to Identify with their Organisation

Of course, in order to enhance organisational communication at all levels in the hierarchy, employees who have an inherent need to identify with their profession, also need to identify with the organisation. This important need is the objective of a study titled 'Horizontal and Vertical communication as determinants of professional and organisational identification' authored by Jos Barrels, Oscar Peters, Menno de Jong, Ad Pruyn and Marjolijn van der Molen (2010). The paper aims to present the results of a study into the relationship between horizontal and vertical communication and professional and organisational identification of employees. The study was carried out at a large hospital in the Netherlands. The findings of the study showed that although employees identify more strongly with their profession than with their organisation, there is a positive connection between professional and organisational identification. Dimensions of vertical communication are important predictors of professional identification., whereas dimensions of horizontal communication are important predictors of professional identification. The practical implication of this study is that management should find a balance between communication about organisational goals and individual needs, which is crucial in influencing professional and organisational identification.

The above is essential to give a sense of identity to employees on both parameters, as when a sense of identity exists, there is grounding, and the level of performance increases.
**Relationships are Enhanced Through Constant, Open Communication**

Constant, transparent, two-way and open communication has been often deemed to be a key factor in building rapport and establishing, maintaining and strengthening human business and relationships. In fact, *Jeswald W. Salacuse (2005)* states that a good working relationship between two entities requires information to flow easily in both directions. The author goes on to say that commitment requires more than mere handshakes and signatures. Creating respect in a relationship begins with the principle of equality between the partners or individuals or organisations involved. Just as communication is a two way street, so is respect a two way street, according to the author.

These relationships and perceptions of external customers with and towards the organisation and the brand are impacted each time the customer has any interaction, intended or unintended, from the organisation’s end, with regards to any aspect of or through any representative of the organisation. As an example, if an individual has never entered any outlet of a fast-food chain, or has never purchased nor consumed its product offerings, yet such an individual could have an interaction with a delivery-person of that fast-food chain, who on his delivery motorcyle zooms rashly past this individual on the street, thus leading that individual to form some impression and perception about that fast-food organisation as a whole. And as is rightly said - 'The customer's perception is your reality.' Authors *Lawrence A. Crosby and Brian S. Lunde (2008)* commence by stating, "The Brand is the experience." they continue by saying that what the customer knows and understands about the brand is heavily (maybe even primarily) influenced by the customer's direct experience with the brand. The authors acknowledge that there is another school of thought which believes that brands are primarily built through the billions of dollars spent each year on advertising and promotion, also known as marketing communications. The authors feel that there is a more holistic notion which needs to be understood, and that is the notion of buying stages, which they have categorised as:

a. Problem recognition

b. Motivated search

c. Evaluation

d. Choice (purchase)

e. Consumption / use
The premise of the authors is that the influence of marketing communications will decline and the influence of brand experience will rise, as customers move through the buying stages. The authors state "It is critical to recognise (over the progression of the stages of the buying cycle), that experienced-based brand perceptions begin to replace those created by marketing communications as a general rule." The authors also emphasise that decades of customer satisfaction and loyalty research in both B2C and B2B markets have proven that customers form long-term attachment to brands, based primarily on their actual experiences across all of the touch points.

**Everything is Significant when it comes to Passing on a Message Which Leads to Perceptions Formed by Customers**

In the significant article by Joseph S. Fulda (2010), the author enumerates on a theory enumerated by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling which was first propounded in 1982. The proponents essentially challenge the 80/20 theory and invokes a new theory which could probably be called the 100/0 rule, where it's not only the big things that matter, but everything matters. It is enumerated how the police authorities in New York in USA acted proactively to attempt to prevent burglaries before they could actually happen. To identify residences which had a higher probability of being targeted by a burglar, they attempted to identify parameters of residences which could possibly attract the attention of burglars to a higher extent than other residences could. They found that burglars targeted residences where windows were cracked or broken and not repaired, as they assumed (rightly or wrongly) that the owners of those apartments were in general careless and irresponsible individuals as they had neglected to repair the broken windows and hence felt could also be careless about things like burglar alarms, locks on the front door and so on. Similarly, organisations also have many 'Broken windows' such as confusing websites, dead plants in the lobby, worn-out carpets, which customers could view and receive as signals and non-language based communication emanating from the organisation and would form a negative perception about the quality of products and services of the organisation based on these 'Broken Windows' they have observed.

Thus communication arises and emanates from multiple channels and not merely from verbal, written and body-language channels alone. As seen in the previous examples of the 'Broken Windows', neither were there verbal nor written messages, but yet communication happened. As Leonard L. Berry, Eileen A. Wall and Lewis P. Carbone (2006) point out, customer's assessment of services is based on performance. Customers rely on numerous
clues that are embedded in performance when choosing services and evaluating service experiences. Indeed it is often little clues that communicate a lot and add to the customer’s overall perception about a brand. Customers form perceptions based on the technical performance of the service (functional clues), the tangibles associated with the service (mechanic clues), and the behaviour and appearance of service providers (human clues). All these communicate a lot although the language may not be verbal or written.

Non-electronic Communication is Still the Key

As this study focuses on the multiple non-electronic forms and categories of communication emanating from corporate houses and brand representatives; it would be pertinent to mention Alan R. Winger (2005) who stated that though many predictions had been made with regards to the extinction of face-to-face communication, it is these predictions which are themselves beginning to disappear. He mentions that while it is true that emerging information technologies are substantially altering the face of business communication, discussions at close-quarter and debate remain important, as evidenced by what we have recently learned about social behaviour. He mentions that the promises made by technology when it comes to reducing the impact of face-to-face communication do not look like fructifying in at least the next decade or two. In the interim, and probably beyond, the importance and criticality of non-electronic communication messages emanating from the organisation and its representatives as far as customer decisions are concerned, can only increase.

Thus, Organisational Communication / Corporate Communication / Managerial Communication can have their origins and genesis in multiple ways, which could be appropriately termed as the various ‘channels of communication’, and not only through verbal and written means. Thus, apart from construing messages and forming perceptions with regard to the organisation from the obvious channels of verbal and written communication, many other non-electronic based channels are also the source of Organisational communication as far as the customer is concerned.

One such channel was discussed in the example of the research on the ‘Broken Windows’ and can be termed as ‘Non-language based communication’.
Listening

Another element which is often ignored, or not given the importance it deserves when it comes to the subject of communication in organisations is 'Listening'. Many successful CEOs who, when asked the secret ingredient or character trait they possess which could be identified as the reason for their success, have thoughtfully replied that they possess no 'special' attributes, but if pressed for an answer, they can say that they have reached the exalted position they occupy due to the fact that they are good 'listeners'. Similarly, not just individuals, but vast organisations as well, can and have positively differentiated from their competitors by focusing on the vital communication attribute of 'Effective Listening'. In fact according to John George and Phil Simon (2011) successful relationships start with good listening. The authors further explain that "The social customer expects you to listen and engage with her, not only when it coincides with an e-mail blast or new feature release, but rather when she needs you. And you better respond fast, in real time, or she will either move on to a competitor, or tell her friends about her bad experiences".

Listening is also the subject of study of a work by Iris W. Johnson, C. Glenn Pearce, Tracy L. Tuten and Lucinda Sinclair (2003). This study has used a revolutionary process, which is 'silence', for developing listening skills. A key finding of this research was that those participants who had undergone listening training prior to participating in the experiment scored higher and this demonstrates that listening training improves perceived listening effectiveness.

Knowledge Sharing

While the element of 'Listening' in organisational communication referred to above is vital, it has a complementary element, 'Knowledge Sharing', which forms the other crucial end of this necessary element of organisational communication. 'Listening' could be broadly (though not necessarily completely), classified as an 'Upward' activity or more appropriately an 'Inward' activity, sucking in whatever is available in terms of data, information and feedback; 'Knowledge Sharing' could be classified as a 'Downward', or again more appropriately, an 'Outward' activity, where the knowledge available in terms of policy, procedure, information, and so on, is disseminated to those who would find it valuable for effective functioning and decision making. Knowledge could be disseminated from the controlling authority to individuals at lower levels within the organisation, and also to customers outside the organisation. The more the necessary knowledge is shared, the more open and trustworthy the
organisation is generally considered by various stakeholders, including customers. Utopian levels of sharing of knowledge can and have been achieved by certain progressive organisations, and it is worth studying best practices of knowledge sharing leading to profitable communication. One such fruitful study was published by Natalie Schoch, Peter Oelschlaeger, Leonard Huskey and Robert C. McNamee (2011). The article elaborates the findings of a benchmarking survey conducted to measure the health of knowledge sharing within an organisation. The initial results of the survey (conducted on 626 respondents from Multinational R & D companies), show that climate, motivator and demotivator scales are all important predictors of knowledge-exchange behaviour. As an example, a one-point increase on the collaborative climate scale increases proactive knowledge sharing by 54 percent, while an increase of one point on the negative social motives scale decreases knowledge sharing by about 74 percent. The survey asked respondents to recall a specific recent knowledge-exchange interaction and describe his/her behaviour as either the source or the recipient in the interaction. By grounding survey respondents in a real recent interaction, we increase the accuracy of responses as well as the depth of information we can realistically gather about the knowledge-exchange.

**Processes and Systems, and Standardisation, Lead to Enhanced and Improved Communication**

Another attribute which falls under the broad category of 'Communication' is that of 'Systems'. Not computer-related systems, but systems in general. Such systems are not something which are typically considered as an element of communication, but Japan, for example, has communicated an extremely strong brand image of itself as a country to customers throughout the world over the past few decades, simply by excelling in the area of 'Systems'. Often in the media in the recent past, stories have emerged where efficient systems have resulted into communicating a positive image of the organisation in the eyes of its customers and other stakeholders, and vice versa. It has rightly been said that ninety percent of the problems that an organisation faces are 'system problems' and not 'people problems'. By merely replacing the person at the forefront of the problem area, the problem will not be solved, as it is the lacunae system which in most cases will ensure that irrespective of the individual, the problem will keep recurring till a system is created / improved / fine-tuned. An organisation with strong and robust systems in all areas, an organisation where the top management lays great stress on systems, an organisation, in short, which is 'System and Process Driven', communicates an extremely positive message to its customer base and
customers and potential customers can be assured that the experiences they will receive when interacting with such organisations will mostly be positive ones.

'Standardisation' is another element of communication which needs to be focused on as it is an element that customers easily observe and base their opinions on. Strong focus on standardisation ensures that confusion in communication is virtually eliminated, wastage is reduced, grievances minimised, and expectations met. McDonald's has built a super-brand by focusing primarily on this element alone. Standardisation as an element of communication has many facets and each needs to be given due consideration as an apex management function. For example, when it comes to written communication, the word 'standardisation' itself can be spelt as 'standardiSation', or as 'standardiZation'. The first being the British English spelling and the second being the way it is spelt in 'American English'. Both are considered correct and acceptable, but whichever one is preferred, needs to be the de facto standard throughout the length and breadth of the organisation, in all communications, with all entities, else it will give the negative impression of a 'Broken Window' and create a perception among observant customers that the left hand of the organisation is not aware of what the right hand is doing. So similarly all other words which have dual spellings, for example, 'favour' (not 'favor'), 'colour' (not 'color'); should be adopted if British English is the standard adopted by the organisation. (even the word 'Organisation' would be spelt as 'OrganiZation') if American English is adopted as the communication standard for the organisation. Another dimension in which standardisation in communication could be observed by customers and demonstrated by organisational representatives is in communication of information to customers. For example, in one branch of a particular bank, a customer could be told that he needs to submit three types of documents for opening an account, and in another branch of the same bank, the same customer could be told that he needs to provide only two documents for opening an account. This lack of standardisation in communicating the message to the customer can create a dissonance in the mind of the customer, and conversely, standardisation of messages throughout the organisation communicates a strong positive message. An excellent article which deals with both the elements of 'standardisation' as well as 'systems and processes' has been authored by Aviv Shoham, Maja Makovec Brencic, Vesna Virant and Ayalla Ruvio (2008). The article says that most research on standardisation has been done in the context of the marketing mix. In contrast, research on standardisation of management processes / characteristics is rare. Of the four broad parameters studies by the authors in this context, one was communication standardisation. The authors found that communication standardisation enhanced and
displayed positive behavioral outcomes of the participants on three parameters, i.e. cooperation, esprit de corps, and commitment, but not overall performance. However the authors say that this study being conducted on Slovene exporters who are relatively inexperienced in the international market, further research could bring about different findings.

**Importance of Written Communication**

A vital element of overall communication effectiveness with regards to impact on customer experience is the element of 'Written Communication'. This is all pervasive. Brochures, pamphlets, advertising in different media, fine print, guarantees and warranties, websites, emails, etcetera. Written communication is ubiquitous when it comes to organisational relationships with their customers. The impact that the written communication emanating from an organisation and its representatives has been exquisitely captured by Michael S. Mitchell and Clifford M. Koen Jr. (2007). The authors mention that written communication in maintaining discipline is an area which is vastly important for any organisation. Also, communications that are well thought out and which use language that is appropriate to both the message and the reader will create a sense of caring and concern on the part of the company. This in turn can contribute in meaningful ways to greater customer loyalty.

Further, Edward C. Brewer and Terence L. Holmes (2009) mention that we all constantly communicate, and when what we say or write is misunderstood, the fault may lie with either party. A major source of miscommunication is the different meaning that people place on commonly used words and phrases. This is also an arena that organisations need to train their staff on, for improved clarity of written communication, as miscommunication is a major source of customer dissatisfaction.

**Importance of Verbal Communication**

On the subject of 'Written Communication', a parallel and equally prominent element which rivals or perhaps even surpasses the import that written communication has on customer experience and perception about the organisation is the element of 'Verbal Communication'. Every time there is a physical interaction between a customer and an organisational representative, it is almost a given that there will be at least some degree of verbal communication involved from both ends. A customer does not normally differentiate between the verbal communication emanating from an organisational representative and the organisation as an entity itself. The importance of controlling the ambiguity in the verbal
element of communication emanating from organisational representatives has been the subject of study by Larry English (2005). He elaborates that the vital area of ambiguity in communication, especially verbal communication, is a source of so much duplication of work, errors, and misunderstandings within the organisation. The author focuses on the quality of information generated and presented. High information quality is mandatory to running an efficient organisation, and this quality is dependent on whether ambiguity and vagueness can be avoided in both the collection and gathering of information, as well as in the presentation of the information. Information quality is not simply about the quality of data collated and available to an organisation, it pertains to the quality of all our communication - whether spoken, written or displayed. To achieve this quality, it is imperative to analyse the root causes of past moments where miscommunication has occurred. Successful communication results not just by transmitting what we perceive is a clear message, but ensuring that the receiver understands the essence as we intended it. A factor to be focused on is to develop a process within the organisation to intercept misinterpretations and false assumptions and rectify them before the damage has been done. Thus apart from the area of the importance of verbal communication, this article also stresses the importance of developing a system and a process to improve the element of overall communication.

Proactiveness as an Element that Impacts Quality of Communication

Another element of communication which is of great importance to customers, one which if practiced can overshadow a multiple of sins of omission and commission on behalf of the organisation is the element of 'Proactiveness in Communication'. Very often, in the rush for meeting targets and attracting new clientele, the only proactiveness in communication witnessed from an organisation is the unsolicited sales pitch. Once the sale is secured, it is often observed that for every bit of support required or each query raised or adherence to commitment solicited or even for basic information, it is the customer who is seen chasing the organisational representatives. Superior organisations are proactive in their communication and not reactive. The importance of proactive communication from an organisation to its customers can be best understood by referring to the article by Christopher P. Blocker, Daniel J. Flint, Matthew B. Myers and Stanley F. Slater (2011). The authors state that today's customers expect their sellers and suppliers to not only respond efficiently but reactively to their expressly communicated needs, but expect and demand that sellers and suppliers understand them sufficiently well to proactively address their latent, unexpressed and future needs. The authors examine the impact of proactive customer
orientation and communication on value creation by taking an approach that examines the proactive customer orientation - value - satisfaction - loyalty chain, using data from 800 business customers in India, Singapore, Sweden, the UK and the USA. The authors find that proactiveness displayed by firms leads to sustainable competitive advantage and also that proactive customer orientation is the most consistent driver of value across the multinational data set they have included in their study.

**Bureaucracy in Communication**

A complement to reactiveness as far as organisational communication is concerned is the element of 'Bureaucracy in Communication'. Bureaucracy is typically a word which has negative connotations, and sends shudders down the spine of a customer who has the misfortune to encounter it in his communication with an organisation. Typically the 'prerogative' of governmental behemoths, it has now unfortunately percolated down to the profit sector organisations as well. In informal parlance, bureaucracy in communication can be referred to as 'Red tape'. The object of red tape is to strangle and stifle. While in old-school governmental procedure this may often be seen as a necessary and even a 'profitable' delaying or stalling tactic; a deterrent to unpleasant questioning or soliciting of uncomfortable and even embarrassing information, it has no room or role to play in the modern organisation, whether in the profit or non-profit sector. In an age where customers have not only become more aware and demanding, but have the tools and technology available to extract information and spread information at will, it is beneficial for an organisation if it is proactive in its verbal and written communication as well as its actions (non-language based communication), and not bureaucratic. Bureaucracy has been the area of a study by Robert W. Gunn and B.R. Gullickson (2008). The article is titled 'He Said, She Said'. The article focuses on how excessive reliance on clarifying communication procedure and communication protocols at an organisational level do create a well defined vertical structure, but has the unpleasant result of people in the same department sitting side-by-side, not informally interacting and communicating with each other, because a horizontal hierarchy has not been defined. As the authors put it, "At the institutional framework, communication frequently bumps into bureaucracy. In trying to achieve something that no individual can manage alone, organisations must often put the needs of the group above those of the individual. The individual must swallow a certain amount of 'voice' to be part of the whole."
Credibility of Communication

Carrying forward from the above point, an extension of it would logically take us to the element of 'Credibility of Communication'. In layman's but extremely effective terms, this would translate as 'Walking the Talk'. Flowery and even proactive communication serves no purpose, in fact it is self defeating in nature, if it cannot be trusted nor believed. A majority of current advertising communication would fall into the negative end of the spectrum of this particular element of communication. It is extremely important that all communication emanating from an organisation and its many representatives be first and foremost, primarily; credible in nature and in content. Deep study in this and related areas has resulted in the concept of the 'Language of Trust'. Elaborating on this concept is the primary subject of the article by Michael Maslansky (2010). The author has developed the concept of the 'Language of Trust' to assist professionals and representatives of organisations to find the 'correct' language on occasions where there appears to be a failure to communicate. The 'right language' will not enable you to sell a comb to a bald man, but at least you will be able to get them to listen to you. As the author points out, communicating with trust is a holistic exercise. It includes our words, our thinking and our actions as well. But the starting point of this language is 'words'. In simple language, the 'Language of Trust' is about your audience, their thoughts, feelings and opinions, and not your own. To gain trust and get the customer or stakeholder to listen to you, you have to ensure that you communicate in a way which tells them that you are genuinely looking after their interests, while at the same time you are obviously and naturally representing your organisation and its interests as well. This intersection point or overlap is the 'Language of Trust'.

Co-ordination as an Element that Impacts Communication

Often, all the other elements of communication are in place, yet the final outcome is not effective, as the element of co-ordination is lacking. This has been the subject of study of Ranjay Gulati (2007). In this article, the author discusses a case relating to GE Healthcare, where initially the Performance Solutions Unit did a good job by generating substantial revenue through consulting services, but then the unit went into decline. As the author says - "It turned out that equipment salespeople had trouble explaining the value of consulting services, so when they called on customers they couldn't contribute much to the sale of additional services. What's more, these reps were reluctant to allow Performance Solutions
salespeople to contact their customers." This and similar cases are studied by the author, who suggests that the solution to overcome similar co-ordination challenges within internal silos, departments or SBUs, requires systematic, ongoing change to help organisations transcend existing product-based or geographical silos, and replace them with customer oriented ones.

Further work in this area was done by Jayanth Jayaram, Kefeng Xu and Mariana Nicolae (2011). The authors commence with the theoretical background on co-ordination theory, which says that there are three types of co-ordination:

a. Co-ordination between two tasks

b. Co-ordination between two resources

c. Co-ordination between a task and a resource

This paper examines the impact of two types of co-ordination on plant performance in the Chinese context. Specifically, the effect of supplier co-ordination and customer co-ordination on two dimensions of performance, i.e. a. Flexibility b. Quality. The results of this study confirm that there is a positive impact of supplier co-ordination on flexibility performance, which means that supplier co-ordination enhances an organisational ability to handle non-standard orders that impact the manufacturing process, especially when the demand is increasing. The results show that effective co-ordination with suppliers influences quality performance. Also, customer co-ordination was found to influence flexibility performance. The collaboration and co-ordination between a firm and its customers reduces production uncertainty, making the firm more responsive to customer demands.

**Human Resources has a Role to Play in Improving Organisational Communication**

As has been seen above, a very important element of communication is the element of 'Knowledge Sharing' within the organisation. Without this entrenched as a philosophy within the organisation, the individual tacit knowledge which has been gained through experience will be lost to the organisation forever once the individual possessing that knowledge leaves, unless a knowledge management system is put in place throughout the organisation. Serio Salis and Allan M. Williams (2010) study whether the adoption of human resources management practices that encourage face-to-face communication (FTFC) among employees lead to gains in efficiency and productivity. The authors find a positive co-relation between productivity and FTFC in problem-solving groups, teams and meetings of senior or line managers and employees, provided that FTFC is adopted not as a one-off or random exercise,
but on a regular basis. The authors conclude by saying that their findings which relate to British workplaces in the trading sector clearly suggest that productivity could be increased by introducing HRM practices to enhance knowledge sharing through employee's personal interactions.

While on the subject of the Human Resources function and its contribution to enhanced organisational communication, it is pertinent to mention a paper by Marshall Goldsmith (2003). The author says that for long the ability of giving and receiving feedback has been considered an essential skill that managers need in order to succeed. This is good. But the author mentions that there is one fundamental problem with feedback as a concept. It looks backward and is therefore static and is not forward looking and dynamic. An experiential exercise involving managers is described, where participating managers are asked to provide feedforward to other participants, i.e. offer them help and suggestions for the future, and in turn receive suggestions from others for their own future and learn as much as possible. After the exercise the participants explain that it was a good learning and that it was fun. They felt that while feedback can be viewed as negative criticism, feedforward appears positive and motivating. They also viewed feedforward as goal oriented and thus preferred by successful people. Another benefit that emerged was that feedforward can be provided even by people who don't know you well.

**Holistic Organisational Communication**

Knowledge sharing is so crucial, that a study by Jeffrey A. Martin and Kathleen M. Eisenhardt (2011) gives it special importance. The authors say that synergy is at the heart of corporate strategy. They predict that synergy is the basic rationale behind strategic business moves such as acquisitions, diversification and alliances. Despite the importance that management lays on synergy across businesses, for many organisations it remains an elusive goal. The authors identify three important business-unit / corporate level processes that become particularly salient with the increase of market dynamics:

a. Knowledge transfer

b. Patching

c. Co-evolving

If these three processes are well done, they secure the advantage of helping bring the market inside the organisation, thereby facilitating the co-existence of co-operation and competition
among the business units and the parent corporate entity. The market power and functional efficiency of such organisations also take a good step forward. The study also believes that cross-business synergies can be used to create a series of temporary advantages in dynamic markets. The authors define 'knowledge transfer' as transferring knowledge-based resources between business-units. 'Patching' is defined as reconfiguring the business units to address changing market opportunities. 'Co-evolving' means relinking the web of business-unit collaborations.

The above are elements of communication which have been considered as appropriate to include (but the list is by no means an exhaustive one), for the formation of a Model for Holistic Organisational Communication. To the best of knowledge available, no such comprehensive model is currently available or has been developed for Organisational Communication. Current definitions of the related and often interchangeably used terms Organisational Communication / Corporate Communication reveal that only a few elements are considered. A paper which took into account a few of the elements which form the scope of this study has been authored by Seema Gupta (2011). The author has interviewed leading Corporate Communications professionals to identify core issues that can lead to enhancing the role of Corporate Communications (CC) in organisations. A few interesting findings were:

a. CC builds the corporate brand. This is what eighty percent of the practitioners identified as the core purpose of CC - Building the corporate brand. A quote from a practitioner who was interviewed was - "CC is effective for creating and portraying a unified umbrella brand rather than sub-brands."

b. Another common perception among respondents was that CC plays a pivotal role in managing several activities such as CSR, internal communication, media relations, etc. Again a quote from a respondent in this context was - "CC is a long-term strategic tool for building the goodwill of the company through broad-based activities like CSR, media, internal communication, sponsorships, etc. Across practitioners who responded, key roles of CC were identified as corporate branding, media relations, CSR, crisis management and internal communications.

c. An important issue highlighted by 54 percent of the respondents was that Heads of CC need to have general management skills and should understand the core business of the company and the role of CC in attaining organisational objectives. It was felt by the
respondents that the communications function has to support the business objectives and each sector and industry has its own unique challenges.

d. The fourth major finding was that the respondents emphasised that CC professionals should have special knowledge in writing and media relations in addition to being generalists.

e. A very interesting finding was that the respondents strongly felt that continuous development is vital for CC professionals, but there is lack of training opportunities. They felt there were not sufficient in-depth and strategic training programmes available in the domain for practitioners. A quote from a respondent was - "T & D is still in its infancy in the field of CC." Another quote was - "India lacks in training opportunities in the field and there are at best some general programmes on topics like brand management conducted by business schools. Another quote was - "There is a dearth of professional training opportunities in the domain of CC. People rely more on seminars, conferences, etc. with the twin objective of learning and networking".

Another paper which comes relatively close to the proposed area of this research study has been authored by Edwina Luck and Jennifer Moffatt (2009). According to the authors, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a relatively modern concept in marketing. Unfortunately, although the word 'Integrated' indicates a holistic perspective, the focus and thrust of most IMC's is only on advertising and sales promotional activities. The paper proposes a broader perspective on IMC. In fact, it propagates that IMC has to be incorporated and integrated into the very fabric and DNA of the organisation. The authors further explain that IMC is meant to be customer focused and it is not only advertising and sales promotion messages that customers intercept and act upon.

**Role of Top Level Synergy in Enhancing Organisational Communication**

Various elements which impact and comprise organisational communication have now been identified. However, ultimately it is important that since communication in organisations is traditionally top-down in approach, top level teams need to synergise to get the benefit of these elements of communication to accrue to an organisation. James B. Stryker and Michael D. Santoro (2012) highlight this in their article. They explain that despite the increasing use of electronically mediated methods for team communications, research continues to underline the importance of face-to-face (F2F) communication for the successful accomplishment of complex, high-tech team tasks. The paper reports that simply moving people from closed offices to open cubicles does not in itself increase F2F communication.
Rather the level of F2F communication depends on the location of team members’ workstations within the overall configuration of the space and the amount of space provided to support collaboration opportunities, including both formal and informal spaces. The authors also offer suggestions for the layout and design of workstations to foster productive F2F encounters. This would lead to synergy and thus enhances productivity, efficiency and innovation, ultimately leading to a stronger brand.

**Importance of Customer Perception on Brand Success**

Thus, a customer's perception of the brand is either sometimes totally, in most cases substantially, and in a few cases at least partially, based on the communication he has received from the organisation through its representatives through the various elements identified above. In the sense, most customers form strong associations between the quality of communication of an organisational representative and the policies and procedures and philosophy of the organisation they have interacted with, and the quality and even reliability of the goods and services that the organisation produces and delivers. This is true to a great extent of all the other elements identified as elements of organisational communication. Thus, it could be said that a ‘Halo Effect’ emerges about the value and reliability and quality of the basic goods and services of the organisation, from the manner in which an organisation through its representatives communicates on all the various levels or elements of communication identified as being vital to the proposed model (Holistic Organisational Communication Model), which forms the *raison d'être* of this entire study. According to **Filipe Jorge Coelho, Mario Gomes Augusto, Arnaldo Fernandes Coelho and Patricia Moura Sa (2010)**, satisfaction of customer's needs and perception of customers to brand overall is especially dependent upon the customer orientation of frontline employees. Understanding the drivers of such orientation, is therefore, a key issue in current research. One of the drivers of such orientation is the element of the willingness and ability to communicate. Thus enhanced communication from the frontline representatives of the organisation helps in creating a positive overall perception of the brand in the minds of the customer.