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# Cover sheet

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***Harvard Business Review's* reframing of digital communication:  
From professional expertise to practical guidance**

**Abstract**

In the context of our research work focused on mapping the latest multimodal and hypermodal strategies of constructing and communicating expert knowledge (e.g., Maier, 2014, Maier/Engberg 2015, Engberg/Maier 2015, Engberg/Maier 2019), in this paper we address hypermodal strategies used for communicating domain-specific knowledge and practical guidance to various audiences.

The empirical evidence is represented by a cluster of digital texts from the *Harvard Business Review* webpages (<https://hbr.org/>). This digital context aimed at communicating domain-specific knowledge and practical guidance is characterized by hypermodal communication strategies meant to accommodate various levels of expertise and interests.

The paper presents and explains methodological tools suitable for investigating comprehensibility and engagement enhancement when addressing potentially non-academic receivers in a website context. For this purpose, we explore the interaction of semiotic modes as well as hypermodal combinations of the web-based genres. In this context, we aim especially at identifying the roles of the digital affordances in communicating professional expertise and practical guidance with a basis in the same Internet venue. The impact of promotional strategies is also explained.

The relevance of this research work lies in its contribution to a better understanding of the complex hypermodal strategies used for reframing the communication of domain-specific knowledge to various audiences.

**Key words**

Knowledge communication, genre cluster, multimodality, hypermodality, easification, comprehensibility enhancement, engagement enhancement

## 1. Introduction

Expert knowledge is one of the main currencies of knowledge societies. This is true in the sense that a knowledge-based economy, as it is (or at least was) pursued by governments and intergovernmental institutions in the Western world, bases its economical calculations and accounts upon valuations of the production of knowledge, rather than upon valuations of, e.g., products or services. It is also true in the sense that, in a knowledge society, disciplines (or epistemic cultures) and individual researchers are valued according to the knowledge they present and especially the usefulness of this knowledge for solving specific problems. In such settings, an interest may exist among researchers to make the knowledge they have developed available to the world outside the discipline, e.g., to make it available to other types of experts than the researchers themselves. Depending upon the discipline, its topic and the personal ambitions of the researcher, this may be pursued with more or less vigour.

A field with a tradition for focusing the need for disseminating research knowledge to practical experts is that of business and corporate management. This has created an opening for what may be called marketplaces of knowledge, where non-researcher experts can find insights with relevance for fulfilling their expert tasks. In the field of business and corporate management, a prominent example of this is the Harvard Business Review (<https://hbr.org/>). This market group “aims to provide professionals around the world with rigorous insights and best practices to help lead themselves and their organizations more effectively and to make a positive impact” (<https://hbr.org/corporate/about>). It earns a living (albeit on a not-for-profit platform) from creating a marketplace and brokering expert knowledge in it. This is done by a number of different genres, ranging from the printed version of the journal “Harvard Business Review” over PDF-versions offered at the website and on to other web-based genres like hypertextual articles, webinars, short films, whiteboard sessions, clickable tables, etc. The HBR website, which provides the data for the present analytical endeavour, is thus a prototypical example of the kind of marketplace necessary for the purposes of a knowledge society. It takes advantage of up-to-date media possibilities for making the knowledge available and thus applying modern strategies of dissemination in a wide sense in order to offer “insights and best practices” with relevance for the effective corporate management. Based upon our previous research work on the dissemination of academic expert knowledge (e.g., Maier, 2014, Maier/Engberg 2015,

Engberg/Maier 2015, Engberg/Maier 2019), we want to investigate aspects of this knowledge brokering efforts in the form of a case study of a text cluster on the HBR website.

The aim of this paper is to present and explain methodological tools suitable for investigating comprehensibility and engagement enhancing strategies when addressing potentially non-academic receivers in a website context. We take the view that the affordances of the hypermodal environment influence the range of intersubjective positioning means that can be employed when simultaneously communicating both professional expertise and practical guidance. Furthermore, we also consider that the same affordances facilitate the appearance of various communicative strategies meant to enhance comprehensibility and engagement wherever necessary. For in order for hbr.org to work as an efficient marketplace of knowledge, it is necessary that the presented knowledge is accessible and appears relevant to the projected customers. For communication researchers, our integrated analysis model accounting for both comprehensibility and engagement enhancing strategies is meant to highlight the versatility of a hypermodal communication context.

## **2. Theoretical frameworks**

In this section, we briefly overview the perspectives upon knowledge communication, hypermodal communication, genre, and intersubjective positioning that provide the theoretical background of our research endeavor. Rather than siding with one of these perspectives, our prior research work has shown that when we investigate complex hypermodal strategies of knowledge communication, it is necessary to find explanatory support in their interplay. Together, these perspectives offer a consistent and nuanced interdisciplinary framework for understanding and explaining how professional expertise and practical guidance coexist dynamically in the hypermodal communicative context of *Harvard Business Review* website.

### **2.1. *Knowledge Communication Approach and Comprehension***

The different perspectives that we combine in our complex analytical tools are bound together in the framework of the Knowledge Communication Approach:

The study of Knowledge Communication aims at investigating the intentional and decision-based communication of specialised knowledge in professional settings (among experts as well as between experts and nonexperts) with a focus upon the

interplay between knowledge and expertise of individuals, on the one hand, and knowledge as a social phenomenon, on the other, as well as the coping with knowledge asymmetries, i.e., the communicative consequences of differences between individual knowledge in depth as well as breadth. (Engberg, 2016, 37)

The object of study is specialized knowledge of (professional) experts exchanged in **hypermodal** communicative settings. Central aspects are the interactive character of the process of communicating knowledge and the importance of knowledge asymmetries as generators of communicative efforts. When focusing upon the aspect of knowledge asymmetries, we are interested in finding out how the perceived differences in knowledge between the communicative partners (in our case between communicators and users) is visible in choice of, e.g., hypermodal and generic resources, thus reflecting intents to communicate and achieve a specific level of comprehension across knowledge asymmetries. Hence, from this perspective, interest is into how hypermodal and generic relations are applied in order to signal connections between elements and texts, supporting the construction of knowledge by the users (explanatory ambition, Engberg 2019). Concerning the second central aspect of the Knowledge Communication Approach, the communicated knowledge is not seen as present in texts as such. Instead, we see it as emerging from constructive comprehension processes of the users when interacting with the text created for knowledge communication. Only when information presented in a text has been subject to constructive comprehension processes does it turn into knowledge. This process depends upon the knowledge available in the mind of the individual user, which is a factor that is out of bounds for interests of the present case study. However, it also depends upon the degree to which communicators invites the users to participate in the knowledge development process. Here, the analytical concepts of monologic and dialogic engagement (Martin and White, 2005; White, 2003) become relevant as descriptors of whether knowledge is presented as monolithic or as open to dynamic processes and thus as leaving a space for an active user. In the two following sections, we will elaborate upon these two analytical perspectives.

## ***2.2. Hypermodality and genre clustering***

We link these two theoretical perspectives upon web-based communication because both of them contribute to understanding the same communicative phenomenon in the HBR context, namely the construction of knowledge asymmetries and hence comprehensibility enhancement.

However, it is not possible to understand hypermodality without clarifying the complementary aspect of contemporary communication, namely multimodality. Communication has always been multimodal (Kress, 2001). Pioneering researchers such as Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996 and 2001) and Jewitt (2009) have repeatedly highlighted this fundamental truth and explained that:

Multimodality describes approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use – image, gesture, gaze, posture, and so on – and the relationships between them (Jewitt, 2009:14).

Related to this perspective, according to Lemke, “hypermodality is basically hypertext plus multimodality” (Lemke, 2015: 135). If multimodality research is focused on the interplay of semiotic modes and the roles of this interplay upon meaning-making processes in representation, hypermodality research introduces an explanation of the interactive affordances of the web and of the layers of meaning added through these affordances:

Hypermodality is more than multimodality in just the way that hypertext is more than plain text. It is not simply that we juxtapose image, text, and sound; we design multiple interconnections among them, both potential and explicit (Lemke, 2002:300).

In the hypermodal website investigated here, we are not investigating texts in their individuality, but what we see as a cluster of texts from different genres. The type of cluster we are interested in may be seen as a “grouping of multimodal items which are part of a larger unit in which they function” (Baldry & Thibault, 2006: 31). We investigate elements of the HBR website that are tied together based upon their expressed relations to a printed HBR article and the underlying publication, and we are interested in the types of relations and connections, and in differences in the way the topic is treated in the different texts.

However, where in the field of genre analysis the concept of clusters of genres, also termed genre colonies (Bhatia, 2004) or constellations of genre (Swales, 2004) tends to focus upon typified relations between genres (like the chain of genres leading from the call for papers for

a conference to the publication of a contribution to its proceedings, (Swales, 2004, 19), we do not look for *generic* clusters. Whether the investigated clustering has a typified character, is not investigated due to the characteristics of our data as a single case study. However, the partial lack of explicit connections between the investigated texts, which we will comment upon in the analysis in section 5 below, indicates that at least the degree of typification is not very high. Further studies are necessary to investigate this aspect.

### ***2.3. Intersubjective positioning: The dialogic engagement***

In order to better understand and explain knowledge communication strategies adopted in the HBR digital environment, it is necessary to be informed by one more theoretical perspective, namely a perspective concerned with stance-taking in communication (White 2003; Martin & White 2005). Such a perspective can help us clarify how specific digital affordances allow communicators not only to communicate knowledge but also to take a stand with or against prior authors and potential users of HBR materials while communicating. According to researchers in engagement from within the theoretical frame of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin, 2015), the focus of this perspective is on “the resources by which speakers negotiate an interpersonal space for their positions and the strategies which they use to either acknowledge, ignore or curtail other ‘voices’ or points of view” (Tan 2010: 93).

Although its roots can be found in verbal communication research related to the inherently dialogic character of all texts (Bakhtin/Volosinov, 1981), by being oriented towards “meanings in context” (Martin & White, 2005:94) rather than towards grammatical forms, this perspective is relevant for exploring engagement issues in the context of knowledge communication across semiotic modes and media. Previous research based on this intersubjective positioning typology has been done on a wide range of both monomodal and hypermodal data from multimodal textbooks (Chen, 2010) to web-based advertising campaigns (Tan, 2010), academic literacy programs (Fryer, 2013) research articles (Moyano, 2019) and digital medical research (Fryer, 2019). Highlighting “the heteroglossic diversity of hypermedia discourse”, Tan explains (2010: 93):

The potential for dialogic engagement afforded by the functional characteristics of hypertext objects can be modelled from the viewpoint of ENGAGEMENT, which presumes that all texts are either *heteroglossic*, when they draw on resources that

allow space for dialogic alternatives, or *monoglossic*, when they make no such allowances (Martin and White, 2005; White, 2003).

The heteroglossic engagement resources are categorized at several levels of delicacy according to their dialogic potential: dialogic contractive and dialogic contrastive (Martin & White 2005; White 2003). The dialogic contractive resources are meant “to challenge, fend off or restrict the scope” of other positions (Martin & White, 2005: 102), while the dialogic contrastive ones are supposed to make allowances for alternative positions. When monoglossic engagement is employed, the writer communicates knowledge that is accepted in the respective communicative context, and “construes the value positions of those who have a different view... as not needing to be recognized or engaged with in any way” (Martin and White, 2005:157). A detailed representation of the categories of heteroglossic engagement is provided below.

### **3. Data & methodology**

The empirical investigation is a qualitative one because we intend to capture the richness of the analytical purposes related to hypermodal research. As such, our in-depth analytical work has been done on one generic cluster consisting of texts from several web-based genres embedded in the HBR digital context: the PDF version of the article “Energy Strategy for the C-Suite” (Winston et al., 2017) which is a static multimodal text, the hypertextualized version which is a dynamic multimodal text, the related video with voice-over commentaries and animated graphics, and the related whiteboard session in which one of the article’s authors explains the content of the article.

As already mentioned, the hypermodal lens is applied to analyze how professional expertise and practical guidance are reframed in HBR digital context. This means that we address the knowledge communication strategies in the selected generic cluster across semiotic modes and media. The analytical inquiry has been organized in Microsoft Word tables for each web-based genre of the generic cluster according to the functional categories of comprehensibility and engagement enhancement strategies. In the multimodal PDF version of the article, the verbal strategies are explained in detail, while in the other genres, the focus is on how the HBR digital environment influences the communication strategies in general. The conceptual frameworks



of comprehensibility enhancement and engagement enhancement that have been employed are presented below in more details.

### **3.1. *Comprehensibility enhancement***

From the point of view of comprehensibility enhancing strategies, we want to find the strategies applied in the texts of the generic cluster. We compare the PDF version of the article to the other components of the cluster, in order to see in what ways the differences in the hypermodal characteristics between the texts may be said to contribute to enhancing the comprehensibility of the presented topic and thus to demonstrating a specific level of explanatory ambition (Engberg, 2019). Our interest is in the level of explanatory ambition demonstrated in the cluster texts. This means that we are interested in seeing whether the differences between the PDF version and the rest of the cluster may be said to indicate that the communicators have tried to make it easier for the users to construct a relevant knowledge structure based upon the text and thus to overcome the knowledge asymmetry between the expert's knowledge and that of the users.

In this context, we are especially interested in assessing whether the attempts of overcoming the knowledge asymmetry may be seen as instances of simplification or of easification (Bhatia, 1983). In this dichotomy, originally developed in order to describe attempts of making statutory legal texts more accessible to citizens, the focus is upon what is done to a text in order to make expert knowledge conveyed by the text accessible to non-experts.

When using simplification strategies, either the content or the form of the central text is changed. The purpose of simplification strategies is “to make a given text simpler in terms of its content and/or form.” (Bhatia, 1983, 42). If the *form* is changed, it means that there are differences in the phrasing of sentences or in the use of multimodal elements that show less complexity in the form rendering the expert knowledge. Bhatia also sees inserting examples as a kind of formal simplification. If the *content* is simplified, on the other hand, parts of the expert knowledge expressed in the original text is omitted, or the description is less expertly in rigour and level of detail. In both cases, the complexity of the knowledge to be constructed on the basis of the text is lowered. This also means that the level of explanatory ambition is lower in simplified texts than in non-simplified texts. On the other hand, when using easification strategies, the intent is to keep the complexity of the original text, but to change the access

structure to make the complexity more accessible. The idea is to “... leave the input more or less authentic and unsimplified, but give learners an additional instructional apparatus by developing a kind of ‘access structure’ around the text, the purpose of which is not to help comprehension directly, but to guide the learner through the text, thereby helping him with his intake.” (Bhatia, 1983, 46). Examples of easification strategies given by Bhatia are reorganisation of the rhetorical structure (i.e., the order and positioning of argument elements in the text), the use of diagrams and other types of visualisation to show a line of argumentation in a text, and the use of questions showing the user what information to expect (Bhatia, 1983, 47-52).

The examples are clearly mainly concerned with the context of making written legal texts (statutes, cases, text books) accessible to students or to citizens and are thus not directly applicable to the situation at hand here, neither concerning the relations between the texts in the cluster nor concerning their multi- and hypermodal characteristics. However, the basic distinction and the principles explained in Bhatia’s examples may function as a basis for establishing an analytical framework for assessing communication strategies of comprehensibility enhancement related to the aspect of complexity and accessibility (cf. table 1).

Table 1. Communication strategies of comprehensibility enhancement

Strategies		Functional characteristics
Simplification	Simplification of form	To change formal aspects in order to make the resulting text less complex and thus support the construction of less complex knowledge
	Simplification of content	To change content aspects so that the presented content is less complex and / or less detailed and thus support the construction of less complex knowledge
Easification	To insert textual or hypermodal elements that enhance the accessibility of the text and thus support the construction of complex knowledge	

### 3.2. Engagement enhancement

A perspective on engagement has also been adopted in this study and, therefore, the specific framework employed in the analytical work is that developed by Martin and White (2005) and White (2003). The conceptual tools that have been employed are those that have enabled us to identify and analyze the multimodal and hypermodal resources related to heteroglossic engagement stances, namely the dialogic contractive and dialogic contrastive ones. Apart from that, the monoglossic resources are also considered in the present analysis. Table 2 provides an explanatory overview of these conceptual tools.

Certainly, the categories attain another level of complexity in webpages “that generates a multitude of intertextual possibilities by assembling texts from various modes and discourses (e.g. verbiage, image, sound, activity) that are then represented in multiple relations to one another – are by their very nature dialogic, intertextual and heteroglossic” (Tan, 2009:93).

Table 2. Communication strategies of engagement enhancement

Forms of engagement	Functions	
Monoglossic engagement	To communicate consensual knowledge that is accepted in the current communicative context.	
Dialogic alternative 1: heteroglossic engagement  (dialogic contrastive resources)	To entertain	
	To attribute	Acknowledge
		Distance
	To justify	
Dialogic alternative 2: heteroglossic disengagement  (dialogic contractive resources)	To proclaim	Concur
		Pronounce
		Endorse
	To disclaim	Deny
		Counter

Thus, to allow for more rigorous claims to be made, we place our analytical work at the intersection of several theoretical perspectives. This type of methodology supports an overall view on hypermodal knowledge communication that is meant to reveal the complexity of strategies employed to communicate simultaneously both professional expertise and practical guidance.

#### 4. Comprehensibility enhancement in the HBR digital context

The first step in our assessment of comprehensibility enhancement strategies applied in the studied cluster is to compare the four texts concerning the topics treated in them. As already stated above, in our comparisons we take the pdf version of the article offered on the HBR website as the base line.

Table 3: Topics of elements in cluster

<p>Multimodal PDF version (9 print pages, 4741 words) Title: <i>Energy strategy for the C-suite</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy is a rising topic, not to be treated only as a cost, but as a broader part of strategy (129 words)</li> <li>• Authors have surveyed major companies and assessed relations between ‘energy maturity’ and business value + have experience (181 words)</li> <li>• One case of shifting perspective in this direction: Microsoft (403 words)</li> <li>• No relevant guidelines exist → the article presents a five-step model (3667 words)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start with a C-level mandate (content: principles + concrete examples)</li> <li>2. Integrate energy into the company’s vision and operations (content: principles + concrete examples)</li> <li>3. Track energy at all levels (content: principles + concrete examples)</li> <li>4. Shift to renewables and other advanced energy technologies (subheadlines: ‘Financing options’, ‘Other benefits’) (content: principles + concrete examples)</li> <li>5. Engage key stakeholders (content: principles + concrete examples)</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Hurdles preventing companies from adopting an energy strategy (lack of data, centralized ownership, perception of energy as just a cost or as</li> </ul>
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	<p>extremely expensive to manage strategically) + reasons for why hurdles could be overcome (297 words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy is the next upcoming driver of competitive advantage after fluency with big data (61 words)</li> </ul>
<p>Hypertextual version</p> <p>Title: <i>Energy strategy for the C-suite</i> (+ in the browser tab: <i>Your company needs an energy strategy</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The verbal content of the hypertextual version is identical with that of the PDF version</li> </ul>
<p>Video (1:52 min)</p> <p>Title: <i>Why Aren't More Companies Using Renewable Energy?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy is important cost factor in companies (0:10)</li> <li>• Falling prices and increasing pressure for carbon reduction creates push toward renewable energy sources (0:09)</li> <li>• Article authors report falling costs leading to shifts in energy market (0:06)</li> <li>• Details concerning the fall in costs for different energy sources (1:10)</li> <li>• Advantages for companies from including renewable energy sources: Boost reputation, reduce risk, improve resilience, manage costs (0:17)</li> </ul>
<p>Whiteboard session (video; 9:09)</p> <p>Title: <i>The Business Case for Sustainability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generic introductory video sequence (0:06)</li> <li>• Looking at possibilities of gaining value (reducing costs or risk, building revenues and intangibles) through the lens of sustainability yields new ways of potential value (0:39)</li> <li>• Concretization of this general statement (2:00) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost reduction (traditional) (one: reducing energy footprint)</li> <li>• Risk (traditional)</li> <li>• Revenue (new)</li> <li>• Intangible (new, important, difficult to measure)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• General consequences of sustainability lens, eventually summed up (0:35)</li> <li>• General problem: All advantages are difficult to measure → no value set (0:30)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory-based framework for classifying elements that no value is put upon, highlighting internal intangible elements normally overlooked (0:40)</li> <li>• Result of consultancy investigation supporting importance of intangibles (1:30)</li> <li>• Problem: Accountancy does not measure that which is really important, the value of return on sustainability-related investment (0:35)</li> <li>• Practical example: Unilever measuring impact by looking at LinkedIn page followers in order to measure employer engagement from sustainability strategy (1:00)</li> <li>• Problem: How to put a (money) value on that? There is value, but currently it is set to 0 (0:40)</li> <li>• Unfair to require that a business case is set up for all of sustainability – instead for projects – in order to measure the right things (0:53)</li> </ul>
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Looking at the content of the elements, the PDF version and the hypertext version are identical. The focus of the texts is energy strategy and how and why to establish such strategies. The main idea is to make companies give more priority to energy by making it a matter of central strategy by explaining advantages, presenting a five-step guideline and giving some factual details. The focus of the video is upon convincing companies to use renewable energy, presenting factual details about development of costs and importance of renewable energy sources among emerging energy sources (the same as in the article text). The whiteboard session video has as its focus the problem of assessing the actual (positive) value of a sustainability-oriented management strategy despite the problems of measuring the actual return on such investment. The main idea is to convince companies about the high value of such difficultly measured aspects, based upon classifications and investigation results from management research, and upon practical examples, as well as requiring development in the field of accountancy in order to be able to assess actual value of valuable elements. Hence, all elements in the cluster (article in two versions, video, whiteboard session) have independent purposes, none of them are versions of the others, but they are thematically connected by overlaps in their content: the article is about energy strategies at the most central managerial level, to which also choosing renewable energy sources, the video's topic, belongs. And energy strategy is one example of sustainability-oriented strategical activities. From the point of view

of the balance between presenting academic research results and giving practical guidance, the whiteboard session is the most research related, due to the information presented and the more abstract discussion, whereas the two other texts aim predominantly at giving advice. In the article, investigative research results play some role as backing of the guidance, whereas the video mainly relies upon factual arguments.

Concerning the concept of simplification vs. easification strategies, we can see some similarities and differences between the texts in the cluster that are interesting from this point of view. Just to remind you: Easification strategies are textual and hypertextual strategies intended to support the construction of complex knowledge, whereas simplification strategies are textual and hypertextual strategies intended to support the construction of a simpler form of complex knowledge. This means that simplification strategies are only relevant in comparisons between the elements of the cluster, whereas easification strategies may also be studied on individual texts. Due to the relations described above between the elements of the cluster, in this paper, we focus only on easification strategies.

Table 4: Easification strategies in cluster

		Cluster element
Textual strategies (mono- or multimodal)	Extracted and highlighted cites from the text	PDF, Hypertext
	Checklist	PDF, Hypertext
	Giving similar information in verbal and visual mode	All elements
	Giving information in visual mode in animated form	Video, Whiteboard
	Thematic structure in bullet form	Whiteboard
Hypertextual strategies	Link to company supplying benchmarking tool related to checklist	Hypertext
	Link to another element from within an element	Hypertext
	Linking the texts in the cluster together	All elements

As is visible, all of the elements apply the textual easification strategy of giving the same information in verbal and visual mode, i.e., to present for instance numerical information verbally and also in the form of a table, curve or other type of diagram. Furthermore, all elements are linked to each other, but not in all directions:

- The PDF version of the article is accessible from the hypertext version.
- The video is accessible from within the hypertext version of the article.
- The hypertext article is accessible from the webpages containing the video and the whiteboard session, respectively.

Hence, the communicators have not taken full advantage of the easification strategy of linking all elements of the cluster together in order to enhance comprehensibility.

The rest of the applied strategies are only used by some of the elements in the cluster:

- The two video formats take advantage of their affordances and give visual information in animated form. Especially, the video uses the same illustrations as the article, but in a form that constructs them on the screen.
- On the whiteboard, which is central in the video from the whiteboard session, a list of the main topics of the session is visible throughout the video. As the session proceeds, the topics are ticked off to help the user know how far the communicator is in the session.
- Both versions of the article contain extracted quotations from the text that are represented with a different typography and size for them to stand out, as we know it from modern newspapers and magazines. In this way, the communicator can indicate to users what the part of the article is about.
- In the article, a checklist is presented that companies may use in order to assess their “maturity in energy strategy and practice”. In the hypertext version, the checklist is hidden and must be unfolded. Furthermore, entering the hypertextual strategies, in the hypertext version of the article the checklist contains a link to a company that offers information about other companies’ assessment based upon the list.

## **5. Engagement enhancement**

The focus of this part of the analytical work has been on the multimodal and hypermodal resources for intersubjective positioning, namely both on how communicators engage with other positions (or not), and on how they anticipate responses from the potential users of the HBR digital materials.

### ***5.1. The multimodal PDF version of the article***

As far as the *monoglossic engagement* strategies in the multimodal PDF version of the article are concerned, these strategies are marked by a recurrent use of undialogized bare assertions that are evaluatively formulated in order to provide knowledge that is commonly accepted in



the HBR communicative context: “Large companies spend millions, or billions, of dollars directly on energy each year – and millions more indirectly, on supply chain, outsourcing, and logistics texts” (Winston et al., 2017:2).

When *heteroglossic engagement* is employed in the multimodal PDF version of the article, the strategies employed by communicators are meant not only to strengthen their assertiveness related to their professional expertise, but also to construct particular relations with the potential users of the HBR digital materials. The authors’ stance becomes dialogic by *acknowledging* and making direct references to prior communicative participants: “Energy has become a C-suite issue’ Bernard says. ‘The CFO and the president are now actively involved in our energy road map” (Winston et al., 2017:4). The last sentence of this quote is multimodally highlighted as it is also visually repeated diagonally and magnified in the left corner of the article’s PDF page. Thus, the engagement meaning of *entertaining* is realized by the editors of the article’s PDF page as this highlighting is supposed to show the status of the respective words “as one of the possible options against the wider backdrop that consists of alternatives from the multimodal text itself (Chen, 2010: 500). Another illustrative example of multimodal highlighting is the visually repeated rhetorical question “What makes an energy leader?” that facilitates the transition between communicating professional expertise and practical guidance when it is followed by the words: “To assess your maturity in energy strategy and practice, consider these questions” ((Winston et al., 2017:9). The authors can also indicate that potentially contrary viewpoints are possible when quoting them by *distancing* from them: “Executives from smaller firms often claim that buying into the clean energy economy is possible only for big, rich companies: ‘Of course Apple or Microsoft or Walmart can do it,’ they tell us, ‘but we don’t have that kind of cash.’” (Winston et al., 2017:10).

When *heteroglossic disengagement* is employed in the multimodal PDF version of the article, the authors’ strategies are meant to close down the dialogic space. Both the strategies of *proclaiming* and *disclaiming* provide means of challenging or excluding dialogic alternatives. For example, through the usage of specific adverbials, the article’s authors are able to *proclaim* a self-evident viewpoint and thus limiting the reason for alternatives while guiding the readers: “All companies should aggressively communicate their energy and climate strategies to these groups” (Winston et al., 2017:9). The same happens when the authors are highlighting their warrantable expertise: “In our research, we’ve uncovered hurdles, both real and imagined” (Winston et al., 2017:9). Multimodally, this proclaiming strategy is reinforced by the editor

through the accompanying graphs and various types of visual highlights that either display the results of the research work and/or summarize the content of the authors' advice: the problem, the solution and the key steps. A dialogic alignment with readers that are expected to share the same knowledge is manifested when *endorsing* and thus overtly agreeing with other sources of expertise: "In Michael Porter's classic view of strategy, firms create advantage by keeping costs low and through differentiation" (Winston et al. 2017:9). When using the strategy of *disclaiming*, the article's authors acknowledge their readers and limit their dialogic engagement also by monitoring their expected position through the usage of concessive conjunctions. Such conjunctions are employed to signal *a concession* through which an invoked viewpoint is disclaimed: "The five steps we recommend here for building a robust energy strategy are not revolutionary – but systematically applying them to a company's energy use is" (Winston et al., 2017:5). A second disclaiming strategy appears when expected viewpoints are directly *negated* denying in this way the possibility of engaging in a dialogue related to this issue: "This is a strategic mistake that overlooks enormous opportunities" (Winston et al., 2017:4).

## ***5.2. The hypertextualized version of the article***

In the hypertextualized version of the article, the meaning-making potential arising from the hypertext's affordances is reduced in the monoglossic sentences if they don't permit the web users to intervene. However, if the sentences "react" when the web users click on some words, then the engagement status of the respective sentences is changed as the monoglossic setting is opened to include the prospective readers. Although such changes are provoked when the article is remediated and hypertextualized by the web editors and not by the article's authors, these changes do affect the authors' dialogic stance towards their prospective readers too. The digital affordances of the hypertextualized version of the article offer the web editors the possibility to contract the heteroglossic space and expand it simultaneously. An obvious example is provided by the hyperlinked names of the articles' authors through which the editors both *proclaim* the warrantable authorial positions, and open up for dialogic alternatives by *attributing* the authors other articles to which the users can navigate by clicking on their names.

In the context of this dynamic and interactive version of the article, the dialogic expansion is also manifested multimodally beyond the boundaries of the professional expertise and practical guidance communicated in the article's text. Those boundaries are transcended by inserting multimodal boxes of hypertext related to the article's topic (e.g. "Read more" and "Play"), or

to unrelated topics (e.g. “Click to learn more” and “See more videos”). As a consequence of employing such imperatives, both the editor’s guiding role as a participant in the dialogic exchange and his power upon including specific dialogic alternatives are recognized (Chen, 2010). The heteroglossic alliance is also established between editors and web users realizing the engagement meaning of *entertaining* when other authorial voices from somewhere outside the article’s text are also recognized. The users are also explicitly acknowledged when they can directly intervene with their comments at the end of the hypertextualized article, and the dialogic engagement takes place at another level of interaction which is both explicit and encouraged.

However, when bringing unrelated and/or promotional topics in the context of the hypertextualized article, the dialogic relation between the article’s authors and their readers is completely disrupted due to these embedded boxes. For example, multimodal boxes containing advertising texts such as: “Reimagining Health Care. Innovative ideas for improving patient experience” or “Interacting with AI. How humans and machines will work together”. The same disrupting effect have the hypermodal boxes placed outside the hypertextualized article, on the left side of the webpage, through which the editors address the prospective users: “Explore the archive”, “What to read next”, etc.

### **5.3. The video**

The multimodal ensemble of the video “Why aren’t more companies using renewable energy?” belonging to the same genre cluster provides another dynamic context to communicate once again both the authors’ professional expertise and their practical guidance. Here, the professional expertise is underscored. Embedded in the web environment after the first three paragraphs of the hypertextualized article, the video summarizes some of the article’s content through animated graphs accompanied by voice-over commentary while also adding new details.

There are several ways in which this new medium enhances the forms of engagement found in the two versions of the article. Firstly, the medium of film enhances the effect of the verbal monoglossic stance of the explanatory voice-over commentary due to the temporal progression of the animated graphs and the appearance of key words on the screen. Secondly, although this video is placed after the first three paragraphs of the hypertextualized article, an embedded

image of a small video screen in the left corner of the main screen allows the user to click and access another video based on another article focused on a completely different issue: “Where Workers are the happiest. Based on the HBR article by Jan-Emmanuel De Neve and George Ward.” Thus, although in terms of engagement, the video itself may be deemed as monoglossic, through the insertion of the small video screen, the web editor provokes a multimodal dialogic expansion that weakens both the monoglossic stance and the strategic positioning of the main video in the context of the hypertextualized article. Thirdly, in spite of the rhetorical question of the video’s title, from the very beginning, the video participates also in the construal of heteroglossic disengagement by proclaiming visually the preferred answers to this question when the following words fade gradually in the first shot: “Based on the HBR article by Andrew Winston, George Favaloro, and Tim Healy”. The way in which the voice-over narrator engages with the potential viewers is also meant to rule out alternative expert positions: “As Andrew Winston, George Favaloro, and Tim Healy report...”.

#### ***5.4. The whiteboard session film***

In the whiteboard session film, “The Business case for sustainability”, although both professional expertise and practical guidance are again in focus, the practical guidance is here more dominant. The effects of both the *monoglossic* and *heteroglossic* engagement strategies are enhanced due to the direct eye contact that the viewers can maintain with one of the article’s authors, Andrew Winston, who is explaining while writing and drawing on the whiteboard or pointing to a big computer screen. Moreover, the persuasive voice inflections of the author addressing the viewers when explaining step by step the rationality of his arguments contribute also to this enhancement.

The whiteboard session film provides dynamic alternatives of dialogic contraction when the author writes or draws on the whiteboard in front of the viewers’ eyes because the very act of visualizing his expertise and advice inside the whiteboard’s frame indicates that alternative propositions are not expected. Together with the author’s eye contact and his voice inflections, it intensifies the authorial emphases contributing to the *pronouncing* mode of *proclaiming* when the author explains as in a “one-to-one teaching” session.

A disrupting strategy of dialogic expansion is employed by the editor in the web context of the whiteboard session film where the words “What to watch next”, placed below the film’s screen,

are accompanied by an interactive box with multiple choices for the users (e.g. “related”, “latest”, “most popular”, “subscriber only” and “explainers”). Obviously, the potential users of the HBR digital materials are thus again acknowledged as implicit participants in the opened HBR dialogic space. Apart from that, the hyperlinked words “For more, read “Energy Strategy for the C-suite” placed on the right side of the screen by the web editor acknowledge the existence of the generic cluster while contributing to the heteroglossic alliance inside this cluster.

Table 4 provides illustrative examples of the monglossic and heteroglossic diversity provided by the HBR digital environment.

Table 5. Examples of engagement forms.

Engagement forms Genres	Monoglossic engagement	Heteroglossic engagement (dialogic expansion)	Heteroglossic disengagement (dialogic contraction)
The multimodal PDF version of the article “Energy Strategy for the C-Suite”	Textual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- by using bare assertions: “The drivers of competitive advantage are always evolving” (Winston et al., 2017:10).</li> <li>- by using multimodal graphs</li> </ul>	Textual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- by <i>entertaining</i>: “What makes an energy leader?” (Winston et al., 2017:9).</li> <li>- by <i>distancing</i>: “We hope that this article has disabused anyone of the first notion” (Winston et al., 2017:10)</li> </ul>	Textual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- by <i>pronouncing</i>: “To understand how firms are approaching energy strategy, we surveyed executives from 145 countries” (Winston et al., 2017:5).</li> <li>- by <i>endorsing</i>: As Mary Kay Skott, GM’s environmental compliance and sustainability director puts it...” (Winston et al., 2017:9).</li> </ul>
The hypertextualized version of the article “Energy Strategy for the C-Suite”	Hypertextual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- by using the same bare assertions with no hyperlinked words</li> </ul>	Hypertextual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- by <i>entertaining</i>: hyperlinks from multimodal boxes of hypertext embedded in the article</li> </ul>	Hypertextual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- transcended through hyperlinks from multimodal boxes of hypertext related to the article’s topic or to unrelated topics</li> <li>- by <i>proclaiming</i>: the hyperlinked</li> </ul>

		(related or not to the article's topic) - by <i>attributing</i> : hyperlinks to the authors' other articles	names of the articles' authors
The video "Why aren't more companies using renewable energy?"	Filmic: - enhanced by the synchronous combination of voice-over bare assertions with animated graphics	Hypertextual: - by <i>attributing</i> : hyperlink to another video inserted as a small screen inside the video	Filmic: - by visually <i>proclaiming</i> the preferred answers to the title's question - by verbally <i>proclaiming</i> : "Based on the HBR article by..."
The Whiteboard session film "The Business case for sustainability"	Filmic: - enhanced by the synchronous combination of author's bare assertions with eye contact and persuasive voice inflections	Hypertextual: - by <i>entertaining</i> : hyperlinks to interactive box with multiple choices - by <i>entertaining</i> : hyperlinks from multimodal boxes of hypertext to unrelated topics	Filmic: - by visually <i>proclaiming</i> through the author's multimodal contact with the viewer - by <i>endorsing</i> : hyperlink to the article

## 6. Conclusions (Jan & Carmen)

This paper extends the focus of knowledge communication in digital environment by highlighting how such an environment can reframe the transition from professional expertise to practical guidance when facilitating domain-specific knowledge communication across several semiotic modes and media. Using the theoretical lens and methodological tools belonging to several research fields, it provides the detailed and systematic explanation of various multimodal and hypermodal strategies of comprehensibility and engagement enhancement.

Concerning comprehensibility enhancement, we found initially that all elements in the cluster concern the same topic. However, apart from the pdf and the hypertext version of the article they all have different purposes. Hence, it was only relevant to investigate easification strategies leading to comprehensibility enhancement. The hypermodal technique of linking elements together has been applied, but only to a certain degree: All elements point to the article, but there is no link from the article to the whiteboard session video. Hence, the publishers have not fully used the potential of this strategy, indicating probably that they see the article as more central to their purposes than for instance the whiteboard session video. Apart from that, the analysis found a high degree of advantage taken of the affordances of the formats of the different elements of the cluster, like animations in videos, extracted citations in printed text, and links to supplementary information from the hypertext version.

It has also been shown that the analysed generic cluster negotiates between the communication of professional knowledge and of practical guidance by creating and sustaining various relations between the authors and web editors on one side and the potential web users, article readers or/and video viewers on the other side. The communication of professional knowledge is more nuanced in the digital environment of HBR because this environment empowers the web editors to provide a wider range of hypermodal dialogic alternatives that expand the possibilities to acquire issue-specific knowledge beyond the frame of the initial article written by the authors. However, these hypermodal dialogic alternatives also affect the dialogic engagement between the authors and the web users. Even the dialogically inert assertions of the monoglossic stance become dialogically active when the web editors intervene by hyperlinking them to similar or different domains of knowledge. The digital environment has also a clear impact upon the practical guidance that is offered in the HBR's digital context because this guidance combines hypermodally the issue-specific guidance offered by the authors and the web navigation guidance offered by the web editors that may or may not be related to the issues discussed in the authors' original article. When the web editors' guidance has an explicit HBR promotional goal that is not related to the issues discussed and/or visualized in the genre cluster, the effects are detrimental for the impact of the authors' communication of issue-specific professional expertise and practical guidance.

Certainly, due to its focus on depth rather than breath, this analytical work has some limitations, however, a certain degree of generalization might be permissible even if the empirical evidence is based on one case, namely a single generic cluster. Therefore, in keeping with our previous

papers, we encourage researchers interested in hypermodal knowledge communication to nuance the present research work by addressing other knowledge domains and other generic clustering strategies from similar perspectives.

Overall, we consider that contemporary knowledge communication in dynamic hypermodal contexts is both of great relevance and an ongoing challenge for communication scholars. Our common goal should be to move scholarship at the same pace as the present technological developments force us to do. We believe that preserving the present research pace will not allow us to influence the directions that these developments might take communication in the future.

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Article

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whiteboard session:

<https://hbr.org/video/5415413929001/whiteboard-session-the-business-case-for-sustainability>