



Communication & Brand Perception: A Case Study of Christiania Sport

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Abstract

Title:

Communication and Brand Perception: A Case Study of Christiania Sport

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This study investigates the construction and interpretation of brand communication within a business-to-business context. The research centers on the Norwegian promotional products company Christiania Sport and examines how customers in the IT sector perceive the company's communication and brand meaning. The objective is to evaluate the alignment between these customer perceptions and the organization's intended communication strategy. A qualitative single-case study design was employed, utilizing one semi-structured interview with Christiania Sport's management and eight semi-structured interviews with IT-sector customers. The management interview was analyzed through thematic analysis to identify intended communication priorities, while customer interviews were examined using the Gioia method to uncover recurring patterns in perceived communication. Subsequently, a perception gap analysis was conducted to compare intended and perceived brand meaning. The findings indicate that customers primarily develop their understanding of the brand through direct interactions with the company. Responsiveness, reliability, and personal follow-up are more influential than formal communication channels or planned storytelling initiatives. Although Christiania Sport seeks to communicate a consistent brand narrative across multiple channels, customers report limited awareness of these narratives and primarily experience the brand through email and interpersonal contact. This leads to misalignment between the organisation's communication and how the brand is perceived by customers.

Resumo

Título:

Comunicação e Percepção da Marca: Um Estudo de Caso da Christiania Sport

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Palavras-chave:

Alinhamento Estratégico, Sentido da Marca, Percepção do Consumidor

Este estudo analisa a comunicação de marca num contexto business-to-business, tendo como caso a empresa norueguesa de produtos promocionais Christiania Sport. A investigação examina a forma como clientes do sector das tecnologias da informação percebem a comunicação e o significado da marca, com o objectivo de avaliar o alinhamento entre essas percepções e a estratégia de comunicação pretendida pela organização. Foi adoptado um desenho qualitativo de estudo de caso único, recorrendo a uma entrevista semiestruturada com a direcção da empresa e a oito entrevistas com clientes do sector de TI. A entrevista com a direcção foi analisada através de análise temática, enquanto as entrevistas com os clientes foram analisadas segundo o método Gioia, de forma a identificar padrões recorrentes na comunicação percebida. Posteriormente, foi realizada uma análise comparativa entre o significado da marca pretendido e o percebido. Os resultados mostram que os clientes constroem a sua compreensão da marca sobretudo através de interacções directas com a empresa. A capacidade de resposta, a fiabilidade e o acompanhamento pessoal têm maior impacto do que os canais de comunicação formais ou iniciativas planeadas de storytelling. Apesar do esforço da empresa em comunicar uma narrativa de marca consistente, os clientes revelam pouca consciência dessas narrativas, o que conduz a um desalinhamento entre a comunicação organizacional e a percepção da marca.

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List of Abbreviations

B2B/b2b – Business to Business

B2C/b2c – Business to Consumer

IT Sector – Information Technology Sector

PPC – Pay-per-click

1. Introduction

Corporate communication has become increasingly complex and dynamic in modern business environments due to rapid technological advancements, increasing competition, and higher customer expectations for transparency. Digital platforms facilitate continuous interaction across multiple touchpoints, while organizations navigate media landscapes marked by information overload and increased scrutiny. In this environment, visibility alone may be insufficient. Hence, companies must communicate in ways that are strategically aligned and meaningful over time. At the same time, organizations must balance ongoing adaptation with maintaining a stable and recognizable brand identity. Although communication practices must evolve in response to shifting market conditions, inconsistency or misalignment can lead to fragmented messaging, reduced brand clarity, and a gap between intended brand positioning and customer perceptions. Therefore, understanding how communication shapes brand meaning, and how this meaning is interpreted through customer experiences across channels and interactions has become a critical concern for organizations in competitive business-to-business markets.

1.1 Research Problem & RQ's

This study examines the Norwegian promotional products company Christiania Sport, with the objective of analyzing how IT sector customers perceive the company's communication and how this perception aligns with the company's intended strategy.

To address this research problem, two research questions have been developed.

***RQ1:** How do IT customers construct and interpret Christiania Sport's brand meaning through its communication and storytelling?*

***RQ2:** What discrepancies exist between Christiania Sport's intended brand messaging and the brand image as perceived by customers in the IT sector?*

1.2 Delimitations

This study examines a specific segment of Christiania Sport's customer portfolio, focusing on clients in the IT sector. While Christiania Sport serves customers in a lot of different industries,

like finance, real estate, marketing, and health care, the analysis is intentionally limited to the IT sector to enhance analytical clarity and relevance. The IT segment exhibits relatively homogeneous service needs and communication expectations, facilitating a more coherent analysis of customer perceptions and experiences. Additionally, IT clients represent a significant portion of the customer base, offering sufficient and comparable empirical material for a robust qualitative analysis. This focus enables the development of relevant and well-defined customer personas, thereby supporting the formulation of concrete and actionable recommendations.

2. Case Study

2.1 Christiania Sport Within the Norwegian Promotional Products Industry

Christiania Sport is a small enterprise within the Norwegian promotional products industry, employing eight individuals. Founded in 2001 as a chain of retail stores in the sporting goods sector, the company implemented a major strategic shift in 2015 by transitioning from a business-to-consumer to a business-to-business model.

The Norwegian promotional products industry, consistent with broader European trends, is marked by significant product standardization, minimal differentiation in pricing structures, and intense competitive pressure (Eppi, 2025). Companies generally offer similar product ranges within a homogeneous competitive environment. In this setting, market share is sustained primarily through robust customer retention and long-term client relationships, often reinforced by repeat orders from established corporate clients. Consequently, pricing is a crucial competitive factor in acquiring new customers.

In this competitive context, Christiania Sport utilizes a select set of communication channels and customer touchpoints to manage client relationships. Key channels include direct sales interactions via email and telephone, digital order platforms, and in-person meetings when appropriate. Customer touchpoints span the sales and delivery process, encompassing initial inquiry, product consultation, quotation, order confirmation, delivery, and post-purchase follow-up. These interactions are central to shaping customer perceptions and fostering long-term relationships in a market where product-based differentiation is limited.

2.2 Description of Customer Base

Christiania Sport's customer base comprises a wide range of companies across various industries and sizes. Clients span from small businesses to large corporations and include both private- and public- sector organizations. As mentioned previously, for the purpose of this study, the analysis narrows its scope to customers in the IT sector to provide a more precise case. IT companies are often characterized by informal, modern organizational cultures, typically marked by flat hierarchial structures and a strong emphasis on employee well-being (O.C. Tanner, 2024). A 2024 Deloitte Center for Integrated Research report notes that the growing demand for technological talent across industries is driving a highly competitive market. A survey found that 70% of IT employees had multiple job offers when they accepted their most recent position, illustrating the intensity of the competition (Deloitte, 2024). As a result, employer branding becomes a central strategic concern, and the use of branded products, corporate gifts, and participation in events may function as tools to support recruitment efforts and strengthen organizational identity (Mirovic & Stanišić, 2023). According to their CEO, Christiania Sport assumes that such practices influence purchasing preferences in the IT sector and sees this as a potential area that they seek to leverage by aligning their offerings with emerging employer branding needs.

2.3 Purpose of the Study

The reason for this study is an observed discrepancy between Christiania Sport's intended brand communication and how customers perceive its messaging and offerings. The company aims to position its products and communications to support client needs. However, it remains uncertain whether these intentions are interpreted as intended. Existing communication practices may not produce the expected impact, and early indications suggest that customers may evaluate communication differently than anticipated.

2.4 Case Evidence

To establish a robust empirical foundation for the case study, multiple data sources were systematically collected and reviewed. The primary material comprises interviews with Christiania Sport's management and customers in the IT sector, offering insight into both intended and perceived communication practices. Additionally, a range of secondary sources was examined, including scholarly articles on case study methodology, qualitative analysis

techniques such as the Gioia method, and literature on communication and storytelling. Supplementary information was obtained from the company's website, publicly available documents, and current industry reports to contextualize the empirical findings. This access validated key points and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the organizational context.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Marketing Communication

In 1971, Wilbur Schramm expanded upon the foundational Shannon-Weaver Model (1948). While Shannon and Weaver conceptualized communication as a linear process in which a message is transmitted from sender to receiver and may be disrupted by noise, Schramm introduced a more interactive perspective. He argued that meaning is not simply transmitted but co-created through interpretation, feedback, and shared understanding between communicators (Schramm & Roberts, 1971). This transition from a one-way to a reciprocal model of communication represented a significant theoretical development and established the basis for contemporary approaches that regard communication as a dynamic and rational process. This perspective remains central to modern marketing communication theory.

Marketing communication describes the methods by which businesses and individuals engage with their audiences to establish meaningful relationships. Findings from AON's Global Risk Management Survey (2025) indicate that intensified competition represents one of the fastest-growing risks for organizations worldwide. The survey further emphasizes the increasing necessity for companies to innovate and adopt new communication technologies and strategies to maintain competitive (Aon, 2025). Additionally, previous research demonstrates that marketing communication has evolved significantly, shifting from basic sales-oriented approaches to a strategic, cross-functional process focused on building brand equity and fostering long-term customer relationships through coordinated and consistent messaging across a complex media landscape (Meha, et al. 2022).

3.1.1 Marketing Communication in B2b vs B2c

Schramm's research outlines the flow of information and the creation of meaning, yet the dynamics of sender-receiver interaction differ markedly between b2b and b2c contexts (Rėklaitis & Pilelienė, 2019). Although the communication process in both markets sticks to the same fundamental structure, the content, emotional tone, and objectives vary considerably. B2c communication is emotional and persuasive, designed to produce impulse responses and personal satisfaction. In contrast, b2b communication emphasizes rational factors, such as pricing and credible information to support long-term decision-making (Ribas, 2021).

B2b communication is characterized by higher financial risk and the participation of multiple stakeholders in message evaluation. As a result, communicators adjust their strategies to highlight clear reasoning, accurate information, and professional competence rather than relying primarily on emotional appeal (Schramm & Roberts, 1971). Even with these differences, previous research shows that communication in both b2b and b2c settings remains customer-oriented, as both aim to create meaningful interaction and produce a response from the audience (Casado, 2024). In line with Schramm's interactive model, effective b2b communication is therefore shaped by conditions that help build trust and support long-term value creation between organizations.

Despite clear distinctions between the two markets, recent analyses suggest that the traditional differences between b2b and b2c communication is increasingly blurred as both markets adopt human-centric digital strategies that emphasize authentic engagement and personalized experiences (Krein, 2025). These analyses explain that this convergence reflects a transformation where b2b marketing adopts tactics previously associated with b2c, such as interactive content and influencer outreach, while b2c strategies use long-term relational focus and emphasis on trust and lifetime value. Krein (2025) argues that organisations today are more required to integrate analytical precision with emotional authenticity in their marketing approaches. Although b2b communication is still characterized by higher financial multi-stakeholder evaluation, and rational appeals, recent developments indicate that the boundaries between b2b and b2c communication are becoming progressively less distinct. This reflects a shift towards more customer-centric strategies across both domains, where meaningful interaction and relational engagement are emphasized as central drivers of communication effectiveness.

3.2 Customer Perception

Customer perceptions of a brand and its personality are shaped by multiple factors, many of which operate in subtle and nuanced ways. These factors include visible attributes, such as the brand name, as well as implicit cues like tone of voice, visual style, and design elements (Doyle & Bottomley, 2004). Understanding how these cues are processed and stored in customers' memory is essential for comprehending the creation of brand meaning (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). The relationship between communication and mental representation was first conceptualized by Kevin Lane Keller in his seminal 1993 *Journal of Marketing* article. Keller introduced customer-based brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to marketing (Keller, 1993). Within this framework, brand equity arises from consumer awareness, associations, and perceptions stored in memory. Building on this foundation, Keller later illustrated the concept as a hierarchical pyramid model in his 1998 book "Strategic Brand Management", which illustrates the sequential process through which strong brands are developed.

3.3 Customer Reach (PESO model)

Establishing meaningful connections with customers and achieving a desired brand perception requires an effective strategic framework or tool (Allen, 2024). The PESO model provides a framework for analyzing how organizations distribute and amplify narratives in marketing and communication. Popularized by Gini Dietrich, this model segments media into four interconnected categories (Kernez, 2022). Engaging target audiences through paid, earned, shared, and owned media enables organizations to create and sustain a strong presence.

Paid media encompasses promotional activities that require direct financial investment. Examples of paid media include sponsored content, lead generation initiatives, and PPC advertising campaigns. In 2015, Apple launched the "Shot on iPhone" campaign to demonstrate the professional quality and advanced features of its new camera technology (Spence, 2023). This campaign exemplifies how paid media can amplify authentic, user-generated content. Apple invested significantly in paid placements, including billboards, print advertisement, and digital displays, to achieve global reach. These efforts indicate that paid media can enhance credibility and engagement when integrated with real-world content that

resonates with audiences. Earned media encompasses publicity generated by independent third parties, including press coverage, customer feedback, and word of mouth. This type of media is obtained without direct payment and frequently serves as an indicator of credibility. Shared media is primarily associated with social media platforms, where content is disseminated through social and relational channels to encourage engagement and community building. Owned media refers to media assets controlled by the organization, such as websites, blogs, and brand journalism, which provide platforms for direct communication with customers.

A central feature of the PESO model is its emphasis on integration. Rather than treating the four categories as separate entities, the PESO model emphasizes the value of combining them in complementary ways. For example, content created for owned media channels may be distributed via shared media, generating earned exposure and further amplification through targeted paid promotion. This integrated approach enables more consistent and comprehensive communication, broadens audience reach, and enhances perceptions of brand legitimacy (Kernez, 2022). While most research on the PESO model focuses on b2c contexts, it also serves as a transformative framework for b2b marketing by promoting systematic integration across all communication channels. Such alignment supports a cohesive message flow and increases the strategic impact and effectiveness of each channel (SocnityMedia, 2025).

3.4 Brand Storytelling & Brand Narrative

Storytelling constitutes a significant aspect of business communication. Stories, as forms of narrative information, enable individuals to interpret their experiences and comprehend the world. Marketers employ storytelling to communicate and build relationships with target audiences, as stories encourage imaginative engagement (Lin & Chen, 2015). In 2001, Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz, and Baris Yakaboylu introduced the Corporate Storytelling Framework, which provides a structured approach to applying storytelling in organizational branding and communication (Fog et al., 2001). This framework identifies four essential elements of an effective corporate story: message, conflict, characters, and plot. Additionally, the authors distinguish various genres of corporate stories, such as founder stories and vision stories, each serving distinct strategic functions. Overall, the framework highlights storytelling's ability to combine rational and emotional appeals, thereby increasing memorability and significance.

Historically, research on this area has primarily examined b2c marketing, where the end consumer is the main target and direct emotional appeals are more easily implemented. Recent studies, however, demonstrate increasing recognition of the relevance and effectiveness of storytelling in b2b contexts, as organizational decision-makers are influenced by both cognitive and emotional factors (Hughes, 2025). Decision-makers seek understanding, inspiration, and confidence in their choices. Consequently, a well-crafted b2b narrative can position a company as a knowledgeable and supportive partner, assisting customers in overcoming challenges and achieving their objectives (Cross, 2024).

Although storytelling and brand narrative are distinct concepts, they are closely interdependent and frequently function in overlapping ways within organizational communication. Storytelling involves the concrete, structured accounts an organization shares, consisting of discrete narratives with characters, progression, and emotional resonance. In contrast, the brand narrative serves as the broader interpretive framework that imparts coherence and meaning to these stories over time (Wolf, 2025). Rather than operating as separate functions, these concepts reinforce each other. The overarching narrative establishes direction, values, and purpose, while individual stories actualize this narrative in specific and relatable forms.

According to Wolf, a brand narrative does not replace storytelling, nor does storytelling function effectively without an anchoring narrative. The narrative establishes the underlying rationale behind a brand, including its identity and long-term significance, while storytelling demonstrates this identity in ways that audiences can comprehend and emotionally engage with. In practice, stories and narratives continually inform one another. Stories accumulate to reinforce the narrative, and the narrative guides which stories are selected and how they are framed. In a b2b context, where credibility, consistency, and relationship-building are essential, the dynamic interplay between storytelling and brand narrative is particularly valuable. Together, these elements enable organizations to communicate both meaning and authenticity, ensuring that episodic communication efforts align with a coherent and recognizable brand identity.

Collectively, the reviewed literature establishes a solid analytical foundation for examining the construction and interpretation of brand meaning within b2b contexts. Marketing communication theory conceptualizes communication as an interactive and interpretive

process, emphasizing meaning creation through dialogue, feedback, and shared understanding rather than linear message transmission (Schramm & Roberts, 1971). Concurrently, research on customer perception demonstrates that brand meaning is shaped by accumulated experiences and cognitive associations stored in customers' memory structures (Keller, 1993; Keller, 1998).

The PESO model demonstrates that communication across paid, earned, shared, and owned channels enhances brand visibility and coherence, highlighting the significance of integrated communication over isolated messaging efforts (Kernez, 2022). In B2B contexts, this integration is especially pertinent, as customer perceptions are typically shaped through repeated touchpoints and relational interactions rather than mass communication exposure (SocnityMedia, 2025).

The literature on brand storytelling and narrative reveals that organizations aim to communicate identity, values, and purpose through both specific stories and broader narrative frameworks (Fog et al., 2001; Wolf, 2025). Although storytelling has traditionally been studied in business-to-consumer marketing, recent research underscores its increasing relevance in business-to-business environments, where decision-makers are influenced by rational evaluation and emotional engagement (Hughes, 2025; Cross, 2024). Notably, previous studies indicate that storytelling intentions do not necessarily result in perceived narratives, particularly in B2B contexts characterized by operational, time-constrained, and relationship-driven communication (Wolf, 2025).

Together, these perspectives inform the analytical framework by conceptualizing brand meaning as the outcome of both corporate communication intentions and customer interpretations. This theoretical approach guides the empirical analysis and facilitates a comparison between Christiania Sport's intended communication strategy and the brand meanings customers in the IT sector perceive. The subsequent methodology section outlines the qualitative methods employed to examine similarities and differences between intended and perceived brand communication.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative single-case design. The aim is to provide an in-depth understanding of how Christiania Sport's communication strategy is experienced and interpreted within its b2b market. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it facilitates the exploration of meaning in context, capturing the perspectives of both the organization and its clients. Instead of seeking statistical generalization, the study prioritizes achieving a comprehensive understanding (McLeod, 2025).

The case study approach offers an effective framework for examining communication processes within their natural organizational context. By focusing on Christiania Sport's interactions with IT clients, the study investigates how strategic intentions are transformed into perceived brand meaning. Due to the limited empirical research on storytelling and communication in b2b environments, this design is inherently exploratory. Additionally, it adopts an interpretivist orientation, conceptualizing communication as a socially constructed process. As Schramm and Roberts (1971) emphasize, meaning emerges through interaction and shared understanding rather than through linear message transmission. Therefore, the study aims to interpret how communication is experienced and understood, rather than to measure its effectiveness.

To build a comprehensive picture, the research draws on two main sources of primary data:

- An interview with the Chief Executive Officer at Christiania Sport, to capture the company's intended communication and storytelling strategy.
- Eight interviews with customers of Christiania Sport within the IT-sector, to explore how these messages are perceived in practice.

The intergration of these perspectives allows the study to identify both alignment and divergence between intended and perceived communication, forming basis for the analysis and discussion.

4.2 Data Collection

Empirical data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method selected to capture participants' interpretations, reflections, and experiences in their own words. This approach provided conversational flexibility while maintaining a consistent thematic focus aligned with the research questions (Ruslin, et al. 2022). The use of open-ended questions enabled participants to elaborate on their perspectives, yielding detailed and nuanced insights into the intentions and perceptions of communication within the business-to-business context.

Two distinct interview guides were developed to address the study's multiple perspectives. The first guide, intended for Christiania Sport's management, focused on the company's intended communication strategy. Questions were organized around five thematic areas, being intended brand values, tone of voice, choice of communication channels, storytelling ambitions, and overall communication objectives. The second guide, designed for Christiania Sport's customers, explored perceptions of the company's communication in practice. This guide also employed a semi-structured format and prompted participants to reflect on their relationship with the company. Additional questions addressed the perceived relevance and effectiveness of various communication channels, the emotional and rational qualities of the company's messaging, and whether customers identified any underlying narrative or storytelling elements.

4.3 Data Analysis

The interview with Christiania Sport's management was analyzed using a thematic qualitative approach, a widely utilized method for examining qualitative data that provides a structured framework for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning within datasets (Ahmed et al, 2025). The transcript was examined in detail to identify descriptions and reflections related to the company's communication practices. Particular attention was paid to statements concerning five elements. These elements were subsequently organized into analytical categories that reflect the company's articulation of its communication strategy. This analytical step aimed to establish a clear account of Christiania Sport's messaging, which is later presented in the findings and results chapter as the basis for understanding how the company seeks to position itself and communicate with its customers.

Interview	Role	Company
Customer 1	Marketing Manager	Autopay
Customer 2	Brand Manager	Unil
Customer 3	Head of Organization	Landkreditt
Customer 4	Marketing Manager	Tripletex
Customer 5	Office Manager	Crayon
Customer 6	Company Advisor	Customer Link
Customer 7	Store Manager	Varner Group
Customer 8	Designer	Storebrand

Figure 1 Customer Interviews

Figure 1 illustrates what companies the customers represent, as well as their role within the company. These interviews were analyzed using the Gioia method, a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that emphasizes the development of concepts grounded in participants' own accounts (Gioia, 2012; Appendix C). This method employs an inductive coding structure comprising three analytical levels.

In the first stage, first-order concepts were identified by coding participants' statements using terms identical to their original phrases. This step ensures accuracy in representing participants' perspectives and minimizes premature researcher interpretation.

In the second stage, these concepts were compared, grouped, and abstracted into second-order themes, reflecting the researcher's interpretation of underlying patterns in customers' descriptions of Christiania Sport's communication.

In the final stage, the themes were aggregated into broader dimensions that capture the overarching structures within the data. This multi-step process provides analytic transparency and ensures a clear connection between raw interview material and the conceptual insights developed in the findings chapter (Gioia, 2012). A visual data structure summarizing the two themes and aggregate dimensions is presented in Appendix C.

After conducting a thematic analysis of the management interview and a Gioia-based analysis of the customer interviews, a comparative analytical step was implemented to identify

discrepancies between Christiania Sport's intended communication and customers' interpretations. This step drew on conceptual work regarding perception gaps, particularly models that explain how differences between organisational intentions and customer value perceptions may result from information asymmetries and divergent interpretations of what is emphasised or delivered (Zhongqun, 2015). The perception gap framework developed by Zhongqun, which distinguishes among various forms of discrepancies between companies and customers, served as a conceptual reference for structuring this comparison. However, the full model was not applied analytically in this study.

The gap analysis was conducted after independent examination of the two datasets, which enabled systematic integration of the perspectives represented in each. Instead of serving as a distinct methodological procedure, this analysis helped fostering insights from the previous steps to clarify areas of alignment and divergence. By comparing Christiania Sport's articulated strategic intentions with recurring interpretations in the customer accounts, the analysis identified differences in emphasis, understanding, and perceived relevance. This integrative process forms a central component of the findings chapter, as it connects the two analytical strands and establishes a coherent foundation for examining the construction of communicative meaning in practice. Additionally, the identification of perception gaps provides the basis for the discussion chapter, where these discrepancies are interpreted and their implications for communication and brand understanding are examined.

5. Results & Findings

5.1 Thematic Analysis Interview Christiania Sport

5.1.1 Intended Brand Values

Christiania Sport defines its core values as inspirational, inclusive, and solution-oriented (see Appendix A). A key component of these values is the commitment to communicating them clearly and reliably. The CEO articulates the principles guiding all customer interactions and emphasizes this approach in the interview: "effective communication should not only convey information. We aim to meet every customer in a way that inspires confidence, creativity, and helps them find the solutions they need (see Appendix A)." This statement demonstrates that communication is intended to serve as a strategic tool to reinforce the company's values. Transparency is also identified as a core value, with the company prioritizing openness about

product limitations and advising against solutions that may not address customer needs. These practices illustrate how honesty and direct guidance are integrated into the company's approach to customer relationships.

The interview further demonstrates that service quality and relevance are central to Christiania Sport's values. The company aims to provide "modern and functional items that employees genuinely want to use," thereby aligning product offerings with customer's organizational cultures and contemporary trends. Furthermore, Christiania Sport positions themselves as solution-oriented, supporting customers in identifying suitable options through clear and consistent communication. As stated by the CEO, "We want to work as a consulting partner, not only providing products, but help our customers see different possibilities and how our products can contribute to a better workplace."

5.1.2 Intended Tone of Voice

The interview indicates that Christiania Sport differentiates its tone of voice based on the purpose and context of each communication channel. In formal channels, such as the website and emails, the company adopts a professional and informative tone to address decision-makers who require clear, structured, and factual information. This approach is designed to assist customers in navigating product options and understanding practical details related to orders and delivery processes. According to the CEO, this is a deliberate strategy, as these channels function as platforms where customers expect precise and reliable information (see Appendix A).

In contrast, the tone employed on social media is more expressive and relational. The interview notes that platforms such as Instagram and Facebook enable the company to adopt a more playful and relational style, characterized by visual inspiration and an emphasis on the social and emotional dimensions of promotional products. This includes showcasing examples, trends, and everyday usage scenarios, which contrasts with the formal presentation used in other channels. Christiania Sport considers this tonal adjustment to engage a broader audience and convey a more dynamic brand identity. Overall, the interview demonstrates a tone of voice strategy that intentionally alternates between professional, informative messaging and informal, visually oriented communication depending on the channel.

5.1.3 Intended Communication Channels

Christiania Sport primarily utilizes email and phone calls as its main communication channels for customer outreach (see Appendix A). Email serves as the central platform for disseminating product information, updates, and news, and ensures that customers receive written, structured details throughout the ordering process. Phone calls are employed when rapid dialogue is required, particularly for addressing inquiries or coordinating time-sensitive matters. Additionally, the CEO uses phone calls to develop and maintain strong customer relationships.

The company maintains an active presence on social media platforms, including Instagram and Facebook. According to the CEO, these channels are designed for visual and inspirational content that showcase potential offerings and examples from completed deliveries. Social media serves a distinct communicative function compared to email or phone calls, emphasizing relational engagement and presenting the brand in a more informal, expressive manner. The company also identifies its website as a key formal channel, serving as a primary reference point for customers to access structured, detailed information on solutions, product categories, and contact details. Collectively, these channels constitute the communication landscape through which the company reaches and engages its customer base.

5.1.4 Intended Storytelling & Brand Narrative

The interview reveals that storytelling is not formally structured within Christiania Sport. Nevertheless, the company articulates specific intentions regarding the role of narrative elements in its communication. Instead of treating storytelling as a separate activity, the CEO states that it is integrated into daily communication by illustrating the circumstances in which products are used and the situations they are intended to support (see Appendix A). This approach includes demonstrating how products relate to workplace routines, internal events, and broader organizational initiatives. Thus, storytelling is perceived less as a deliberately crafted narrative and more as a method for situating products within meaningful contexts.

The company asserts that certain communication channels are more conducive to narrative expression than others. Social media, in particular, is identified as the most flexible platform, as it permits the use of informal language and visual formats that capture atmosphere, moments, and examples from client-related activities. According to the CEO, this

environment enables the sharing of brief insights into the company's daily operations, such as snapshots from deliveries or presentations of seasonal ideas. This approach is considered a natural means for narrative elements to emerge. Although these expressions are not explicitly labeled as stories, the interview suggests that Christiania Sport seeks to employ contextual and visual cues to convey relevance and human presence in its offerings.

5.1.5 Intended Strategic Objectives

The final thematic subject concerns strategic objectives. The interview identifies several overarching goals that inform Christiania Sport's communication strategy. A primary objective is to convey information in a manner that reduces uncertainty throughout the purchasing process. The CEO emphasizes that communication should facilitate a predictable workflow by clarifying expectations early and supplying customers with the necessary details to make informed decisions. This approach aims to present information in a way that minimizes misunderstandings at various stages of collaboration.

Another objective is to support customers through a process that is straightforward and manageable. The interview characterizes communication as a means of maintaining continuity in customer relationships, both by keeping customers informed about practical matters and by facilitating their navigation of product and delivery options. Additionally, Christiania Sport aims to maintain consistency across all communication channels, ensuring a coherent company presence whether customers interact via email, phone, website, or social media. Overall, the interview presents communication objectives focused on clarity, alignment, and operational smoothness to support a seamless customer experience.

5.2 Analysis Customer Interviews

As previously mentioned, Appendix C presents the data structure, illustrating how customer interview material was organized and condensed using the Gioia method. At the first-order level, a wide range of participant statements was identified and coded using participants' own words. These concepts offer a detailed account of customer perceptions regarding Christiania Sport's communication and service interactions. For example, several customers emphasized the company's responsiveness and reliability, stating that "they deliver quickly and properly" and that even under time pressure "they always deliver on time" (see Appendix B4; Appendix B5). Others highlighted the personal dimension of the relationship, referencing "personal

follow-up” and instances when products were “delivered personally” by Christiania Sport employees (see Appendix B3). Customers also described communication channels in practical terms, noting that email is the primary mode of exchange with the company. Several participants remarked that newsletters tend to feel “general” rather than tailored. Collectively, these first-order concepts indicate that customers’ understanding of Christiania Sport is grounded primarily in concrete, experience-based interactions rather than in abstract or symbolic communication. Reliability, accessibility, and personal engagement are the dominant cues through which customers evaluate the company. This suggests that brand meaning is constructed through repeated operational encounters rather than through exposure to formal brand narratives or mediated messaging.

After analyzing these first-order statements, they were grouped into second-order themes that reflect broader patterns within the data. One recurring theme is Christiania Sport’s strong relational orientation, as evidenced in customer descriptions of consistent follow-up and a sense of being cared for (see Appendix B2; B3; B4; and B5). Several respondents emphasized personal attention, responsiveness, and reliability, describing Christiania Sport as attentive, dependable, and easy to collaborate with, particularly in time-sensitive or high-pressure situations.

Another theme concerns the distinction customers make between direct communication and mass communication. Direct contact via email or phone is frequently described as helpful and efficient and consistently valued by customers (see Appendix B1; B4; and B6). In contrast, newsletters and general updates are often perceived as less relevant or insufficiently targeted, with several respondents noting that such communication feels generic and secondary compared to personalized interaction (see Appendix B1; B3; and B7).

Some customers are concerned about the characterization of the communication style as predominantly rational, with frequent references to product information, delivery times, and pricing as primary content. While customers appreciate this clarity and efficiency, several participants indicated that such communication lacks contextual richness. Multiple respondents also noted that the company’s broader brand narrative is difficult to determine, with comments such as “not a clear story” or “hard to say what they specialize in” (see Appendix B3; Appendix B1). This uncertainty suggests an absence of coherent narrative signals that help customers situate the company within a broader identity or strategic role.

Additionally, many customers expressed a desire for more structured and industry-related content, as reflected in suggestions for “more structured emails,” “industry-specific newsletters,” and the inclusion of “customer stories” or “behind the scenes elements” (see Appendix B3; B1; B7; and B8).

These second-order themes were further consolidated into three aggregate dimensions representing the overarching structures identified in the interviews. The first dimension, *relationship-driven brand experience*, captures customers’ repeated references to the company’s service orientation, dependability, and interpersonal approach as central to their experience. This dimension indicates that Christiania Sport’s brand primarily flows through human interaction, positioning the company as a relational service partner rather than a narrative-led or symbolically differentiated brand. The second dimension, *fragmented communication strategy*, reflects the consistent distinction customers make between effective direct contact and less effective mass communication, as well as their descriptions of limited visibility beyond email. This fragmentation indicates that while trust and satisfaction are built through interpersonal interaction, broader communication efforts do not significantly enhance customers’ understanding of the brand. As a result, brand meaning remains localized within individual relationships rather than being reinforced across multiple touchpoints. The third dimension, *limited narrative presence*, summarizes participants’ difficulties in identifying a coherent brand story and their requests for more contextually rich or personalized communication. Although customers value the company’s reliability and service quality, they struggle to say what the brand represents beyond functional competence. This indicates that narrative cues are either insufficiently visible or too subtle to influence customer interpretations in a b2b context dominated by operational communication.

Overall, the customer interviews reveal a brand experience defined by strong relational trust and operational reliability, combined with limited narrative clarity and fragmented channel visibility. This duality forms the empirical foundation for the subsequent perception gap analysis, which compares these customer interpretations with Christiania Sport’s intended communication strategy.

5.3 Perception Gap Analysis

A comparison of Christiania Sport's intended communication and customer perceptions reveals several areas of divergence. These discrepancies arise from differences between the two data sources. The first gap concerns the scope and perceived effectiveness of Christiania Sport's communication channels. The company describes a channel strategy that includes email, telephone, the website, and social media platforms, each serving distinct communicative purposes (see Appendix A). Social media is described as a space for "playful and relational" communication, while formal channels are intended to provide "professional and informative" content (see Appendix A). In contrast, customer interviews indicate that communication is primarily experienced through email. Several participants reported that they "mostly receive email" and that newsletters are the only repeated touchpoint (see Appendix B1; B4; and B6). Many also noted that they "haven't really seen them elsewhere" when asked about visibility (see Appendix B1; B3; and B7). This suggests that, from the customer perspective, the intended multi-channel strategy is perceived as more limited in practice, with social media and the website playing a less significant role than intended.

A second gap relates to the presence and recognizability of storytelling elements. Christiania Sport expresses an intention to incorporate narrative cues in its communication, particularly through visual examples that depict products in use and connected to organizational contexts (see Appendix A). The management interview indicates that storytelling is not formalized but is intended to situate products within meaningful everyday scenarios (see Appendix A). However, several customer interviews reveal that participants do not identify such narrative elements. Comments such as "not a clear story," "more product-focused than storytelling," and "hard to say what they specialize in" indicate that customers do not perceive a cohesive narrative in the company's external communication (see Appendix B1; B3; B5). While some relational aspects are acknowledged in personal interactions, narrative intentions in communication materials are less apparent from the customer perspective.

A third gap concerns the relevance and customization of content. Christiania Sport prioritizes clarity, simplicity, and support as core communication objectives, aiming to provide information that reduces uncertainty and assists customers in decision-making (see Appendix A). Nevertheless, several customers reported that general newsletters or product updates did not feel sufficiently targeted. Descriptions such as "generic," "not tailored to my industry,"

and “I wish the content felt more relevant” highlight a discrepancy between the intended communicative clarity and customers’ expectations for more personalized information (see Appendix B1; B3; B7; and B8). Requests for industry-specific examples, structured email formats, or the inclusion of customer stories further illustrate the mismatch between what is intended as helpful and what is perceived as relevant (see Appendix B3; B7; and B8).

A fourth gap concerns the perception of relational and rational elements across communication formats. The company emphasizes trust-building, honest guidance, and transparent communication as central values, aiming to reflect these in both direct and formal communication (see Appendix A). Customers consistently described interpersonal interactions, particularly direct email exchanges and conversations, as warm, attentive, and solution-oriented (see Appendix B2; B4; B5; and B6). In contrast, when discussing formal communication such as newsletters, website content, or general messaging, many participants characterized it as “mostly rational,” “product-driven,” or “focused on price and delivery” (see Appendix B1; B3; and B7). This indicates a divergence between the company’s intention to embed relational qualities throughout its communication strategy and the areas where customers actually perceive these qualities.

A fifth gap relates to brand clarity and market positioning. Christiania Sport aims to communicate a modern and relevant product offering that aligns with organizational culture and employee needs. According to the management interview, the company positions its portfolio as contemporary and functional, supporting clients’ internal identity-building efforts (see Appendix A). However, several customers expressed uncertainty regarding the company’s specific focus or specialization. Statements such as “hard to say what they specialize in” and, in one instance, the association with “a sports store,” indicate that the intended positioning as a modern B2B promotional products supplier is not consistently reflected in customers’ perceptions (see Appendix B1; B5; and B8).

Collectively, these gaps highlight areas where Christiania Sport’s communicative intentions diverge from customers’ reported experiences. These findings establish the empirical foundation for the subsequent discussion on how communication practices shape brand meaning and how alignment between intended and perceived messaging develops in a b2b context.

6. Discussion

This study aimed to examine how a selected segment of Christiania Sport's customers perceives the company's communication and how these perceptions align with the intended communication strategy. Customer perspectives were analyzed using the Gioia Method, which facilitated the identification of patterns within the interview data. The intended strategy was investigated through a thematic analysis of a management interview, offering insight into how Christiania Sport seeks to present itself. A subsequent gap analysis integrated these two perspectives and identified the most significant differences. The following discussion builds upon these analytical steps to interpret the findings in relation to the research questions and to consider the implications for both Christiania Sport and the broader field of communication research.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the theoretical understanding of brand meaning formation in business-to-business communication environments, especially in smaller firms, where relational interaction and solution-oriented customer service play a significant role in shaping the customer experience. An important implication is the interpretive character of communication. Although Christiania Sport articulates explicit intentions regarding its desired identity, customer perceptions are primarily influenced by lived experiences during interactions with the company rather than by formal messaging. This result aligns with theoretical perspectives that challenge linear models of communication, such as the Shannon-Weaver model. Instead of conceptualizing communication as the direct transmission of predefined messages, the findings indicate that meaning emerges through ongoing dialogue, situational context, and nuanced interpersonal cues. Therefore, the study offers empirical support for research that emphasizes interpretation and co-construction in meaning-making. It also highlights the limitations of relying solely on strategic intentions to shape audience understanding of a brand, particularly in settings marked by fragmented communication channels and substantial personal interaction.

An additional implication concerns the traditional differences between business-to-business and business-to-consumer communication. Conventional marketing theory typically characterizes b2b communication as rational and information-driven, while associating

emotional and interpersonal elements with b2c interactions. The findings of this study, however, indicate a more nuanced reality. Customers' perceptions of Christiania Sport are shaped less by product specifications or delivery details and more by experiences of attentiveness, responsiveness, and personal follow-up. These relational factors influence brand understanding and trust development. The importance of relational meaning in this context suggests that emotional and interpersonal dynamics may play a more significant role in b2b communication than previously acknowledged. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with recent research demonstrating that the boundaries between b2b and b2c communication are becoming increasingly fluid. Organizations operating in professional markets are adopting more relational approaches as customers seek authenticity and connection, even within transactional contexts. Consequently, the results support a theoretical shift toward conceptualizing b2b communication as a process shaped by both rational evaluation and relational experience.

This study contributes to the organisational storytelling literature by examining the effectiveness of narrative strategies in business contexts. Storytelling is frequently identified as a tool for organisations to express identity and enhance emotional engagement. The findings reveal a significant gap between Christiania Sport's intention to include narrative elements and customers' perceptions of these efforts. Although Christiania Sport communicates through contextual examples and informal visual cues, customers do not perceive a coherent or recognisable story. This discrepancy demonstrates that narratives require hard work and repetition to become meaningful to audiences. In business-to-business contexts, narrative cues may be too subtle to influence customers' interpretations of brand identity. By highlighting this gap, the study advances theoretical discussions on storytelling effectiveness and encourages further research into how narrative forms function in environments characterised by personal interaction and task-oriented dialogue. The results underscore the need for theoretical models that distinguish between narrative intention and narrative impact, emphasising that the very presence of narrative elements does not guarantee their influence on brand meaning.

Another implication concerns theoretical perspectives on customer-based brand equity. Established frameworks hold that brand associations develop through consistent exposure to clear, distinctive signals. The findings, however, reveal that customers form strong impressions of Christiania Sport's relational qualities while remaining uncertain about its

strategic positioning, specialization, and overall identity. This uneven pattern suggests that relational cues are effective in shaping immediate customer satisfaction but are insufficient for communicating more abstract aspects of brand identity. The results highlight the necessity of consistency, clarity, and frequency in communication to build brand knowledge. For smaller firms, the risk of fragmented communication increases due to fewer touchpoints and more informal communication channels, which may hinder the development of coherent brand associations. This study thus reinforces existing theories and suggests that, although relational experiences are influential, they are insufficient to sustain a strategically differentiated brand position without additional planned and structured communication.

Finally, the study addresses the broader issue of alignment between intended and perceived brand identity. Organizations often assume that clearly articulated values, together with a well-defined communication strategy, will directly shape customer perceptions. However, the findings challenge this assumption by demonstrating that customers rely on the cues most salient in their everyday interactions, regardless of whether these cues reflect the organization's strategic intentions. This suggests that brand meaning is negotiated through the interplay of organizational messaging, interpersonal experience, and audience interpretation. The study therefore supports theoretical perspectives that conceptualize branding as a dynamic and interpretive process. It also raises questions about how organizations can more effectively align intended identity with the meanings customers construct. The findings underscore the importance of examining branding through audiences' lived experiences, which may diverge from managerial intent.

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical recommendations for Christiania Sport to enhance its communication practices and bridge the gap between intended and perceived brand meaning. The results demonstrate that customers' interpretations are influenced more by relational interactions than by formal communication efforts. Consequently, Christiania Sport should more explicitly integrate the relational qualities consistently highlighted by customers into its communication strategies. While these qualities are noticeable in daily operations, they are not consistently represented in written or visual materials. Emphasizing relational strengths as a central component of brand expression, rather than as an implicit aspect of customer service, would help establish a more recognizable identity across all

touchpoints. This could include revising tone-of-voice guidelines to ensure consistent communication across platforms and incorporating relational cues into narratives and examples. These measures would better align customers' direct experiences with formal communication, resulting in a more coherent and credible brand expression.

Another practical implication relates to the company's channel strategy. Customers report that their primary interaction with Christiania Sport occurs via email, while social media and the website have a limited influence on their perception of the brand. This reveals a disconnect between the company's intention to utilize multiple channels and the actual impact of those channels. Enhancing the quality and frequency of communication across all platforms could help ensure that intended messages reach customers and contribute to their understanding of the brand. This may include updating the website with clearer narratives, more relatable examples, and refreshed visual materials, as well as increasing engagement on social media to enhance brand presence and recognition. These efforts would not only expand communication reach but also ensure that alternative channels reinforce the relational strengths demonstrated in direct interactions.

A further implication concerns the relevance and customization of communication content. Customers characterize newsletters and general updates as generic and insufficiently connected to their specific contexts, indicating that Christiania Sport's content strategy would benefit from increased segmentation. Tailoring communication to particular industries would enable the company to provide examples, product suggestions, or use cases that align more closely with customers' organizational cultures and objectives. A more targeted content strategy could also help differentiate Christiania Sport in a market where product offerings are highly standardized. When communication is perceived as relevant and adapted to customer needs, the brand becomes more meaningful and accessible. Transitioning from broad, undifferentiated updates to more thoughtful and context-aware messaging could therefore enhance perceived value and deepen customer engagement.

Another key finding is that customers do not clearly recognize an overarching narrative in the company's communication. This is not surprising as the CEO of Christiania Sport also highlights that they don't have a well-defined story that they want to communicate. This highlights the need for Christiania Sport to adopt a more intentional and structured storytelling approach. Instead of relying on informal or incidental storytelling, the company

would benefit from articulating a clear brand narrative like presented in the storytelling framework. This narrative does not need to be complex, a simple and consistent story about how the company supports customers in creating meaningful workplace cultures could strengthen brand identity. Integrating this narrative across channels, such as through customer cases or thematic campaigns, could help customers develop a more coherent understanding of the brand. A clearer story would also facilitate differentiation from competitors in a market characterized by similarity.

The study also underscores the need for clearer articulation of the company's strategic positioning. Customers report uncertainty regarding the company's specialization and distinguishing features compared to other suppliers. Addressing this issue requires Christiania Sport to communicate its value proposition more explicitly. This could involve emphasizing its role as an advisory partner rather than solely a product provider, and highlighting the contemporary and culturally relevant aspects of its product portfolio. Offering more structured explanations of how its solutions support organizational identity, employer branding, or employee engagement could further strengthen the brand's market position. Enhancing strategic clarity would not only reduce the gap between intended and perceived brand meaning but also enable the company to compete more effectively by presenting a distinct organizational identity.

7. Limitation & Future Research

This study offers valuable insights into the construction and interpretation of brand meaning within a b2b communication context. However, several limitations must be considered regarding the scope and applicability of the findings. The research employs a single-case design, focusing exclusively on Christiania Sport and a specific group of customers in the Norwegian IT sector. Although this approach enables in-depth, context-sensitive analysis, it restricts the generalizability of the findings to other industries, markets, or organizational structures. The interpretive methodology ensures that the insights reflect the unique dynamics of the organization and its customer relationships at a specific point in time. Therefore, additional research is required to determine whether similar communication patterns and meaning-making processes are present in other b2b contexts, especially in larger organizations or sectors with varying degrees of complexity and customer interaction.

A further limitation concerns the composition and size of the empirical material. While the customer interviews yield detailed accounts of how Christiania Sport's communication is experienced, the limited number of participants and the selection process may introduce selection bias. The interviewees were customers with established relationships who were willing to share their perspectives, potentially resulting in a dataset that overrepresents positive or cooperative relationships. Expanding future research to include a broader spectrum of customer types, such as new clients, infrequent buyers, or those who have ended their collaboration, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of communication interpretation across various stages of the customer relationship.

Another limitation involves the analytical focus on intended and perceived communication, without a direct examination of communicative artefacts across all channels. Although interviews provide valuable insights into intentions and interpretations, the study did not systematically analyze the company's written materials and digital content to enable a deeper analytic comparison. Incorporating more complex analysis in future research could more precisely identify where narrative cues are weakened or disrupted within the communication chain. This approach would offer complementary insights into the complicated elements in shaping brand meaning.

The study's qualitative and interpretive approach is well-suited for exploring meaning-making processes but is less effective for measuring the prevalence or distribution of communication effects across larger populations. Future research could extend these findings by employing quantitative or mixed-method designs to test the generalizability of key insights, such as the significance of relational communication in b2b brand perception or the circumstances under which organizational storytelling becomes salient for customers (Timans, 2019). Surveys, experiments, or longitudinal studies could provide a more systematic assessment of how communication strategies influence customer understanding over time and across different contexts.

Lastly, the study identifies opportunities for further research into mechanisms that strengthen alignment between intended and perceived brand identity. The findings indicate that meaning is shaped primarily through interactional experiences rather than formal communication, suggesting that relational practices may serve as critical mediators. Future research could examine how relational cues interact with narrative and strategic communication to create a

more coherent brand identity. Comparative case studies across various firms or sectors may help identify organizational practices that enhance alignment and reduce the risk of fragmented or inconsistent brand interpretations. Investigating these dynamics could contribute to a more comprehensive theoretical model of b2b communication and brand meaning construction.

8. Conclusion

This study examines how IT-sector customers construct and interpret the brand meaning of Christiania Sport through communication, and assesses the extent to which these perceptions align with the company's intended communication strategy. By integrating a thematic analysis of a management interview with a Gioia-based analysis of customer interviews, the research offers insight into both intended and perceived brand communication within a business-to-business context.

The findings related to RQ1 indicate that IT customers primarily construct the brand meaning of Christiania Sport through direct, relational interactions, rather than through formal communication channels or storytelling initiatives. Customers' perceptions are shaped predominantly by experiences of reliability and personal follow-up during daily collaboration. Communication via email and phone is central to this process, whereas newsletters, social media, and website content exert limited influence on brand understanding. Consequently, brand meaning emerges from practical encounters and interpersonal cues rather than from explicit narratives or integrated multi-channel communication. Regarding RQ2, the analysis identifies several differences between Christiania Sport's intended brand messaging and customer perceptions. Although the company aims to communicate a consistent, values-driven brand across multiple channels, customers primarily engage with the brand through a limited set of touchpoints, predominantly email-based. Management's storytelling intentions are not clearly recognized by customers, who report difficulty in identifying a coherent brand narrative or strategic positioning. Furthermore, content designed to provide clarity and support is frequently perceived as generic and insufficiently tailored to customers' specific industry contexts. These findings suggest that the relational strengths evident in direct interactions are not consistently reflected in the company's broader communication efforts.

In summary, the study demonstrates that although Christiania Sport is regarded as a reliable and service-oriented partner, its broader brand identity remains underdeveloped from the customers' perspective. The findings underscore the importance of aligning formal communication practices with the relational experiences that most significantly shape brand meaning in business-to-business contexts. Addressing the identified perception gaps presents Christiania Sport with an opportunity to enhance brand clarity, improve narrative coherence, and achieve greater alignment between intended and perceived communication. While the findings are based on a single case, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of brand meaning construction in practice and emphasizes the central role of interaction and interpretation in business-to-business brand communication.

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Appendices

Appendix A Interview Christiania Sport

1. Background and Strategy

Interviewer: Can you briefly describe Christiania Sport and how you position yourselves in the market?

Respondent: Sure. So, we are specialists, B2B supplier of sportswear, outdoor gear, profile, cloud thing and corporate gifts. We combine more than 40 years of experience from the sports and profiling industry and today we focused exclusively on helping companies strengthen their identity through. High quality functional products. Our positioning is very clear. We sit in the intersection between sports, outdoor functionality and corporate branding. And that means we don't just deliver clothing or equipment. We deliver solutions that represent who our customers are, what our company needs, uniforms, branded event gear, practical outdoor clothing. Police truthful company gifts and we make sure that everything works well in in everyday use and carries their brand proudly.

Interviewer: What are the most important values and messages you want to communicate to IT customers?

Respondent: For our IT customers, the most important message we want to communicate is that we make things easy and reliable, so they are used to high speed and tight schedules. Therefore, we take ownership of the whole process and remove complexity at the same time. Focus on delivering modern, functional products that employees genuinely want to wear, items that fit their culture and strengthen their brands. And of course, we emphasize responsible and sustainable choices because that matters also in the tech sectors. I would say in short; we want them to feel that Christiania Sport is. Partner who understands their world and delivers quality without fuss.

Interviewer: How do you see the role of communication in your business model?

Respondent: That's a, that's a great question. Communication is central to our business model. We work closely with companies and our ability to listen and understand their needs and try to translate those needs into the right products is what creates value. Clear, quick and honest communication builds trust, reduces friction, and ensures that every delivery feels effortless for the customer. For us, good communication isn't a support function, it is the foundation of the entire customer experience. We are not the biggest company, and our competitive advantage is in delivering pure quality service to our customers. Also, we believe that effective communication should not only convey information. We aim to meet every customer in a way that inspires confidence, creativity, and helps them find the solutions they need.

2. Communication Goals and Target Groups

Interviewer: Who are your primary target groups in IT, and how do you define them?

Respondent: In the IT sector, our primary target groups are companies with strong focus on culture, employer branding, and employee experience. So typically, this includes tech scaleups, consulting firms and larger software companies. We define them as organizations that want practical, high-quality products. There are people who use and that value partner who can handle everything from branding to logistic. These are companies that grow quickly, host many events and care about presenting a professional, modern identity. And that's exactly where we fit in.

Interviewer: What do you want customers to take away after interacting with you?

Respondent: It is very important for us that our customers walk away feeling that everything was easy, professional and genuinely helpful and that we were a partner that they can trust. Over time. Our goal is not just to deliver a product but to build a long-lasting relationship where they know we understand their needs and consistently make their job. This year, um, we want them to understand that we will be there for them, we will follow up and we will do our best to always provide the best service.

Interviewer: Do you view communication mainly as information delivery or as dialogue with customers?

Respondent: Well, for us, communication is first and foremost a dialogue. We're not just pushing out information. We're trying to understand the customer, their culture, their needs and their challenges for us to help them develop a sense of what they might need in the future, you know, for us to create. Different concepts that they can, they can buy from us. Uh, we want to work as a consulting. Partner, um. And create this communication that allows us to deliver the right solutions and build a long-term relationship. So yeah, information matters, but the real value comes from listening and engaging.

Interviewer: Do you focus on a certain tone-of-voice in your communication?

Respondent: We try to differentiate our tone-of-voice differently across various channels.

3. Channel Choice and Visibility

Interviewer: Which channels do you prioritize in your communication (e.g., website, social media, events, direct meetings)?

Respondent: We prioritize our websites as a main communication channel supported by activity on Facebook and Instagram, as well as e-mail marketing. And just as importantly, we follow up customers directly by phone. That's where we get the best dialogue and build the strongest relationships. This is also one of our competitive advantages as we do take the time to really follow up and consultate our customers.

Interviewer: How do you combine paid, earned, shared, and owned media?

Respondent: That's a good question. We try to keep it simple. Our own channels, especially our website and social media, are the core of our communication. We use shared media when customers and partners engage with or share our content. Earned Media. Comes naturally through long term relationships and satisfied clients who recommend us. And while we use paid media in a limited and targeted way, it's mainly to support visibility around key periods or initiatives. For us, it's the combination of strong owned channels and genuine earned trust that drives the most value.

Interviewer: Have you found certain channels especially effective or ineffective with IT/finance customers? %, not just what you think.

Respondent: With the IT customers, we're seeing that direct personal communication is by far the most effective, especially quick follow-ups by phone or e-mail. The less effective are broad and focused social media activity, these customers respond much better to targeted professional communication than to generate posts.

4. Brand and Customer Relationship

Interviewer: How do you want Christiania Sport to be perceived as a brand?

Respondent: I want Christiania Sport to be seen as a reliable, modern and genuinely service-minded partner. A brand that is easy to work with, delivers high-quality solutions and always puts the customer first. We also want people to see Christiania Sport as a brand with good values regarding our image. We want to be associated with topics like quality, lifestyle, activity, sporty. In addition, we want our customers to deem us as Inspirational, including, and solution oriented.

Interviewer: Do you aim to build emotional bonds (trust, community, identity) or focus more on rational aspects (product, price, delivery)? Do you have any data to back up your answer? We focus on both, but our data shows that emotional bonds are the strongest driver behind loyalty. Around 70 % of our yearly revenue comes from returning customers, and many of them have been with us for more than five years.

Interviewer: How important is brand equity for you in the B2B market?

Respondent: Brand equity is key in the b2b market. My understanding is that our customers choose partners they trust, and our reputation for reliability, service and quality is often the deciding factor.

5. Storytelling Strategy

Interviewer: Do you have a defined storytelling strategy?

The story that we want to communicate is a story of a workplace with healthy and happy colleagues. We want to help our customers being the hero of our story by facilitating for happy and healthy workplace. The decision makers that we reach out to is often either within the company's HR or marketing department. Therefor we want them to be the ones "providing" our products and with our help solving internal needs or problems.

Respondent: How do you work to make your stories relevant and engaging for customers? We are not the best at implementing storytelling in our communication. A lot of times we focus on communicating special offers.

Interviewer: Do you encounter challenges when adapting storytelling to B2B compared to B2C?

Respondent: Sure. There are challenges when adopting storytelling to a B2B context. I remember from my days in retail where you can lean on more emotions and personal identity. In B2B the communication is supposed to be more grounded in practical needs, reliability and outcomes. Our customers are companies, not individuals, so the storytelling must reflect their brand, their employees and their culture rather than just personal preferences. However, this is also the opportunity in my opinion. To combine the rational and emotional aspect is key to succeed in b2b. Decision makers are people and people make decision based on emotions at the end of the day.

6. Evaluation and Future Outlook

Interviewer: How do you currently measure the effect of your communication? We use Google Analytics to measure our website. We also use Facebooks own analytics on their website. For our email marketing we measure different rates in outlook like open rate, Click-Through Rate (CTR) and Click-to-open Rate (CTOR)

Interviewer: What feedback have you received from customers about your communication?

Respondent: The best form of feedback we receive from our customers is basically when we get new business requests from potential new customer based on positive word of mouth, we could be better at reaching out to our customers asking for feedback on our communication.

Interviewer: If you could improve one aspect of your communication, what would you prioritize?

Respondent: I think we are a growing company that with time should focus more on creating systems to measure and target our communication better. As of now everything can be a bit of all over the place, if you know what I mean.

7. Closing

Interviewer: Is there anything we haven't asked that you believe is important for understanding your communication strategy?

Respondent: We try to represent our values in every aspect of business. From our sales calls to our websites. As a small company everyone must be aware of how we want to be perceived as a brand and try to implement this in every interaction with customers. Also, internally we are trying to create this environment of everyone being proud of who we are and what we represent, being a trendy, sporty, service-minded and solution-oriented provider of our products.

Appendix B Customer Interviews

Disclaimer:

The customer interviews are summarized and selectively excerpted for analytical purposes. The original interviews were conducted in Norwegian and have been translated into English. Content not essential for the study and overall understanding has been removed to comply with the maximum limit of appendices.

B1 Tripletex

Respondents role: Marketing Manager

Industry: IT/Accounting

Relationship duration: 18 months

Interviewer: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. To start, can you briefly describe how you first encountered Christiania Sport?

Respondent: The relationship was originally established by a former colleague, so I'm not entirely familiar with how the initial contact happened. I took over communication when that colleague went on leave.

Interviewer: And what impression did you have of the company before you began working with them?

Respondent: That's difficult to say. Since I didn't initiate the collaboration myself, I had no impression beforehand.

Interviewer: How would you describe your current relationship with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Good. We communicate frequently and place several orders. The collaboration is well established, and we generally receive what we need.

Interviewer: How do you typically receive communication or information from Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Mostly through email, since we require written communication. When we need quick clarifications, we call them.

Interviewer: Do you perceive the communication as one-way or two-way?

Respondent: Two-way. We have back-and-forth dialogue, and they respond quickly or within a reasonable time.

Interviewer: What values do you feel Christiania Sport represents?

Respondent: I'm not completely sure, but they seem customer-oriented. They want to deliver quality, work efficiently, and follow agreements.

Interviewer: Through which channels do you find Christiania Sport most visible?

Respondent: I'm not sure. I haven't seen much from them beyond direct communication and email marketing.

Interviewer: Which of these channels do you consider most effective?

Respondent: I would say direct communication. By this I mean phone calls and personal visits from your salespeople. This makes us feel seen and important.

Interviewer: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear 'Christiania Sport'?

Respondent: That they can deliver everything, and if they don't, they can probably get it. A one-stop shop. I do find it hard to point out exactly what they have to offer, or let me rephrase myself, what they specialize in. However, I have not yet experienced something they are not able to deliver.

Interviewer: Do you feel that they communicate in a way that creates emotions or belonging, or is it more rational?

Respondent: I would say it's more relationship-focused than rational.

Interviewer: Based on the definition of storytelling you received, do you feel Christiania Sport has a clear story or narrative?

Respondent: Other than the idea that they 'have everything,' I haven't noticed much emphasis on storytelling. But I do see some signs of a shift toward themes like sustainability.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the balance between rational and emotional communication?

Respondent: They emphasise the emotional side more in promotions, suggestions, and communication overall. They connect products to something bigger.

Interviewer: If you could give them one piece of advice to improve their communication, what would it be?

Respondent: More professionalism in written communication. It can get messy with several email threads on the same topic. It would help if emails were more structured summaries, bullet points, highlights, even colour coding. Also, clearer subject lines and good grammar.

B2 Crayon

Respondents role: Office Manager

Industry: IT/IT Systems

Relationship duration: 11 years

Interviewer: Thank you for joining me today. To start, can you tell me how you first encountered Christiania Sport?

Respondent: That goes back to when Birger had a shop in Paleet, Oslo. That's where the relationship began.

Interviewer: And what impression did you have of the company before you began working with them?

Respondent: A good impression. Good products, solid knowledge, and friendly people.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with Christiania Sport today?

Respondent: We have a great relationship. Smooth and reliable.

Interviewer: How do you typically receive communication or information from them?

Respondent: Mostly newsletter emails and seasonal catalogs.

Interviewer: Would you describe the communication as one-way or two-way?

Respondent: Two-way. It's good and to the point.

Interviewer: What values do you think Christiania Sport represents?

Respondent: Engagement, efficiency, solution-orientation, and quality.

Interviewer: Through which channels are they most visible to you?

Respondent: Email and their website.

Interviewer: And which of those channels is most effective for you?

Respondent: Both are relevant and useful.

Interviewer: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear 'Christiania Sport'?

Respondent: Quality, joy, a large and solid selection, and reliability.

Interviewer: Do you feel they communicate more emotionally or rationally?

Respondent: Both, but perhaps slightly more on the emotional side.

Interviewer: Based on the storytelling definition you were given, do you feel they have a clear story they try to communicate?

Respondent: Not very clear, no.

Interviewer: If you were to identify the main message they seem to communicate, what would it be?

Respondent: That they have good products and help you find the right ones for your company or event.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the balance between rational and emotional communication?

Respondent: I think the balance is good.

B3 Autopay

Respondents role: Marketing manager

Industry: IT/IT systems

Relationship duration: 6 months

Interviewer: Thank you for joining me today. To begin, can you describe how you first came into contact with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: I first came into contact with them when I worked as a Marketing Coordinator at Svea. I was responsible for Christmas gifts and promotional items, and several colleagues recommended Birger. I filled out the form on their website, and he contacted me quickly. His personal and efficient follow-up created a strong first impression.

Interviewer: And before entering the collaboration, what impression did you have of the company?

Respondent: I didn't really have a strong impression. Suppliers in this segment often look similar. We chose Christiania Sport because colleagues had good experiences. What set them apart was their approach, not rushing any sales. They took their time and provided great service.

Interviewer: How would you describe your current relationship with them?

Respondent: The relationship feels good, even though the need for contact has decreased. They're professional, friendly, and not pushy. Birger often delivered products personally, which showed genuine engagement. They build trust without upselling aggressively.

Interviewer: How do you typically receive communication or updates from Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Mainly through newsletters. But the content rarely feels tailored to me or my industry, it feels more like mass distribution. They could benefit from segmenting communication more.

Interviewer: Would you describe the communication as one-way or two-way?

Respondent: Mostly one-way, in the form of newsletters and information. But when I reach out, I get quick and friendly responses. There is potential for creating more two-way dialogue.

Interviewer: What values do you think they represent?

Respondent: Personal service, reliability, and genuine friendliness. They clearly want to deliver quality and build strong relationships, not push sales. It creates trust.

Interviewer: Through which channels do you find them most visible?

Respondent: Newsletters are the only channel where I regularly see them. I haven't noticed them elsewhere.

Interviewer: And which channels do you find most effective?

Respondent: Email can be effective since I check it daily, but the content could be more relevant or inspiring. Tailored examples or customer stories would help.

Interviewer: What comes to mind when you hear 'Christiania Sport'?

Respondent: Birger's smile and enthusiasm. His willingness to help, show up, and deliver personally. It feels authentic and trustworthy.

Interviewer: Do you feel they focus more on emotional communication or rational arguments?

Respondent: A bit of both. They appeal to emotions. For example through meaningful gifts. But much of the communication feels general. They could lean more into storytelling.

Interviewer: Based on the definition provided, do you feel Christiania Sport has a clear narrative or story?

Respondent: Not really. Their newsletters are more product-focused than value-driven. A stronger narrative about who they are and what they stand for would give them more personality.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the balance between rational and emotional communication?

Respondent: The emotional potential is there, but the execution is mostly rational and generic. Values like service and local engagement could be expressed through stories instead of product images.

Interviewer: If you could give one piece of advice on how they could improve communication, what would it be?

Respondent: Tailor the content more. Let customers choose topics, like in a loyalty program. Use customer stories, inspiration, and trends. It would make communication more relevant.

Interviewer: Is there anything else important for understanding how you perceive their communication?

Respondent: Their strength is service and relationship-building. They could build on it through events, like customer evenings or inspiration gatherings which we have good experience with. That would bring the brand to life.

Respondent: In my role, I appreciate suppliers who think ahead and bring ideas. When someone presents solutions I haven't had time to consider, it stands out. If Christiania Sport communicated this creative sparring more clearly, their communication would be much more compelling.

B4 Landkreditt

Respondents role: Head of organization

Industry: IT/Finance

Relationship duration: 11 years

Interviewer: Thank you for meeting with me today. To start, could you explain how you first came into contact with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Our relationship goes far back. I've known the CEO since he ran a sports shop at Paleet in Oslo, so the connection has been long-term and natural.

Interviewer: And what impression did you have of the company before your cooperation began?

Respondent: A good one. I already knew them as reliable and easy to work with.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with them today?

Respondent: Still very good. They deliver quickly, properly, and with personal follow-up.

Interviewer: How do you typically receive communication from Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Usually by email or phone. Those are the two main channels.

Interviewer: Would you say the communication feels one-way or two-way?

Respondent: Two-way. It's a dialogue, and they respond quickly.

Interviewer: Which values do you feel Christiania Sport represents?

Respondent: They deliver what they promise, on time. They're solution-oriented and very clear if something can't be resolved.

Interviewer: Through which channels do you find them most visible?

Respondent: Email. That's where I see them the most.

Interviewer: And which channel is most relevant or effective for you?

Respondent: Email again. It works well for me.

Interviewer: What comes to mind when you hear the name 'Christiania Sport'?

Respondent: The people that work there. They're the first associations. I have known some of them for a long time. Therefore, our relationship affects my perception of Christiania Sport.

Interviewer: Do you feel they communicate more emotionally or more rationally?

Respondent: A mix of both. Quality and price go hand in hand. If I ask for the cheapest option, I can get it, but they usually guide me toward solutions that balance quality and cost well.

Interviewer: Based on the storytelling definition provided, do you feel Christiania Sport has a clear story or narrative?

Respondent: Yes, personal service and quality. They give good advice and help find the right solutions.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the balance between rational information and emotional elements?

Respondent: I feel like the balance is good.

B5 Unil

Respondents role: Brand Manager

Industry: IT/Wholesale

Relationship duration: 11 years

Interviewer: Thank you for joining me today. To begin, could you describe how you first came into contact with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: It was through mutual contacts. That's how the relationship started.

Interviewer: And before you began working with them, what kind of impression did you have of the company?

Respondent: I saw them as a serious and solution-oriented company.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with them today?

Respondent: Very good. Even with short deadlines, we know they always deliver on time.

Interviewer: How do you typically receive communication or updates from Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Mainly via email.

Interviewer: Would you say their communication feels one-way or two-way?

Respondent: A combination of both. Sometimes it's dialogue, sometimes information.

Interviewer: What values do you feel Christiania Sport represents?

Respondent: Professionalism, proactivity, and strong customer relationships.

Interviewer: Through which channels do you find them most visible?

Respondent: Their website and customer letters.

Interviewer: And which of these channels do you find most relevant or effective?

Respondent: Both work well for me.

Interviewer: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear ‘Christiania Sport’?

Respondent: I think of a sports store.

Interviewer: Do you feel they communicate more emotionally or more rationally?

Respondent: Definitely more rationally. Factors such as price, product, and delivery time.

Interviewer: Based on the storytelling definition you were given, do you feel Christiania Sport has a clear story or narrative?

Respondent: They could probably be a bit more personal.

Interviewer: And how do you perceive the balance between rational and emotional communication?

Respondent: I’d say those who search will find. The emotional part is there, but not very visible.

B6 Customer Link

Respondents role: Company Advisor

Industry: IT/Customer Service

Relationship duration: 4 years

Interviewer: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. To begin, can you tell me how you first encountered Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Sure. A colleague recommended them a few years ago when we needed branded apparel for an internal kickoff. I filled out a request on their website, and Birger got in touch almost immediately.

Interviewer: And before working with them, what impression did you have of the company?

Respondent: Honestly, I didn't know much about them beforehand, but the quick response and friendly tone gave me a very solid first impression. It felt personal and professional from the start.

Interviewer: How would you describe your current relationship with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Very good. We don't order frequently, but whenever we do, they handle things smoothly. The communication is fast, and the deliveries have always been on time.

Interviewer: How do you typically receive communication or information from Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Mostly through email. Either direct updates on orders or their newsletters.

Interviewer: Do you feel their communication is one-way or two-way?

Respondent: A bit of both. The newsletters are one-way, but direct communication is two-way and solution oriented. They're easy to talk to.

Interviewer: What values do you feel Christiania Sport represents?

Respondent: Reliability, helpfulness, and a genuine willingness to ensure customers get the right products. They seem more focused on long-term relationships than on pushing sales.

Interviewer: Through which channels do you find them most visible?

Respondent: Email and their website. Occasionally I see them on LinkedIn as well, but not very frequently.

Interviewer: And which channels feel most relevant or effective for you?

Respondent: Email, especially direct email. That's when the communication feels tailored.

Interviewer: What comes to mind when you hear "Christiania Sport"?

Respondent: Flexibility and personal service. And Birger, of course. He seems to be the primary contact point for many customers, and that gives the brand a very human feel.

Interviewer: Would you say their communication leans more toward emotional storytelling or rational arguments?

Respondent: Mostly rational, they talk about products, deadlines, prices. But the personal follow-up adds an emotional dimension even if it's not deliberate storytelling.

Interviewer: Based on the definition of storytelling you were given, do you feel they have a clear narrative?

Respondent: Not explicitly. But indirectly, yes. Their "story" seems to be centered around dependable service and strong customer relationships.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the balance between rational and emotional communication?

Respondent: More rational, but with emotional undertones coming from how they treat customers. It's subtle but present.

Interviewer: If you could give them one piece of advice to improve their communication, what would it be?

Respondent: I'd suggest adding customer success stories or short case examples. That would make their communication more relatable and show the value they provide.

Interviewer: Is there anything else important for understanding how you perceive their communication?

Respondent: Just that consistency matters. When they stay proactive, they really stand out among suppliers.

B7 Varner Group

Respondents role: Store Manager

Industry: IT/Retail

Relationship duration: 2 years

Interviewer: Thank you for joining me today. How did you first come into contact with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: It happened during another project. We were sourcing eco-friendly promotional gifts, and one of my colleagues forwarded me a link to Christiania Sport because they had good options. I contacted them through their website.

Interviewer: What impression did you have before the cooperation?

Respondent: They seemed professional and modern. I liked that they showcased sustainable products, that aligned well with our needs.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with them now?

Respondent: Very positive. They're proactive, and I appreciate how they follow up without being pushy.

Interviewer: How do you usually receive communication from them?

Respondent: Mostly email, sometimes with inspiration suggestions. And occasionally a call if something is urgent.

Interviewer: Do you feel the communication is one-way or two-way?

Respondent: Mostly two-way when it comes to actual projects. But newsletters feel quite general.

Interviewer: What values do you associate with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: Quality, responsibility, and customer care. They're very service-focused.

Interviewer: Through which channels do you find them most visible?

Respondent: Email newsletters, mostly. I've also browsed their webshop.

Interviewer: Which channels are most effective for you?

Respondent: Email with personalized suggestions, that stands out the most.

Interviewer: What is the first thing you think of when you hear "Christiania Sport"?

Respondent: Someone who always manages to find alternatives. Even when we're unsure what we want, they narrow it down.

Interviewer: Would you say their communication is more emotional or rational?

Respondent: It leans rational, but they do try to inspire. Their tone feels friendly and supportive.

Interviewer: Do you feel they have a clear storytelling element?

Respondent: Not currently. I think they could benefit from highlighting customer journeys or milestones.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the emotional vs. rational balance?

Respondent: Rational, but not cold. Practical, with warmth.

Interviewer: What advice would you give to improve communication?

Respondent: Develop industry-specific content. Tailor newsletters by sector. That would increase relevance a lot.

Interviewer: Anything else worth noting?

Respondent: Their service mindset is outstanding. If they communicated that visually, maybe through videos, it would strengthen their brand.

B8 Storebrand

Respondents role: Designer

Industry: IT/Finance

Relationship duration: 18 months

Interviewer: Thank you for meeting with me today. To start, how did you first come into contact with Christiania Sport?

Respondent: We were looking for a new supplier for branded clothing and gifts. A partner company recommended Christiania Sport after having a good experience with them. I reached out via email, and they responded quickly.

Interviewer: And before entering the collaboration, what impression did you have of the company?

Respondent: I had the impression of a smaller, specialised supplier, flexible and service-minded. I didn't know much else before interacting with them.

Interviewer: How would you describe your relationship with Christiania Sport today?

Respondent: Solid. We've collaborated on several projects now, and they consistently deliver on time. They're approachable and solution-driven.

Interviewer: How do you typically receive communication or updates from them?

Respondent: Mostly through email. Occasionally a phone call if something needs clarification.

Interviewer: Do you experience their communication as one-way or two-way?

Respondent: Two-way. If I reach out, I get answers quickly and usually with suggestions or alternatives. But the newsletters feel one-way.

Interviewer: What values do you feel Christiania Sport represents?

Respondent: Efficiency, reliability, and honesty. They don't oversell, if something won't work, they say so.

Interviewer: Through which channels do you find them most visible?

Respondent: Mainly email and their website.

Interviewer: Which channels feel most relevant or effective for you?

Respondent: Email. Especially personalized communication when we're working on an order.

Interviewer: What comes to mind when you hear “Christiania Sport”?

Respondent: A hands-on supplier that gets things done. They don’t complicate things.

Interviewer: Would you say their communication leans more emotional or rational?

Respondent: Mostly rational. They focus on what’s possible, timelines, and pricing. But there’s a personal tone that creates trust.

Interviewer: Do you think they have a clear storytelling narrative?

Respondent: Not really. Their brand story isn’t very visible. It’s more about practicality and service.

Interviewer: How do you perceive the balance between rational and emotional elements?

Respondent: Rational-heavy, but with a positive human touch.

Interviewer: If you could give one piece of advice to improve their communication, what would it be?

Respondent: Highlight more behind-the-scenes elements. Show people who work there, that builds emotional connection.

Interviewer: Anything else important to understand your perception of their communication?

Respondent: Consistency is key and they’re generally good at that.

Appendix C Analysis of Customer Interviews (Gioia Method)

