Strategies and Techniques of Organizational Image Building

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Abstract: The article deals with strategies and techniques of building the image of an organisation, because in the contemporary world image is important as it generates stability, trust and attraction or just the opposite, which brings no benefits to the organisational goals. It is important that a strategy of building the image of a company should essentially include the following elements: role and main mission of the entity, goal and objectives proposed, categories of target audiences relevant for its activity, key messages that should be released for each type of target audience, communication channels, which will be used based on the particular nature of recipients, deadlines of planned activities, necessary human, material and financial resources, public relations programmes required for the implementation of the image creation strategy. A strategy for building the organizational image must, firstly, aim at achieving and consolidating the organization's identity in the mind of the target-groups relevant for the balance and functioning of the organization. The specialized literature, especially the one referring to marketing, shows the concern of the organizations to implement strategies that envisage the setting-up of a positive climate, marked by credibility and trust, the generation of a distinct and clear image in the relevant social environment and in the spheres of interest, increased loyal membership and supporters of the organization, determination and motivation of opinion leaders regarding the main issues of the organization, increase of the market success by drawing the public's attention, willingness and trust.

Keywords: *strategies; techniques; organizational; image; management.*

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1. Introduction

A strategy for building the organizational image must, firstly, aim at achieving and consolidating the organization's identity in the mind of the target-groups relevant for the balance and functioning of the organization.

2. Theoretical Background

The specialized literature, especially the one referring to marketing, shows the concern of the organizations to implement strategies that envisage the setting-up of a positive climate, marked by credibility and trust, the generation of a distinct and clear image in the relevant social environment and in the spheres of interest, increased loyal membership and supporters of the organization, determination and motivation of opinion leaders regarding the main issues of the organization, increase of the market success by drawing the public's attention, willingness and trust (Kotler, 1994). When formulating an image strategy one must consider the strategic factors defining the general status of the organization, the favorable situations used by it and the elements from the social environment hostile to it (Zabin & Brebach, 2004). The best-known strategic factors, with major implications on the organizational image are: the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats. The structures implied in the organizational image building will take into account these factors in the strategy formulation stage and in the ensuing stages: strategy implementation, evaluation and control of its implementation (Godin, 1999).

3. Argument of the paper

Publicity – Latin origin term coming from the verb “*publico - publicare*”, meaning “to make known to the public” – is an action envisaging, through specific means, the consolidation of the organization's reputation. It is defined in the dictionaries as “*the public notice resulting from the extensive mention in the newspapers, radio or by any other channel or means of communication*”, together with “*the measures, the process or the business of securing public notice*” (Webster's Dictionary, 1996), emphasizing the effort of the organization to maintain itself in the attention of the public opinion, firstly, by a systematic and sustained public dissemination.

Publicity contributes to the structuring and consolidation of the organizational image through the major aspects it emphasizes: it is a communication phenomenon, because preservation in the attention of the public opinion envisages the organization's success and credibility by gaining

the public's willingness; also, it is a social phenomenon, because it addresses not only the target-public categories, but, firstly, the entire population that constantly manifest its desire to know and to be informed.

Advertising includes all the means and techniques whose immediate purpose is to call the consumers' attention to a certain product or service, in order to induce them to purchase and use that product or service. Therefore, it stands for those techniques used to focus the public's attention on products, services, opinions or causes, so as to persuade the public to react determinately, as advised by the originator (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998).

The main characteristics of advertising are: the mere economic purpose (envisages the sale of products and services); mere commercial activity (use of the printing or broadcasting space in exchange for a price); role of regulator between supply and demand; important contribution to mass selling; favoring the development and research expenses by reducing the time limiting a technical or commercial innovation from its usage on the market.

The advertisement, through its actions on the buyer (data regarding the products and determination of motivated choice; informing and documenting the clients in stating and forming models, tastes, attitudes, life styles etc.), consolidates the brand image, individualizes the products and services, makes them visible and distinct, renders them perceivable to the public at large or specialized public bestowing them notoriety and credibility.

Opinion leaders belong to the category of opinion formers together with the decision makers and influencing factors and play an important role in filtering the information, orienting the perception and outlining the attitudes. They are assigned attributes that recommend them as real catalysts of public opinion (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 1992).

Thus, their main characteristics are: they show great interest in a certain matter, being better informed in that matter than the common citizen; they are great consumers of the information circulated in the newspapers; they rapidly assent to new ideas; they have great influence on the citizens due to the organizational and initiation capacities of group actions; they can be met at all the community's levels; they are identified by the community as authorities in certain specific fields; they usually reveal the strategic decisions and opinions of those situated on the higher levels of the community's power structure.

The above-mentioned characteristics grant to the opinion leaders an important role in reproducing the positive/negative organizational image. They point out the meanings of the things, events and phenomena, "*filtering*"

the community-dedicated information through their own reference system and then “*delivering*” it to the community.

The role of the opinion leaders in the community is bi-dimensional. The first dimension is related to the decision dissemination from the top of the pyramid of power to the common citizen, and the second dimension grants it the role of important means of transmitting the common citizen’s opinions to the top of the pyramid of power.

The techniques of event generation are based on their meaning, on the great impact they have in outlining the social images and in determining the major attitudes of the people.

The event is an occurrence, a fact, a significant action, somehow out of the ordinary, acting on the individual or collective mind determining assessments, evaluations and opinions. The event takes place or it is generated, being itself identified as message or object of the message (Zabin & Brebach, 2004).

The events that take place, especially the natural ones, may be used by the organization to highlight its strengths, the quality of the products or of the services. The floods, the snow-bounds, the drought, the landslides, the accidents, the incidents, the catastrophes may be turned into force demonstration opportunities and reaction options for the organizations.

A sun eclipse may become an important event for presenting the quality of the optical products of a company or the great number of possibilities for broadcasting the phenomenon (from the air and from the ground) by several television channels.

When the events are planned and organized in the economic, political and social fields, they must be the conception of the PR specialists and of the decision-makers in these fields.

The role of the events is to draw the community as a whole and each individual towards legitimacy, authority, efficiency, credibility, and a major solidarity. The mere winning of the public opinion is not a purpose in itself; a thoughtful and free vote of confidence is required from the community (Godin, 1999).

The world we live in greatly values the image and we must not forget that this is natural, on the one hand because we receive most of the information through sight and, on the other hand, because the technique and art of communication have developed very much. Last but not least, in terms of images, people are much more educated today than they were in the past. The novelty of the research of this topic lies in its emphasis on the fact that the image of an organisation is very important nowadays, as the development of the means of mass communication and of technology has

led to extraordinary image struggles in the public space. Furthermore, the image and the first created image count enormously in the economic space and anything that would affect this structure in terms of the image leads to serious problems, even to a collapse of the organisation image with huge costs at all levels.

Our own contribution to the thorough research of this topic is precisely to highlight the great importance of the image issue in the organisational space, the need for decision-makers to involve, with responsibility, into the smooth running of an activity and to intervene fast and efficiently in the event of a clear slippage.

4. Arguments to support the thesis

The best known techniques of organizational image building are: the use of the “*halo effect*” (use of the organization’s, the individual’s or the phenomenon’s image that already has reputation, so as to obtain extra credibility for its own organization); the imagological upsetting (all the PR activities aimed at changing shortly the nature of the organizational image – from preponderantly negative to preponderantly positive – by associating its products and services with positive events of large audience and with major implications in people’s life and activity); the unitary use of image multipliers (the unitary briefing of the image multipliers – employees, former members of the organization, clients, neighbors, admirers, mass-media etc. – in hope that they will re-transmit relatively unitary signals and messages (Wilcox et al., 1992); image differentiation (the differentiation of the message sent, placing great emphasis only on the characteristics of the organization) (Kotler, 1994).

5. Arguments to argue the thesis

The promotion of the organizational image is the field where the advertising, the publicity, the opinion leaders’ practice and the techniques of events generation interfere (Blythe, 2003). Their space of convergence and interference is possible due to the meaning of the sent messages, which envisage the promotion of a multi-sized, but unitary, image on the following coordinates: highlighting the organization’s role (the organization’s position and role in the hierarchy of similar organizations; the position and role assigned by the task-environment and the local or global community; the defining characteristics of the organization; the horizontal and vertical interactions with other organizations; the organization’s traditions and achievements; the consumers’, customers’ and partners’ advantages and

protection; short-term and long-term organization's perspectives); highlighting the organization's activities (the activities specific for the organization, their purpose and importance; activities in the interest of own members: educational, recreative; activities in the interest of the community: humanitarian, cultural, life quality improvement etc.); highlighting the role of the organization's members (the role of the organization's important members; the members' rights and obligations; the personnel's professionalism, competence and honesty; members' contribution to the organization's purpose-reaching; participation of the organization's members in prestigious national and international activities etc.); highlighting important events taking place inside the organization, locally, regionally and globally (domestic and international) significant and interesting (Chaffey, 2007).

6. Dismantling the arguments against

The use of these techniques shall be done by their personal, independent, implementation, or by their combination dependent on the envisaged purposes, the organizational image status, the interpretation perspective of the social environment in which the organization functions, the manifested interests of the target-public, the characteristics of the media/information environment in which the organizational image is built (Kotler, 1994).

7. Conclusions

An image building strategy usually implies the following elements: purpose and estimated objectives, the main components of the organizational image, categories of target-public, main messages that have to be sent for each category of target-public, the communication channels of the messages in relation to the specificity of their addressees, the terms for fulfilling the planned activities, the necessary material resources, the development and execution of PR programs for the implementation of the image building strategy (Godin, 1999).

This type of strategy seeks to build a positive organizational image by projecting its personality, character and identity in the collective and individual mind.

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