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The Role of Marketing Communications in Responsible Organizations

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Abstract In the contemporary business environment, the number of responsible organizations is constantly increasing. Responsibility is reflected onto various fields such as micro environment of an organization, and macro environment, as well. Being responsible means being precise, consistent, correct, taking control, making strategy, motivating, making achievements for the overall business system. If we discuss the ethical, moral, social or financial workforce responsibility, we have to bear in mind that good communication within an organization and communication between the organization and public audience create an excellent predisposition to responsible business. Since marketing communications nowadays provide us with 100% transparency, organizations invest additional effort to position its responsibility and spread it to new segments. Therefore, this paper will focus on the role and the importance of marketing communications in responsible organizations. Through the current examples of leading companies from the field of social responsibility, we demonstrate how marketing communications affect awareness of customers and their complementary activities.

KEYWORDS: organization • responsible • social • communication • marketing • traditional • digital • target • companies • audience • media • business

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1 The Role of Marketing Communications

The challenge of marketing communications is to convey the correct and clear message in a right way to a selected target audience, at the right place at the right time.
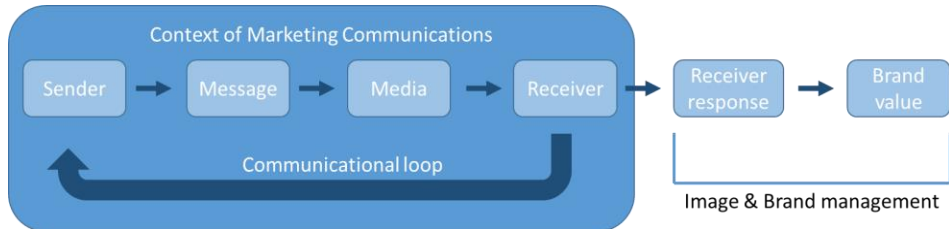
Image 1: [Macromodel of marketing communications]

The model points out the key factors in the effective communication. The senders must know the audience they want to reach as well as the answers they want to get. The senders codify their messages that the audience can decipher. The messages are sent via media that reach the target audience and build the channels for receiving feedback so that the answer could be followed. The more experiences of the sender overlap with the experiences of the receiver, the higher the possibility of message effectiveness.

1.1 Using traditional media vs. digital communication

Traditional media such as print, TV and radio are push media – one–way streets where information is mainly unidirectional, from company to customer unless direct response elements are built in. In contrast, many digital marketing activities like content, search and social media marketing are pull media and inbound marketing. Amongst marketing professionals this new approach to marketing is now commonly known as inbound marketing (Shah and Halligan 2009). Inbound marketing is powerful since advertising wastage is reduced. Content and search marketing can be used to target prospects with a defined need - they are proactive and self-selecting. But this is a weakness since marketers may have less control than in traditional communications where the message is pushed out to a defined audience and can help generate awareness and demand. Advocates of inbound marketing argue that content, social media and search marketing do have a role to play in generating demand. The implications are that stimuli to encourage online interactions are still important though online or traditional ads, direct mail, physical reminders or encouraging word–of–mouth. "Push" from e-mail marketing remains important and is part of the inbound marketing approach:, it should be a priority objective of website design to capture customers' e-mail addresses in order that opt-in e-mail can be used to push relevant and timely messages to customers.

Creating a dialogue through interactivity is the next important feature of the web digital media such as mobile and interactive TV which provide the opportunity for two way

interaction with the customer. This is a key distinguishing feature of the medium according to Peters (1998), and Deighton (1996) which proclaimed the interactive benefits of the internet as a means of developing long-term relationships. Walmsley (2007) believes that the main impact of digital media has not been to find new ways to connect brands to consumers as originally anticipated, but in connecting those consumers to each other. Walmsley believes this trialogue will influence every aspect of marketing, from product design through to product recommendation.

Traditional push communications are one-to-many, from one company to many customers often the same message to different segments and often poorly targeted. With digital media 'one-to-some' – reaching a niche or micro-segment becomes more practical - e-marketers can afford to tailor and target their message to different segments through providing different site content or e-mail for different audiences through mass customization and personalization.

Image 1. illustrates the opportunities for mass customization as interaction occurs between an organization (0) communicating a message (M) to customers (C) for a single-step flow of communication. It is apparent that for traditional mass marketing in (a) a single message (M1) is communicated to all customers (C1 to C5).
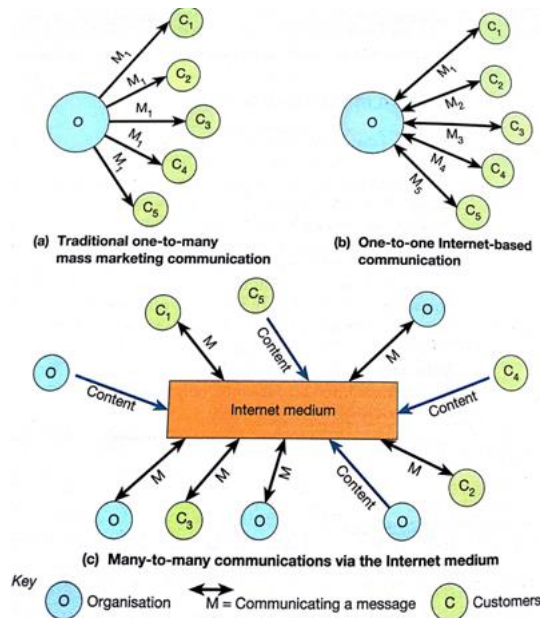

Image 2: The differences between one to many and one to one communication using Internet

Holfrnan and Novak (1997) believed that this change was significant enough to represent a new model for marketing. They suggest the facilities of the Internet, including the web, represent a computer-in-mediated environment in which the interactions are not between the sender and receiver of information, but with the medium itself. Their vision of the future is now apparent in the popularity of social networks, blogs and specialist communities.

Consumers can interact with the medium, organizations can provide content to the medium and in the most radical departure from traditional marketing environments, consumers can provide commercially-oriented content to the media.
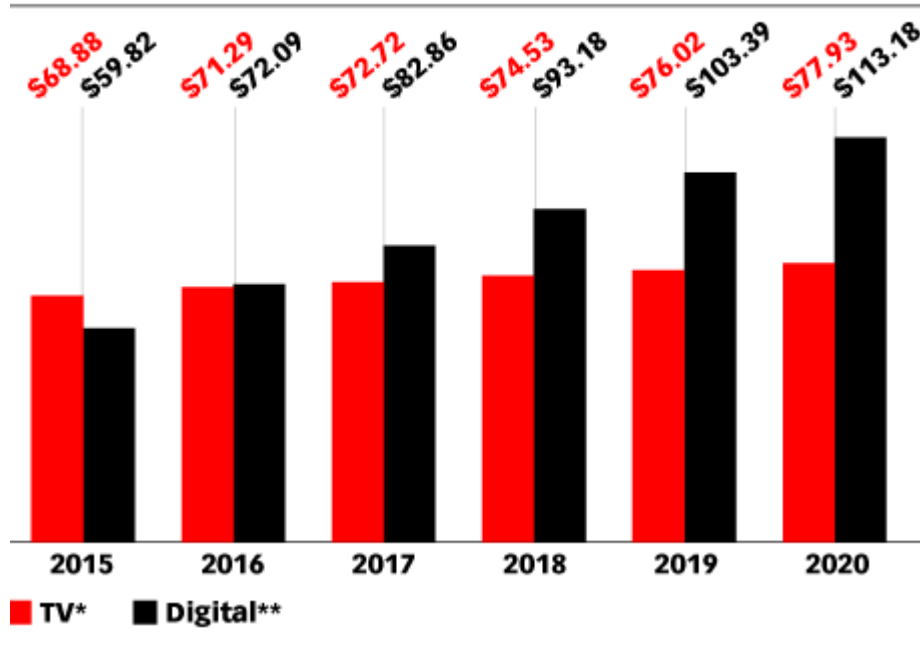
Digital media also enable many-to-many communications. Here customers can interact with other customers via a website, in independent communities or on their personal websites and blogs. Many-to-many communications require monitoring of information sources, but it opens more opportunities to reach out to influencers to expand reach.

Digital media are also intense media – they are interactive, lean-forward media where the customer wants to be in control and wants to experience flow of responsiveness to their needs. First impressions and devices to encourage the visitor to interact are important. If the visitor to site does not find what they are looking for immediately, whether through poor design or slow speed, they will move on, probably never to return.

In addition to offering the opportunity for one-to-one marketing, the Internet can be, and widely still is, used for one-to-many advertising. The website or social media site can be considered as similar in function to an advertisement (since it can inform, persuade and remind customers about the offering, although it is not paid for in the same way as a traditional advertisement). Berthon et al. (1996) consider a website as a mix between advertising and direct selling since it can also be used to engage the visitor in a dialogue. Constraints on advertising in traditional mass media, such as paying for time or space, become less important. The wastage in traditional advertising where ads are either ignored or are not relevant for an audience is reduced in online marketing and search marketing in particular. In pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, display of ads can be controlled according to user need based on what searchers are looking for and cost is only incurred where interest is indicated by a click.

Peters (1998) suggests that communication via the new medium is differentiated from communication using traditional media in four different ways. First, communication style is changed with immediate, or synchronous, transfer of information through online customer service being possible. Second, social presence or the feeling that communications exchange is sociable, warm, personal and active may be lower if standard web page is delivered, but can be enhanced, perhaps by personalization. Third, consumer has more control of contact; and fourth the user has control of content, for example through personalization facilities or posting their own user-generated content.

36. MEDNARODNA KONFERENCA O RAZVOJU ORGANIZACIJSKIH ZNANOSTI: ODGOVORNA
ORGANIZACIJA (22. – 24. MAREC 2017, PORTOROŽ, SLOVENIJA)
L. Zečević, O. Zečević Stanojević, A. Milenković The Role of Marketing
Communications in Responsible Organizations

1321

*Graph 1: [*Includes broadcast TV and cable TV; ** includes advertising that appears
on desktop and laptop computers, mobile phones, tablets]; Source:eMarketer.com, Sep
2016*

According to research conducted by eMarketer company, the investment in mobile
marketing in the USA will reach 73 billion dollars by the end of the year, and it is
expected that it will continue growing.

**2   Use of marketing communication for raising social responsibility of the
organization**

Many companies believe they have a responsibility to give back to society. This focus
includes contributions of time and money, a duty to provide environmentally friendly
products and services, and a desire to improve the lives of individuals here and around
the globe. Such socially responsible companies see to it that this consciousness permeates
everything they do. (Bob Liodice 2010).

The research conducted by companies Burson Marsteller i Roper Starch Worldwide has
shown that the oral compliments of a distinguished person influences the attitude toward
purchase of the other two persons. The number is bigger, that is eight, if we talk about

online compliments. Many types of communications take place on the internet, between customers, on various topics. Not only do internet users produce information about a product, but they also create it.

Social media marketing can often be assisted through viral marketing that harnesses the network effect of the Internet and can be effective in reaching a large number of people rapidly as a marketing message is rapidly transmitted in the same way as a natural virus or a computer virus. It is effectively an online form of word-of-mouth communications which is sometimes also known as 'buzz marketing'. The two main forms of online viral marketing are through passalong-e-mails or discussions within social networks. When planning integrated campaigns, it is important to note that the online viral effect can be amplified through offline media mentions or advertising either on TV and radio or in print. Word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing is an established concept closely related to viral marketing, but broader in context. Companies can work hard to make people happier, they can listen to consumers, they can make it easier for them to tell their friends, and they can make certain that influential individuals know about the good qualities of a product or service. Word-of-mouth marketing techniques which are based on the concepts elements are: of customer satisfaction, two-way dialogue and transparent communications. The basic elements are: educating people about your products and services, identifying people most likely to share their opinions, providing tools that make it easier to share information, studying how, where and when opinions are being shared, listening and responding to supporters, detractors and neutrals. Positive WOM is believed to increase purchase intent.

WOM marketing identifies different approaches for facilitating WOM. The ones that are most relevant to online marketing are:

- Buzz marketing. Using high-profile entertainment or news to get people to talk about your brand.
- Viral marketing. Creating entertaining or informative messages that are designed to be passed along in an exponential fashion, often electronically or by e-mail.
- Community marketing. Forming or supporting niche communities that are likely to share interests about the brand (such as user groups, fan clubs and discussion forums); providing tools, content and information to support those communities.
- Influencer marketing. Identifying key communities and opinion leaders who are likely to talk about products and have the ability to influence the opinions of others.
- Conversation creation. Interesting or fun advertising, e-mails, catch phrases, entertainment or promotions designed to start word-of-mouth activity.
- Brand blogging. Creating Blogs and participating in the blogosphere, in the spirit of open, transparent communications; sharing information of value that the blog community may talk about.

36. MEDNARODNA KONFERENCA O RAZVOJU ORGANIZACIJSKIH ZNANOSTI: ODGOVORNA
ORGANIZACIJA (22. – 24. MAREC 2017, PORTOROŽ, SLOVENIJA)
L. Zečević, O. Zečević Stanojević, A. Milenković The Role of Marketing
Communications in Responsible Organizations

1323

The following companies stand out as prime examples of how social responsibility can be productively coupled with sound strategies to advance goodwill, while building sustainable and impressive businesses. They provide the leadership to demonstrate how marketers can pursue both objectives simultaneously. As such, socially conscious companies have stepped up their efforts with increasing effectiveness and productivity. It is an impressive movement and one that invites society at large to do even more.

2.1 The Body Shop

The Body Shop is regarded as a pioneer of modern corporate social responsibility as one of the first companies to publish a full report on its efforts and initiatives. Founder Anita Roddick led her company to stand up for its beliefs and champion causes such as self-esteem, environmental protection, animal rights, community trade and human rights. From sponsoring posters in 1985 for Greenpeace to presenting a petition against animal testing to the European Union with 4,000,000 signatures, The Body Shop has contributed significantly to the causes it supports, and exemplifies how other companies can do the same.

Much like The Body Shop's campaigns of the past, it will focus less on putting marketing pounds behind TV and instead plans to create a lot of video, in-store, and social media content. With 65 per cent of its shoppers under 35 years old, the brand has been increasingly testing emerging channels like Snapchat, Instagram and Pinterest.

With a global staff of over 22,000 some of the most important communications around 'Enrich Not Exploit' have happened behind closed doors. To keep employees around the world – from the top to the bottom of the company- in the loop it created a campaign, starting with a teaser video and culminating in a full-length film outlining its ambitions and how each person could help.

Next up came a redesign of its stores. In the longer term The Body Shop is investing heavily in making every retail outlet eco-friendly by using locally-sourced SSC-certified wood, sustainable materials in its flooring, LED lighting and non-toxic paints. However, to make consumers aware of 'Enrich not Exploit' in the shorter term it's made some more cosmetic changes including the introduction of a vibrant yellow color-scheme and eye-catching front window featuring a specially designed symbol.

To show shoppers the impact that every pound spent with The Body Shop has on the wider world, it's put one square meter of faux-grass on at the checkout point which the customer stands on as they pay to see what they're helping to build.
This idea of being able to physically see where spending with The Body Shop's goes will be taken further with web-cams which show things like where ingredients are being grown.

Image 3: [Strong marketing communication presented by responsible organization]

2.2 Starbucks Coffee

Since Starbucks Coffee started in 1971, the company has focused on acting responsibly and ethically. One of Starbucks' main focuses is the sustainable production of green coffee. With this in mind, it created C.A.F.E. Practices, a set of guidelines to achieve product quality, economic accountability, social responsibility and environmental leadership. The company supports products such as Ethos Water, which brings clean water to more than 1 billion people who do not have access.

In 2012, Starbucks, Seattle Theatre Group and KEXP 90.3 FM, joined forces to create Little Big Show, a concert series designed to support arts organizations for young people. Several times a year, Starbucks find a great band or two, give them a stage at the Neptune Theatre in Seattle, WA, and donate 100% of the ticket sales to a different nonprofit beneficiary. Not only does the series provide critical funding for youth organizations, but also provides a unique platform for fans and artists to engage with the local community.

The company Starbucks has recognized the importance of their customers, and therefore it has given a phenomenal opportunity to the customers to be included in the making of their products and services. Via mystarbucksidea.com the customers create and give their suggestions so that the company could improve their business and take the customers' wishes into account. For the five years of their existence the company has received over 150,000 ideas and 277 have been turned into reality. The customers send their ideas about new flavors of drinks or cookies, and they also send valuable ideas about the

36. MEDNARODNA KONFERENCA O RAZVOJU ORGANIZACIJSKIH ZNANOSTI: ODGOVORNA ORGANIZACIJA (22. – 24. MAREC 2017, PORTOROŽ, SLOVENIJA)
L. Zečević, O. Zečević Stanojević, A. Milenković The Role of Marketing Communications in Responsible Organizations

1325

functionality: the way they can pay, organization of space, events, the more efficient service.

On daily basis, the site receives couple of ideas. The site is completely transparent and simple to use. Organization can see the descriptions of the ideas and vote for them. In this way the company builds strong relationships with their customers, builds its credibility, and improves itself in accordance with the environment.

Image 4: Starbucks, Corporate Social Responsibility

3   Corporative Blog on Social Responsibility

Blogs enable marketers to create content in form of announcement, by which, in some ideal cases, trust and the sense of authenticity among consumers is built. After the content has been published, the audience can offer the feedback in form of a comment. Since a blog gives a chance to consumers to open dialogues and give their own opinions, the comments section on the blog represents one of the most vital methods for communication between brands and consumers.

Blogs can be divided into two categories: first category comprises of corporative and professional blogs, and second of non-corporative, personal blogs.

Corporative blogs are endorsed by the companies, or by some of its brands and the blogs are managed by one or more employees in the company. Those blogs serve as a channel

for distribution of marketing information, and represent an effective platform that enables the organization to become a leading authority in its field, to build better relationships with shareholders, to create optimal conditions for consumers, to attract new buyers, to create predilection for the organization via anecdotes and stories about brands, and to make an active forum for testing new ideas.

Socially responsible companies, such as Toms Shoes, Whole Foods and GE inform their customers about new trends via their blogs.

3.1   Toms Shoes, Whole Foods and GE

Blake Mycoskie started Toms Shoes on the premise that for every pair of shoes sold, one pair would be donated to a child in need. This innovative idea resulted from a trip to Argentina where Mycoskie saw an overwhelming number of children without shoes. Toms Shoes recognized that consumers want to feel good about what they buy, and thus directly tied the purchase with the donation. In just four years, Toms Shoes has donated more than 400,000 shoes.

On the other hand Whole Foods supports sustainable agriculture, promotes the reduction of waste and consumption of nonrenewable resources and encourages environmentally sound cleaning and store-maintenance programs. The company created the Local Producer Loan program, which provides up to $10 million in low-interest loans to small local producers to help grow their businesses. Whole Foods has also created Whole Planet Foundation, which fights poverty through microlending in rural communities around the world.

To stay true to GE's mission, Ecomagination offerings include products that significantly and measurably improve customers' operating performance or value proposition and environmental performance. Ecomagination helped GE build its business by increasing awareness of how the company is using renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions.

36. MEDNARODNA KONFERENCA O RAZVOJU ORGANIZACIJSKIH ZNANOSTI: ODGOVORNA
ORGANIZACIJA (22. – 24. MAREC 2017, PORTOROŽ, SLOVENIJA)
L. Zečević, O. Zečević Stanojević, A. Milenković The Role of Marketing
Communications in Responsible Organizations

1327

4   Conclusion

Image 5: Top 20 responsible companies

Companies consciously work on improving environment and life standard. That's a win-win situation because companies depend on natural resources. By taking care of natural resources companies make good base for their further development. Also, by taking care of people, as stated in the example, companies make good atmosphere towards the existing and prospective customers. Thanks to adequate marketing communication the audience is informed about the companies' projects. Therefore, the solution would be to create such a win-win project and then to communicate in appropriate way with the audience in order to convey the precise and unique message.

We can be satisfied with the fact that companies have become aware of the responsibility towards their employees and customers. The image above illustrates brands that customers labeled as socially responsible thus shows that the awareness does exist. This trend continues to grow, because by setting their own examples, companies motivate their environment, competitors, consumers and potential consumers to follow their ethics and come up with some innovative solutions.

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