

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN CREATING A COMPANY IMAGE

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ABSTRACT

Currently, market conditions are becoming more and more competitive, and organizations can only survive through a top-level activity. Current studies have highlighted that the key factor in the success of an organization is the knowledge and satisfaction of consumers targeted by a higher supply, and public relations is that function of society, responsible for defining the target consumers and the best ways to meet their needs, exigencies and wishes at a competitive and profitable level for both the consumer and the manufacturing company. The present paper attempts to pronounce on the interaction of two complex elements: the image of a company and public relations, highlighting the deep links between them

KEYWORDS: *public relations, company, resources, competitiveness*

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, market conditions are becoming more and more competitive, and organizations can only survive through a top-level activity. Current studies have highlighted that the key factor in the success of an organization is the knowledge and satisfaction of consumers targeted by a higher supply, and public relations is that function of society, responsible for defining the target consumers and the best ways to meet their needs, exigencies and wishes at a competitive and profitable level for both the consumer and the manufacturing company (Boier, 1994). The gradual development of the free-trade mechanism and the affirmation of its functioning rules determine the change in the mode of action of the economic agents (Chicidean & Țoneș, 2000).

Comparing with a dynamic socioeconomic environment, they seek to adapt, becoming more open, more flexible and responsive to market needs (Burlacu, 2011). One of the most important ways of adapting is the pursuit of a profound marketing activity, which has been very little in the past. Public relations is a new concept of organizing and conducting economic activity, according to which the economic activity must be directed towards the satisfaction of market requirements with maximum efficiency (Coman, 2001). The present paper attempts to rule on the interaction of two complex elements: the image of a company and public relations, highlighting the deep links between them.

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2. ROLE OF IMAGE IN PROMOTING A COMPANY

In everyday life, the consumer is assaulted with a lot of messages coming from both the objective reality and what is meant to be presented as reality (Costache et al., 2015). From this multitude of messages, the consumer retains only one part, and the retained ones are subjected to a process of ordering and systematization that results in the formation of images of persons, institutions, products, brands, etc. This is how we try to influence this conscious and less conscious process in the sense of forming a favorable image. Undoubtedly, talking about the image, familiar or not with its meaning, is more than a fashion, it has become a necessity (Dortier & Cabin, 2010).

The image is the way the consumer sees, perceives a product, a brand or a business, something that occurs in the consumer's consciousness and not in reality. The image is an attribute of psycho-social life based on the ability of the human psyche to build mental representations that could influence the decision-making power of an individual or a community (Evans & Berman, 1994).

From a marketing perspective, the image represents a set of realistic, affective, symbolic meanings or opinions that help consumers, consumers, brands or firms perceive. The image of a company is related to its brand and has a great economic and social importance for brand use in product promotion (Kotler, 2010).

The image element appears in the relationship between the seller and the buyer. Creation of the image is subject to fixed reasoning, clear and precise laws whether it is the sale of a product or service, or the image of an institution. The imaging mechanism must be as simple as possible to make it easy to understand.

One of the essentials in creating the image is trusting the imposition by various methods of a proper image appropriate to the organization that will generate a sense of trust among the public, towards the products and services offered to the public (Ionita et al. 2009).

3. STRATEGIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

At present, public relations enjoy a growing appreciation from managers in large and small organizations. Organizational culture is created by the dominant condition, especially by the founder of an organization, and public relations managers have no influence if the values and ideology they promote differ significantly from those of the organization (Mecu & Bărbulescu, 2012).

The public relations strategy includes: identifying the target audience, creating effective messages that can form unambiguous representations for the target audience, choosing the best performing channels, the appropriate layout of the activities, the optimal allocation of material, financial and human resources (Oliver, 2009).

Implementation of the public relations plan in the targeted environment - refers to the pursuit of the determined actions and the allocation of resources, the readjustment of the program to adapt the strategy to the new conditions during the process, the monitoring of the collaboration relations between the agent public relations and beneficiaries, or between the program coordinator and the other participants in the process (Papuc, 1999).

The evaluation of the public relations program is the last step and is carried out sequentially, at the end of each phase and finally for the whole program. Sequential evaluations may lead to changes to the strategy, but they can't affect the main purpose of the process. Quantifying the results of a public relations plan is as difficult as advertising.

Research is the phase of discovering the issues that need to be addressed in the public relations process. At this stage, practitioners use quantitative and qualitative research methods to better

understand the organization, to see the challenges it faces and the opportunities it can benefit, and to discover the views of different audiences about the organization (Pop, 2000).

The evaluation is the stage where it examines how public relations activities met the objectives set by the organization at the beginning of the process. Forms of assessment also occur during the public relations process through permanent monitoring that allows for changes and adaptations of the action and communication forms according to the new elements that appear.

Regardless of the type of structure of the public relations process, it is important that the latter can't be conceived beyond the procedural dimension. Only in this way it is possible to divide public relations activities into distinct stages, the efficient and continuous control of their deployment, permanent evaluation based on rigorous and scientific methods, all of which led to the exclusion of the random nature of public relations.

4. ANALYSIS OF DACIA IMAGE IN ROMANIAN ECONOMIC PRESS

SC Automobile Dacia S.A. is considered to be the largest Romanian car manufacturer, having over 30 years of experience in this field.

SC Automobile Dacia S.A. was established in 1967 under the name of Pitesti Automobile Factory, and the following year, 1968 started production of the Dacia 1100 model, based on a license from Renault for the R8. In 1969 production starts at Dacia 1300, the Romanian equivalent of Renault 12, which is made on the Colibasi mounting bands, in a much more modern form. Although not best rated or best-selling, in Romania, the Dacia brand is the most publicized. Of all the auto brands present on the Romanian market, Dacia is the head of the list regarding its presence in the economic press, whether written or online.

The Romanian brand is followed in the top 10 by Renault, Mercedes, BMW, Ford, Volkswagen, Audi, Toyota, Ferrari and Opel, according to an analysis by Mediafax Monitoring, the press monitoring market leader. The top ten brands in terms of media coverage are: Dacia - 10% of the volume of media coverage, Renault - 6%, Mercedes - 5.9%, BMW - 5.6%, Ford - 5.6% Volkswagen - 4.9%, Audi - 3.9%, Toyota - 3.9%, Ferrari - 3.8% and Opel - 3.2%. We can see in the diagram below that Dacia is the headline of the media coverage in Romania.

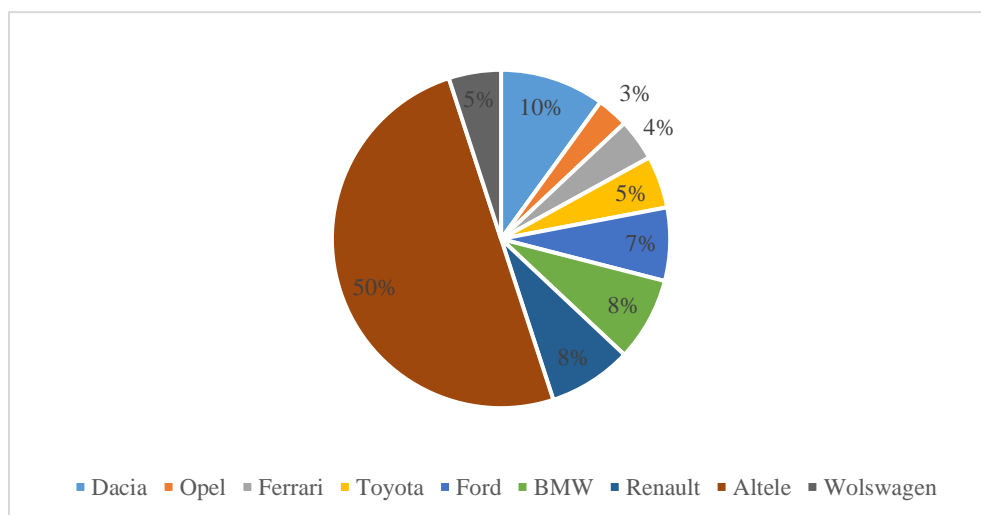


Figure 1. Top of the most publicized brands

Source: Auto Roman Register, 2017

In the first half of 2017, the car market was present in Romanian media (TV, print and online media) with over 195,000 references from Romanian and foreign car brands, most notably Dacia, Ford, Renault, BMW and Mercedes, according to data from a study by Mediafax Monitoring.

Although we are accustomed to thinking about televisions as having a significant impact, the study data show that they rank the last in the top of the news or show media in the automotive market, with 3,862 references and a total of 2,242 references recorded in the economic press. Regarding the share of each broadcasting medium, the written economic press generated, on average, 79% of the number of references registered by the top 10 brands. According to the economic press, the most important medium in this respect is television, with an average of 14%, followed by radio, 7%. The distribution of the number of appearances by media is mostly for the online environment, with 90% of auto brand appearances appearing on blogs and twitter accounts, 8% in print media and 2% on TV stations.

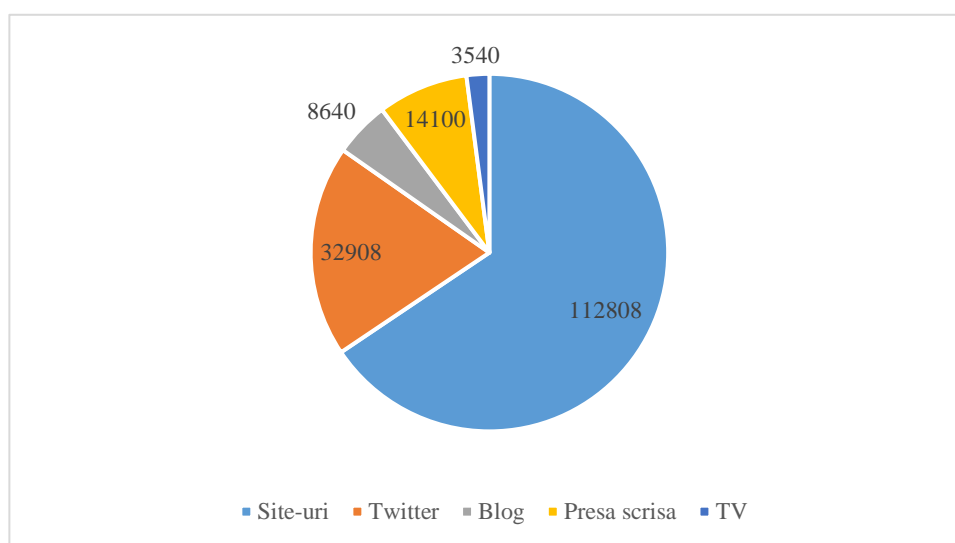


Figure 2. Distribution of the number of appearances by media

Source: Auto Roman Register, 2017

3. CONCLUSIONS

The image is particularly important, both on a personal and social level. It is preferable to create a good image in front of the partners and all the people with whom they work, they interact. A positive image of the organization also has a positive influence on business and last but not least, it is remarkable that a good image at the national level associated with a good country image is beneficial at international level.

The responsibility for managing a company's image must necessarily rest with the management, the manager, therefore image management must be a function of the firm's management. The unfavorable or superficial vision of image managers may lead to a continuing decline in the company's ability to resist competitive pressures or even to foreclose it. The correct approach to image management is considered to be the one on components. This aspect means a good knowledge of the structure of the image. Society needs to know its public well in this regard by requiring public relations specialists to build the so-called "public maps" in order to adapt the message of the appropriate segment, choosing the right channel for disseminating information.

Public relations have a very important role in all these approaches, and this role is of strategic nature. The economic agents, as well as the non-profit organizations in Romania, often apply to different

public relations techniques, more or less willingly. This is due to detention of a less-known field at present, but with great prospects in the future.

Public relations activities should only be perceived within a procedural dimension, which provides many advantages such as: segmentation of these activities on separate stages, the possibility of carrying out control and evaluation of results based on rigorous, scientific methods. In this way, the random nature of the application of public relations techniques is completely excluded. A very important role is played by emerging techniques of internet communication, an environment with many possibilities for strengthening a positive image, establishing mutual trust relationships between the organization and the public.

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