

# COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN BUSSINES PROMOTIONS

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## **Abstract:**

*The capacity of a company to reach its business targets is closely linked to the effectiveness of its communication strategies. Building brand value or strengthening an existing brand involves different ways of communication but all have, as a starting point, a good knowledge of the consumers' habits. This paper aims to identify and analyze various communication strategies designed to help business promoting.*

**Key words:** communication, strategies, business

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## **Introduction**

A communication strategy represents an integral part of the global strategy of any company. Choosing an efficient communication strategy, adapted to the economic and social environment in which a company operates is essential in order to obtain the desired results. In order to achieve this purpose, a company will develop and implement communication strategies both internally – vertically and horizontally – and externally, using diverse communication networks. Our article will analyze the particularities of the external communication process of a company to identify possible communication strategies of an economic entity, especially through commercial communication.

## **External communication and the economic environment**

External communication has different forms, with a wide typology of manifestations, from managerial communication to advertising. In the specialty literature, most often, there are three types of external communication that are identified and analyzed: operational, strategic and that of promotion.

*External operational communication* takes place between the members of an entity and the external partners. The employees of a company have professional relationships with externals – people outside the company they work for. They implicitly promote a certain image and communicate certain messages on behalf of the company, while they also receive information that they re-communicate within the company.

*External strategic communication* represents building or extending a communication network. This type of communication also focuses on developing particular tools that allow anticipation for the evolution of the economic and social environment, in order to prepare the company to manage possible changes that could affect its activity. Data administered and operated by a company is very useful in making decisions, choosing strategies and establishing policy options.

*External promotion communication* ensures broadcasting certain data regarding the products or services of the company, tries to improve company image or makes company values known. Specialty literature includes this type of communication within external communication, although it is not characterized by an essential feature of external communication: the bilateral dimension of the communication process.

Communication with a role in promotion, although it supposedly has a good knowledge of the public to which it is addressed, it has a unilateral feature, from the organization towards the external environment. In this situation, those who maintain the relationship with the external factors are not the members of the company, but the company as an entity. The main form in which this communication is manifested is advertising through mass media or by specific advertising materials.

The process of strategic communication with the external environment within an organization, on one hand focuses on broadcasting company messages to the target audience and on the other hand, it focuses on capturing feedback from the targeted audience. Economic organizations communicate with the external environment directly, through the Public Relations departments. These departments administer all official and unofficial data regarding the company. Part of the information is communicated selectively to different target groups and by different communication channels.

External communication works two ways, so the PR department is not only a broadcaster of the message of a company, but also the entity that summarizes data received from external and internal environments. Due to its role as interface between the company and the external environment, communication managers are consulted in the decisional process regarding company policy. The role of the communication department in big corporations is as a management tool, due to the great amount of data that this department is exposed to.

In order to identify a standardized external communication scheme, applicable to each company is practically impossible, considering the unlimited number of specific situations in which a company finds itself. But beyond the contextual diversity and the set objectives, a company will allocate necessary resources to insure an efficient communication, in order to keep or strengthen its position on the market in operates on.

### **Communication strategies in advertising**

The purpose of strategic planning in commercial communication is reaching business and communication objectives for a brand, within a certain timeframe. It “represents the process through which a brand image is built, beginning with getting to know the customers, but also according to the life stage in which a product/brand operates at a certain moment”<sup>1</sup>.

Developing a communication strategy means defining the objectives set, if it is related to changing the position of a brand on a certain market, communicating the benefits of a product for a different target group than the one already buying, or launching a new product/service, etc. In any such undertaking, it is necessary to know the consumers who represent the target group of the commercial communication and to understand their needs, wishes, habits and life styles.

In the specialty literature, there are three types of strategies that have been identified and which can be developed in commercial communication. All of them start from the premise that in order to reach the goal of transforming an individual into a real consumer, the advertisement must persuade him/her to go through 3 successive stages:

1. *The cognitive stage* (LEARN) requires attention, acknowledgement, awareness, understanding, having as a result a knowledge of the product by the potential consumer.
2. *The affective stage* (LIKE) requires interest, assessment, preference, conviction, with the result of the individual taking an interest in the product.
3. *The behavioral stage* (DO) requires intention, behavior, action, having as a result the fact that the potential consumer becomes a buyer.

Such an approach has a simplistic understanding of the communication situation as a foundation. Advertising is not limited to a mechanical scheme of the stimuli-answer

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<sup>1</sup> Petre D., Nicola M., *Introducere în Publicitate*, Ed. Comunicare.ro, București, 2004, p. 117

type, in which the commercial message of the communicator mandatorily gets a response reaction (feed-back) from the receiver.

The combination of the three stages will illustrate three advertising theories<sup>2</sup>.

*The learning theory* (learn, like, do) applies especially to the beginning stage of the advertising and focuses mainly on household goods. Advertisements built on this theory aim to determine behavioral changes regarding every day, routine activities.

*The cognitive dissonance theory* (do, like, learn) was advanced by Leon Festinger and it is based on a post-behavioral scheme. According to this theory, people search for information that matches their own ideas and acting and they become immune to other types of communication. This scheme could be interpreted as follows: (1) I bought; (2) I have been convinced and I don't want to doubt my choice; (3) I enrich my knowledge regarding the product.

*The minimal involvement theory* (learn, do, like). This theory is associated with the poor messages regarding small products. The main tactic is the great number of repetitions of the message. The minimal involvement theory best illustrates manipulation in advertising.

Claude Bonnange and Chantal Thomas establish three main objectives for the three theories: *learning* – the consumer must find out what the product is; *dissonance* – when he finds out, he must not forget; *minimal involvement* – if he doesn't want to find out anything, he will be forced to, anyway.

Starting from the three classic advertising theories, Claude Bonnange and Chantal Thomas<sup>3</sup> suggest other three theories that are based on strategies generated by possible combinations of the verbs (learn, do, like), that characterize advertising: the childish impulse theory, the attributed learning theory, the promotion theory.

**The childish impulse theory (like, do, learn).** The message is built on a sensitive experience, included in a known story easily associated with the promoted product. Although the story is familiar, figures of speech resulted from the unexpected association of two terms are used. Also, a well-known song or the mockery of a well-known scene could be of use in this approach.

**The attributed learning theory (like, learn, do).** The aimed objective for the strategy that adopts this theory is that both the story that presents the product and the promoted brand must remain in the consumers' minds. This strategy is developed especially for the products that require a strong involvement, due to their costs, but also for new products. The attributed learning theory focuses on the emotional, highlighting the affective elements of the brand.

**The promotion theory (do, learn, like).** The strategy proposed by this theory is the foundation of promoting sales by offering certain immediate advantages (presents, coupons, lower price). The most important thing is the immediate experience, the interaction with the product. The instantaneous purchasing of the product will be followed by information regarding it and last, if it is necessary, a loyalty insurance from the consumer.

## Conclusions

Fulfilling the objectives of an economic entity depends on good communication with the external environment, among other things. In order to be efficient, the communication process needs to develop based on well-articulated strategies, closely linked to the overall strategic plan of the specific activities of the company. Far from only being just mere information, genuine communication implies an exchange of cognitive structures with the aim of changing the other's behavior, if we are talking

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<sup>2</sup> Bonnange C. and Thomas C., *Don Juan sau Pavlov? Eseu despre comunicarea publicitară*, Ed. Trei, București, 1999, pp. 38 - 39

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, pp. 41- 47

about the beneficiaries of the developed economic activities or the partners in the economic environment. In the context of a society in which information becomes an important asset of every business organization, the adopted economic strategies are an efficient tool in reaching the objectives of every company.

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