

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN POLITICS?

Ovidiu-Aurel GHIU

Assistant, University " Ștefan cel Mare" Suceava Romania

PhD. Student, University A.I. Cuza Iași Romania

ovidiughiuta@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The current study has practical applicability in political domain and theoretical involvement at political marketing communication level. The type of the research is a qualitative one, using as survey methods scientific observation and documentary search. The aim of the research is to prove the applicability of marketing communication concept integrated in political marketing and global marketing communication. There are also exceptions, just analyzing the industry – politics, in which integrated communication can't be considered global communication.

The subject of integrated marketing communication is relatively a new one in marketing (two decades), but its applicability in political domain and the specifications that assumes this application represents a new vision at European and worldwide level. This study clearly presents the differences between the integrated marketing communication and global marketing communication.

In documentary research, the author used studies belonging to Anglo – Saxons theoreticians and practitioners (Americans, Canadians, British) but also Europeans (French, Belgians, Romanians). The main reason is the fact that in marketing domain on extremely narrow scientific sections the visions belonging to these two main orientations aren't always equable. Also, in scientific observation, the research analyses political events from United States of America, France and Romania. Due to this reason, we can affirm that the current study has not only a regional applicability but also a global one.

Key words: integrated marketing communication, global communication, political communication, marketing communication in politics, political marketing.

JEL Classification: M31

INTRODUCTION

Marketing practice has been developing towards its object. The marketing methods aren't reserved anymore just for commercial companies. They can be practiced with success by cultural and religious institutions, political parties and people. Nowadays, there aren't anymore reserved domains where marketing principles can't be applied. It's impossible to consider political marketing a simple sectoral branch, not even an application domain for traditional basic techniques. (Revue française de marketing, 2006).

According to the most well known worldwide marketing manual (Marketing Management) between the ten types of entities where marketing can be applied we can identify six of them which are in contact with political field: events, people, places, organizations, information and ideas. (Kotler, 2006).

This study belongs to a larger research whose theme is the brand influence in voter's behavior. The researcher utilized as methods the scientific observation and documentary research.

COMMUNICATION AND POLITICAL MARKETING

Professional political communication and political marketing concepts are dating from the second half of XX century. The introduction of marketing in politics is due to the elaboration of a policy of political communication: a global step of conception, accomplishment and achieving the objects of modern political communication.

The genesis of modern political marketing is related by the history of political communication from United States of America. The presence of modern political marketing on North American continent was quickly built: in less than one century between the presidential election from 1952 and those from 1960, it became indispensable.

Political parties manifested their interest for marketing methods that could be used in a way to understand much better the profiles of voters and to influence them much easier. (Lindon, 1976)

Nowadays, in XXI century, there are often discussions about integrated marketing communication, meaning selecting the best communication channels, achieving the best media plan and using a clear and coherent message. In this study we will approach global communication as taking part from integrated marketing communication, because in all specialists' definitions, global communication represents a clear and coherent communication for the entire organization. These concepts can be also identified in integrated marketing communication definitions.

For marketer there is a dilemma: increasing media number or number of means of communication. A high number of sources bomb the consumer. For him, the communication of one political party belongs to the same speech even if it's created by the president of the party, the president of district organization of the party, spokesman at district or national level, if it's an article about a remarkable member, a flyer found in post box, a mass on yahoo messenger or a broadcast spot at local/national television channel. All these persons and actions represent for the voter the image of the party which is produced by his mind. We'd rather not use the enforcing formula "must" like all the representative members of parties and all the communication instruments used to say the same thing. We talk about the same idea, direction and meaning but not about the appropriation word by word of the same kind of speech.

MARKETING INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

„Integration is a marketing catchphrase of the moment. Its value propositions seem unquestionable strong – the whole of a marketing initiative can be greater the sum of its multidisciplinary parts if those parts tightly together to assist one another .” (Sasu, 2005)

During the 80's many companies recognised the necessity of a strategic integration of promotional instruments. They were interested in principles of integrated marketing communication.

In commercial marketing there has been a lot of talking, especially in the last decade, about integrated marketing communication conception. Integrated marketing communication consists in the elaboration of one global communication strategy which aims to create solid relations with the clients, showing to costumers that the company and its products help them to satisfy their needs.

Marketing communication has its roots based on advertising, promoting the sales, public relations and direct marketing. Each of these fields had evolved in distinct ways and industries and the only chance to communicate is the integration of each part of this amalgam.

To clarify these relative new notions I will present the specialists' definitions from the domain.

In the 8th French edition of *The Marketing principles* from 2007, Armstrong and Kotler comprehend through integrated marketing communication a concept which represents the fact that a company integrates carefully its numerous communication channels with the aim to launch a clear, coherent and attractive message about itself and its products.

Balloffet and Coderre (2005), teachers at North American universities, assert: „*Integrated marketing communication consists in coordinating the elements of promotional mix and other activities of permanent marketing communication with clients of the company*”.

In 2002, Duncan considers integrated marketing communication a process realised for administrating relations with clients and giving a value for the brand. More precisely, it's a crossed functional process for creating and maintaining profitable relations with the clients and shareholders in order to control and influence all the messages that are send to each group, including data collection and achieving a constructive dialog.

„An organisation's unified, coordinated effort to promote a brand concept through the use of multiple communications tools that « speak with a single voice»” represents the definition given by Shimp, definition which brings the integrated marketing communication very close to branding process and organisation's brand. (Shimp, 2000)

A more complex definition, but less succinct is given by Pickton and Broderick: „ *Integrated marketing communications is a process which involves the management and organization of all « **agents** » in the analysis, planning, implementation and control of all marketing **contacts**, media, messages and promotional tools focused at selected target audiences in such as to derive the greatest enhancement and coherence of marketing communications effort in achieving predetermined **product** and corporate marketing communication objectives*”, definition which has as main vision the synergetic phenomenon of integrated marketing communication. (Pickton, Broderick, 2005).

The famous teacher and French practitioner Jaques Lendrevie used the concept of efficacy in integrated marketing communication: „*Integrated communication through various channels means the selective, complementary, united appropriation of many communication channels for speaking with the same voice at maximum level of efficacy.*” (Lendrevie, de Baynast, Riou, 2004) Later on, in the same book the author reverts in order to provide a more ambitious definition: „*Integrated marketing communication has as objective the best re-entrance of communication expenses using a strategy founded on architecture of distinguish channels which are functioning in synergy and spreads coherent messages. It's orientated to clients, their perceptions and behaviors. Its efficacy depends on multidisciplinary competences of responsible people that are leading the company...*”

Among first publications about integrated marketing communication it's relevant the article written by Duncan and Everett published in 1933 in Journal of Marketing Research. In this article we find the following regards: „ *A concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, e.g. general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relation – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact.* “

Analyzing the definitions we can notice that the main common idea is that in integrated marketing communication the tools of communication that are used independently combined in a way to allow the achievement of a synergetic level. The resulted communication is more homogeneous.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN POLITICS?

In politician's case we can talk about integrated marketing communication. If he is the only one who is representing his brand this means there are other persons around him that can radically influence his image. For a politician's condition it is recommended the integration of messages in different communication channels. Analyzing the communication channels used by Romanian politicians we can affirm: mass – media means (in the frame of these channels, communication can be direct, by participating to talk-shows, different broadcasts, or indirect by journalists' comments about politician's statements for press agencies) and non mass media means (public relations, direct marketing and personal blogs). Between mass media means that are used for political communication the researcher agrees that the most relevant media channels are: written press (magazines, newspapers), television, radio and billing.

Even a well prepared integrated marketing communication planning can produce little unpleasant surprises, but this integrated marketing communication can save a politician from an eventual disaster in obtained position ng or a possible failure in elections. Let's take as example the virtual communication through internet. In Romania the rate of internet penetration is relatively low in comparison with European averages. A study made by Internet World Stats effectuated in March 2008 shows a penetration rate of 53,9 % while the European mean is 59,9 % and taking in consideration the significant differences between urban and rural environment.

Therefore at uninominal parliamentary elections carried on November 2008, in Iasi, in urban environment, from 15 candidates of district parliamentary parties for Deputy Chamber 11 of them had and used a website or a personal blog for communicating with the voters. This candidates'

interest manifested for virtual mean is due to the strategy of achieving the segments of younger audience, using the internet, but also for direct communication, without intermediates (which gives the possibility to bias the message). The usage of websites and personal blogs offers the candidates a total control of sent message, which is not available for the indirect communication in mass media. A personal blog can be quite useful for a politician especially when he finds himself in the position of defending from a negative campaign launched against his image. Many times this negative campaign is accomplished together with blocking the candidate's access to some media channels (television, written press). This is the reason why, for a politician, it's vital to own direct communication means unmediated with voters.

GLOBAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Among worldwide specialist's point of view, integrated marketing communication includes also the global marketing communication which means the communication through one single voice of the same message regarding the organisation and its products in a global way of speaking. Integrated marketing communication includes also the concept of efficacy, the best usage of communication medias and channels and the synergy of simultaneous appropriation of these methods.

Nevertheless integrated marketing communication isn't and doesn't mean always global communication. The proof comes from politics. We have the example of new leaders' ascending. The party isn't an enterprise; it's a democratic entity which allows the communication of opinions that don't have the same vision like its leadership. There are moments when the practice requires dissident's existence within the framework of party. The party is an organisation where there is a powerful internal competition for force. In the positioning strategy through leader there is a moment when it must be achieved a strength takeover. If the leaders have a good image in voters' perception and only time passing can change him (for example after 12 years of leadership of one party or after two president's seats) it must be achieved an image extension from the older leader to the new one. Here we must talk about global communication for one party where internal strokes are forbidden.

We have the example of Social Democratic Party (PSD) from Romania, in 2004: PSD used the position through doctrine, especially through leaders. During 1990 – 2000 the incontestable leader of the party was Ion Iliescu and during 2000 – 2004 the change of the leader was produced when Adrian Năstase had to achieve that takeover of the power, realised in a considerable proportion, but not in total amount. In 2004, Ion Iliescu was capable to win a new seat as president of Romania, but the Constitution didn't allow because he already used the maximum number of mandates for becoming the president of Romania. Despite the fact that Iliescu was in election campaign with Adrian Năstase, the PSD candidate, he couldn't transfer him a big part from his popularity. This is one of the reasons why PSD lost the presidential elections and in this way started a party decline.

There are situations when the leader's image doesn't help the party. For instance, when he lost the elections at a big difference or he obtained an extremely faint outcome in comparison with the expected one. In this case, the new team and especially the new leader must have a different attitude and communication towards the leader that failed. There are tactics used for attracting the attention toward the party when a leader launches a false attack against the leadership, just for creating hubbub in mass media. With this technique the attention can be caught and won the notoriety chapter, showing that there is democracy in the party and all the members are free to express their opinions.

The third example of integrated marketing communication, but not a global one is the internal elections in American parties for the investiture of being the representative of the party for presidential elections: the most recent fact is the election campaign from United States of America from 2008. In Democratic Party, Hillary Clinton competed with Barack Obama for investiture. Between them there was a real struggle in order to conquer the internal elections in the party and

during the competition. Many times, both candidates had different visions about the development, the external policy and economy of United States of America.

Another possible example when global communication isn't indicated is the situation when the president of a district organisation has a contradictory opinion with the national leader of the party, taking the defence in an important cause for the community members. In case he manages to solve the problem in a favourable way for the voters and especially when the event takes place near a local election we can draw the following conclusion: this aspect can be a pre – campaign tactic or a well done campaign. The hypothesis is still available considering the fact that local and national elections don't take place at the same time.

Integrated marketing communication is more significant for a bigger entity, a political party than a politician. More messages are delivered by transmitters more the situation becomes complicated and an integrated marketing communication is required. For a party it is necessary to combine advertising, public relations, direct marketing, internet marketing in order to obtain a *simpler, convergent, clear, persuasive and homogeneous communication*.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to understand the consumers it is required to know when and how to talk to them. It is also good to know when to stop the communication. It's useful to possess more options in order to find the best solution for communication. But a lot of options don't provide in a necessary way a good solution (Droga, 2008). Holding an optimal solution we need to accomplish an integrated marketing communication.

For sure, we can successfully apply the concept of integrated marketing communication in politics domain. Although the global communication is included in integrated communication, the politics is the domain which proves that there are exceptions where integrated communication can be applied being in contradiction with the global one.

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