

Communicating Social Issues through Social Media: Strategies to Increase Visibility on Social Media

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Abstract: *This paper sets out to study the manner in which some social issues can be communicated through social media. Companies choose to get involved in social campaigns for various reasons: to improve the company's image, to support a social cause, and to try to change the public's opinion about the company. There are many ways in which an organisation can get involved in social causes: a company either chooses to get involved only financially in certain campaigns by donating sums of money or chooses to develop and organise its own campaigns concerning social issues in order to support a certain cause. This paper will first present a comparative analysis of two campaigns concerning social issues, whose topics are related to people who have a complicated life due to problems with their physical appearance, in order to highlight the type of the transmitted information, the used methods, the type of the images that are used and the communication techniques that are applied. Second, a questionnaire addressed to the audience will be applied in order to see whether the message was received correctly or not.*

Therefore, the paper deals with a topic of interest as it highlights the methods needed for the communication of social issues and the manner in which a gap between the message sent and the message received can be avoided.

Keywords: *social media, strategy, visibility*

1. Introduction

The main purpose of the paper is to highlight the methods that can be used to increase visibility in communication and to reduce the gap between the message sent by the company and the message received by the public. The paper comprises the theoretical notions about the communication of social issues and about the visibility in communication and the practical part to exemplify them.

The main objective of the paper is to draw attention over the main elements that makes us to pay more attention to visibility in communication and the most important reasons why this aspect is relevant for communication specialists. Social media is a new channel that can be more than useful while trying to increase visibility in communication.

This paper is based on the hypothesis that people spend a lot of time in the virtual environment, so that makes social media the perfect way to increase visibility in communication campaigns.

There are several specialists that approached this subject in his works. I've decided to use multiple research methods like: an analysis grid, a questionnaire and some more.

2. Research methods

1. The comparative analysis: The subject of the research are two campaigns concerning social issues that address the same topic: how to improve the

lives of people with physical difficulties after a series of surgeries, treatments at beauty salons and hair changes. One of the campaigns is the one started by TopLine Romania and the second one is a TV show produced by Pro TV.

The analysis grid consists of the following criteria:

- Presentation of the campaign
 - Campaign type
 - Purpose of the campaign
 - Duration of the campaign
- The information transmitted during the campaign
 - Information type
 - Explicit information
 - Default information
- Graphic elements with an informative role about the sender's intention
- Images with an informative role about the sender's intention
 - The power of suggestion
 - The degree of affectivity that the image can transmit
 - The degree of demand of the receiver to understand the message
- The association between the text and the image

Thus, this analysis has been designed in order to identify the main elements used to convey the message, the ways of communication, the differences between the two campaigns, but also to emphasise the importance of using appropriate techniques and strategies.

2. The quantitative analysis: a questionnaire will be used in this respect.

The purpose was to build a questionnaire with a series of approximately 12-13 closed questions, which is addressed to the public

receiving the message transmitted during the show and the social campaign. On the one hand, the percentage in which the message was received correctly must be found out, and on the other hand, the parts that attracted the most attention and that were of the greatest interest to the public must be highlighted. Following the analysis of the two elements, the social campaign and the television show, but also the application of the questionnaire, my purpose is to find out the communication methods and techniques used by those who organised the campaign and the show, but also the manner in which the public received and assimilated the information to see if there were any differences between the information transmitted and the one that was received.

3. Results

Following the application of the criteria of the analysis grid on the materials used and distributed to the public during the social campaign and the television show, a conclusion has been reached and the data related to the transmission of the information have been extracted. The results obtained after having applied the analysis grid are the following:

- Both the "There is no can't" social campaign and the "Beauty on the edge of a knife" television show deal with social issues. Both refer to how a person's life can be changed as a result of surgeries, body treatments at the beauty salon and haircuts. The people participating in the campaign and the show have problems related to their physical appearance and their purpose is to remedy them and restore their self-confidence.
- The information in the distributed materials is transmitted both explicitly and implicitly. This means that the information is either explained overtly or that it is implied. Explicit information is related to the physical changes, the surgeries and treatments that people undergo and the products used while the implicit information refers

to the emotional changes that people experience. These changes are those related to self-confidence, the perception of oneself, the perception of others, the way people relate to the others and to the society.

- In the materials distributed during the campaign and the television show, images with a high suggestiveness, a low degree of affectivity and which do not demand too much from the receiver are used. Images are frequently used during the campaign and the show and convey a large amount of information.
- In the text materials, the graphic elements are used with a low frequency in order to emphasise the transmitted information. These elements refer to the use of the colours, punctuation, the bolding of certain words or to the use of capital letters.
- The text-image association is used in the social campaign and the television show, but not in a quantity that is large enough to be able to influence the information transmitted.

After obtaining the results about the manner in which the message was sent, it is important to get information about the manner in which the message was received and understood as well as about the information that was sent. These results have been obtained after having applied the questionnaire, i.e. 105 responses from 88 women and 17 men, of an average age of 27 years, coming from urban areas.

The obtained results are the following:

- Every person who responded knew the show and the campaign and watched them unfold.
- Most people stated that the purpose of the two was to change the participants' physical appearance, without emphasising the emotional changes to which they were subjected.

- Most of the respondents were attracted by the participants' life stories.
- The part that attracted the most attention was the one related to the presentation of the participants and the surgeries they underwent.
- The greatest interest was for the physical changes that those who participated went through.

After analysing the results obtained from the application of the two research methods, it is easy to see that there are significant differences between the message that the campaign's and show's organisers wanted to convey and the one received by the public. This difference may be due to several causes.

Consulted specialist sources

The topic researched in this paper is related to the communication of social issues, emphasising the way information is transmitted as well as the methods that were used. The theoretical notions the research is based upon refer to the communication of social issues, social campaigns, the transmission of information about social issues in the online environment and the increase of visibility in communication.

Sandra Oliver describes the relationship between the public relations specialist and the target audience in this way: "Public relations specialists communicate with all relevant types of internal or external audiences, to develop positive relationships and create a cohesion between organizational goals and societal expectations. They shall develop, implement and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and knowledge between the constituent elements of an organization and the public " (2009, p. 35).

Referring to the social campaigns, Doug Newsom and his co-workers state that "A campaign is designed and developed to raise a problem, solve one, or improve a situation. Campaigns solve these things by changing a

behavior, a law or an opinion, or causing a desirable behavior, opinion or law" (2001, p.152).

As far as the communication visibility that a brand needs is concerned, a specialised site believes that "The visibility of a brand is the level of familiarity that consumers have about a company. Its name, features, logo, or any other element that may be associated with it. But the visibility of a brand also means the goods and services it offers. It is essential, from the first days of a brand's existence, for it to be able to indicate and predict the opening on the profile market. But also its market position, compared to direct and indirect competitors" (<https://banner-rollup.ro/blog/sfaturi-la-inceput-de-cum-sa-cresti-vizibilitatea-unui-brand.html>, accessed on 15.04.2020).

Conclusion

Following the theoretical notions that were acquired and mentioned earlier, a research on how the information is transmitted within the "There is no can't" social campaign and the "Beauty on the edge of a knife" TV show has been carried out. The research has focused on the message sent by their organisers and on the manner in which the message was received by the target audience.

After having analysed the obtained results, it was noticed that there is a difference in communication between what the broadcaster wanted to transmit and what was received by the audience. The main part of the message that did not reach the audience is the one related to the emotional changes that the participants went through.

The dissertation paper will assess the need for a proposal to streamline communication in the case of the show and the campaign and a proposal will be formulated, if necessary. In order to minimise the communication gap, it is important to implement and use appropriate communication techniques and strategies.

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