

## Public Relations as Part of Integrated Communication of an Enterprise-Consumer Oriented On

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### Abstract

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The performance of marketing activities requires more than using classic marketing strategies and practices in developing businesses or institutions. This is because new methods and new tools have been introduced in order to increase the awareness of the consumer and gain their loyalty. This is with the aim of attaining a position in the market or in the perception of the public for its products and the overall enterprise. One of the tools to be used is Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) with emphasis on the role of the Public relations (PR). This paper is used to conceptually study and evaluate the public relation and their use in communication activities of enterprise or institution. A research has been done through collection of data using interview questionnaire. Also, a second data analyses were carried out. The data obtained from the survey brought us to a conclusion that PR has an identity and a specific way of communicating with the public. This is particularly with the loyal customers of the enterprise. To a large extent, PR is used as a communication element within the promotional mix. A limitation of this research is the lack of sufficient data related to PR in Kosovo enterprises and institutions. Nevertheless, it will help in the future to value the importance of PR in doing business and offering services to consumers and users. This is with the aim of creating a good image for the products and services they offer, as well as building an image for enterprises and institutions.

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**Keywords:** Marketing, Public relation, marketing communications, promotion, consumer, user.

### Introduction

Different activities take place in the market where enterprises compete for each customer. This happens in all branches of industry including manufacturing enterprises as well as service ones. Competition is always present as a threat, and it is linked to a market segment in which the enterprise identifies its own interest. Enterprises and organizations steer the marketing at least on two levels: at the national and local level. They see public relations as an important and useful tool to present and attract customers. All this is performed with great efficiency and affordability financially. In general, Public Relations (PR) have become a term which is used on a daily basis in different business sectors and social life.

Although theoreticians and authors in the marketing sector often come up with different views regarding the purpose and importance of public relations by increasing or minimizing the effect of its use, it was again proven that as an element of the promotional mix and part of mixed marketing, public relations are likely to link and assist certain policy activities of mixed marketing. In addition, it involves promotion as a communication process.

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With the aim of obtaining knowledge on the place and the role of PR in the activities of an enterprise, be it on the national or local market, collection of data has been conducted. Thus, this data enables the drafting of this piece of work in order to obtain information on: what forms of PR are used by enterprises during marketing activities, in which cases and to what extent PR is used during the promotion of products – enterprise, and how much PR is acknowledged in the marketing of an enterprise. Consequently, the sample covers enterprises engaged in trade, services, and non-governmental organizations. After analyzing the data obtained from the survey, it came to a conclusion that PR has an identity and a specific way of communicating with the public. This is particularly with loyal customers of the enterprise. To a large extent, PR is used as a communication element with the promotional mix. However, PR has not been acknowledged on a satisfactory level and its methods have not been accepted in the mixed marketing of an enterprise. As a result of this, they have identified the need for the marketing managers of enterprises or marketing agencies engaged by enterprises. Thus, their aim is to acknowledge and establish unique models of communication through PR in all markets targeted by an enterprise.

## **2. Marketing Management and Communication with the Market**

The role and function of marketing in our country has reached quite a significant level in terms of its application and development in businesses, NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), and in public and private institutions of the Republic of Kosovo. An enterprise which strives for success in its business must recognize the need for communication in implementing marketing strategies. However, this is with emphasis on the strategies and techniques used for achieving the objectives (Ukaj, 2015). The pillars of the modern marketing are: the product, price, distribution, promotion, people, the process, and the physical environment (7P). Thus, it is otherwise called a holistic or comprehensive marketing. This marketing requires and has a better understanding regarding the products and services by the management, as well as bringing closer the company/institution to the customer/public.

Depending on the type of the business and industry in which the enterprise operates, we distinguish between the marketing bearers. These marketing bearers include: individual businesses and corporations, NGOs and chambers of commerce, government agencies, and state institutions. In reality, each of these members of the marketing process in the market manages their own marketing mix. However, they can also coordinate joint activities. This they do by assigning someone as a coordinator of the activities. However, in order to implement a complete marketing, one should constantly keep in mind the need to communicate with the market. According to the majority of authors and marketing experts, promotion presents the core force of marketing in an enterprise (Ukaj, 2013). Recently, majority of the authors refer to the term "promotion" as "integrated marketing communication". Thus, this includes all the elements of the promotion mix underlining the importance of the communication of an enterprise with focus groups. This has to do with all the activities that have an impact on its marketing. Being able to promote the products and enterprises or institutions requires a definition of the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). This is defined as: "the coordination and integration of all marketing communication tools, avenues, and sources within a company into a seamless program that maximizes the impact on consumers and other end users at a minimal cost" (Clow & Baack, 2007).

Due to rapid growth of the need for communication agencies, Duncan gives the definition of IMC as "...a process for planning, executing, and monitoring the brand messages that create the customer relationships" (Duncan, 2005). All enterprises and organizations which are businesses, NGOs, or institutions, use different forms of marketing communication in order to promote their offer and achieve their financial and non-financial objectives. The objective of marketing communication is to communicate the right message to the right people, in the right way, at the right place, and at the right time. The management of mixed marketing communication falls in these objectives. The packaging (as the communication aspect of the product), sales environment (as the communication aspect of distribution and sales), and the communication aspect of the price have been added to the traditional mix of promotion. Therefore, the result of the management of communication mix will be visible and appropriate when the adequate combination of all elements is used. This is done by integrating them in entirety.

Moreover, the more the integration of communication elements of the marketing, the more their differences in their features fade away. Hence, each element is interlinked with the activities of other elements. Thus, in a way, all the elements of communication mentioned by different authors should be seen as part of an entirety. Based on the mentioned definition, there are five basic characteristics of the philosophy and practice of integrated marketing communication (Shimp, 2000). And those are: impact on the behavior of target groups, focusing on buyers and clients (potential one), the use of all available contacts, enhancing synergy, and establishing and maintaining the relationships.

Subsequently, the continuous and dynamic change of the environment in which marketing communication takes place, including market opportunities and risks, constantly influences the formation of the marketing communications mix. Managers of integrated marketing communication have at their disposal different elements of communication. Hence, their use will depend on the circumstances prevailing at a particular moment or at a particular time. Therefore, this largely depends on a variety of factors such as: the financial means available, product characteristics, the market, relationships with buyers, competition activities, business policy of the enterprise, the level of globalization, etc. At the same time, responsible managers for marketing communication in their markets face a variety of other problems. This may also represent obstacles and restrictions in using the integrated marketing communication program. Therefore, the planning, organization, and implementation of integrated marketing communication by the managers can have their advantages and disadvantages. Hence, these activities are usually implemented by different individuals or agencies working separately from each other. In addition, the manager should be the person to coordinate all these activities for the sake of success.

### **3. Public Relations as Tool Used In Enterprise Communication Mix**

The fourth element of the mixed marketing is promotion. However, promotion is a driving force in advertising, information and sales promotion, and investment. Public relations can be a valuable tool for businesses and experts to establish credibility, enhance their profiles, build awareness, and in finding new customers. However, public relations, being an art and not science, have changed a lot in recent years. Thus, public relations experts face difficulties in applying public relations in an appropriate manner. Public relations are defined as "any program or effort designed to improve, maintain, or protect the sales or image of a product by encouraging intermediaries, such as traditional mass media, the electronic media, or individuals, to voluntarily pass a message about the firm or product to their audience of businesses or consumers" (Gianini, 2010).

Practicing public relations may include the use of social marketing campaigns to change the behavior of an individual that is considered to be a social good. On the other hand, the use of lobbying campaigns is aimed at politicians. In both cases, such campaigns need to be sustainable for longer periods of time in order to achieve the desired results. Another issue is being responsible when engaging in media relations. Here, the requirement is that public relations professionals must understand who controls the media organizations in a country and whether such control extends to editorial content (Krishnamurthy & Verčič, 2009). Based on the above discussion, the research question has been formulated. These questions include: How can Kosovo enterprises use public relations as marketing tools to increase their market? Furthermore, Grunig suggests three dependent variables of public relations effectiveness: the image in the public, relations with share holders, and the satisfaction of employees (Grunig, 1993). The major goals of publicity are to stimulate business activity, enhance profits, and increase the public awareness of a product, service, individual, organization, or activity (Fletcher & Rockfeler, 2003). Grunig et al argued that the communication objectives should be linked to broader organizational goals (Grunig et al., 1992). Marketing, more than any other business function, deals with customers. Therefore, the simplest definition would be: Marketing is the management of profitable customer relations. The dual purpose of marketing is to attract new customers by promising high value and to maintain and increase the number of current customers and by providing the desired satisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013).

Sales and marketing are just a part of a larger marketing mix. They are a set of marketing tools working together to satisfy the needs of the customers and in building up relations with customers. Therefore, marketing is defined as a process through which companies create values for customers and build strong relations with customers. This is for the purpose of obtaining values from customers in return. The key elements of integrated marketing communication are: advertising, personal sales, sales promotion, direct marketing, and public relations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013). Public relations are an organizational function which manages the communication of enterprises to achieve a variety of objectives. Thus, it includes building up and maintaining a positive image, addressing and managing adverse events and stories, as well as maintaining positive relations with the media. Public relations activities support promotional efforts by enterprises generating the attention of "free" media. Good relations with public have always been an important success factor.

However, in the recent years, the importance of public relations has increased since the costs of other forms of marketing communication have been increasing. At the same time, the influence of public relations has become more powerful since customers have become increasingly skeptical of the marketing demands made by other media.

In many cases, customers see media coverage generated through public relations to be more reliable and objective than any integrated communication program. This is due to the fact that enterprises do not "buy" space in the press or time in the radio or television (Grewal et al., 2009). Consequently, public relations have traditionally been considered as a communication tool, but they function better when integrated with the management aspects related to research, planning, and decision making (Davis, 2007). Furthermore, public relations perform five functions: *Relations with press* - presentation and transmission of news about the organization in the most positive way, *Publicity of the product* - sponsoring efforts to advertise specific products, *Corporate communication* - promoting the understanding of the organization through internal and external communication, *Lobbying* - has to do with lawmakers and government officials to encourage or discourage legislation and regulations, and *Counseling* - advice of management regarding public affairs, as well as the position and image of the company during good times and bad times (Kotler & Keller, 2009). In addition to the departments within enterprises, most of the organizations from small enterprises to global entities, cooperate with various agencies to develop and implement communication programs. However, these agencies generate high income, employ thousands of advisers, and serve as training providers and development of young practitioners entering this sector each year.

#### 4. Presentation of findings

Having in mind the lack of secondary data regarding the problem of this research, namely the use and adaptation of the forms of public relations used by enterprises and organizations in Kosovo, a broader research has been conducted. At the beginning of the fieldwork, the goals of this research have been set. However, through the method of analysis, and by using the inductive method from specific conclusions of the research, the general aim has been achieved. This is achieved by using deductive and comparative method. Based on the random sample, which have been identified as the most suitable taking into account the difficulties with the readiness of the population to take part in our research, five entities in two Kosovo towns have been researched.

The data have been collected through a semi-structured questionnaire. This questionnaire allows the respondents some freedom in responding to questions. Nonetheless, some limitations of the research were noted. This begins from misunderstanding, the small number of respondents, and the generalization of the findings. In this case, the analysis is been done only on the findings of the questions related to public relations. Thus, this leaves the data that deals with other marketing issues provided by the participants in this research. Based on the main activity of the respondents, we have obtained information which makes the marketing form different. However, public relations are used because the need to achieve their objectives by means of PR is to increase their general income and expand their market. Regarding the manner of communication and managing of the messages to the public through the PR, the data has been collected on the audience targeted by the enterprises. Thus, this makes the selection of the audience by age. Also, this is dependent on the product and the service offered to the respondents and the audience the messages have been addressed to. This brings up an average that the target audiences for all enterprises are the age groups between 20-60 years old.

Consequently, this is interpreted based on the interest of the audience for the products and services provided. In addition, it is based on the interest of enterprises to serve a wide range of audience as far as age is concerned. Regarding communication with the audience, it has been found that in addition to other media, all the respondents have a website that enables them additional opportunities to keep the public opinion informed. It also allows better interaction with the audience. Considering that the Internet enables these enterprises to have an increased and active communication and presence in the so-called social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, it enables them to disseminate information faster and wider. Another question that was of interest to us, had to do with the budgeting and expenditures for marketing, including the PR. As for the budget, they do not have a separate budget line for PR and they justify this with ad hoc needs. This was done to intervene in support of other elements of promotion used by them. The forms used by enterprises to reach the audience have been identified as: distribution of brochures-catalogues, newsletters, and direct mail. Based on the responses received, it has been noticed that the use of the above-mentioned forms brings satisfaction based on the results of increased sales or the overall results of the enterprise. Also, the priority is seen in terms of the low cost in reaching specific groups of people as opposed to their readiness to respond by buying their products and services.

The main question dealing with the PR is "Does your enterprise use public relations." This has resulted to the statement that all respondents use this form of communication 100%. Hence, it highlights some of the most important benefits of public relations for them. These is seen as an economic way of reaching the target audience, raising awareness of the products and services of the enterprise, strengthening the perception and image of the enterprise, creating more credibility than traditional advertising, and creating an advantage over competitors who do not effectively use public relations. Subsequently, the reason for using PR is due to the fact that public relations have a high percentage of reliability compared to other forms of promotion. It was of interest for us to get to know that the PR tactics used by enterprises, allows them to mention freely the form which was used mostly by all the respondents.

These include: launching a special day, a week or a month as a tactic of public relations; the tactic of creating a micro webpage on the Internet followed as a form used in critical periods of business decline; or the presentation of new products in the offer of the enterprise. This is aimed at capitalizing as much as possible, the limited budget of public relations and other tactics. Of particular interest was the information about who manages the PR activities in these enterprises. Therefore, this is usually done by professional agencies or by the enterprise itself. Most of the responses clarify that PR is managed by the enterprise itself. Specifically, it is carried out by its staffs who also deal with other marketing activities of the enterprise. On the other hand, a small number of staff and their professional competence help in dealing with this activity which has been mentioned.

Only one of the respondents stated that they hire a professional communication agency. The respondent highlights the advantage of hiring these agencies that are familiar with numerous programs and know-how in using all public relations tools available to attract the attention of their clients. In the frame of this issue, it has been noticed that the enterprises treat public relations program internally. This is because according to them, public relations are much cheaper than advertising. They can be useful particularly for small businesses. However, it should be noted that although these activities are handled internally, the persons responsible should be specialized in this field since these programs are very important. The most used media to distribute information through the public vary from one to another. Therefore, they are ranked as follows: direct electronic mail/email, social media, TV and radio, and other forms. According to the respondents, they are practical forms, easy to communicate, and with lower costs and easy collaboration. For example, direct mail/email can be sent to a large number of customers and groups as a form of cooperation or a tool for information and education about the products or services.

Through this form of communication, the enterprise seeks feedback from the customers. Also, it is a good way to attract new customers by allowing these customers to connect and interact with the company on a personal level. Social media serves as a good opportunity to develop the brand and help in creating a more positive image for enterprises. In general, based on the responses of all the questions, it comes out that marketing and public relations are an important factor for the market growth of enterprises. This is because all the enterprises surveyed have effectively used these tools to enhance their market and reach their objectives. Public relations are a form of communication that enhances the image of the enterprise. Their goal is to reach an understanding and support, which influences opinion and behavior. Furthermore, the use of campaigns as a form of public relations helps to adapt to a specific audience. Thus, the potential customers can only receive offers or information that meet their individual needs, encourage their willingness to buy, and increases the demand for specific products or services during different periods of time.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the management and coordination of the whole process of marketing communication in the enterprise brings results in the form of creating a proper message and achieving better results in sales. This is what prompts the manager to identify the way in which the buyer can get in contact with the enterprise. Also, it enables the collection of various offers and the messages of enterprise distributed during business activities. It allows them to adjust entirely to all the elements, and not just in using only one of them. It combines them in the best possible way to send the right message which would have a significant impact on demand and sales. Communication of the enterprise can be focused on different target groups. Therefore, they have several objectives as more than one message can be delivered to the public. These messages have to be harmonized, consistent, and complementary to each other leaving no space for contradictions.

It should be noted that the creation of mixed marketing communication will bring results only if they are in harmony and go hand in hand with other instruments of the mixed marketing.

Managers need to constantly explore, test, measure, and evaluate activities and their effects on their constant pursuit to achieve better results. Application of the concept of integrated marketing communication can lead to the definition of a more sustainable and consistent positioning of organizations and their products/services in the minds of customers. It also helps in achieving better results and increase of sales. The importance of experience should be noted, as well as the staff and the management of the enterprise regarding integrated communication and relations with the public. This is especially if it is associated with important and reliable contacts in the context where the information is to be placed both for the enterprise and the product as a constant pursuit for the best possible results in business activities. After analyzing the data collected, it can be concluded that public relations have an irreplaceable role when it comes to communication with customers and buyers. They have been used frequently as a marketing "tool" by the enterprise. In general, it is not known and valued sufficiently in the marketing of organizations. Therefore, based on this, it is important to create a specific model of public relations management at the level of organizations or enterprises in Kosovo. This would include the following categories: basic public relations, business relations, relations with public/community, and internal relations.

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