

## AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF MEASURING SUCCESS OF PR CAMPAIGNS

In today's modern world, sharing the information with public is vital for success and development of business. The fierce competition obliges companies to use every bit of resource so that every customer's objective is to choose a reliable one to collaborate with. Modern public relations have evolved from what traditional public relations used to be. If previously the ultimate weapon to gaining consumer's trust was marketing, now public relations (PR) has become more important [3].

These days credibility is becoming increasingly important. And the best perk of PR is creating a positive public image and building friendly relationships with the media. So a PR campaign can build credibility because it's an effective way of engaging the public in conversation or inviting them to participate in what a company does.

As a result of such attitude to communication in business PR as well as marketing campaigns play a critical role in achieving growth, particularly in the digital marketing era. A PR campaign is an excellent method for all sizes and sectors to diversify their efforts and attempts at promotion and advertising. That's why we tried to find out what it takes to create a remarkably effective PR campaign. In order to do that we examined top PR campaigns of last years in foreign countries as well as in Belarus. It was also interesting for us to answer the following questions. Does the Belarusian advertising experience differ from the foreign one in many ways? Is an effective PR campaign more than just a press release on a new product or a fundraiser to raise brand awareness? Are there any tips that can help to reach the heights with at PR campaign?

**The aim of this survey** is to identify the potential of a modern PR campaign as well as trends in advertising by analyzing the most popular campaigns of recent years.

The aim is realized in **the following tasks**:

- to analyze the most commonly used classification systems to measure the impact and success of a PR campaign;
- generate a universal measurement technique;
- identify and compare characteristics of a modern PR campaign;
- conduct a questionnaire of students and define the most remembered and effective PR campaign;
- identify the trends that can help to make a PR campaign a success.

**The object** of the research is retail business. **The subject** of the research is a PR campaign as means of building branding awareness.

**The hypothesis**: a PR campaign can make a great contribution to retail business with the use of the most popular trends (collaborations with celebrities, animal welfare).

Such **empirical and theoretical methods** of scientific research as gathering of information, analysis, induction, poll were used in the research.

It was found out that every organization defines PR in its own way, so there isn't any single definition of PR.

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations provides a thorough definition of PR. It says: "Public Relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding

and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics” [5].

Regardless of which definition of PR is chosen, several factors are consistent. PR is part of an organization’s overall marketing and communications function. It is critical in helping to engage an organization’s diverse publics across media platforms. Public relations must protect the organization’s reputation and provide crisis management where necessary.

A PR campaign is a series of activities with a specific goal planned in advance. This contrasts with other areas of PR, such as general on-going publicity tactics, paid advertising, and reacting to events. Ultimately a PR campaign has three characteristics: identifying an objective, finding the message to achieve the objective and addressing the message to the audience.

There are several benefits of measuring a company’s PR campaigns:

- it gives a clear picture of your business’ performance and proves the value of PR campaigns in reaching business objectives;
- analysis during the implementation of a PR campaign reveals what’s working and what isn’t;
- evaluating past performance helps to plan successful future PR strategies, set budget, and establish KPIs;
- possibilities to defend your brand during a reputation crisis with the data you have.

The problem of evaluating and measuring PR and marketing campaigns has become more complex recent years – particularly with the continued growth of digital. In this environment choosing the right measurement technique for the right PR campaign objective has become more challenging.

Nowadays there isn’t one common established system for evaluating and measuring PR communications campaigns. The most frequently used metrics of measuring the impact and success of a PR campaign: sales stats, social media reach, engagement on social media, media impressions, brand mentions, social shares, website traffic, number of backlinks, keyword rankings, lead generation [1].

Taking into account previously established classifications for measuring the value of a campaign of different authors we decided to combine “small” metrics into three significant measures: output, outtake, and outcome.

Outputs measure activity of business: a number of posts you publish per week, events attended, conferences you’ve presented at, press releases published, number of social media posts per day.

Outtakes measure consumers’ sentiment towards your brand, following a PR campaign. It can be measured by characteristics/features associated with your brand.

Outcomes measure what consumers do as a result of being exposed to your PR communications. Actions or behavioral changes could include: reading your blog post, checking the quantity of likes and views on YouTube, responding to email and attending events of the organization.

Having analyzed top-lists of PR campaigns of last years on the Internet, the most interesting ideas of building branding awareness were chosen: Lacoste – “Save Our Species”, Bonsticks by Evroopt, Reebok – “BeMoreHuman” and Domino’s Pizza – “Paving for Pizza”.

In order to find out students’ attitude to the chosen campaigns we decided to conduct an online survey. The questions about each campaign were as follows: Did you know about this campaign before? Where did you see it? How successful is this campaign? Which detail do you like most about this campaign? Then the respondents were asked to choose the one they liked most and least. We were also interested what PR campaigns we should have added to the top-list.

Bonsticks by Evroopt turned out to be known about by 86 % respondents, and the rest of respondents are familiar only with the company. Domino’s campaign is less known – 20 %. At the same time the number of students who aren’t aware of neither the campaigns by Lacoste, Domino’s and Reebok, nor the brands is about 18 % on average.

The commercials were mostly watched online. Lacoste and Domino's appeared a lot on YouTube as well as social networks. Respondents found out about Bonsticks advertisement on TV – 24 %, social networks – 24 % and in shops – 31 %. A campaign by Reebok was promoted enough on social networks – 52 %.

It was interesting for us to investigate, what special details are appreciated by respondents. Students mentioned ecological problems as well as saving endangered species of animals in Lacoste campaign, targeting children focus by Evroopt, feminism and respect for women by Reebok, solving social problems by Domino's pizza.

The questionnaire made it possible to rank the campaigns. According to the results: Lacoste is on the first place – 44 %. Then Domino's goes – 20 % liked it. Reebok is on the third place – 32 % didn't like it. And even though Bonsticks are widely known by students, and the idea seemed bright enough to them, the campaign couldn't compete with foreign companies – 48 % didn't like it.

We decided to test our measuring method on practice. The most popular belarusian (Bonsticks by Evroopt) and foreign ("Save our Species" by Lacoste) campaigns were taken to prove usability of classification.

Bonsticks are small toys which were distributed in Evroopt stores in exchange for a certain amount of money spent. One detail that is special about that rubber toy is a suction cup, which was appreciated enough by children who like to stick toys everywhere.

Outputs. The company created 5 collections of toys. Moreover, there were created comics with Bonsticks. Evroopt launched great marketing-mix-advertisements on TV, the Internet, promo events, downloaded shops with different goods with picture of Bonsticks. Distribution network conducted more than 200 free entertainment activities for children all over Belarus. In addition, such projects as – family "Bonsticks show" and news program "Bonsticks News" were on TV.

As a result, Evroopt gave out more than 75 million of Bonsticks for purchases to the customers. Distribution network sold out more than 1 million albums for collecting toys. In addition, buyers actively acquired goods branded with the characters: school supplies, hygiene items, clothing, utensils, food, educational kits, games for kids.

Outtakes. The campaign had a positive impact on business performance as well as reputation of the company «Evrotorg». Sales of partner product, which gave additional toys, have increased 5 times. Quantity of some sold types of goods increased in 7–8 times compared with the previous period. What concerns the impact of stocks on turnover of «Evrotorg», the increase amounted to approximately 2–3 %. During the campaign a growth of 110 thousand new customers for the loyalty program "e-plus" was recorded.

Outcomes. Evrotorg tried to engage the audience and achieve its loyalty. Today Bonsticks accounts in social networks have over 65 thousand followers. It is the largest Belarusian children's community on the Web. Bonsticks videos on YouTube-channel totally have 10 million views. Internet-users published 16 thousand photos under hashtag #bonsticks.

Lacoste's website sold limited quantities of polo shirts emblazoned with an endangered species in the spot where its iconic alligator icon typically appears. Ten different species were featured and the number of shirts available for each corresponds to its remaining population in the wild [2].

Outputs. The limited-edition polos were sold exclusively online in the US and in Europe. The polos were likely to see strong demand due to their exclusivity. For Lacoste, the effort was an opportunity to build loyalty and drive word of mouth with consumers interested in saving endangered animals, even if they weren't able to spend \$185 on a shirt. Video content was released on Lacoste social media to explain the operation and the partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The launch was made during the brand fashion show at Paris Fashion Week on February 28th.

Outtakes. This PR campaign defines Lacoste as an iconic brand which isn't afraid to twist its own codes to support a worthy cause. The target audience is Lacoste fans who have a deep attachment to

the brand and its crocodile. But main objective was to reach a wider audience and public attention on this biodiversity issue. Consumers were able to show their support for the cause by sharing videos on social media using the #LacosteSaveOurSpecies hashtag.

Outcomes. One of positive fallouts for IUCN is that donations multiplied by 4 during the operation. Social media work resulted in 600 000 shares, 1,2 million impressions and 9,9 million earned media. The limited edition “Save our Species” polo shirts sold out in 24 hours. Among all the people, who bought a polo, 76 % are those, who made the first purchase of the brand [4].

As proven by the examples provided above, we defined a practical way of measuring modern campaigns. It was useful to compare correlation of efforts and results and define the best campaigns. It was determined that both campaigns showed great results: the number of customers and sales increased and public attention was attracted.

But our main focus was on identifying trends of successful campaigns. The most common trends are as follows: video content; social networks; animal welfare; collaborations with celebrities; social and gender issues; eco-friendly ideas.

A conclusion was made that a PR campaign definitely makes a great contribution to retail business with the use of the most popular trends. For years companies weren't sure about marketing campaigns effectiveness with the exception of actual sales. That is no longer the case and now you can use the analytical marketing tools that are available to gather data today and use that data to shape continually future marketing campaigns toward being highly successful ones.

## References

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